Social networking, protest and politics in Portugal - Do crisis, grievances and social media really suffice for political outcomes? A first study of “Geração à Rasca” protests

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**Abstract**

*In March 2011, Portugal saw two things that were completely unknown in its recent political history when a small group of friends that were also precarious workers (“precários”) used social media to protest against the lack of jobs for the younger generations and the Government bad handling of the economy. Although those protests were not organized by conventional political actors using conventional means, they mobilized hundreds of thousands of citizens from all ages and statuses and put politicians worried, despite widespread incomprehension, and even disdain, by some media commentators and pundits. In this paper, the authors will use social movement theory and relevant theory on people and technology relationship in order to make a preliminary assessment of the March 12 “Geração à Rasca” protests, while proposing unprecedented venues for research about that initiative. Our first assessment is that grievances, economic and social crisis and Internet enabled technologies were not sufficient to explain the emergence of the protests. Some events, and particularly, the arrival of allies, were critical for the mobilizations, as were critical how claims were framed and ideologically articulated and elaborated.*

**Keywords**: Internet, social media, social movements, e-mobilization, technological affordances.
Introduction

In 12 March 2011, Portugal saw two things that were completely unknown in its recent political history when a small group of friends and underpaid “precários” 1 who used social media to protest (“Geração à Rasca” protests) against the lack of jobs for the younger generations and the Government bad handling of the economy. Although those protests were not organized by conventional political actors using conventional means, they mobilized hundreds of thousands of citizens from all ages, classes and statuses (500.000 according to many sources) all over the country and put politicians worried, despite widespread incomprehension, and even disdain, by some media commentators and pundits. In this paper, the authors intend to do a preliminary assessment of these protests. To that end, social movement literature will be used in order to examine the political context that surrounded the protests, as well as the role played by social media on resources mobilization and framing. Our initial conclusions are that the availability of social media, together with the sense of grievances and of a deepening crisis were not sufficient for mobilization. A conjunction of factors, some contingent, like a pop concert, were decisive in establishing the appropriate symbolic and discursive climate for the messages, while the arrival of allies helped the creation of loosed networks capable of attracting audiences and mainstream media attention to the activist’s objectives and their online platforms.

To better understand how technologies are used by activists and how they perceived their importance for political action we must turn to the most recent theoretical advances regarding the relations between social movements and ICTs and between people and technology in general. Beginning in the nineties (see, for instance Ayres 1999), communication and social scientists directed their attention to the eventual transformations propelled by the use of ICTs on political action. While some of them clearly downgraded these impacts (Diani, 2000; Tarrow, 1998b; Tilly, 2004), others saw the emergence of Internet activism as a mere “accentuation” of offline activism effects (Bennett, 2004; Fisher, 1998; Myers, 1994) or even the dawn of a new paradigm in contentious politics and political communication, leading to model-changing explanations (Bimber et al., 2005; Earl & Schussman, 2003). In this section, we will deal briefly with two related problems arising from digital activism: protest-related diffusion processes on the Web (see Earl, 2010) and how people relate to technology (Earl & Kimport 2011, Hutchby 2001), as they are of particular relevance to our subject and to the aim of this study.

Regarding the relationship between technology, agency and social processes, we propose a case by case and a problem driven approach, together with a flexible and balanced approach, in order to evade the basic dichotomy exposed by the realist and the constructivist camps. As technologies are not used in the same way across countries, we hypothesize that their uses depend, at least during initial phases, on local and

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1 “Precários” is one of the terms more used by the protesters to define themselves and it designates those who have precarious jobs. “Precários” don’t have working long term contracts and are underpaid. Another term that is very used is “quinhentoseuristas”, which refers to those that are paid 500 euros by month for their work.
national political cultures and practices. This implies that we use Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport leverage of affordances model (2011; see also Hutchby, 2001) with caution, as it presupposes a purely strategic model of decision making together with an understanding of mediated politics in the context of American political culture. Over the next lines we will deal briefly with the leverage of affordances model for understanding both the people/technologies relationship and Internet enabled political action.

According to Jennifer Earl and Katrina Kimport (2011, p.189), “Technologies don’t change societies or social processes through mere existence but rather impact social processes through their mundane or innovative uses, and in which the affordances of the technology are leveraged by those mundane or innovative uses.” Consequently, Earl classifies web protests according to the degree activists leverage two important affordances provided by the Web: star-up and scaling costs, and copresence affordances. The more those two are leveraged, the more “transformative” and “augmentative” are the impacts of Internet enabled technologies to political action and social processes. Low leverage of cost and copresence affordances of the Web leads to “e-mobilizations”, while greater leverages lead to “e-tactics” and, ultimately, to “e-movements”. As the authors say, “the more these two affordances are leveraged, the more transformative the changes are to organizing and participation processes leading to the need for what we dub “theory 2.0”; the less these affordances are leveraged, the more likely it is that researchers will find what we refer to as a “supersize” model where the Web leads to faster, wider, cheaper activism, but without fundamental changes to the dynamics of contention” (Earl & Kimport, 2011, p.185).

At this point, it can be argued that although Internet enabled innovations and information are continuously on the risk of spreading, their local uses and interpretations are not automatic and immediate. In this paper, we contend that digital activism is always culturally situated, which means that we cannot fully understand digital action if local uses and decisions are automatically set against a pure strategic model. In fact, as we will see, when dealing with mobilization resources, 12 March protests cannot be fully appreciated if technological choices are disengaged from social practices and local contexts, or if social actors and their decisions are set against a pure strategic model. Ideological and cultural local interpretations are crucial, in our view, both enabling activists to resonate successfully and forcing them to adapt to circumstances in order to be successful.

This paper will be structured as follows. In the next section we will present our analytical scheme based on social movement theory. Our findings will then be presented in the next section, which will be divided into several sub-sections for commodity of exposition. As we will see, regarding the uses of ICTs, we will prefer to adopt a “supersize” model to describe the uses of Internet enabled technologies, like Facebook, You Tube or Wordpress, before the 12 March protests. A last section will be used to offer some concluding remarks and venture some prospects for future research.

Opportunities, mobilizing structures and frames

Political opportunity structures (POS) refer to the conditions in the political
environment that favor social movement activity (see the pioneering works of Eisinger, 1973; Kenniston, 1968; Parkin, 1968; Tilly, 1978). According to Doug McAdam (1996, p. 27), POS most important dimensions are the relative openness or closure of the institutionalized political system, the stability or instability “of that broad set of elite alignments that typically undergird a polity”, the presences or absence of elite allies, and the State’s capacity and propensity for repression. In our case, as we will see, the circumstances anticipating and surrounding 12 March 2011 protests were a critical and fragile conjuncture, in political, economic and social terms.

Constructed as a response to functional strain theories of violence, revolutions and collective behavior, political opportunity structure scholars don’t sum up individual behaviors in their explanations of social processes or see outcomes as systemic responses to societal imbalances or functional failures. Instead, they concentrate solely on the ways agents are able to organize collectively, without further assumptions. Mobilizing structures are thus the mechanisms that enable individuals to engage in collective action – mainly, organizational structures and tactical repertoires (McCarthy 1996, see McAdam, McCarthy and Zald 1996).

Social structures encompass both formal configurations, such as social movement organizations or churches, and informal configurations, such as friendship and activist networks. Tactical repertoires describe the forms of protest and collective action that activists are familiar with and able to utilize. Thus, supporters are more likely to mobilize around an issue if there is an existing organizational infrastructure and familiar forms of protests. The relation between mobilizing structures and ICTs continues to be the most explored area of research by scholars of social movements and new communication and information technologies. ICTs can be seen, in fact, as new repertoires of tactics that can be used by activists in a new contentious environment where online networking is a powerful extension of offline organizational forms.

Standing between macro and meso processes, and mobilization, are framing processes. These are strategic attempts to craft, disseminate and contest the language and the narratives used to describe a movement, and aiming to justify the activist’s claims and motivate collective action using culturally shared beliefs and understandings (Zald, 1996; see McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996). In this paper, we will use frame analysis in order to scrutinize the “Geração à Rasca” manifest on their Facebook page. Our intent will be to expose and examine the movement’s ideological and cultural appropriations resulting from frame articulation and frame elaboration processes (Snow & Byrd, 2007) at work during three core framing tasks: diagnostic framing, prognostic framing and motivational framing (Zald, 1996; see McAdam, McCarthy & Zald, 1996). To be effective, collective action frames, frames enacted by social movements, must fulfill three essential tasks: 1) they must identify a problem (or problems), along with its, or their, causes; 2) propose a logical solution to that problem (or problems), as much as they must identify who will be the protagonists of the solution, a task that eventually involves exposing the organizational or the group tactics and strategies related to it; and, finally, 3) be able to emotionally engage their audiences, generally through the enactment of slogans. In order to understand how collective action frames are related to ideologies (and, in our view, to political cultures), or the “metaphorical blending, weaving, and grafting” processes that are at work during ideological reception, transformation and reproduction, we must, nonetheless, turn our attention to two “highly agentic, interactive,
discursive” processes: frame articulation and frame elaboration (Snow & Byrd, 2007, p.130). Frame articulation generally “involves the connection and alignment of events, experience, and strands of moral codes so that they hang together in a relatively unified and compelling way”, while frame elaboration is associated with the task of “accenting and highlighting some events, issues, or beliefs as being more important than others” (Snow & Byrd, 2007, p. 130). On the next section, we will begin to examine closely the movement’s Manifest on the Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/events/180447445325625/) in order to look deeper at those interpretative processes. We will try to understand how the four activists used available cultural and ideological resources while framing this message and, more precisely, it’s nature and content, and how the cultural component of political action was determinant for the success of the protests.

**Applying and discussion**

In the subsequent subsections we will apply our theoretical and methodological guidelines for each of the three now classic factors of contention, followed by a brief discussion. As far as we see it, this is an ongoing research project that is subject to modifications and the refinement perspectives, methods and hypotheses. As so, we see our actual results more as heuristic devices for further research, than as a more or less static point of arrival.

**Political opportunities**

The circumstances for mobilization were born in a specific critical and fragile conjuncture, in political, economic and social terms. By the time, the socialist and minority Government was suffering a high pressure from the opposition parties at Parliament. The political climate between the Prime-Minster, José Sócrates (Partido Socialista, PS) and the President Cavaco Silva was worn and coming to a saturation limit, not matching together after six years of a quite sensitive political management. Thus, the situation vis-à-vis the elites’ alignments were not unfavourable for protest, especially regarding the signs coming from the top of the democratic establishment. Furthermore, the international context was suffering a deep and worldwide financial crisis since July 2008 that further divided Portuguese elites and severely narrowed their margins to establish consensus or negotiate. Also, the crisis coming from the American Lehman Brothers bank collapse made a strong impact on the citizen’s perceptions of their rulers, alienating State politics further from the people and making them even more exasperating.²

² According to Eurostat ("Unemployment statistics" - Statistics Explained (2012/4/1) <http://epp.eurostat.ec.europa.eu/statistics_explained/index.php/Unemployment_statistics#>), Portuguese youth unemployment rate (between 15 and 24 years, inclusive) in the third quarter of 2011 reached almost 30%, its highest value since 2008, a value similar to Ireland, although lower than Greece and Spain. In 2010, the total unemployment rate
Despite more than forty years of democracy, Portuguese elites were never able to open the regime to real and substantive participation. Party politics dominated and the limits of strict representative democracy was never questioned or altered. So we can also say that its relative accessibility was never sufficient to control for the growing political, economic and social discontent and unease coming from the governed.

As we said earlier, the protests weren’t a party supported movement, but a civil society initiative leaded by “precários” that made explicitly the intention of not including parties in its organization or during its public exposure. The March 12 protesters where openly against parties and party organization, and though started their protest intentions by considering that civil society should look inwards rather to the parties, and look for political, instead of electoral decisions and platforms, since these had proved being already distant from the right answers. The general question of the movement would be ‘How did we become to be in such bad life conditions? (In other words, how did we get to be ‘à rasca’?). An initial state of mind that would previously mean to be a youth movement became, somehow unpredictably, an intergenerational massive wave of protest, aiming to show that no matter the age, the conditions were equally bad for many.

In principle, this apparently independent strategy was not obviously the best to attract elite allies. We say apparently, because in politics nothing is final or impossible. As far as we can say, we can confidently assume that March 12 protesters relied ostensibly on themselves and on minor political players to call directly to the masses and bypass the system. Even the Portuguese communists distanced themselves from the protests, even indirectly, and we can assume that this is not something that has no political costs for the party. In the next section we will take a closer look at those allies.

As for the State’s capacity and propensity for repression, the obvious answer is that in this respect Portugal offers plenty of opportunities for protest and for non conventional opposition. Since the Carnations Revolution, Portugal has shown great levels of tolerance, especially in their most obvious manifestations. It’s Constitution clearly states that all citizens have the right to demonstrate and to associate (Artigo 45.º and Artigo 46.º), while the suspension of those rights is only legitimate in extreme cases, like the imminent downfall of the democratic regime and democratic institutions (Artigo 18.º, nº2).³ Furthermore, Portugal is part of the European Union, not to say that it has signed many international conventions against the use of force for political control or the persecution or silencing of minorities and opposition groups. We must also bear in mind that in its recent history, Portugal was very instrumental in freeing the East-Timorese people from Indonesian domination.

³ As Article 19, nº 2 states: “O estado de sítio ou o estado de emergência só podem ser declarados, no todo ou em parte do território nacional, nos casos de agressão efectiva ou iminente por forças estrangeiras, de grave ameaça ou perturbação da ordem constitucional democrática ou de calamidade pública.” (The state of siege or the state of emergency may be declared in all or part of the national territory, in cases of actual or imminent aggression by foreign forces, serious threat or disruption of the democratic constitutional order or public calamity.)
In view of the above, we can hardly ignore the question why the protests occurred only in 2011 and not before. Grievances were generalized well before that year and with the socialists in government since 2004, representative politics further radicalized while corruption, mismanagement and lack of democratic transparency was on the rise. In other words, many of the problems that were present in 2011, especially for the younger generations, were already present some years earlier. Why they erupted only in 2011, and why they manifested themselves as they did, can only be further understood with the help of additional factors, like resource mobilization and cultural framings. Although important, grievances and political opportunities alone cannot elucidate us much, especially on the ways psychological and social phenomena translated into political action.

Events, allies and mobilizing structures

Political contexts are important factors for explaining social movement emergence and dynamics, but they are not enough. According to the now tenets of social movement theory, in order to succeed, activists must also be able to organize and to mobilize a panoply of resources, and communicate successfully their messages. If this was so in an era when communication technologies were not changing nonconventional politics, we must now take it into account, asking how the Internet and social media were perceived and used by March 12 “Geração à Rasca” protesters and how they impacted on organizational and mobilization resources.

Right from the beginning, it is hardly convincing that an apparently banal and innocuous event, like a pop concert, would play an important role in the 12 March protests. But it did. On January, a Portuguese pop group called Deolinda gave two concerts in the two most important cities of the country (Porto, 22 and 23 January; Lisbon, 28 and 29), where, at the end, they played an unpublished song entitled “Que Parva que eu Sou” (“What a fool I am”).

What followed was surprising. This song, dealing with job inequalities and working precariousness, resonated so strongly with the audiences that many kept standing after listening to it while others recorded the event and its emotionally charged atmosphere. Although this event would almost certainly pass unnoticed some years ago, it could hardly lost its momentum in the Web 2.0 era. Deolinda’s concert in Porto was immediately uploaded to many web sites, attracted mainstream media attention and initiated a process of amplification. In just three weeks, the two YouTube pages that were broadcasting the event registered more than 500,000 visualizations.

The importance of these concerts to the protests was crucial. They set up the emotional atmosphere, channeled audiences to the initiative, and it was under their direct influence that the four young university graduates were led to political action.

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4 Available at [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8lo82tXbWU](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f8lo82tXbWU) and [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rgOFS7UZ2I&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=_rgOFS7UZ2I&feature=related)

5 It was not possible, despite our attempts, to interview the four founders of the “Geração à Rasca” movement before submitting this essay. We hope to close that gap in a near future.
4 February 2011, they initiated the “Geração à Rasca” campaign on Facebook, where they published a manifest, and on 11 February created a Wordpress blog calling for national protests on 12 March against youth unemployment and the lack of working conditions. Another big moment, though, would come when, on 10 February, as soon as they heard of the campaign, a civic political organization defending working rights and better working conditions called Precários Inflexíveis, used their weblog to further publicize the protests, associate it with Deolinda’s song (publicizing the lyrics) and stating that more than 15,000 people had already confirmed their presence in the protests through “Geração à Rasca” Facebook page (based on those confirmations, we constructed Table 1, presented at the end of this essay). At that time, the song was already strongly resonating with Precários Inflexíveis audiences.

As we can see, the four friend’s decision to organize the protests didn’t came out of thin air. On 23 January, You Tube was already broadcasting Deolinda’s performance in Oporto Coliseum and playing the song “Que Parva que eu Sou”, attracting generalized attention from online audiences and attention from mainstream media. Yet, also importantly, in our view, was the fact that the Deolinda’s song created almost instantly an atmosphere of proto-revolutionary and emotionally driven awakening that resonated profoundly with the Portuguese political culture. This was because the song was directly associated with another important event of Portuguese political history, the Carnations Revolution of 1974. In fact, it was with a song, “Grândola Vila Morena”, by Zeca Afonso, an almost mythical leftist reference, that the Captains of the 25 April 1974 revolution coordinated their coup against the dictatorial regime of Marcelo Caetano (the political heir of Salazar), and introduced democracy in the country. In this context, it is not surprising that the four friends didn’t need to highly leverage the affordances of the Web, as they viewed their movement as consonant with a classical mobilization and with the popular demonstrations that followed the military coup. Although they intended to stage pacific demonstrations, it would be defeating for their strategy if they didn’t use the culturally and emotionally rich context created by the song to maximize its prospects of success through offline mobilizations. In other words, making their demands using other tactics (“e-tactics”, in Earl’s terminology), like an online petition or an online boycott, would be defeating for the movement because it would be incomprehensible culturally by the majority of the publics that were being “trapped” by a proto-revolutionary atmosphere closely related to offline protests and demonstrations. In sum, Internet enabled technologies were used only to scale or to multiply offline effects, even if other tools and possibilities were at hand and technology literate publics were available.

While You Tube versions of the concerts and the arrival of an important ally like

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9 See www.youtube.com/watch?v=LDFAI0vDgWM , published on February 13, 2011, accessed on September 30, 2011.
Precários Inflexíveis were creating the symbolic, emotional and organizational conditions for successful political action, many references to the protests multiplied on the Internet: on blogs, on pages created by other movements, and on online outlets of trade unions and political parties that were sympathetic to the initiative. The creation of that “reseau” of loosed and informal networks, combined with some institutional and more traditional actors (see Table 2 at the end), marked the second big moment in the organization of the initiative. An important aspect of this dynamic was the fact that, at that time, some social movements, trade unions and political parties, were also organizing around the issue of youth unemployment and job precariousness. Nevertheless, as their websites, social networks or news portals reported the announcement of the protests, they were also redirecting their Internet audiences to “Geração à Rasca” Facebook page, acting as a collective magnet of the protests. This was especially the case of Precários Inflexíveis, as we saw. Additionally, new initiatives of the activists became instrumental to pull audiences from the You Tube pages to the movement. As our findings show, the Wordpress blog was the main liaison between You Tube and the activist’s Facebook page, connecting it, in turn, to the same media that was following Deolinda’s song on You Tube and relating about the unusual popularity of their concerts because of it. At this point, some collective actors, mainly from civil society, joined the movement. This was the case, for instance, with the entertainment and audiovisual group Plataforma dos Intermitentes (http://intermitentes.org/), an informal organization of “precarious” artists and performers, but also with the many organizations known to be more ideologically radical, proto-revolutionary and still largely embedded in the revolutionary political culture of 1974. The involvement of these associations and organizations, their convergence to a central online platform and the promotion of national, local and sectorial dynamics, produced a cascading effect directed at the disclosure of the event which, of course, increased the chances of mobilizing new allies and interests. Using a term from social network analysis, the activist´s platforms, especially the Wordpress weblog, was able to function as an authority node that connected with many hubs. This would not be possible without the contextualization offered by Deolinda concerts, which

11 Precários Inflexíveis is the main informal organization of Portuguese “precarious” workers. The organization already existed for some years, at least since 2007 when it began mobilizing “precários” on May Day parades. Those mobilizations were never so massive and mediated as the ones organized by “Geração à Rasca” activists on 12 March.
12 TV public and private stations like TV 2, TV1, TVI 24, SIC; print and digital generalist media like Jornal de Notícias, Público, Sol, and free and specialized outlets like Destak and Blitz.
13 Just to cite a few: AIP - Associação de Imagem Portuguesa; ANC - Associação Novo Circo; ARA - Associação de Assistentes de Realização e Anotação; ATSP - Associação dos Técnicos de Som Profissional; CPAV - Centro Profissional do Sector Audiovisual; GRANULAR – Associação de Música Contemporânea; PLATEIA - Associação de Profissionais das Artes Cênicas; REDE – Associação de Estruturas para a Dança Contemporânea; RAMP, Sindicato dos Músicos; SINTTAV - Sindicato Nacional dos Trabalhadores das Telecomunicações e Audiovisual; and, STE - Sindicato dos Trabalhadores do Espectáculo.
acted as a magnet between the network components. As we can see, the level of the technological affordance was not high, was even low, as technology served almost exclusively to create alternative information relays for offline action and for third-party message amplification.

Apart from the use of the Internet and social media to inform and to aggregate information about the protests, the organizers used them in conjunction with other tactics to promote the event. The first one was a “flash mob” initiative at the Lisbon subway. It took place on March 3. Activists used portable devices, like mobile phones, to play the music of Deolinda inside metro carriages, thus calling the attention of subway passengers. A second offline action, fully organized and coordinated online, was the interruption of a speech by the prime minister during an official session of the Portuguese Socialist Party (PS). The media coverage itself, the confirmation of some artist’s in the protests, and the organizers disclosure of the number of confirmations, were all updated to the Facebook page. Also, on March 5, seven days before the protests, Homens da Luta, a musical group, won RTP’s Song Festival, a very popular song contest produced and transmitted by the main public TV channel (Rádio e Televisão de Portugal). During their “official” interview, they announced that they would join the protests, drawing further public and media attention to the event.

Strategic framing

Over the next lines, we will begin to examine closely the movement’s Manifest on the Facebook page (http://www.facebook.com/events/180447445325625/) as to scrutinize those interpretative processes. We will try to understand how the four activists used available cultural and ideological resources while framing this message and, more precisely, its nature and content. Furthermore, we will try to show the importance of these framings for the success of the protests.

As we said earlier, several events created the appropriate context for the protests. We are referring particularly to Deolinda’s song and to the arrival of instrumental allies,

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14 On March 7, 2011, a small group of activists from the “Geração à Rasca” campaign interrupted a speech of the Socialist Party’s Secretary-General, José Sócrates, during a Congress of the party. After walking on stage, the youths, using a megaphone, said: “The time for the “Geração à Rasca” to speak out is now; this is a peaceful demonstration, we only want to speak out.”

15 Throughout the preparation of the protest, media coverage was secured through interviews, political commentary, televised debates, among other actions. Obviously, the media interest has arisen since the massive disclosure of Deolinda’s video on the Internet. It was raising at the outset two types of news: on the one hand, news of the events; on the other, the news of the Internet usage and of the social networks as new media, and of the social and political mobilization.

16 The confirmation of the presence of popular artists and groups like Homens da Luta; Lúcia Moniz; Paulo de Carvalho; Chullage; Blasted Mechanism; Rui Veloso; Luís Represas; Kumpании Algazarra; Vitorino; Valete; Nação Vira Lata; Social Smokers; Fernando Tordo; Tiago Bettencourt; and Zé Pedro.
like *Precárias Inflexíveis*, mainstream media attention and the empathy of some civic and radical groups. As we said, also, those two events brought with them particular segments of the population: those that were dissatisfied not only with youth unemployment but mainly with the state of democracy and wanted to reactivate its more radical and revolutionary roots; and those that wanted to protect their most immediate interests. If the song resonated strongly with the “precários”, its appeal to the more radical groups presented nonetheless a risk. It could potentially limit the scope of the campaign and have a negative impact on its tactics and potentialities. This is a possible explanation of why the activists opted by a blank ideology in their manifest. Doing so, they could escape the appropriation of the campaign by certain groups without alienating them, while being sufficiently open to attract both the precários and all that were dissatisfied with “the unbearable” “situation” into which “we were all dragged in”. This would further explain why the campaign was after appropriated by so many groups and interests, which were to interpret the manifest in the ways that would be more convenient to their cultural backgrounds, experiences and interests. From an ideological point of view, the manifest seems, thus, apparently uninteresting. It is a vague text destined to resonate with the masses and optimize the effects of social media content on ideologically fragmented audiences.

In terms of diagnostic framing (see Table 3 at the end), the problem is framed as an unbearable state of affairs, a situation of social and economic precariousness and uncertainty. Curiously enough, job precariousness is not only a problem which causes cannot be attributed to others, like employers or politicians. The younger generations are also part of the problem and, thus, co-responsible. The logical solution (prognostic framing) is a collective endeavor to solve the situation and regenerate the country, to make it worth of the efforts of anterior generations, turn the youth useful and give a future to Portugal. While the unbearable labor condition of the younger generations and their responsible are diagnosed in apolitical and non-adversarial terms, prognostic framing is constructed as a partnership between those that suffer under unbearable conditions and the nation. Those are: “Nós, desempregados, “quinhentoseuristas” e outros mal remunerados, escravos disfarçados, subcontratados, contratados a prazo, falsos trabalhadores independentes, trabalhadores intermitentes, estagiários, bolseiros, trabalhadores-estudantes, estudantes, mães, pais e filhos de Portugal.”

As we see, the experience of frustration and job insecurity by some is articulated as a national experience uniting generations, and elaborated, or interpreted, as a national imperative: “Protestamos para que todos os responsáveis pela nossa actual situação de incerteza - políticos, empregadores e nós mesmos – actuem em conjunto para uma alteração rápida desta realidade, que se tornou insustentável.” Frame elaboration proceeds thus in defining an ample and consensual discourse that prefers to be

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17 “We, the unemployed, the “five hundred euros people” and other under-paid people, disguised slaves, subcontracted workers, term contracted workers, false independent workers, intermittent workers, trainees, fellows, students, student-workers, students, mothers, fathers and sons of Portugal.”

18 “We protest in order that all responsible for our current situation of uncertainty - politicians, employers and ourselves - act together for a quick change of this reality, as it became untenable.”
apolitical and not antagonistic, while being directed to generational claims that can be satisfied pacifically and democratically. As part of the consensual and apolitical tone of the manifest, motivational framing was construed in terms of an appeal to self-vindication, vindication of others (not only the older generations, but also those who will come) and as patriotic zeal, directed at a more just future and national economic success. As we see it, thus, an appeal directed to change through dialogue and consensus between all parts of the great functional problem posed by an unbearable state of things, is construe alongside an indirect appeal to the Revolution and the hopes it raised.

As we see, regarding frame articulation and frame elaboration processes, the protests associated incidental injustices suffered by the “precários” with an opportunity for reconciliation between equals and collective catharsis. This consensual and pacific tone was, in our view, a crucial factor for the mobilization of a so massive number of protesters coming from all ages, classes and statuses.

Concluding remarks and future research

As we saw, crisis and a profound sense of grievances were not enough to produce the March 12 protests, the same way as the popularity and availability of social media. Grievances, along with political favorable opportunities, were already present in Portuguese society since at least 2005, dominated as it was by strict representative politics, news of corruption, bad performances of the economy, internationally induced economic and financial crisis, and elites incapacity to generate legitimate and generalized consensus on a more just and efficient society. On the other hand, Internet enabled technologies, like Facebook and You Tube were also very popular among Portuguese for some years. Although as of December 2011, Portugal was still not included among Europe’s Top Internet Countries,\(^\text{19}\) it has shown an impressive record on Internet and Facebook users, especially if we compare those numbers to the size of its population. Between 2000 and 2010, the number of Portuguese Internet users more than doubled (from 2,500,000 to 5,168,000, almost half the country’s population), while 4,174,000 of those were Facebook users (38.8% penetration rate, a rate that was bigger than leading Internet countries, like France, Spain, Netherlands, Luxembourg and Italy).\(^\text{20}\) Additionally, the vast majority of Internet and Facebook Portuguese users were the young (no more than 24 years old).

To acknowledge for the protests we must thus look for other factors. Only these can, in our view, explain how a national issue like job precariousness and an organized movement that were already present in Portuguese society were finally transformed into massive protests. The answers, in our view, are three. Firstly, some minor events dominated by Deolinda’s concerts in Lisbon and Porto, created the emotional and cultural climates not only for the protests but also for the creation of a patriotic national platform. This was done mainly online, using social media as tools for offline protests. This was particularly important as the emotional and cultural climate created by the

\(^{19}\) Internet World Stats, \url{http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa.htm#pt}

\(^{20}\) Internet World Stats, \url{http://www.internetworldstats.com/europa.htm#pt}
concerts communicated symbolically with the Portuguese Revolution of 1974 in which a song played a liberating role. Activist’s low leveraged uses of the Web were mainly directed at lowering organizational costs, informing potential participants, communicating within loosed networks of allies, sending short but powerful messages, or linking to other technologies, like YouTube. As a result, March 12 protests were essentially “e-mobilizations”, or offline mobilizations assisted by ICTs.

Another important component of the protests were the arrival of some allies. Natural allies, like Precários Inflexíveis, but also other ideologically important ones, like A25A (Associação 25 de Abril), the association of the captains that in 1974 did the Revolution, or very popular artists and performers. This is congruent with the efforts of the activists to situate the protests in a frame that combined emotional and cultural revolutionary appeals with a more general and consensual discourse that would not limit the protests to particular interests, be them of the “precários” or coming from more radical groups. The cultural components of the protests were thus, in our view, decisive.

March 12 protests were only the first initiative of “Geração à Rasca” activists. In future work, we intend to deepen further the analysis carried here but additionally we will study the second initiative of the group, the m12m movement. This will give us an insight of how ICTs and political organization and mobilization were carried out after the March 12 protests, how the two initiatives differ and the eventual impacts they had in Portuguese society and politics.
Figure 1

*Evolution of Internet users per 100 inhabitants, Portugal. Source: UN.*
Nós, desempregados, “quinhentoseuristas” e outros mal remunerados, escravos disfarçados, subcontratados, contratados a prazo, falsos trabalhadores independentes, trabalhadores intermitentes, estagiários, bolseiros, trabalhadores-estudantes, estudantes, mães, pais e filhos de Portugal.

Nós, que até agora compactuámos com esta condição, estamos aqui, hoje, para dar o nosso contributo no sentido de desencadear uma mudança qualitativa do país. Estamos aqui, hoje, porque não podemos continuar a aceitar a situação precária para a qual fomos arrastados. Estamos aqui, hoje, porque nos esforçamos diariamente para merecer um futuro digno, com estabilidade e segurança em todas as áreas da nossa vida.

Protestamos para que todos os responsáveis pela nossa actual situação de incerteza - políticos, empregadores e nós mesmos – actuem em conjunto para uma alteração rápida desta realidade, que se tornou insustentável.

Caso contrário:

a) Defraudá-se o presente, por não termos a oportunidade de concretizar o nosso potencial, bloqueando a melhoria das condições económicas e sociais do país. Desperdiçam-se as aspirações de toda uma geração, que não pode prosperar.

b) Insultá-se o passado, porque as gerações anteriores trabalharam pelo nosso acesso à educação, pela nossa segurança, pelos nossos direitos laborais e pela nossa liberdade. Desperdiçam-se décadas de esforço, investimento e dedicação.

c) Hipoteca-se o futuro, que se vislumbra sem educação de qualidade para todos e sem reformas justas para aqueles que trabalham toda a vida. Desperdiçam-se os recursos e competências que poderiam levar o país ao sucesso económico.

Somos a geração com o maior nível de formação na história do país. Por isso, não nos deixamos abater pelo cansaço, nem pela frustração, nem pela falta de perspectivas. Acreditamos que temos os recursos e as ferramentas para dar um futuro melhor a nós mesmos e a Portugal.

Não protestamos contra as outras gerações. Apenas não estamos, nem queremos estar à espera que os problemas se resolvam. Protestamos por uma solução e queremos ser parte dela.
Figure 3  March 12 protests poster
Table 1  Confirmations of attendance at the Facebook page dedicated to the event.

<table>
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<th>Day</th>
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<th>Average daily rate of confirmations</th>
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<td>Portal informativo BE</td>
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**Table 2** Some sites of other movements, trade unions and political parties that promoted the protests
### Table 3 Strategic Framing Tasks: Geração à Rasca Protests.

**Core tasks**

#### Diagnostic Framing

*Problem(s)*

- “situação precária para a qual fomos arrastados” (the precarious situation to which we were all dragged)
- “actual situação de incerteza” (actual uncertainties)
- “realidade, que se tornou insustentável” (an unbearable situation)

*Responsible(s)*

- “todos os responsáveis pela nossa actual situação de incerteza - políticos, empregadores e nós mesmos” (all the responsible for our present situation of uncertainty – politicians, employers and us)

#### Prognostic Framing

*Logical solution*

- “alteração rápida desta realidade, que se tornou insustentável.” (a swift change of this reality, which became unbearable)

*Protagonists*

- “desempregados, “quinhentoseuristas” e outros mal-remunerados, escravos disfarçados, subcontratados, contratados a prazo, falsos trabalhadores independentes, trabalhadores intermitentes, estagiários, bolsistas, trabalhadores-estudantes, estudantes, mães, pais e filhos de Portugal” (We, the unemployed, the “five hundred euros workers” and other under-paid people, disguised slaves, subcontracted workers, term contracted workers, false independent workers, intermittent workers, trainees, fellows, students, student-workers, students, mothers, fathers and sons of Portugal)
- “Nós, que até agora compactuámos com esta condição todos os responsáveis pela nossa actual situação de incerteza - políticos, empregadores e nós mesmos” (all we that pactuated with this uncertain situation – politicians, employers and us)

*Tactics/Strategies*

- “estamos aqui, hoje, para dar o nosso contributo no sentido de desencadear uma mudança qualitativa do país” (we are here, today, to give our contribute for a qualitative change in the country)

#### Motivational Framing

- “não estamos, nem queremos estar à espera que os problemas se resolvam” (we are not, nor want to be waiting for the problems to be solved)
- “Protestamos por uma solução e queremos ser parte dela” (we protest for a solution and we want to be part of it)
- “temos os recursos e as ferramentas para dar um futuro melhor a nós mesmos e a Portugal” (we have the resources and the tools to give a better future to us and to Portugal)
- “futuro digno, com estabilidade e segurança em todas as áreas da nossa vida” (for a worthy future, with stability and security in all areas of our lives)
References

McAdam, D., McCarthy, J., & Zald, M. 1996. Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilizing Structures, and Cultural Framings. New York: Cambridge University Press.
“Que parva que eu sou”

Deolinda’s song lyrics

Sou da geração sem remuneração
E não me incomoda esta condição
Que parva que eu sou
Porque isto está mal e vai continuar
Já é uma sorte eu poder estagiár
Que parva que eu sou
E fico a pensar
Que mundo tão parvo
Onde para ser escravo é preciso estudar
Sou da geração "casinha dos pais"
Se já tenho tudo, pra quê querer mais?
Que parva que eu sou
Filhos, maridos, estou sempre a adiar
E ainda me falta o carro pagar
Que parva que eu sou
E fico a pensar
Que mundo tão parvo
Onde para ser escravo é preciso estudar
Sou da geração "vou queixar-me pra quê?"
Há alguém bem pior do que eu na TV
Que parva que eu sou
Sou da geração "eu já não posso mais!"
Que esta situação dura há tempo demais
E parva não sou
E fico a pensar,
Que mundo tão parvo
Onde para ser escravo é preciso estudar