Journalistic Narratives and Media Activism: inside the news

Narrativas Jornalísticas e Ativismo Midiático: a notícia pelo lado de dentro

Narrativas periodísticas y activismo mediático: la noticia por el lado de adentro
ABSTRACT
This is an empirical study which analyzes the Mídia Ninja group’s coverage of the Occupation Movement involving more than one thousand educational institutes across Brazil in 2016. This movement was in protest against Bill 241/55, proposed by the Temer government, which puts a cap on the spending for health and education for the next 20 years. Data was collected from the Media Observatory from the Federal University of Pará (UFPA). The Mídia Ninja Facebook fanpage alone had 565 posts on the occupations between November 7 and 27, 2016. We used quantitative and qualitative criteria to analyze 50 posts taken from this fanpage, which is a space for resisting and criticizing hegemonic discourse. Based on studies from Downing (2002), Motta (2005, 2008, 2013), Martín-Barbero (2009), Aquino (2009), Araújo (2011), Malini and Antoun (2013) and Bentes (2013, 2014), and others, we identify and understand the narrative modes contained within the fanpage collective content in order to observe aspects of journalistic narratives in media activism. The main results of this study point to a journalistic narrative with an activist agenda, built on the perspective of not only those who produce the news but also those who live the facts.
Keywords: Journalistic narrative; Media activism; Occupation Movement.

RESUMO

RESUMEN
Esta investigación empírica se desarrolla a partir del análisis sobre la cobertura hecha por el grupo Mídia Ninja de las acciones relativas al Movimiento de Ocupación, que tomó más de mil instituciones de enseñanza en todo Brasil en 2016. Este movimiento se convirtió en símbolo de resistencia a la PEC 241/55, elaborada por el gobierno Temer para congelar los gastos en salud y educación por 20 años. La recolección de datos fue realizada por el Observatorio de Medios de la Universidad Federal de Pará (UFPA), que sólo en la fanpage del Mídia Ninja en Facebook contabilizó 565 posturas sobre las ocupaciones en los períodos de 07 a 16 y 22 a 27 de noviembre de 2016. Adoptando los criterios cuantitativos y cualitativos, se analizaron 50 postes publicados en esta fanpage, considerada un espacio de enfrentamiento y crítica al discurso hegemónico. A partir de los estudios de Downing (2002), Motta (2005, 2008, 2013), Martín-Barbero (2009), Aquino (2009), Araújo (2011), Malini e Antoun (2013) e Bentes (2013, 2014) y otros, se busca identificar y comprender los modos de narrar presentes en el contenido producido por el colectivo en su fanpage, a fin de percibir aspectos de la narrativa periodística en el contexto del activismo mediático. Los principales resultados de esta pesquisa apuntan para una narrativa periodística pautada por el activismo, cuya construcción es marcada por la mirada no solamente de quien produce la noticia, sino también de quien vivencia los hechos. Palabras clave: Narrativa periodística; Activismo mediático; Movimiento de Ocupación.

Submissão: 30-7-2017
Decisão editorial: 23-11-2017
Introduction

Since he assumed the interim presidency of Brazil on May 12, 2016, the then vice-president Michel Temer has made amendments and measures that reduce social, labor and pension rights, one example being the Constitutional Amendment Bill (PEC) 241/55, which freezes public investment in the areas of health and education for the next 20 years. The president’s office sent this bill to National Congress on June 15, 2016 and it became known as the ‘Bill of Death’. It was rejected by numerous sectors of civil society, in particular education, and generated a cross-country protest. This paper looks at the media production around this protest in order to understand journalistic narratives of media activism. The analysis is supported by studies from Fábio Malini and Henrique Antoun (2013), Manuel Castells (2013), Ivana Bentes (2013, 2014), Jesus Martín-Barbero (2009), David de Ugarte (2007) and John Downing (2002), and adopts

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1 On this date the Federal Senate approved the impeachment process of then-president, Dilma Rousseff (PT), which, for many, represented a State coup, especially as it was motivated by apparent fiscal dodging (a common practice in the Executive Branch) and does not warrant enough legal reason for prosecution. After the impeachment process was over, Michel Temer was sworn in as president on August 31, 2016.
the Critical Analysis of Narratives by Luiz Gonzaga Motta (2013) as its methodological mechanism.

Before we start with the analysis, we would like to highlight, however briefly, some aspects of this movement that generated protests and demonstrations, trying to educate society about the effects of Bill 241/55. Many institutions of learning became the stage for what is called the Occupation Movement, which from the end of September (when the Bill was announced) until the end of October 2016 had more than a thousand schools across Brazil participating (TOKARNIA, 2016), including federal institutes and public and private universities. This movement gained a lot of support, but at the same time it gained a lot of criticism, particularly from traditional media, whose coverage clearly criminalized the movement. Alternative media emerged as a space that deconstructed the dominant discourse and presented the Occupation Movement through a counter-hegemonic and radical perspective.

One of the protagonists from this alternative media was the group Mídia Ninja – Independent Narratives, Journalism and Action, an open and collaborative network of journalists created in Brazil, 2013, and is maintained by more than 200 groups and thousands of collaborators (LEAL, 2015) who produce and distribute decentralized information. They use a number of digital platforms such as Twitter, Facebook, Tumblr and YouTube as well as their own site. “We rely on the

2 For the first four years the group’s site was hosted on the Oximity platform (ninja.oximity.com), which was subsequently purchased by Scribd, a paid subscription service for reading books, audiobooks and magazines. As of the second semester of 2017 Mídia Ninja has been using the web address http://midianinja.org, at the same time it released a new site format, placing a higher emphasis on photojournalism and audiovisual content as well as its columnists.
collaborative logic of creating and sharing content to provide reports, documentaries and investigations in Brazil and the world” (NINJA fanpage, Facebook, s.d.).

During the Occupation Movement this group went to the capitals and interior of the country for coverage. “Our agenda is where the social struggle and the articulation of cultural, political, economic and environmental changes are expressed” (NINJA fanpage, Facebook, s.d.). This struggle particularly occurs in cyberspace, and reminds us of Castells (2013, p.11), who believes that it is individuals who form networks “sharing pain and hope on a free public space on the internet”. It is through their interaction that they create meanings, “connecting their networks together, its formation occurs through the act of communication” (CASTELLS, 2013, p.15). Producing meanings results in, according to Motta (2008), the enunciation of states of change, which helps organize narrative discourse.

Narratives bring objective and subjective knowledge to the world [...] in the form of reports. It is through the enunciated narratives that we are able to put things in order and have a perspective on things, in a logical and chronological way. This is how we understand most of the things in the world (MOTTA, 2008, p.2).

Based on this conception, we concentrated on the narratives on the Occupation Movement built by the Mídia Ninja group on their Facebook fanpage³, and an attempt to understand journalism in media activism. In order to do this, we had to answer this central question: what are the modes of narrating these groups have adopted?

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³ Available at: https://www.facebook.com/MidiaNINJA/
Our data was collected between the periods of November 7th to 16th, and 22nd to the 27th, 2016, the month in which protests intensified after Bill 241/55 had been approved by the House of Representatives and then forwarded to the Senate on October 25, 2016. This data came from the Media Observatory, created by the Occupied Communication Agency from the Faculty of Communication (Facom) at the Federal University of (UFPA). It is composed of teachers and students from Facom and from the UFPA’s Post-Graduation Program in Communication, Culture and the Amazon (PPGCom).

Our methodology is based on a quantitative and qualitative survey of all the Mídia Ninja publications released during the previously-mentioned time period4. We selected and analyzed 50 posts, out of a total of 565, based on two criteria: a) they referred to the occupations in the Brazilian Amazon and; b) they had the most likes. Therefore, after adding together the posts from each day, we used qualitative criteria to select the posts, focusing mainly on those about occupations in the region. We then used quantitative criteria to identify which posts exhibited the most user-interaction based on the number of likes they had received. We selected the three most-liked posts from each day and observed their comments and shares. As mentioned previously, our study is based on theoretical reference, on activist practices in media spaces and adopts the Critical Analysis of Narratives by Motta (2013), who believes the logic of journalistic narratives only reveals itself if we observe how these narratives

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4 This study was supported by Roberta Pureza, scholarship holder from the Scientific Initiation Support Program (PIBIC) and journalism student at the Faculty of Communication, UFPA.
are organized and occupied over time, resulting in a reordering of their chronology.

In addition to highlighting the narrating modes present in narrative journalism on media activism (produced by those who work with social movements) this study also helps to understand the relationship of communication between social and political changes in the contemporary world.

A few features of Alternative Media

In reflecting on the meanings of counter-hegemonic communication, in particular popular communication, Peruzzo (2006, p. 23) explains that, aside from their differences, the terms ‘alternative, participative, participatory, horizontal, community, dialogic and radical’ are usually used synonymously when representing “a form of expression for impoverished segments of the population, but which is in the process of meeting their needs for political survival and participation in order to establish social justice”. Martín-Barbero (2009) seeks to differentiate the mediums of alternative community communication, clarifying that community mediums are more connected to democratization, while the alternative ones are more connected to confronting hegemonic mediums, because “at the heart of it, alternative mediums have always followed the political lead and have never been democratic enough” (p. 160).

For Corrales Garcia and Hernández Flores (2009), alternative communication has its origins in the minds of individuals who oppose counter-hegemonic power, and it appears to be the option that has emerged from and for the community since this type of communication “es resultado de un proceso social alternativo, que difiere en forma, función y contenido al
proceso social propuesto por el sistema dominante, generalmente guiado por la relación del gobierno y los medios de comunicación tradicionales" (2009, p. 5).

In his studies on counter-hegemonic communication, Downing (2002) says that in order for media to be considered alternative it has to share social movement values and produce versions that mainstream media ignores, questioning the dominant discourse and instilling within the public the belief that they have the power to change reality. And for this reason, he highlights the need to deconstruct the power of dominant classes through counter-hegemonic media, or as he refers to it, radical alternative media.

Among the many features of this media type, Downing (2002) points to the tendency to try and be more democratic and make a more current form of the active audience, which does not just absorb messages but expands on and shapes media products. Thus, radical media content producers are referred to as activists, whose objectives “create participative forms of informing, combining strategies of alternative communication with the political actions they develop” (DOWNING, 2002, p.42), thereby offering their public debates, criticisms and actions.

However, he also highlights that this media model does not guarantee a progressive perspective since radical alternative media can be used to disseminate fundamentalism, racism, chauvinism or fascism, among other backward movements. He believes that this media is not necessarily connected to a positive or negative action, but it is an important alternative for whomever is excluded socially. Da Costa Júnior (2010, p.179) draws attention to the power of positive
and negative, especially when referring to the use of technologies within the scope of these actions. He says that collective actions are intended to break the commercial system and politics of the state, which include its structure and hierarchy.

Downing (2002) goes on to state in order to define radical alternative media one must understand that it does not make up any part of the hegemonic sphere of cultural industry and, although it may reach thousands of people and address national or international issues, its perspective mainly remains local. Another feature he highlights is that communication is realized between active people (from which we get the term activist) who switch between the role of sender and receiver, helping in the collaborative construction of their narratives and in mobilization processes. The practices and actions of Mídia Ninja are one example of this conception, as Rodrigues, Becker and Pinheiro (2016, p.12) write:

Mídia Ninja widely disseminates leftist social movements from all over Brazil, mainly to show the dissatisfaction that many Brazilians have for Temer’s government. Another value identified, since its creation, is the prioritization of decentralized material, outside of Rio and São Paulo....

The term activist comes from at least three nomenclatures used to refer to activist practices in media spaces: mediactivism, free mediactivism and cyberactivism⁵. While these writers consider these terms to be synonymous with one another, others look at

⁵ Due to the fine line between these terms, you can see all three of them used in narratives from the Mídia Ninja group (LEAL; MARTINS, 2016), as mentioned in this paper.
their singularity. Downing (2002), for instance, believes mediactivism refers to strategies of alternative communication and political actions, constituting, according to Luisa Aquino (2009), a direct expression against power structures, intensified by the use of mobile media and social networks. In the case of Mídia Ninja, Rodrigues et al (2016, p.3) emphasize that it associates “journalistic production with political activism, disseminating content on the internet that had been ignored by traditional press, relying on the collaboration of people using mobile media (cellular phones)”; in other words, it places “media as a central element of its social action” (MAZZARINO; MIGUEL, 2017, p. 119).

Free mediactivism uses communication to mobilize and organize social movements; its members are the subjects of the event, something which Malini and Antoun (2013, p.23) call “hacker narratives” or “a kind of subject who continually produces narratives on social events that differ from the views of newspapers, TV channels and radio broadcasters of large conglomerates of communication”.

The free mediactivists are subjects who are equipped and interfaced (in sites, blogs and social networking profiles, etc.) and search, outside the modus operandi of mass media, to produce a network communication that feeds new trends, new informative agendas and a new public, widening the public media space by hacking the attention of narratives that used to focus on the media circuit (MALINI; ANTOUN, 2013, p.24).

For these writers, free mediactivism can either be massified or cyberactivist. Massified means it is based on radical politics for civil society in the fight for democratization, solidifying itself as an alternative and antagonistic practice when compared to traditional
media, uniting “experiences of organized social movements that produce community and popular media” (MALINI; ANTOUN, 2013, p.22). These same writers then describe cyberactivist free mediactivism as being based on free production without intermediaries and “uniting singular experiences of construction from digital devices, technology and shared communication processes through online social collaboration of information technology” (2013, p.21). Its objective is “to radicalize basic rights, especially freedom of expression” (MALINI; ANTOUN, 2013, p.22).

Reflecting on this comparison we noticed that Mídia Ninja had traces of both of these forms described above. This is because, on one hand, they build “counter-narratives placed by traditional, conservative media to invisibilize and criminalize a number of struggles and movements in the country today” (NINJA, 20156 apud LEAL, 2015). On the other, they unite “virtual protestors who actively participate by discussing, criticizing, encouraging, observing and intervening in transmissions in real time, thereby becoming a reference by strengthening the emergence of “ninjas” and free mediactivists across Brazil” (BENTES, 2014, p.331). Malini and Antoun (2013, p.22) characterize these types of free mediactivism by highlighting:

Both of them demand a different political economy of mediums, one in which the property of mediums should be common, meaning that cooperation in social production of media content is regulated by a collective operative structure of civil society and by a copyright allowing content to freely circulate in society, and not become solely a patent-collecting machine.

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6 Taken from an email interview with journalist Mayra Leal, conducted by Mídia Ninja on March 31, 2015.
Within this circulation of content is where the internet plays a fundamental role and cyberactivism emerges. According to the writers it is “synonymous of organized collective actions, mobilized collectively through the distribution of communication across an interactive network” (2013, p.20). In his reflections on cyberactivism, Willian Araújo (2011, p.3) says that, in general, the concept “is seen as a way to radically use network tools, where the political actions of individuals and groups are strengthened through media environments, decentralized from the internet”.

Ugarte (2007) relates cyberactivism to the empowerment of people sustained in the discourse, tools and visibility which networks and technology make possible. He believes discourse stems from “de relatos de individuos o pequeños grupos con causa que transforman la realidad” and defines “activism as a form of social hacking” (2007, p.92). The tools should be developed and made available to the public since “el ciberactivismo, como hijo de la cultura hacker, se reitera en el mito del hágalo usted mismo, de la potencia del individuo para generar consensos y transmitir ideas en una red distribuida” (UGARTE , 2007, p.93). He classifies the visibility of the opposition, the break from passivity, as “the culmination of the strategy of empowering people” (2007, p.94).

Un ciberactivista es alguien que utiliza Internet, y sobre todo la blogsfera, para difundir un discurso y poner a disposición pública herramientas que devuelvan a las personas el poder y la visibilidad que hoy monopolizan las instituciones (UGARTE , 2007, p.95).

This definition adds to the thought from Aquino (2009, p. 53) who believes cyberactivism is “virtual ac-
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tivism, a practice through which social movements use the Internet as a form for thinking about the transgressing function of communication as well as providing global reach to a particular cause, aiming towards changing this hegemony”. It is a panorama which is visible at Mídia Ninja when they use “digital networks to promote the political actions of protest groups who gain a space on the network when they cannot find one on traditional media” (RODRIGUES et al., 2016, p.4).

She adds that this practice uses the internet as a space for building political actions, promoting the freedom to express the ideologies associated with social movements and discussion groups which, as Malini and Antoun (2013) emphasize, were highly important to activist practices on the internet. “Within the history of political activism, the Internet discussion groups will instill a policy of leaking as modus operandi” (p.22) in order to disseminate their information to users across the world. This is where the term narrative hacker came from which, according to these writers, is the subject that transforms discussion groups into the media structure in order to leak information to different virtual communities; in other words, the subject “is capable of competing, subverting and contrasting the narratives produced by large communication conglomerates” (BENTES, 2013, p.12), the narratives produced by the Mídia Ninja group are an example of this, as we shall read further on in this paper. Before that, however, we shall look at some aspects of Motta’s perspective (2005, 2013) on narrative elements.

The news from a movement point of view: modes of narrating at Mídia Ninja

To better understand the modes of narrating at Mídia Ninja we need to look at some questions about
narratives. We start with Motta (2013) who, by addressing journalistic narratives, compares the gender of reporting to the hard style used in building hard news, questioning if its fragmented and inconclusive form could be considered as a narrative. His conclusion is that the logic of narratives only reveals itself if we observe how it deals with time and how it is organized. He states: “Time, for journalistic reports, is blurry, anarchical, inverted. That is why narrative logic and syntax will only emerge if we are able to reshape the themes, puzzles that have a beginning, a middle and an end to a single story” (2013, p. 96-97).

Thus, Motta (2013) is pointing at the need to unite “information spread about one issue or event” which could be separated by intervals of time in order to find “narrative chains, the antecedents and consequences” to piece together “the seriality, the sequence and the continuity of puzzles, just as readers do on a daily basis” (2013, p.97). He believes this means reshaping the time of a story, reorganizing the narrative tense in the journalistic report, and in order to do so requires “identifying conflicts, placing characters, discovering the climax and the outcome of the puzzle”, reordering the chronological dissemination of journalistic narratives (MOTTA, 2013, p.97). These elements make up the structural categories of a narrative, they develop around the action and the set of successive events in a particular space and time.

Motta (2005) understands the conflict as a central figure to which everything else around it gravitates. Through their research on the conflict of journalistic narratives on politics, Motta and Guazina (2010, p.135) believe that the conflict is a pre-existing category in the culture of journalists, functioning like a framework
for “organizing political actors’ activities, defining situations and demarcating events”. The characters are those who are involved in the action; the climax is the moment at which the conflict became intolerable and required a solution; and the puzzle is a set of events that take place according to causality, striving for an outcome.

Continuing with the narrative logic according to Motta (2013, p. 97), in order to find it in hard news “the first thing that needs to be done is to turn journalistic dissemination time into an orderly time narrative so that confusing information about an event are presented as a synthesis, a dramatic chronological history”. Then what is needed is reordering. Nevertheless, he states that reshaping news into a new synthesis or event (dramatic or puzzle) generates a new and different cultural product that requires the “understanding of immediate reality in the cultural passing of a society”. Despite being a decisive procedure, “it does not reorganize chronologically the disseminated events and only reshapes disseminated fragments of news into a serial story” (MOTTA, 2013, p.99), but it recognizes journalism as an activity that produces cultural meaning. In Mídia Ninja’s production, these meanings are built within media activism.

By analyzing Mídia Ninja content, Rodrigues et al. (2016) were able to identify different forms of structure on its Facebook fanpage from its old site:

The reports on this platform do not offer anything new in terms of interactive and multimedia productions. Different from Facebook publications which have a small text offering a description of the published video [...] In this type of distribution, the “posts” provide internauts with greater interaction through comments, likes and responses to content shared on their profiles (p. 6).
Our research confirms this format, based on the collaborative activist (yet partial) approach and the nationwide scope the group is able to reach. Coverage of the Occupation Movement on its fanpage showed that there were many collaborators from across the country, making up a network of communication, as we previously saw in Castells (2013). In addition, its position against Bill 241/55 is clear and its focus is more on the point of view of those who live the facts, who fight for the cause; in other words, those who develop political actions such as the role of activist who produces content on radical media, as put forth by Dowling (2002) – and reinforced by Aquino (2009), Araújo (2011), Malini and Antoun (2013) and Bentes (2013, 2014). This participative form of informing helps us better understand the daily routines and views of those who participate in protests, and to better understand their difficulties, struggles, dreams and activities, a perspective that mass media does not provide as it tends to criminalize social movements.

The political stance of the Mídia Ninja group is easily identified through its narratives and elements, whether it be the title of a text, a video or photography. The texts we analyzed (MARTINS; PUREZA, 2016) were generally full of adjectives, clearly indicating their bias. They also contained slogans and even words of order, revealing the activist nature of the group, one example being the post titled “Santa Maria will not stand by and lose another right”, published on November 12*. This perception is compounded by the title “Students at the Federal University of Santa Maria take to the streets in protest of Bill 55 and all other backward ide-

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* Our monitoring period was carried out in 2016 and all the days in November registered here refer to said year.
as imposed by Michel Temer"\textsuperscript{8}, which criticizes and disqualifies this government through the use of words like “backward” and “impose”. The images are a strong and frequent element of group narratives, whether in the form of videos, photographs or galleries with small texts attached to them.

Short texts, which can vary between a phrase and a paragraph long, are often used as subtitles for short videos, only a few seconds long [\ldots]. The size of these publications can represent the new culture of production and consumption of information in the digital age, which encourages increasingly short and superficial narratives. Content production in smaller sizes is meant to make reading easier and to produce a large amount of information which generates a huge flow of information in the virtual environment. (RODRIGUES et al, 2016, p. 12).

Due to the fragmented nature of Mídia Ninja publications, it is important to present the challenge presented by Motta (2013) of seeking to understand the narrative logic through its organization and forms for dealing with time, including for reshaping the issues, reuniting disseminated information on the Occupation Movement on the group’s fanpage, separated by time intervals of a few hours or days.

During our monitoring stage we saw the flow of posts increasing or decreasing according to the movement’s agenda. For instance, on November 11, 2016 (the National Strike Day against Bill 55) we counted about 140 publications on the fanpage. Among them was one about a psychology student from UFPA who was run over while protesting on Perimetral Avenue in Belém, this was presented as a “hate crime”.

\textsuperscript{8} Published on November 11, 2016.
Taken from the fanpage of the organization Popular Youth Uprising⁹, this post expresses opinion without ever even hearing the accused. By reproducing the text without any additional information, Mídia Ninja did away with the old journalistic practice of ‘listen to the other side’ and instead adopted a unilateral approach, one that is frequently used on the fanpage yet criticized by alternative media when mass media uses it.

A few posts from this same day were in support of other movements joining the fight, like the publication on a march to the Pará law court in Belém by “students and teachers from public networks, Occupy UFPA and UFRA, the bank union, quilombola associations, MST, LGBT and feminist movements”. There was another on the mobilization of “students from IFPA, UEPA, UFPA and Castanhal high school students for the unified ATO” with workers from Castanhal in the interior of Pará.

Making its activist nature even more clear, the group reproduced a post from its site which assessed the activities on the 11th. This assessment was done on November 13th and drew attention to the fact that the movement “reached more cities than we imagined”, referring to the municipality of Capitão Enéas, in the state of Minas Gerais, “which has approximately 15 thousand residents. That is unheard of!” Once again, this just confirms the perspective of who lives the facts.

Even though the posts published during our monitoring period (MARTINS; PUREZA, 2016) were among other posts on other issues, we looked for connecting narratives so that we could piece together the seriality, sequence and continuity to reach the time

⁹ See: https://www.facebook.com/pg/levantepopulardajuventude/about/?ref=page_internal
reordering of the story, as proposed by Motta (2013). Thus, in the content we analyzed, we noticed a sequence in the following titles: “Another space at PUC/RS has been occupied!” and “The number of occupied universities against Bill 55 reaches 204”, a report published by Fórum magazine on November 13 which highlights that the movement had reached 23 states up until that date.

Within this recomposition of the seriality for reorganizing the narrative tense in the journalistic report it was possible to identify conflicts (protests against PEC), the positioning of characters (in favor of the movement), the climax of these conflicts (facing police violence) and the puzzle outcome (approval of PEC) in order to reorder the chronological dissemination of journalistic narratives.

In relation to the conflicts, we stress that the actual Occupation Movement represents resistance not only to Bill PEC 241/55, but also to the Temer government. The Mídia Ninja posts show diverse conflicts like the actions of the Unoccupy Movement. Using the title “When they were opposed, there was no dialogue, they went straight to aggression”\textsuperscript{10}, the group informed that, in Curitiba, the Unoccupy Movement “attacked the UTFPR (Federal Technological University of Paraná) occupation protestors”. The polarization of both movements is evident in the post “Unoccupy Movement is blocked once again at UFES”, highlighting the violence: “women were assaulted and hammers were used to break the chains”\textsuperscript{11}.

\textsuperscript{10} Video published on November 22, 2016 under the following title: Security guard violence against students from the Faculty of Communication at Famecos. See: https://www.facebook.com/MidiaNINJA/videos/758179131006901/

\textsuperscript{11} Published on Nov. 16, 2016.
The violence, however, could be considered as the climax of the conflicts. Regarding the occupation of the Brigadeiro Fontenelle State School in Belém, the Mídia Ninja group stated, on November 24, that “the military police were at the school to ‘check the area’, questioning students and trying to find out who the leader was and also investigating a supposed report that the use of illegal drugs”. The police’s position was classified as a “clear attempt at delegitimizing and spreading the movement. Students, teachers and parents argued for the occupation and continue to resist”.

The reports of violence and repression against the occupations also brought on a lot of public backlash, for instance, the report on security guards acting violently towards students from the Faculty of Social Communication at Famecos (PUC-RS), published on November 11 and had 584 thousand views and generated 4.5 thousand likes, 6.3 thousand comments and 7.8 thousand shares. Despite many users protesting against the violence, this post registered 1.8 thousand laugh emoticons and 523 likes contrary to 982 angry emoticons, 330 sad ones and 138 surprised ones, all on Facebook.

In relation to the comments, we observed a good portion of the public was in favor of the occupations, but there was definitely polarization, especially to the Unoccupy Movement. Those in favor of the occupations disapprove of the government and mass media, one comment read: “And the silence from the pro-coup media continues...”12 and “Just as in so many other cities in the country, the hope of winning against cynical authoritarianism has invaded the streets and

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12 Published on Nov. 13, 2016.
squares, but the press, once again, did not ‘see it’”13. It is worth mentioning that, in the beginning, the polarization with the Unoccupy Movement is very clear in the comments, measuring strengths against the rights to protest and have class. However, the occupations advance as much as they appear to win over more support and the comments are more in favor of this.

As far as the political position of the group goes we can point to the view from inside, the activist character and the opinionated style of fanpage content on Mídia Ninja, like the post whose title raises the following question: “What is 10 minutes out of 20 years of retrocessions?”14. Apart from making one think, this post informs of a “chair” made by protestors “in the main entrance to the Federal University of Viçosa against cuts to education, to student assistance and asking for the suspension of the university study term”. Contrary to what is seen in mass media, which tends to criminalize protests that interrupt traffic, this post tries to justify the act, describing it as an artistic-pedagogic intervention of awareness to draw the community’s attention to the repercussions of Bill 55.

This issue was addressed on the fanpage for two days, explaining that during the ‘chair’ there was “passive flyering, stopping traffic every 10 minutes for one hour” in order to “free up traffic on the road”. The reason for choosing the terms “artistic-pedagogic intervention, awareness, passive flyering, free up traffic” is an attempt to positively qualify the action, revealing a genuine concern for legitimizing the traffic block and avoid any possible criminalization, some-

13 Published on Nov. 25, 2016.
14 Published on Nov. 11, 2016.
thing mass media tends to do when covering protests that affect traffic.

In regards to the puzzling outcome, this can be seen in both the Bill’s approval by National Congress\(^{15}\) and the posts that support the occupations. One example of these posts reads: “UNE, the National Union of Students, is out in force at UnB for the next two days to plan the task force against the Bill”\(^{16}\); another reads “In Belém, more than five thousand people have taken to the streets in protest against government reforms” and another still reads “Students unite during assembly at the Federal University of Santa Maria”\(^{17}\). This last post got more than 2,400 likes and 821 shares and emphasized the strength of the movement when it announced that the assembly was being transferred from an auditorium to “the Planetarium, but both were insufficient”.

The group continues to portray the diversity of social actors in this movement, one example from the text “Students at INSIKIRAN dance ‘Parixara’ during the occupation in public universities against Bill 55”\(^{18}\), and its subjective aspects showing the video\(^{19}\) where a high school student gave “an emotional speech to a public audience in defence of the Ifs in the Legis-

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\(^{15}\) After its approval in the House of Representatives, the Bill was forwarded to the Federal Senate on October 25, 2016, where it was also approved: on November 29 and December 13, and was passed on December 15, 2016.

\(^{16}\) Published on Nov. 14, 2016

\(^{17}\) Published on Nov. 12, 2016

\(^{18}\) Published on Nov. 11, 2016

\(^{19}\) Under the title “Manu Schonhofen, 15-year old student at IFSul Pelotas, representing the Primavera High School”, this video was posted on November 14, 2016 and can be accessed at: https://www.facebook.com/midiaNINJA/videos/761138107376760/?fallback=
lative Assembly of Rio Grande do Sul”. The fanpage highlights a critical and opinionated excerpt from this discourse, strengthening its position against the Temer government: “We count on a president who, apart from the coup, demoralizes youth by saying they don’t even know why they are protesting. We know why we are here, he is the one who doesn’t know what a vote is”. This video received 6.8 thousand likes, 1,300 ‘I love it’ emoticons and 7.3 thousand shares.

Throughout the monitoring process, we were able to see phrases enunciating meaning that Mídia Ninja attributed to the movement, like “solidarity to the Occupations”, the “disapproval of the military police’s truculent action”, the “union of protestors from the MST, high school students, and teachers and students from UFMG” on a march to the Pampulha campus, the unification of the movement with other social fights like the fight for residency at UFABC. The fanpage also showed that “in Belém, students unanimously decided for the total occupation of the Brigadeiro Fontenelle State School in the Terra Firme neighbourhood in protest of Bill 55”\(^{20}\); and that “UnB united more than a thousand people to debate the student strike and protest on November 29 against the Bill”.

Overall, its texts try to value instantaneity by adopting terms like ‘now’ and ‘at this time’, but this is not even the reason for them not publishing information on the facts. Once again, they qualify the actions taken by the presidency as “retrocesses of the Michel Temer government”. Amongst these criticisms, and according to posts from November 22, they inform that Bill 55 “promotes a direct attack on the diverse basic sectors of the country, Education being one of

\(^{20}\) Published on Nov. 24, 2016
them” and that the occupations, “symbols of the fight against Bill 55”, “are intended to create a space for political debate, expanding the strength against the scrapping of public teaching and against projects like School Without A Party, which, in reality, is the school of one party”.

Another characteristic found in the posts is the outrage at federal government measures as well as the concern over explaining and justifying the actions of the movement, as published in a text on November 25 on the occupation of the IFSP school in São Roque: “The partial occupation does not harm the students. Our priority is to raise awareness and these issues [the Bill and the High School Reform] here on campus”. On this same day a funeral procession was put on by students from the Faculty of Fine Arts at UFMG, “mimicking the burial of Health and Education that the approval of Bill 55 brings”.

Due to the “Day for Unified Protests and Strikes”, organized on November 25 by the Central Unions, many posts highlighted the entry of the feminist movement which reported “the number of women murdered in 2014 in the name of chauvinism in all the states of Brazil” and the entry of “High school students, UFTM students, UFTM teachers, state teacher unions and city hall, non-unionized teachers, health professionals and the population” went to the “streets and squares in Uberaba (MG) protesting against the Bill and the government’s measures.

Reinforcing this aspect and the criticisms of the Temer government, a fanpage on November 27 read ‘people without fear’: “At this time, thousands of people take their fight to Paulista Avenue in São Paulo in hopes of putting an end to the retrocesses of Michel
Temer”; “Workers, students, the homeless, and activists in general unite against the retrocesses approved by military police and Bill 55”. The group also covered the unifying act of International Non-Violence Against Women Day which in Belém united “the main unions and feminist movements”\(^2\)\(^1\). In addition, this act also included “the traditional escrache demonstration outside of TV Liberal, an affiliate of Rede Globo, which culminated in a performance of feminist entities outside the Seccional Urbana Precinct of São Brás in memory of all femicides in Pará in 2016”.

Considerations

Throughout our analysis we continuously came across content that expressed the political positioning of the Mídia Ninja group and the meanings this group tried to attribute to the Occupation Movement. We found publications that showed the problems experienced by the occupations like the “fascist attacks by opposing groups” at UFRN, the routine on Campus de Areia-UFPB, its forms of organizing, programming, realizing classes, assemblies, cleaning and cooking and experimenting collective life; they also reported on the security guard violence faced by students at Famecos “where the students were attacked with helmets, punches and pushes”. As we saw in the analyzed narratives, the Mídia Ninja group tried to present the occupations as a resistance movement to the politics of the Temer government, like Bill 241/55 and Bill 746, which proposed to reform high school and the project School Without A Party.

\(^{21}\) This act took place on Nov. 25, 2016 and the post was published on Nov. 27, 2016.
During the monitoring period, coverage by the group focused on occupation activities in a number of learning institutions such as IFPA, UFPA, UEPA, UFRA, UFCA, UFESM, IFSC, UFPB, UFRN, UFES-Alegre, UFABC, UFV, UFMG, UFTM, UnB, IFSP-São Roque, PUC-MG, Famescos, Unisinos, including protests in Belo Horizonte, Brasília, São Paulo, Belém, Castanhal-PA and Capitão Enéas-MG, among other capitals and small towns. This nationwide coverage was made possible by collaborators and activists who were looking to portray a movement articulated with simultaneous actions across the country, “from Acre to Rio Grande do Sul”, including some countries and cities from “Latin America to New York” (NINJA apud LEAL, 2015\textsuperscript{22}).

As we saw in this analysis, the activist character of posts on Mídia Ninja is strengthened by the use of words of order and by adjectives that sculpt the political positioning against the current government and its measures, like the Bill in question. In its short texts, almost always containing dynamic or statistical images, we observed the preference for the terms “protest” and “strike” as well as the use of hashtags to mark a few cities like #Belém and #Curitiba. We did not find any posts in the analyzed material on the Bill itself, nothing explaining what it deals with – but that does not exclude the possibility of them being produced at a different time or even in posts that were not selected for analysis.

In our analysis we can say that the modes of narrating on Mídia Ninja fanpage are characterized not only by the structural model of short texts and the frequent use of images and statistics, but also by the

\textsuperscript{22} Interview conducted by Mídia Ninja with journalist Mayra Leal via e-mail on March 31, 2015.
logic of narratives as proposed by Motta (2013), the one that will only emerge by reshaping the issues. Even though these posts are quite fragmented, we are still able to identify links between before and after, re-composing the sequence of a beginning, a middle and an end to the story, in this case, the Occupation Movement and the other actions against Bill PEC 241/55, reorganizing the narrative time in journalistic reports. Because of this we can say that its narrating mode reflects seriality, the time reordering of the story. In this connection we identified the conflicts of the story, the positioning of the social actors, the climax and its outcome. One form of reordering the dispersed chronology of journalistic narratives and identify the elements present in collective narratives.

The political and activist positioning of Mídia Ninja, clearly shown in publications that defend the movement and are against the government's measures, as it pertains to violence strengthens the perspective of not just those who cover the facts, but those who live them— a protester, activist, a mobilizer, these are the ones who develop political actions and produce content for alternative media, according to Dowing (2002), Aquino (2009), Araújo (2011), Malini and Antoun (2013), including other authors consulted for this paper. This kind of activist is classified mainly as a free mediativist, who differs from a corporate journalist, according to Bentes (2014, p. 331), by the “fact that this activist is part of a protest, an act or manifestation to not only report a fact but also as one of the masses, one of the subjects of the event that uses communication for mobilizing, organizing and expression”. In other words, looking at the other side is one of the narrative modes of Mídia Ninja and its narratives occupy
an important place in mediating actors, confronting and criticizing the dominant discourse. Nevertheless, the group’s fanpage can be seen as a space to face and critique hegemonic discourse.

In addition, it is important to highlight that despite the group classifying its work as “a platform for independent journalism” and criticizing the partiality of mass media, it does not cultivate the practice of listening to the other side, as we have observed in our analysis. However, by having an activist nature it maintains its coherence since it tries to create “counter-narratives of traditional and conservative media that try to criminalize and ignore many of the current struggles and movements in the country”. This is why the Mídia Ninja collective, during its coverage of the Occupation Movement, showed the actions of ‘people without fear’ whose ‘dreams do not stop at the Bill’.

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24 Idem.


