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THE RESONANT IMAGES OF THE MULTITUDE:

EGYPT, SPAIN AND BRAZIL

A RESSONÂNCIA DAS IMAGENS DA MULTIDÃO:

EGITO, ESPANHA E BRASIL

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ABSTRACT: *This article examines the resonant images produced by the emergent multitude in street demonstrations in Egypt, Spain and Brazil, between 2011 and 2013. The starting point for this work is the resonant nature of these moving images, understanding this resonance as a bodily, affective, tangible effervescence generated by the encounter of the multitude in political demonstrations. Thus, the aim of this work is to undertake a reflective analysis of the moving images of recent street protests through the quality of resonance contained within them. The hypothesis is that the resonant images of these insurgencies are elements of mobilization, memory and affective constitutiveness of these events.*

KEY WORDS : *demonstrations; multitude; resonance; image; internet.*

On an open window of the computer in February 2011: a transmission on the site of the independent broadcasting network Al Jazeera¹ showing a multitude of protesters in Tahrir Square in Cairo, the capital of Egypt. The demonstrators were celebrating their victory, following weeks of having camped out in the square, marching through the streets and often clashing with police. On February 11th, it became official: President Hosni Mubarak had been overthrown by popular pressure. The transmission continued for hours, interspersed with interviews and statements from activists and political experts, with vibrant images of the multitude in Tahrir. We could see and hear: the chants, the slogans and the bodies that reverberated collectively.

Watching this transmission was a deeply affective experience due to the transformative effect of the images: a state of elation that made it impossible to avert the eye or to open a new tab on the browser. More than a journalistic construction of the event, the images of the multitude in the streets were hypnotic. These were images of revolution. And it was in the wake of these images and the affection that they provoked at that very moment, in which the computer screen became an open channel to Egypt, that the process for constructing this research project was decided upon. As the social networks, such as Twitter and Facebook, were soon to become associated with the power of the insurrections in the Arab countries, then what began to stimulate our interest were the moving images produced by and about these events.

Images arrived through transmissions such as those by Al Jazeera and coverage by the traditional media, but by and large through being shared on the social

¹ Available at: <<http://www.aljazeera.com/>>. Accessed on: 10th Jan. 2015.

networks. Video sharing websites such as YouTube became a prime location for the circulation of an infinity of amateur images produced by ordinary demonstrators at the very epicentre of the uprisings.

After the Arab countries, came images from *Puerta del Sol* Square which was taken over by the Spanish multitude on 15th May, 2011. Soon after, there were scenes of high school students on the streets of Chile; violent clashes between demonstrators and police during protests in Greece and the encampment on Liberty Square, next to Wall Street in the US. Through social networks, on the websites and blogs created by protesters, through the alternative press and traditional media coverages, images of the multitude on the streets all around the world continued to emerge.

And it was while this research was evolving from amongst the films and videos of the emergent multitude from around the globe, that in June 2013, here in Brazil, before our very eyes, we beheld more protests. We experienced these protests, which occurred during June and the months following, with the very same intensity as those who had hurled themselves into the street demonstrations: screaming their chants and slogans in unison, carrying vinegar in their backpacks and fleeing the effects of police teargas and rubber bullets. The events of these days were also experienced with intensity by those watching the live streaming transmissions by groups from the independent media as well as the active sharing of videos and photos from the demonstrations on the social networks.

Empirically, the experiences of June highlighted the indiscernibility of the two spheres: the streets and the networks. It also became perceivable how the production of images permeated the event in all its complexity and actuality. The June experience was thus decisive in demonstrating that the images of the multitude not only touched us through the field of film studies or even the new audio-visual formats now possible with communication technologies, but also as a constitutive political element of the struggles.

In this brief article, the aim is not to exhaust or map the entire audio-visual production of protests during recent years. The variety and immensity of this material seems far beyond the capabilities and limits of such a text. It will therefore confine itself to a small group of videos, and through the images encountered therein, construct a number of considerations regarding the subject. The focus of this work will therefore be on the videos (from Egypt, Spain and Brazil) in which the emergent multitude on the streets is the primordial imagerial constitutive element.

Within this profile, we will attempt to establish that the demonstrations of the emergent multitude are characterized by a bodily, affective and tangible effervescence. This characteristic will be termed *resonance*. This resonant quality is generated from bringing together the singularities that compose the multitude during political demonstrations. It is our belief that it was the resonance of these vibrant bodies moving through the streets that affected us via the live streaming transmissions of the protests. It was this resonance that hypnotized us as we watched the images from Tahrir Square.

The hypothesis is that the resonant images of the uprisings are not only elements of mobilization and memory, but that they are also the fold of their actuality. These images make and constitute the events; the construction of narratives and disputes of meanings. This article therefore seeks to demonstrate the resonance of the protest images in two manners: through the scenes of the bodies of the multitude vibrating

through the streets and squares of the cities, and through film devices of editing, script writing and mixing that produce or amplify this effect.

Over the pages that follow, the aim is to weave the theoretical basis in order to substantiate this hypothesis. The two concepts therefore that run through our research will be presented: resonance and the multitude. The concept of resonance is the common element through which the films and videos of current demonstrations will be considered. This element is neither a metaphor nor an abstraction, but rather a material quality, effectively provoking the vibration of the bodies, the materiality that also resounds throughout the moving images. It will be considered that the resonance of these images is capable of producing empathic affections and contaminating the bodies of the spectators. This affection produced by the resonance in the encounters of the multitude, will expand the power of the singularities involved to act, thus increasing the multitude's capacity to act as a political body.

The other key concept for the article will be the multitude. It is important to stress from the outset that the multitude is not understood as a synonym for "people" or "the masses". While the definition of "people" emphasizes the aspect of a single identity, and that of "the masses" proposes an idea of subjugation, the multitude is a set of multiple singularities that make up a collective body (although without destroying the singular specificities).

The non-unifying multiplicity of this concept seems fundamental when considering the diversity of the protesters who occupied the streets during the uprisings, and will be discussed herein. More than movements linked to class, ethnicities, genders or nationalities, these were marked by the heterogeneous composition of individuals and collectives. In political terms, the institutionalized forms and left-wing parties were not the protagonists in any of the protests in the Arab countries, Spain or Brazil. Instead, these manifestations were leaderless, horizontal and spontaneous. As this article will attempt to prove, it is our belief that these were movements from within the emergent multitude.

THE RESONANCE OF THE IMAGES

The demonstration which took place on the evening of 22nd July, 2013, in the proximities of the Guanabara Palace in Rio de Janeiro, was just another amongst many that had erupted around the city since the beginning of the previous month. This protest was a repercussion from the effects of the *Jornada de Junho*, which during the month of June took millions of Brazilians onto the streets in many capitals, cities and towns across the country. As in the case of many other protests, this was also dispersed with clashes between protesters and the military police. This particular night was marked both by the arrest of Bruno Teles Ferreira, one of the protesters, accused of throwing a Molotov cocktail at the police, and the collaborative work of protesters during the entire night to discover photos and videos that would go to prove his innocence.

The anonymous task force, organised by the people who had accompanied the demonstration through the social networks and live streaming on the internet, received encouragement from the alternative coverage and from Bruno Teles² himself in an attempt to prove his innocence. This was because all the other protesters arrested

² In this video we see Bruno Teles asking people to search for images that would prove his innocence. This was originally transmitted by *Mídia Ninja* and was repeated that same night on several other social networks. Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kHBWQ6PdtiE>>. Accessed on: 21st Jan. 2015.

on that night were released after only a few hours, while Bruno Teles was detained in custody, since he had been charged with possessing explosives. The result of this collective work was a series of short videos made from both amateur footage and that of the traditional media in an effort to locate Bruno Teles at the demonstration, and therefore to confront the version given by the military police in order to justify the arrest. Thus, different editions of the same images were uploaded onto YouTube and posted across the social networks throughout the night, while other protesters and lawyers at the location were trying to obtain the boy's release. Habeas corpus for Bruno Teles was issued the following morning.

These videos are still easily accessible on YouTube, ranging from short snippets of less than 1 minute (that show specific details of the prison) to the most complete versions that last around 12 minutes (which provide a narrative of Bruno's route during the demonstration up to the moment he is arrested). As a good example, we would recommend the version entitled "*Bruno, a P2 e a tentativa de alguns policiais em incriminá-lo*"³ (Bruno, the undercover police and the attempt by some police officers to incriminate him). As previously stated, no official version or authorship may be determined, and the use of the file in question is justified by its more diversified nature of sources and information on the case.

The video begins with a number of stills: a quote from Malcolm X, the *Wikipedia* definition of anarchism, a declaration from the website of the Military Police in Rio de Janeiro on the use of undercover police (popularly known as P2) in the demonstrations, and the *Wikipedia* page about an attack on the *Riocentro* in 1981. In the first direct images of events, we see the front line of the demonstration held back by a few barricades, very close to the police cordon. Bruno Teles stands out from the protesters, leaning against the railings and gesturing frantically towards the police. The latent tension between the two sides is broken when another protester knocks over one of barricades and soon after, Bruno Teles repeats the gesture knocking over yet another barricade. The protesters suddenly begin to run and many of them turn and run away from the front line. Bruno, who has also moved away, returns to the police lines, waving his hand freely, and is clearly not carrying any accessory.

At this moment, we see a petrol bomb hit the police barrier, coming from a different direction to where Bruno was standing. After the explosion, the video begins to use Military Police images conveyed by the newspaper *O Globo*. This change is marked by the highly pixelated poorer quality of the images. The recording shows the bomb being thrown towards the police, clearly demonstrating that the clothes worn by the person who threw the Molotov cocktail are different to those worn by Bruno Teles. After this scene, we return to the first recording, with its sharper images, filmed from a position to the left of the demonstration, showing the movement of the police after the explosion of the firebomb.

The mixing of the film goes beyond the use of various recording sources, and constantly employs effects in order to freeze, repeat, speed up and slow down the images and sounds to demonstrate or explain some particular incident. The film is also striking because of the use of written captions over the images that contextualize and describe the sequences being shown. This didactic character is used as a mobilizing, militant mixing element, by constantly identifying the protester Bruno Teles, and highlighting wherever possible, the police violence taking place. Hence, the film, like so many others produced that night, not only provides a record of events, but becomes

3 Video available at: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZNRvh_dYwCE. Accessed on: 21st Jan. 2015.

the fold of them, by extending the range and intensity of the protesters united *in loco* and via social networks, the *resonance*. The production of images of the event is not only confined to the moment they are recorded, but also in its wide distribution and in its capacity to analyse and edit several of the protesters from the considerable amount of existing material.

This kind of complementarity between occupying the streets and squares and producing texts and images on the social networks has been one of the main features of the popular movements that have appeared since the end of 2010, with the Arab countries, and which then spread to other locations around the world – from Spain to Greece, from Chile to the US, and from Turkey to Brazil. Clearly, if each of these insurgencies has its own unique characteristics, we believe that together they make up a single cycle of struggles and that this cycle needs to be considered in its global context so as to understand its potential, actualities and resonances.

But how may we consider the set of images from these events, which may be as extensive as one common element? The prison images of Bruno Teles, for example, counted on the collaboration of an anonymous group in producing and editing images of a protest in solidarity for one protester. However, the television program *Images of a Revolution*,⁴ produced by the independent broadcasting network Al Jazeera, contains a compilation of a series of amateur images that went viral and became iconic within their own countries, during the demonstrations that took place in early 2011. In Tunis, Tunisia, a solitary man in the street at night cries out for freedom. The population of Sidi Bouzid (a small town in central Tunisia) starts a demonstration in front of a government building after the street venter, Mohamed Bouazizi, set fire to himself in protest. In Alexandria, Egypt, an unarmed man faces up to police and is shot in cold blood. In Cairo, dozens of unarmed protesters face police water cannons and armoured army trucks. These are just some examples of the amateur images presented in the documentary, which have become massively popular during the Arab insurgencies.

There are many cases of images that have served as examples of this global process of uprisings. In Egypt, there are videos of the female demonstrators – such as those by Asmaa Mahfouz⁵ – encouraging people to join the protests. With subjective reports regarding her own participation in the protests in her condition as a woman, the activist took advantage of the existing inequalities in her country between men and women both to challenge more men to be present (if she – a woman – were there in the square, why were the men not there?), and to serve as an example to other women (if she was there, then so could others)⁶. In Tunisia, the impact of the street venter Mohamed Bouazizi's self-immolation in front of a government building, spread quickly across the internet and triggered other demonstrations.

In these and in the case of many other images that have spread virally during periods of mobilization in this new cycle of struggles, the intensity of the images seems to have arisen from the presence of common, unarmed bodies facing violent government organized situations (the police or the army, and all their instruments: helmets, shields, tasers, batons, water cannons, tanks, etc.). These are images that affect us as spectators as we observe the bodies, which are being directly affected within them. In many cases, due to the intensity of that affection, the need arises not only to share and analyse them and to produce other images, but also to go onto the streets and demonstrate. These are resonant images that affect each receiving body in

4 The programme is freely available online at: <<http://www.aljazeera.com/programmes/aljazeeraaworld/2011/10/2011101974451215541.html>>. Accessed on: 21st Jan. 2015).

5 Sections of the Mahfouz videos translated into English may be seen at the link: <<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1JW-3m8uwcL4>>. Accessed on: 30th Jan. 2015.

6 The militancy of the women was central to the mobilization and for initiating the events, but as the manifestations grew in volume there were innumerable cases of sexual violence against women during the protests.

a different manner, but which in general terms are responsible for bringing about an opening whereby these affections may become intensified.

Moreover, we feel that it is precisely through the resonant nature of the demonstrations, together with their images, that this cycle of insurgencies must be considered. The resonance of the images therefore, would seem to be the common element with which to consider the overall production of films and videos of this cycle of global mobilizations. These events and the circulation of their images through each country not only affect the local population, but are shared globally via the internet to affect demonstrators in many other places.

We consider that the form in which these movements have used the social networks and the autonomous production of images as resonant elements for the protests is one of the basic characteristics that they all have in common. Thus, the manners with which to mobilize demonstrations on social networks have not only served as an example for one uprising to lead to another, but also as a form of increasing the intensity of affection.

THE VIBRATION OF INSURGENT BODIES

The concept of resonance, in reference to the propagation of recent insurgent movements, was first used in the manifesto *The Coming Insurrection* written by an anonymous group of French contributors calling themselves The Invisible Committee. Originally published in France in 2007, the book is a mixture of essays and activist prescriptions, which in various forms anticipates the cycle of movements that took place across the world from the end of 2010. The Committee predicts that:

Revolutionary movements do not spread by contamination but by *resonance*. Something that is constituted here *resonates* with the *shock wave* emitted by something constituted over there. The body that resonates does so according to its own form. An insurrection is not like a plague or a forest fire — a linear process which spreads from place to place after an initial spark. It rather takes the shape of music, whose focal points, though dispersed in time and space, succeed in imposing the rhythms of their own vibrations, always taking on more density. To the point that any return to the normal is no longer desirable or even imaginable” (COMITÉ INVISÍVEL, 2010, p. 155, author’s translation).

The authors barely developed the concept of resonance beyond these few brief lines. Nonetheless, it is quite evident that they use this musical metaphor to explain the spread of insurrections. This sonorous use of the term is certainly in line with the most commonly accepted meanings, such as: “1) (sound) reinforced or prolonged by reflection or vibration; 2) echoing, resounding, continuing to sound; 3) a room or body etc. tending to prolong synchronous sounds.”⁷ The authors finalize the musical comparison stating that the starting point of the insurgents is the outline of a new *composition* in search of its *chords* (COMITÉ INVISÍVEL, 2010, p. 155, author’s translation).

It is from this fleeting use of the word *resonance* by the Invisible Committee that some authors have taken up the same term, this time however in a more conceptual

⁷ Definitions of “resonant” according to The Concise Oxford Dictionary, 2015.

manner. The work of two authors seem fundamental to the development of this concept: that of the anthropologist Gastón Gordillo (who based his interpretation on the ideas and power of affection by Baruch Spinoza) and that of the political and social scientist Jon Beasley-Murray (who draws on both Spinoza and the concept of *multitude* by Michael Hardt and Toni Negri).

Gastón Gordillo argues that a bodily, affective, creative and tangible effervescence is the defining element of the insurgent movements (both in the new cycle, and previous). However, this characteristic has generally been disregarded by more orthodox analyses, being considered as subjective or nonmaterial. Nonetheless, the author believed that this element deserved deeper analysis, since it is the “most powerful form of material known to human beings” for being the only one with the power to “destroy the state” (GORDILLO, 2012, p. 1). And this powerful materiality is only created by the “resonant multitude taking over public space” (GORDILLO, 2012, p. 1).

The materiality of resonance, according to the author, causes the vibration of bodies, even when they are far apart, causing them to act empathetically: “And because it reverberates and is contagious, resonance can travel long distances, spreading outwards from its original node” (GORDILLO, 2011b). However, in the case of resonant insurgencies, far from being a domino effect or a linear, mechanical growth, it is an expansion that occurs within clusters of human bodies being affected by conglomerates of other human bodies, which in turn successively affect other constellations.

Thus, Gordillo considers that: “Resonance expansion is uneven and a permanent arena of dispute involving multitude on the street, messages and images circulating at high speed through media networks, and state violence” (GORDILLO, 2011d). In many cases, this political unpredictability and the irregularity in the forms of expansion, make it possible for resonance to exist in a latent preparatory process, prior to consolidation with the multitude taking over the streets. This would explain, for example, the fact that we are able to consider events in Brazil and Turkey in 2013 as part of the same cycle of protests that erupted in 2011, with the outbreaks in the Arab countries and the Occupy movements, all of which shared common forms of expression, strategies and demands. For Gordillo, the importance of resonance would be in the interconnection of politics, space and the impact of instant forms of communication. Even more importantly, “resonance brings to the fore the power of transnational forms of empathy created when local and trans-local concerns intersect” (GORDILLO, 2011a).

From the meetings to the speeches, through the marches, encampments, chants and collective gestures, to the confrontation of bodies with the police, everything makes part of the resonance. According to the author, the marches are the main source of political resonance, because their movement tends to intensify the exchange of affection between the bodies – as well as the incorporation of music, dance, and carnivalesque or performative elements. Gordillo believes that “the resonance that makes those bodies move in unison to the rhythm of music or drums is the same that makes them act together politically in the streets” (GORDILLO, 2011b). The marches and protests are also striking since they create *nodes* or *focal points* of resonance; that is, spaces from which the resonance expands. These nodes are often ephemeral, precisely because they only last as long as the political demonstration is gathered.

In recent movements, the occupation of squares and parks with permanent encampments has constructed yet another variety of *nodes*, which affect and change materially the physical space they occupy. Gordillo refers to this spatiality as *the terrain*. Thus, a node would not be just any space, but “a point of entanglement, thickness, and articulation that opens relations with other nodes in the rhizome and with the multiplicity of the global elsewhere” (GORDILLO, 2011d). Therefore, the terrain is transformed materially by the political expansion of the spatial saturations (entanglement, thickness and articulations) of nodes. That is, “the saturation of space with a high density of bodies and sounds” (GORDILLO, 2011d). For the author, it was this kind of spatial saturation created by the resonance of the multitude in the streets of Egypt in early 2011 that was responsible for the overthrow of the Mubarak dictatorship.

State repression normally tends to act in order to undo the intensity of these nodes as quickly as possible, although in general, the disproportionality of the counterattack eventually increases the affections of sympathy towards the insurgents. Remembering the abovementioned *Jornada de Junho* in Brazil for example, the violent, repressive response of the police to the demonstrations, not only directed towards the demonstrators but also the media who were covering it (both the corporate and alternative media), is wholly connected to the very first moments when the protests were popularized. Hence, 13th June was a turning point for the movement: that day, the extreme reactions of the police during the demonstration in São Paulo were reported by both the mainstream and alternative media and by activists through social networks.

For Gordillo, the effect of resonance is not exclusive to political mobilization, and may also be perceived in dance presentations, concerts or major sports events; that is, in places that bring several bodies into contact with the same reverberation. However, the author also believes that in these cases the level of empathy and contagion between bodies is relatively lower than in political meetings. For the author, “Resonance reaches political dimensions when the capacity to affect other bodies acquires a higher intensity” (GORDILLO, 2011b).

Thus, the author describes a direct parallel between resonance, as a force that makes it possible to create *lines of flight* (a political break by the multitude from dominant hegemonies, striving for the construction of new spaces) and the concept of desiring machines by Deleuze and Guattari⁸: the protesters in the streets as “bodily assemblages that act” (GORDILLO, 2011b). However, more than in the concept of *desiring machine*, it is in Deleuze’s reading of Baruch Spinoza’s philosophy, in which we encounter the theoretical basis for the concept of resonance.

One of the foundations of Spinoza’s theory is that the human body is made up of a complex infinity of bodies/materials/individuals regarding constant composition and decomposition, and thus without a definite, stable form over time. The body is constantly being affected by its internal constellation of elements (bodies) and by encountering other external bodies (these are also complex entities in permanent composition). It is from this dual aspect that Deleuze describes the concept of the body in Spinoza as “a great number of parts”, and their relationships of “motion and rest” and also, how they are capable of affecting and being affected by other bodies (DELEUZE, 2002, p. 128, author’s translation).

Thus, relationships and motions (speeding up and slowing downing) that compose and decompose are more important than the bodies as forms or permanent

⁸ The two authors developed the concept of “desiring machine” in *O anti-Édipo: Capitalismo e esquizofrenia 1* (Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia) (DELEUZE; GUATTARI, 2010).

structures. And affection, therefore, would be a direct result of the relationship between bodies, “By affection understood as the affections of the body, by which the body’s power of acting is increased or diminished, aided or restrained, and at the same time, the ideas of these affections” (SPINOZA, 2009, p. 50, author’s translation). Thus, human affections would not be expressions of an isolated individual, but produced from the encounter of bodies.

It is along these premises that Gordillo defines resonance as intensified affection, explaining affection as “a confirmation that bodies exist only in constellations and that societies are spatially grounded attempts to structure these constellations” (GORDILLO, 2011b). Thus, resonance would be a form of empowerment that Spinoza called *conatus*: the effort of the body through an encounter with other bodies to expand its power to act, to affect and to be affected. Resonance is the collective search by various bodies (the multitude) for this expansion.

In relation to political resonances, Gordillo distinguishes anti-hierarchical movements from conservative or reactionary movements. In the first case, resonance would be the intensification of joyful passions (expansive and inclusive); in the second, sad passions (reactive and exclusive). Thus, the joyful passions lead to an open desire to encounter other bodies, whereas the sad would lead to a desire to decompose or reject certain bodies.

We believe that while the movements under analysis within this article (the Arab countries, the 15M, the various Occupy movements, the *Jornadas de Junho*, amongst others), clearly possess a number of internal disputes and contradictions, they are resonant movements that intensify joyful passions. In other words, through different manners they seek to construct more equal, inclusive societies. And, as the movements themselves move towards self-management and organization, understanding their compositional power and capabilities of the bodies, they not only become movements created from joyful passions, but also movements that form common notions and appropriate ideas. At this moment, the resonance also becomes a form in which the bodies that compose the movements act together.

Besides the encounter of the bodies, the other key aspect of this concept of resonance is the spatial dimension of the encounters: resonance occurs from within a terrain, a territory, a physical space being occupied by the bodies in contact. And one of the effects of resonant expansion is the expansion of this territory: whether in extension (a protest march that follows a long route towards an encounter with different bodies along the way) or in density (an encampment, which begins to form a resonant node enabling the creation of new, multiple meetings within the same network). Thus, the intensification of resonant affection is directly related to its ability to last in time and expand in space: “The longer a resonance lasts and the farther it expands, the stronger it becomes” (GORDILLO, 2011c).

Therefore, controlling space and the flows of circulation within it is one of the key issues for insurgent resonances. It is no coincidence that one of the tactics employed by many movements is to close avenues, streets or places vital to the circulation of a particular city. One example of this would be the actions of the *Movimento Passe-Livre São Paulo* (the Free-Bus Pass Movement) in June 2013. The demonstrations were planned within a minimal interval of days (between two or three) aiming to occupy and block the main streets in the centre of São Paulo, especially the very prominent *Avenida Paulista*.

Finally, it is important to highlight that the expansion of resonant affection may also occur through images, photos and videos produced by demonstrators and posted on the internet. Although the effect of unmediated physical encounters through bodies are more powerful and contain a greater urgency, what we have observed in this cycle has been an increase in the power of affection from amateur images produced by anonymous protesters and received by anonymous viewers in distant locations, who are willing to reverberate this resonance in its own context. As we witnessed in the case of the videos filmed on the night that the protester Bruno Teles' was arrested, the resonance of the streets and the resonance of images very often act simultaneously and in a complementary manner.

THE RESONANT MULTITUDE: THE COMPOSITION OF THE SINGULARITIES

We consider that within this cycle of struggles, the production and circulation of images from the demonstrations is the driving force for its global resonance. But what can be said of those anonymous, common, amateur protesters who create and circulate such images? How should we consider these bodies that come together in their thousands in the streets or squares, and that fold into thousands of profiles and accounts on the social networks? We believe that in order to provide a satisfactory response to these questions it is necessary to obtain an understanding of this cycle that transcends the traditional political groups or pre-existing social movements in each country. More than a repetition of figurines, these movements have taken over the streets with multiple heterogeneous singularities.

Consider, for example, the configuration of the Spanish *indignados*, the 15M. Initially, the demonstrations started from the union of several groups, amongst them: the *Democracia Real Ya*, an association of digital activists inciting people not to vote; the *V de Vivienda*, a movement that fights for housing developed in networks; the *hipotecados* (the mortgaged) movements, a reciprocal help platform for families and individuals evicted because of debt, and finally, the *colectivos do cognitariado urbano*, without militant supporters. These groups were also joined by the unemployed, casual workers and those in debt. The unification of these singularities and the different groups, under the slogans "All together" and "No one represents us", resulted in a non-identity movement, which sought to organize itself through direct democracy: always speaking in the first person. The organization process of the 15M was most striking because of its attempt at a collective construction from between groups and different singularities.

And what follows when this unit of struggles, groups and different people start acting in collaboration, without suppressing or ignoring the singularities, but rather endeavouring to operate them as power? This scenario approaches the definition by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri of *multitude*: "a diffuse set of singularities that produce a common life" (HARDT; NEGRI, 2005, p. 436, author's translation). The authors counteract the concept of multitude with that of people (that begins from a unitary concept of identity) and the masses (which maintains a variety of subjects, but that becomes indifferently subjugated).

By definition, multitude is multiple, "it is made up of innumerable internal

differences that can never be reduced to a unit or single identity – different cultures, races, ethnicities, genders and sexual orientations; different forms of labour; different ways of living; different views of the world, and different desires” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2005, p. 12, author’s translation). Despite being heterogeneous, diversified, made up of innumerable singularities, the multitude is able to act together. The authors state that: “The multitude designates an active social subject, that acts based on what the singularities have in common” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2005, p. 140, author’s translation). Thus, a social subject is capable of self-government and acting politically in a unit, as observed in the movements examined herein.

In the philosophical aspect of the definition, the authors begin from Spinoza’s logic regarding encounters between bodies (and between spirits): the singularities that make up the multitude in this ongoing process of affecting and being affected by one another. The multitude is “thus an inclusive body in the sense that it is open to encounters with all other bodies, and its political life depends on the qualities of these encounters, whether they are joyful and compose more powerful bodies or whether they are sad and decompose into less powerful ones” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 43). Therefore, since the bodies are composed of an infinity of bodies, and affected by encounters, which continuously compose and decompose them, the singularities that form the multitude pass through the same process of metamorphosis, of mixtures and movements, of speeding up and slowing down. As Hardt and Negri state: “Every singularity is a social becoming” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 112.). This concept of singularity differs from more fixed concepts, such as identity, for example.

It is on this point that yet another Spinoza concept becomes vital for the definition of multitude, that of *common notions*. *Common notions* (or *adequate ideas*) is the process by which the spirit rationalizes the affections that come from an encounter, and form an internal concept of what exists within them that is good, beneficial and joyful. We can define common notions as “a representation of a composition between two or more bodies, and a unity of this composition” (DELEUZE, 2002, p. 98-99, author’s translation). The formation of this notion is what enables the body and spirit to be in full possession of their capacity to act. The multitude would then be a common notion of singularities that make it. Or in the formulation of Hardt and Negri: “The multitude is composed through the encounters of singularities within the common” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 350).

Hardt and Negri argue that the search for this common would be one of Spinoza’s ethical objectives: the search for ways in which bodies may be composed one with another, thus increasing their power to act and compose a common power. For Spinoza, from amongst many external bodies that affect and are affected by human beings, none is more useful (capable of composing a more powerful common notion) than the human being: “If, for example, two individuals of entirely the same nature are joined to one another, they compose an individual twice as powerful as each one” (SPINOZA, 2009, p. 85, author’s translation). Hence, if human beings are defined from their affections and if the *conatus*, the search for joyful affections (which increases the power of acting) is the force that moves us, then the aspiration of human beings compounded in the multitude is to seek the common notions of which they are composed in an increasingly more potent manner. This common power is “the primary force that supports the possibility of democracy” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 53).

Thus, for Hardt and Negri, one of the challenges of the multitude is that of self-government, “to create a durable state of happiness (and thus rather than ‘public’, we would call it ‘common happiness’)” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 377). Happiness, in this case, is used by the authors as a synonym for Spinoza’s joy, “a spur to desire, a mechanism for increasing and amplifying what we want and what we can do” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 377). Happiness that is not a state of unalterable satisfaction, but is directly related to the capabilities of the multitude to self-manage and to take joint policy decisions.

For the authors, the multitude begins to act as a subject transformer from the moment that it becomes a political organization and not simply a spontaneous demonstration. The problem goes from *being* the multitude to *making* the multitude: “Multitude should be understood, then, as not a being but a making – or rather a being that is not fixed or static, but constantly transformed, enriched, constituted by a process to making” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 173). A process of making that is self-produced by the singularities of which it is composed.

This making the multitude politically is in parallel to the biopolitical economic production model, in which a vast social multiplicity interacts together and produces intangible goods and economic value. More than a metaphor, the making of the multitude would need the same capabilities used for this in the economic terrain: “The ability of producers autonomously to organize cooperation and produce collectively in a planned way, in other words, has immediate implications for the political realm, providing the tools and habits for collective decision making” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2009, p. 174). If, economically, the singularities are able to work together producing the common, the same would apply to the political realm.

The question that consequently arises is: How has this multitude, organized by immaterial labour, passed from one sphere to another? How may production of the common mobilized by contemporary capitalism be politically appropriated by the multitude that produced it for its own benefit and not for capital? For Hardt and Negri, although circumstances of inequality, of anger or of social outrage may be the starting point for organizing a multitude, its political capacity to rebel comes about only from an excess: of affection, intelligence, experience, desire, etc. Thus: “This common surplus is the first pillar on which are built struggles against the global political body and for the multitude” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2005, p. 276, author’s translation).

These uprisings, appearing from excess, have mobilized this common in two manners: by intensifying the struggle itself and extending it to other uprisings. This mobilization of the common organized by the politically mobilized multitude intensifies the mobilized common itself. And although the authors never actually employ the term, we believe that the intensification process of the common through the struggle of the multitude is exactly what we have termed resonance. Hardt and Negri indicate (as does Gordillo with regard to resonance) direct confrontation with the state as a factor that intensifies the uprisings and the common: “The direct conflict with power, moreover, for better or for worse, elevates this common intensity to an even higher level: the acrid smell of tear gas focuses your senses and street clashes with police make your blood boil with rage, raising intensity to the point of explosion” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2005, p. 276, author’s translation). As the resonance expands from one insurgence to another, Hardt and Negri state that the common is

extensively mobilized from one local uprising to another: “the geographical expansion of movements takes the form of an international cycle of struggles in which revolts spread from one local context to another like a contagious disease through the communication of common practices and desires” (HARDT; NEGRI, 2005, p. 277, author’s translation).

The mobilized common is resonance and the multitude is resonant. And thus we arrive at the definitions of multitude and resonance provided by Jon Beasley-Murray. For this author, the constitution process of the multitude passes through the composition of bodies and the establishment of mutual resonances through chance encounters, “every-body (every body) comprises a singular combination of simpler bodies that resonate to produce a new being, a body that is ever more open to new encounters, and so new transformations” (BEASLEY-MURRAY, 2010, p. 251). Hence, for the author, the composition of the multitude is formed when the bodies become closer through resonance, through good encounters. A composition remains open for new encounters and transformations.

One important outstanding difference is that, for Spinoza and Negri, the formation of the multitude and the encounters has a teleological purpose, in which the multitude tends towards the composition of perfection, while Beasley-Murray believes in more ambiguous ethics. Thus, according to the author, “a more complex account would stress that there are good multitude and bad: bodies that resonate and expand versus dissonant bodies or bodies whose resonance hits a peak that leads to collapse” (BEASLEY-MURRAY, 2010, p. 247).

Beasley-Murray starts from the concepts of *habitus*, affection and multitude in order to compose a theory on posthegemony, which the author defines as “an attempt to rethink politics from the ground up, rooted in the material reality common to us all” (BEASLEY-MURRAY, 2010, p. xi). The author understands *habitus*, from Pierre Bourdieu’s theory, as the manner in which bodies perform regular and repetitive daily activities. Affection, in Spinoza’s sense, is the power of bodies (individual or multiple) to affect and be affected by other bodies. And the multitude is a set of bodies in expansion that constitutes society, and through self-organization increases its power of affection and resonance. For Beasley-Murray (2010, n.p.), the three concepts interpellate in the definition of multitude, which would be “a collective subject that gathers on affect’s line of flight, consolidates in habit, and expresses itself through constituent power.”

By expressing itself through constituent power, the multitude refuses the state contract of constituted power: against the transcendence of the sovereign state, the multitude appears as an immanent expansion established by resonance through a good encounter. The multitude is developed through the *physics of society*, “experimental conjunctions and aleatory events whose outcomes can never be fully predicted” (BEASLEY-MURRAY, 2010 n. p.). Because of this aspect of continuous metamorphosis, and through the refusal to subjugate itself to the hegemonic social contract (to the constituted power), “the multitude opens up the immanent frontier that is the *kairòs*, the temporality of what is to come” (BEASLEY-MURRAY, 2010, n.p.). The multitude is therefore fluid, always in generation, “in *kairòs*, the temporality of the event and of constitution, straddles past, present and future. Its singular bodies are perpetually encountering and reencountering each other (and others), contingently and contiguously” (BEASLEY-MURRAY, 2010, n. p.)

And for Beasley-Murray (2010, n. p.), it is necessary to overcome this “fluidity and mutability” of chaos, so that the multitude organizes itself through constituent power. Relations between the singularities that compose the multitude then “follow an immanent ethics of the encounter”, which is “Spinoza’s account of such an ethics”. And it is because of the new encounters and their perennial self-transformation, that the multitude is an open concept. Representing it is a way of eliminating it – thus, in the new cycle of struggles, claims, such as “No one represents us” politically echo a process of self-determination by the multitude from its own characteristics.

How then do we consider, from the refusal of representation, the use of images in the composition of insurgencies of this new cycle? How does the production of photos and videos of and by the multitude escape traditional representation (and reducing) processes of itself? How do these images also become resonant in the composition of these movements? These are the questions we will now attempt to answer below.

THE RESONANT IMAGES: FILMS AND VIDEOS OF THE MULTITUDE

The resonance of the struggles, the encounters and the affects within the urban space seems to be one of the recurring motifs of recent demonstrations. As previously mentioned, we believe that the real issue of these movements is that people are reclaiming the cities for themselves, not only as functional spaces to be occupied, but also as a terrain for the construction of emotions and experiences. And not only as a territory, but as a terrain and a resonant node: a location for the multitude to encounter and to exchange. It is within the streets, squares, parks and bridges that the multitude is composed. It is on this terrain that it fortifies its confrontations and builds its encampments. As Hardt and Negri state (2009, p 250): “The metropolis is to the multitude what the factory was to the industrial working class.”

If the appropriation of the city by the multitude is placed before the physical occupation of the bodies, it would seem essential to consider how this experience is almost instantly folded via transmissions on the social networks and blogs with images, photos and texts of the protesters. The contemporary urban space is thus a space traversed by many different portable and immediate forms of communication.

We believe that the influence of mobile media in the construction of hybrid and nomadic spaces has been an important tool in the processes of contemporary political struggles. More than just a simple form of disclosure or broadcasting, the network has often functioned as a fundamental element of resonance, of complementarity in the streets and of constructing self-narratives by protesters. These communication tools have been imperative in enabling these demonstrations to take place without one particular centre or without being controlled by traditional political forces of resistance – factors which could have facilitated repression and demobilized commitment. At the same time, their use creates new possibilities for encounters and affections, increasing the density of the resonant nodes of the multitude.

In Brazil, during the *Jornada de Junho*, the most impressive contribution in real-time broadcasts of the protests was from the group *Ninja Media* (*Narrativas*

Independentes, Jornalismo e Ação). Although this was the group's first opportunity to be seen on a wider scale, their first coverage experiences date back to May 28th, 2011, with a transmission of the Freedom March in São Paulo. After this first experience came a channel for broadcasting debates, *Pós TV*⁹. Both the channel and *Ninja Media* are offshoots of the *Coletivo Fora do Eixo*¹⁰. It is from here that the resources, structure and most of the collaborators originated. In technical terms, coverage by Ninja Media is through mobile telephones and 3G or 4G devices, charged by notebooks that the ninjas carry in their backpacks, and transmitted via live streaming through *Twitcasting*¹¹. During the June demonstrations, the group's Facebook page updated which channels were live and also posted texts and photos from the coverage.

In relation to coverage by the traditional media, the Ninja transmission was particularly outstanding because it was always inside the demonstrations, it interviewed the protesters (who generally drove away or ignored the traditional media), it provided subjective narratives (from the camera itself through to the way of talking, coverage emphasizes the subjective experience of who is transmitting) and it documented live images. All these combined attitudes were responsible for the resonance that the transmissions gained, particularly those in June, which managed to reach 100 thousand people in one night.

The most striking element concerning the use of live streaming transmissions is its participatory nature, through the involvement of the viewer. Transmission sites such as *Twit-Casting*, not only provide videos, but also chat rooms for users to interact both with one another and with the person broadcasting. During the demonstrations this tool was constantly used to provide more information to the person broadcasting, and also to answer the questions of those watching. This type of transmission combines the resonance of the images in real time with the tools of circulation and network dialogues.

Such images have had a visceral affect on viewers, even when they are sitting kilometres away. While it is only possible to produce resonance by the effective encounter of the multitude on the streets, their spatial expansion does not necessarily imply the proximity of the bodies and may occur via global transmission of the experience of these bodies. Thus, for Gordillo, the speed of the insurgent waves is inseparable from the speed of the global networks of instant communication. Using the insurgency in Egypt as an example, the author points to a synergy between “the speed of swarms of bodies clashing with the police on the streets and the much-faster speed of the affective resonances generated by those clashes and amplified over the internet and TV networks not controlled by the Egyptian State like Al Jazeera” (GORDILLO, 2011c).

These resonances are disembodied when transformed into images, sounds and texts transmitted over the internet and television, and are re-embodied to affect those who are viewing, listening to and reading the messages. These messages (photos, videos, texts) do not affect all the bodies that receive them in the same way, just as not all bodies are affected in the same way by the encounters. They are therefore affective images, the impact of which may vary according to the openness of the receptors to be affected and compose new resonances with the messages. Moving images that can be made up of happy or sad encounters between producers and viewers, according to the common notion that they share, the singularities of those who produce and the singularities of those who watch the images.

⁹ Channel available at: <<http://postv.org/>>. Accessed on: 30th Jan. 2015.

¹⁰ *Fora do Eixo* (Off Axis) appeared in 2005, as a network for organizing music festivals off the usual Rio-São Paulo circuit (the axis). Over the years, activities have grown to other cultural sectors, creating group houses in several cities across Brazil.

¹¹ Site available at: <<http://twitcasting.tv/>>. Accessed on: 30th Jan. 2015.

Thus, we may consider the expression “No one represents us” not only as a response to representative party politics, but also as a response to the representations of the movement made by the traditional media. Accordingly, amateur videos produced by demonstrators and distributed through their personal networks have been and are central to telling the story of the movement: not a single voice, not an official version, but a mosaic of stories, impressions and images that build polyphonic meaning. A multitude of images that make up a powerful collective body, while not eliminating the singular character of each film, of each video. Finally, a resonance of experiences of the multitude seeks to maintain its multiple character, constructing its own polyphonic narrative.

An example of this kind of affective dispute for public opinion during the *Jornadas de Junho* in Brazil was seen live during a survey conducted by the television crime watch programme *Brasil Urgente*, on the *Bandeirantes* television network, presented by José Luiz Datena, on 13th June, 2013. The programme’s sensationalist host, who had thus far vehemently condemned the demonstrations against increased bus fares in São Paulo, launched a real-time survey asking viewers whether they were for or against the protests. Initial results demonstrated that viewers were clearly in favour of the protests. Faced with this result, Datena then reformulated the question to: “Are you in favour of violent protests?”, giving emphasis to the disruptive nature of the demonstrations. Even though the question had been reformulated and the results of the initial survey were cancelled, viewers still remained in favour of the protests against the fare increase. With this unexpected response, the presenter finally changes his original discourse, in which he opposed the protests, and begins to demonstrate solidarity with the discontent of his viewers. The video¹² with the survey and Datena’s change of posture, instantly went viral on the social networks, first because of the comic nature of a situation in which a populist presenter was forced to change his posture on live TV so as to agree with the opinion of his viewers, but also for being one of the first indications of the intense resonance that the demonstrations were having on public opinion.

This affective dispute for the resonant multitude seems one of the multitude’s challenges in this cycle of demonstrations. The construction of the narratives, images and autonomous communications, which are at the same time, open and far-reaching for the general public, are one of the ways that enables this encounter of the multitude with new singularities, based on sharing the common. As the empty spaces of the cities together with the major traffic routes are gradually taken over by the desiring, powerful bodies, so the images and symbols of mass media are increasingly appropriated and diverted by the creative power of the multitude.

This process takes place at the same time as the imagerial representation of the city leaves the screens of the cinema, the television and computers, and is actuated in an augmented reality (or reconstructed) with the intense use of mobile media devices, which draw other mappings over the existing maps. We are thus facing a new vision of urban space and the struggles that shape it – and simultaneously reconfigure it. A vision of real-time, of livestream

¹² Available at: <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0XOnYntEfAw>>. Accessed on: 30th Jan. 2015.

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RESUMO: Este artigo examina as imagens ressonantes produzidas pela multidão emergente nas manifestações de rua do Egito, da Espanha e do Brasil, entre os anos de 2011 e 2013. O trabalho tem como ponto de partida o caráter ressonante dessas imagens em movimento, entendendo a ressonância como uma efervescência corporal, afetiva e tangível, gerada pelo encontro da multidão nas mobilizações políticas. Dessa forma, o objetivo é construir uma reflexão sobre as imagens em movimento das manifestações de rua atuais, por meio da qualidade ressonante que as atravessam. A hipótese levantada é a de que as imagens ressonantes dos acontecimentos insurgentes são elementos de mobilização, de memória e de constituição efetiva desses eventos.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: manifestações; multidão; ressonância; imagem; internet.