

I found the post a very interesting discussion about the digital-activism. It's indeed a phenomenon in SNSs that surprises me always a lot, I mean, sometimes I don't understand when expression of opinion has become considered "activism". People started to believe that by signing online petitions or confirming participation in demonstrations means that they are doing something for the society. However, it seems to me that it is just a new form of uncompromising conversation with a neighbor in the elevator, or on a bar table. As Justin mentioned: "I wonder how different is to RL...RL doesn't always necessarily lead to activism either". So much so that most of the protests that I've followed through the media in Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina ended up turning into a true itinerant ballad, a fun gathering better than staying at home on a Sunday afternoon. Perhaps most of the activism and/or social concern that some people have shown in their SNSs profiles end when they arrive at the venue. Then, one realizes that it is like a carnival out of the season and that the participants there are more concerned with having fun than with a social cause. Off course we can't generalize...

It is clear that SNSs are important for communication, fast exchange of information, "a free voice broadcast platform" as Stephen added, but they are not a magic tool for democracy that will bring people in political discussions. There is an exaggerated hope that SNSs can be used as a tool for change rather than what they really are "a self-indulgent medium that promotes slacktivism" (**qtd. in Marichal, 2013**). In fact, the excess of information to which we are exposed and the speed that it comes to us within SNSs might distract and move us away from important concerns. This may also impact in the level of the superficiality we handle important/non important information. Retweet doesn't mean participating; sharing is not the same as compromise.

In addition, the fast and superficial relationship we have with what we share in SNSs makes digital-activism gain more importance within these realms than outside. Certain campaigns stopped gaining space by the effect they have on society to gain distinction by the number of views, shares or retweets collected. As if the aesthetics of these campaigns have become more important than their goals. And by winning attention in SNSs that do not match the reality of the facts/expectations, these campaigns can turn into a big deception. The best example of for this was Kony 2012 campaign; created to promote the charity's "Stop Kony" movement in order to make Uganda's dictator Joseph Kony indicted war criminal (accused to kidnap children and to force them to work in his arm). "As of March 1, 2014, the film has received over 99 million views and 1.3 million "likes" on the video-sharing website YouTube and over

21.9 thousand "likes" on Vimeo with other views on a central "Kony 2012" website operated by Invisible Children"(Anon n.d.). Jason Russell, co-founder of Invisible Children, decided to capitalize on social media and conduct an "experiment" to recruit for his cause. The mini-documentary that emerged "is emotion-laden and appeals to the kind hearts of donator" (Mentzer, 2012) was soon discovered a fraud.

Perhaps, we live in a time that we are probably fascinated with the enhancement in the ways we can now connect with people, communicate and broadcast ideas through SNSs (and through the Internet in general). The large demonstrations around the globe are, maybe, a consequence of this fascination. Nonetheless, we should know that digital-activism alone is ineffective and social changes still require involvement, discussions, etc. much broader than simply "slacktivism". SNSs have brought us opportunities to connect with people that have similar thoughts but at the same time, have alienated us from what is different. We are associated with groups that have similarities, but we ended up moving away from those who think differently. I wonder if this would be an intrinsic side effect of the SNSs, would it? We get away from what we do not want; we can avoid very fast what is undesirable, etc.

References:

Anon. Kony 2012 - Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. [online]. Available from: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kony_2012 [Accessed March 6, 2014].

Marichal, J. (2013). Political Facebook groups: Micro-activism and the digital front stage. First Monday, 18(12).

Mentzer, A. (2012). Kony 2012: Fake Advocacy? Huffington Post. [online]. Available from: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/the-state-press/kony-2012_b_1339081.html [Accessed March 7, 2014].

One simple way to notice it (at least in Brazil) is comparing the number of people confirming the presence in a protest through SNSs against the insignificant number of people attending (comparatively).

Finally, I think that social networks and digital technologies in general brought are not good or bad (as well as technology in general), they are "simply a tool" and as such its capacity will depend on the use we give to it.