Public Arena on the internet in defense of the public university in Brazil: Strategies of #UERJResiste

Arena pública na internet em defesa da universidade pública no Brasil: Estratégias de #UERJResiste   *(PT: 111-138)*

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ABSTRACT

The important dramatization of public scenes through social media can be observed within the paradigm of the Networked Society proposed by Castells (2003). Networked social movements mobilize their efforts to foster and balance public debate in their favor. In this article, we aim to understand how the communication strategies on #UERJResiste Facebook page in defense of the State University of Rio de Janeiro – UERJ – was presented in this public arena

(Cefaï, 2017a, 2017b), in the period from January to April, 2017. 266 posts were collected to outline an ethnographic description (Laplantine, 2004) of the social movement. An interview was also held with one of the page's administrators to understand how the content is produced in order to compose a situational analysis. As a result, we identified four categories that also constitute communication strategies: media politics, discourse of resisting, educational shares, and poetics of identity. In view of the privatization discourses of education and the attacks on its autonomy and its professionals, we understand #UERJResiste as a protagonist with an important narrative to be disseminated, reflected, and discussed in the defense of the Brazilian Public University. Among the main contributions to this study are networked social movements from an ethnographic perspective of a public arena. We also highlight an understanding of strategic communication in the civic dynamics, rebounding the importance of the autonomy of universities for democratic consolidation and citizen participation.

Keywords: networked social movements, public arenas, strategic communication, resisting, ethnography

RESUMO

Sob o paradigma da sociedade em rede proposto por Castells (2003), observamos que as redes sociais na internet são importantes veículos de dramatização das cenas públicas. Os movimentos sociais em rede mobilizam seus esforços para fomentar e equilibrar o debate público a seu favor. Neste artigo objetivamos compreender como as estratégias de comunicação da página #UERJResiste no Facebook, em defesa da Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro – UERJ, se apresentaram como uma arena pública (Cefaï, 2017a, 2017b) no período de janeiro a abril de 2017. Dentro do percurso metodológico foram levantadas 266 postagens, através das quais imergimos na descrição etnográfica (Laplantine, 2004) do movimento social. Também foi realizada uma entrevista com um dos administradores da página, de maneira a entender como são produzidos os conteúdos e compor uma análise situacional. Como resultado, identificamos quatro categorias que se constituem também como estratégias de comunicação e que nomeamos como: políticas midiáticas, discursos do resistir, partilhas educativas e poéticas da identidade. Diante dos discursos de privatização da Educação no país e os ataques à sua autonomia e aos seus profissionais, entendemos o movimento #UERJResiste como protagonista de uma importante narrativa a ser divulgada, refletida e discutida em defesa da universidade pública brasileira. Entre as principais contribuições deste estudo está a reflexão sobre os movimentos sociais em rede sob uma perspectiva etnográfica de uma arena pública. Destacamos também uma compreensão da comunicação estratégica nas dinâmicas cívicas, ressaltando a importância da autonomia das universidades para a consolidação democrática e a participação cidadã.

Palavras-chave: movimentos sociais em rede, arenas públicas, comunicação estratégica, resistência, etnografia

1. Introduction

In Brazil, the year 2017 was marked by a deep financial crisis in the government of the state of Rio de Janeiro. One of the big victims was the University of the State of Rio de Janeiro (UERJ), considered one of the best universities in the country,

according to the *Center for World Universities Ranking*.[1] UERJ appears in the 8th position among the best institutions in the country, the second in the context of Rio de Janeiro. Considering this, many protest movements have engaged in the struggle in defense of the university, and the Facebook page entitled #UERJResiste has been one of the symbols of this struggle.

This article aims to understand the role of the #UERJResiste page in this public arena (Cefaï, 2017a, 2017b). To do so, the method of ethnographic description (Laplantine, 2004) and digital ethnography (Fragoso, Recuero & Amaral, 2011; Hine, 2004) was adopted as the methodological path. Based on an interview with one of the administrators of the #UERJResiste Facebook page and the researchers' experience as engaged observers, a situational analysis of the public arena and the page's communication strategies was conducted. To understand the phenomena addressed, we examined the concepts of public arenas (Cefaï, 2011, 2017a, 2017b, 2019), networked social movements (Castells, 2003, 2016, 2017), struggle for recognition (Honneth, 2013), and strategic communication (Kunsch, 2018; Zerfass, Verčič, Nothhaft & Werder, 2018).

Few studies have focused on associative organizations, especially in the field of communication. Therefore, one of the contributions of this article is to relate the studies of networked social movements and public arenas as important vectors to understand these contemporary phenomena. We understand that strategic communication is a fundamental practice to engage struggles for recognition in democracies and that it should be used by social movements to balance power and have their problems solved in public arenas.

2. Theoretical framework

2.1 Networked social movements, public arenas, and democracy

Understanding contemporary society implies a contextual understanding of a set of economic, cultural, political, and social axes, which pervade information, insecurities, instabilities and flows in social media that are characteristic of the networked society (Castells, 2003, 2017). With the improvement of mobile technological tools, which acquire ubiquitous and pervasive characteristics, there is no way to set boundaries between face-to-face life and online life. Christine Hine (2004) proposed the digital ethnography as a possibility to understand the sociabilities contained in this phenomenon that she called *everyday internet*. Thus, it is understood that digital and physical places are not dichotomous or antagonistic, but rather specific spaces of sociability fully integrated into our experiences of life in society.

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1. Available at http://www.uerj.br/noticia/uerj-melhores-universidades-brasil-al-mundo/. Accessed on 21/08/2020.

As in any moment of profound changes in the daily lives and lifestyles of society, especially those associated with the austerity policies of neoliberal capitalism, social movements become key elements to leverage social transformation. In recent years, we have observed numerous protest demonstrations and social mobilizations originating from economic degradation and a crisis of legitimacy of rulers around the world. The protests are a form of response to those who believed in societies' apathy towards State policies. These forms of demonstration have been analyzed by different authors, such as Isabel Babo (2018), who reflected on the relationship between the concepts of collective action and connected action from a pragmatic perspective when analyzing the movement *Que se Lixe a Troika* in Portugal (2012). Also, Fabio Malini & Henrique Antoun (2013) analyzed digital networks as part of the process in the relationship between cyberactivism and public street demonstrations.

The question that arises as fundamental in this debate is the need to guarantee freedom of expression so that one can act politically through digital networks. Manuel Castells (2017) understands that the internet goes beyond the utilitarian dimension, creating conditions for the survival and deliberation of these movements, as well as safeguarding the repression of physical spaces, maintaining the effervescence of the communication of ideas while political changes or actions are decided. He also believes that the dissemination of positive uses of the internet implies the development of a culture of autonomy based on the strengthening of democracy.

This public expression of debate takes place in what we call the public sphere, a concept advanced by the German philosopher Jürgen Habermas, understood by him as a mediating dimension between the State and Society, the place where public opinion develops and consolidates itself through the freedom of political debate. Thus, the existence of the public sphere is conditioned to the full functioning of democracy.

Between Habermas' proceduralism and Arendt's republicanism, philosopher Axel Honneth (2001) points to John Dewey's democratic theory as a third alternative to the liberal view on politics. For John Dewey (2016 [1927]) democracy is taken as a way of life, a communal expression, departing from Habermas' understanding of the public sphere. Dewey distinguishes between democracy as a social idea and political democracy as a system of government, revealing their connections, especially with regard to human relations. According to the author, government exists to serve its community, even if within democratic forms marked by doctrines and even if these are transitory. Thus, changes in democratic mechanisms must be made by taking into consideration the interests of the public. And, for this to happen, it is a priority that means of participation are made possible.

The gathering of a multiple public, dispersed in the sense of recognizing themselves and expressing their interests, is a difficulty for participation, which is why social movements assume great importance. For John Dewey (2016 [1927]) it is a fiction to think that social life happens without any form of association, refuting the idea that society needs to organize itself numerically for the establishment of a state order. As a way of life, democracy should be fostered by a democratic culture in all spheres of life, making use of institutions as important vectors of democratic action and freedom. In this case, free communication has a fundamental role in solving problems in an intelligent way.

According to Daniel Cefaï (2017a, 2017b), problem solving is a fundamental point to understand John Dewey's pragmatic conception of 'public'. The public constitutes the articulation of demands for joint resolutions of common problems, the political sphere being a cognitive means that helps society solve its problems of social action, uniting rationality with feeling. Publics are networks of actions; they are verbs traversed by power relations and power struggles (Self, 2015; Cefaï, 2019). It is common to pit the public sphere against the private; however from the pragmatic perspective they do not have a fixed relationship, as they relate to each other as a function of engagement. Places are not public but become and cease to be according to the engagement of the publics (Cefaï, 2019).

For Dewey (2016 [1927]) there is no state-civil society dualism, because it is through the community that the two are simultaneously constituted, the community being humans' pure association with freedom and the core of radical democracy. The construction of participative citizenship happens through education and cooperation, in a movement that transforms a great society into a great community. This way, the role of schools, universities, theaters, newspapers, and so many other apparatuses to promote a public spirit that has its origin in the golden age of pragmatism (early twentieth century) stands out. Daniel Cefaï (2017a) claims that these institutions constitute an institutional, legal, and political ecology that create constellations of experiences, discourses, and actions that intersect, interpenetrate, segment, oppose, and balance each other around the public good or to avoid a public evil. This dynamic shapes what he calls the public arena.

We understand, then, that arenas are collective experiences of building public policies and democratic experiences, which can be somewhat conflictive, but are part of the political process when building new possibilities for a common and just world. We agree with Cefaï (2017a, p. 131) when he says that "(...) public problems are social movements whose members reconstruct facts, launch into investigations, analyze official data, seek elements of comparison, test hypotheses, and act accordingly.".

2.2 Struggles for recognition and strategic communication for social change

Social struggles are caused by ruptures arising from experiences of disrespect, that is, unrecognized individuals crave the intersubjective relations of recognition. This political mobilization happens only when this disrespect expresses the view of a community. The logic of collective movements, then, follows the following grammar: disrespect, struggle for recognition, and social change (Honneth, 2003).

This way, we understand that, through social media, the internet is nowadays a public space of important symbolic disputes that guide daily life. It is not rare that, amidst so many social demands present in Brazil, the discussion themes of the social media predominate, and they also gather protagonists in the cultural scene. Somehow, we are facing new social movements in this digital culture that dispute space in relation to economic issues, and contest global powers and imperialism, a process in which strategic communication gains importance.

Charles Self (2015) analyzes the relationship between John Dewey's theory and strategic communication, understanding that communicators are individuals who will facilitate the process of constituting the public through sharing and learning experiences, connecting participants, and promoting their discourses as action. Understanding the lives of the publics involves, above all, actions that insert them into ecologies (Cefaï, 2019, p. 25). That is, in a public arena perspective (Cefaï, 2017a, 2017b), communication or communicative action is an important part of the ongoing investigation of the problem, the discovery of solutions, and the shared evaluation of the results, aiming to act collectively and with institutional tools.

Zerfass, Verčič, Nothhaft and Werder (2018) outline an overview of the last decade on strategic communication research in Europe and the United States, arguing that it encompasses all communication, the survival and sustained success of the organization, thus seeking an approach to strategic communication as a research field with specific objects and perspectives. For the researchers, strategic communication can be defined as follows:

> Strategic communication encompasses all communication that is substantial for the survival and sustained success of an entity. Specifically, strategic communication is the purposeful use of communication by an organization or other entity to engage in conversations of strategic significance to its goals. (Zerfass et al., 2018, p. 8)

Cheryll Soriano (2015) and Mohan Dutta (2012) point out that the theory and practice of strategic communication is still focused on corporate organizations and government. They also highlight the critical perspective of Public Relations that has amplified the debate about the ability of organizations to resist domination and power control. They trace postcolonial paths for voices of resistance

to surface in the most varied forms of collective organization around the world. On that same path, Sónia Sebastião and Daniela Vila Verde (2018) work within the postmodern theory of public relations to analyze the experience of activists defrauded by Portuguese banks. They point out that the associations created by these activists develop their actions without the professional support of the area, but with a communicative action that draws the attention of the media, thus inserting their demands in the public debate.

For Margarida Kunsch (2018), the power of communication and the media is the object of study by several scholars, and the paradigm of strategic communication is inherent in the transformation of the area of research and practice of public relations. The researcher further indicates that it is necessary to overcome the mechanistic and instrumental view of the area, and assume an interpretive and critical paradigm of organizational communication. To achieve communication goals, it is necessary to build a humanistic vision that seeks to understand how people communicate with each other in interactive media and in the daily communicative practices of interpersonal relationships.

Like Manuel Castells (2003, 2016, 2017), we understand that the media function as forms of power, thus requiring regulation, as well as the insertion of social movements in the narrative disputes produced, whether in corporate media or in social media sites. It becomes important to know the ways that social media work, their capacity for sociability, possibilities of engagement, dissemination, and mobilization in the daily life of social movements, which have their public relevance sustained by their forms of communication. Therefore, strategic communication is a fundamental practice for social movements to be able to produce public scenes that draw public attention, until they obtain the resolution of the problems experienced in public arenas.

3. Methodology

Engaged observation was adopted in the development of this study, following the definitions of ethnographic description by François Laplantine (2004), and of digital ethnography by Suely Fragoso, Raquel Recuero and Adriana Amaral (2011), composing what Daniel Cefaï et al. (2011) called ethnography of associative life. The option for ethnography is due to the importance of reflexivity about the method and the experimentation that should be aligned with the challenges and questions that emerge in the research field, important in the construction of the proposed analysis. As the field has a hybrid characteristic, between online and offline, we follow the recommendations of Fragoso, Recuero and Amaral (2011, p. 178) in differentiating the forms of data collection and observation when indicating the variations of environment.

Daniel Cefaï et al. (2011) highlight three elements present in studies of public arenas: situational analysis with an observer engaged in the plots; sensitivity to the symbolic, mythical, ritual, and dramatic dimension vis-à-vis the individual and collective experiences of actors; refusal to dissociate cultural from social questioning. Thus, it is important to understand the uniqueness of what is observed, without an evaluative or prescriptive tendency, maintaining a critical position in relation to what is observed and, therefore, adopting the form of narration.

Based on the theoretical approaches presented here, our research intention was to achieve the following objectives: to understand how the social movement is organized/mobilized/acted upon and its relationships; to identify how the problem appears and relates to public opinion; and to analyze how the #UERJResiste page's communication strategies are presented. To this end, an interview was conducted with one of the administrators of the #UERJResiste page, Professor Renê Forster, which took place on March 27, 2018. In Table 1 we present the main issues addressed, framed in four main axes: origin and composition of the group, relationship with other actors, benefits and limitations of social media sites (platform), and the future of the page.

TABLE 1. Issues addressed in the interview

INTERVIEW WITH PROF. RENÊ FORSTER	
CORE POINTS	**QUESTIONS**
Origin and composition of the group	How did the page come about?
	Choice of name and image?
	Who works on the production of the content?
	What is the objective?
Relationship with other actors (press, UERJ, ASDUERJ, other associations and internet users)	How is the relationship with the press/corporate media?
	How is the relationship with UERJ/ASDUERJ's institutional communication?
	How is the interaction with internet users?
	Were there collaborations in the production of content?
Benefits and limitations of the platform	What are Facebook's conditions for social mobilization?
	What are the influences of the algorithm for the page?
	How is the relationship between face-to-face and online interaction when you call for some action?
Future of the page	What are the plans for the future?
	Are you thinking of migrating to other social media sites? Which ones?

Source: Prepared by the authors.

In Table 2 we present a research design, which is constituted from the interview and the researchers' experiences as engaged and implicated observers of the object of study, in a situational analysis of the UERJ crisis, the public arena about university autonomy, and the posts on the #UERJResiste Facebook page. We list the concepts used in relation to the objectives of each technique employed.

TABLE 2. Research design

		CONCEPTS			
	TECHNIQUE	**Public arenas**	**Networked Social Movements**	**Struggle for recognition**	**Strategic Communication**
Experience of the researchers as research subjects	**Interview**	Understand how they act, share, build experience.	Understand how they organize themselves.	Check what are the pains, injustices, struggles mobilized.	Understand how communication strategies are adopted.
	Situational analysis	Identify the dynamics of the public problem and its relationship to the organizations.	Emphasize the role of mobilization in public actions.	Understand the relationship between injustices and legitimization.	Highlight the importance of the relationship between the media and social movements.
	Analysis of Facebook page	Evidence the role of the page in the production of public scenes.	Understand how they organize themselves.	Understand how discourses are constructed on the page.	List the communication strategies adopted.

Source: Prepared by the authors.

To analyze the posts on the #UERJResiste page we used *Netvizz*, developed by Bernard Rieder in the context of the *Digital Methods Initiative* (DMI). With the application, we extracted a spreadsheet of the posts made by the #UERJResiste page, containing date, posted text, link of the images and the direct link of the post, besides the statistical data of reactions, comments, and shares. From there we analyzed all posts by accessing link by link, from January 1 to April 9, 2017, which totaled 266 posts, 194 photos and 72 videos. The time frame of the research corresponds to the period when UERJ was closed, when there was more public attention to the problem. April 9 is the day before the announcement of the return of the university's activities. The arrangement of content by format (photos, videos, and texts) can be seen in Figure 1, and the data of interactions with the page in Figure 2.
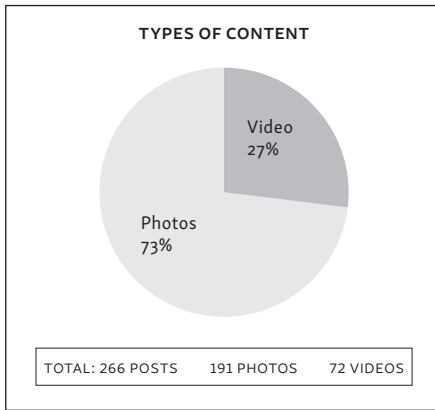
FIGURE 1. Data per type
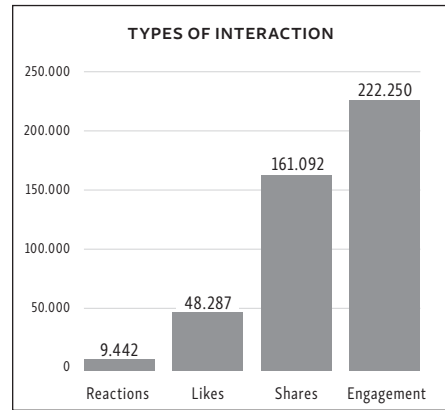**Source:** Prepared by the authors.

FIGURE 2. Interaction data
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Firstly, we analyzed and coded each post, framing them in some of the categories that emerged from the analyzed material. This originated in certain patterns and similarities. Secondly, when we analyzed the material more deeply seeking to translate it in a more objective and complete way, we regrouped each type of post into four categories. Each category was named according to the characteristics of its posts, in a process of constant reflection and dialog. The four categories were: Media Politics, Discourses of Resisting, Educational Shares, and Poetics of Identity.

This categorization, presented in Figure 3, should not be understood as a limitation or confinement of each analyzed content, because the posts can occupy more than one category or notion and have very flexible connections, proximities, and boundaries. With this division, we understand that these notions also take meaning as communication strategies of the page.

4. Results

The results were divided into three aspects: situational analysis of the crisis at UERJ, the public arena about the university's autonomy, and the communication strategies of the #UERJResiste Facebook page, the latter being online. Our intention is to immerse the reader in this universe that does not pretend to be a totality, but that, through the decoding of this data, offers a vision about #UERJResiste as a public arena.
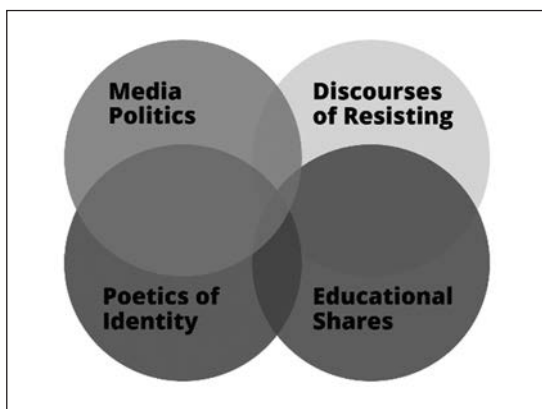
FIGURE 3. Categories/notions of communication strategies

Source: Prepared by the authors.

4.1 Situational analysis of the crisis at UERJ

The undermining of Higher Education in Brazil is nothing new, but it should be emphasized that the attack had never been as frontal as in the period in question. The context of 2017 should be understood from the political tensions of the 2014 elections, in which President Dilma Rousseff was reelected. Her mandate was interrupted by an impeachment in 2016, when an illegitimate president, Michel Temer, arrived at the Palácio do Planalto with new government proposals founded on the privatization of public companies. In Rio de Janeiro, Governor Luiz Fernando Pezão, also of the Brazilian Democratic Movement Party (PMDB), was engulfed in a sea of corruption.

The end of 2016 was marked by a motion from UERJ's University Council (Consun) calling for a new election, given the reported cases of corruption involving state governors. The year 2017 began without any forecast or guarantee of funding for UERJ from the state's government, which led the rectory to suspend the university's activities due to the unhealthy situation caused by the lack of resources. The closure could invalidate a more vigorous demonstration, but social media sites were decisive tools in the mobilization, since they potentiated the connection and sharing between people on the network to build their discussions (Castells, 2017).

In this situational analysis we created a mind map (Figure 4), in which we visually configured an ecology of publics (Cefaï et al., 2011; Cefaï, 2019) that shows how the forms of collective mobilization, the status of public opinion and the dynamics of public action (Cefaï et al., 2011) were articulated. We chose to show

the antagonisms separately because of how these actors produced public scenes antagonistic to UERJ. However, it is worth emphasizing that we do not think that the antagonisms happened in isolation, because they permeated the various public scenes generated.
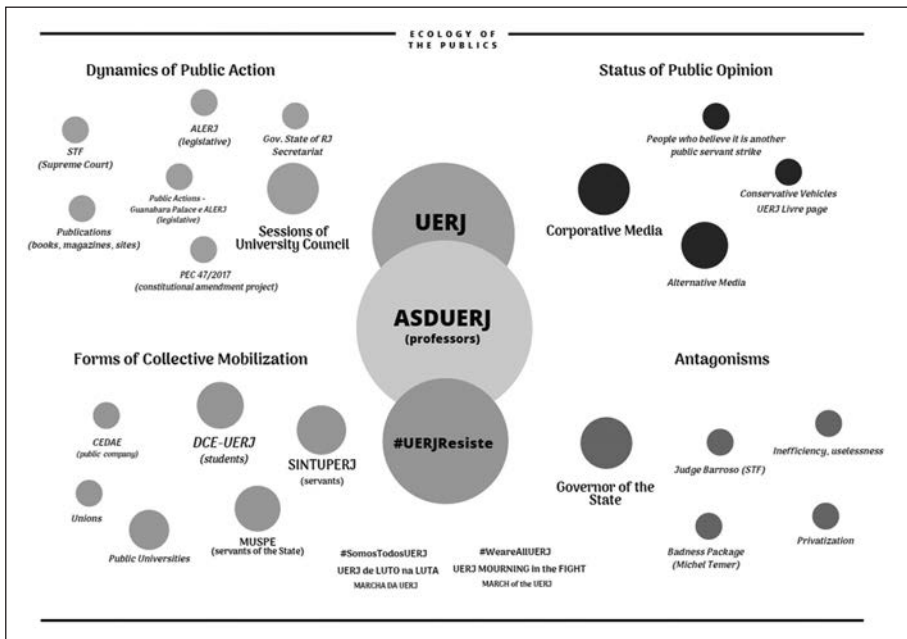
FIGURE 4. Ecology of the #UERJResiste publics
Source: Prepared by the authors.

On the forms of collective mobilization, we observe the #UERJResiste as a regime of publicization linked to the UERJ Teachers' Association (ASDUERJ), which shows through a different public performance. This is because a new institutional character is created, even within a new dynamic of organization that is not directly linked to the union institution, as reported by our interlocutor that we will address in the next section of this article. We focus, therefore, on ASDUERJ united with the university as central figures to understand the paths taken in the fight for recognition. During this period, campaigns were called, such as *#SomosTodosUERJ*, *UERJ de LUTO na LUTA* and *Marcha da UERJ* [We are all UERJ; UERJ mourning in the fight; March of the UERJ] in addition to the several public actions in the Legislative Assembly (ALERJ), in the state government headquarters (Palácio Guanabara) and in the several campuses of the university.

The very spelling of #UERJResiste as a hashtag[2] reveals the intention to constitute itself as an action that spreads and generates engagement in a symbiotic movement between the internet and the streets, as discussed by Malini and Antoun (2013). The option to inhabit these digital communities through social media sites is useful in sharing information and ideas for the construction of knowledge about the topic under debate, seeking to produce communication services that generate values and trust among internet users, as well as to be converted into public demonstrations (Castells, 2017). This publicity generated by the page also attracts the attention of corporate media, which can contribute to the production of new public scenes.

We highlight also the relevance of the actions of the Student Central Directory (DCE-UERJ) and the Union of Workers of the State Public Universities of Rio de Janeiro (Sintuperj) in all the mobilizations and support for actions in social media in defense of UERJ. Supporters outside the university were also fundamentally involved in the ensuing struggle, such as the Unified Movement of State Public Servants (MUSPE), the public universities, and state public companies such as CEDAE (water and sewage company). In the configuration of this public arena, the institutions and organizations of civil society, political parties, congressmen, judges, and many other actors that engaged in the discussions about the public university could not be left out.

In the status of public opinion, we saw the direct relationship with the media and the way associations are presented to the public to forge this opinion about problems. One of the first ways to communicate with the population about the problem was through corporate media, especially television, such as Rede Globo, Bandeirantes, SBT, Record, and TV Brasil. This relationship with the corporate media is not always productive, which causes social movements, in general, to reject the interest of this type of media coverage. Alternative media such as *Forum* magazine and *Carta Capital* have kept a constant monitoring and reporting on the situation. Other Facebook pages linked to the academic community also covered the situation, among which we highlight a conservative page called UERJ Livre, which opposes the decisions of the rectory.

Because UERJ had already been experiencing a succession of mishaps since 2016, one of the issues that instigated a new wave of media coverage was the situation of the Pedro Ernesto University Hospital (HUPE), which became a controversy for the movement. In the first week of 2017, a news story told of the state government's attempt to delink the HUPE payroll from the rest of the UERJ units,

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2. Hashtags are always started with the symbol "#" and play a fundamental role in organizing, locating, and searching for subjects on the semantic web, especially on social media sites.

in a strategy to invalidate the public servants' protests. Facing this situation, a special session of the Consun was called for January 6th, and a letter was issued to the governor stating that activities could possibly be interrupted. This letter was published on the #UERJResiste page, as well as many other documents that were issued throughout this period. We understand the page also worked as a media and opinion maker on Facebook. Furthermore, the news that came from the media about the governor helped build the dynamics of public action.

The representation built by the media always showed the individualized suffering of employees and students, in contrast to the neglect of the state government. The image of the federal government appears in the negotiations of a fiscal recovery regime for the state, which was called by the social movements the "Badness Packet". The privatization discourse is included in many opinions, including that of the STF judge and UERJ professor Luís Roberto Barroso, who wrote an article for the newspaper *O Globo* entitled "Por um novo modelo para financiar a universidade"[3] (For a new model to finance the university) in which he suggests privatization.

We also refer to many prejudices cast about the public university as a place of a perverse elite, of libertinism, of drug use, of unproductivity and inefficiency, which often confuse and misinform the public debate about the functions and purposes of the institution.

As for the class action, it was brought to court seeking the approval of PEC 47/2017, which aimed to regulate the financial autonomy of UERJ, a debate that was dissolved in various ways over the years, culminating in the unsustainable crisis. Throughout the crisis period there was a judicialization of the cases in ALERJ and the Public Ministry, and a lot of struggling on the street. Another front also sought support in the National Congress and the STF.[4]

There are numerous political and interest issues that maintain dependence in the power game between dependence and autonomy in relation to the state government. Once the university manages its budget and its financial issues, it plays an important role in the institution of more democratic relations, consolidating itself as an important and determining public arena in society. The governor, then, resorts to a political dispute in which he places UERJ as a burden that is supported by the taxpayer.

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3. Available at https://oglobo.globo.com/opiniao/crise-na-uerj-reacende-debate-sobre-universidade-gratuita-20806568. Accessed on 20/08/2020.

4. Available at https://g1.globo.com/rio-de-janeiro/noticia/uerj-vai-recorrer-ao-stf-autonomia-financeira--para-obrigar-rj-a-repassar-verba.ghtml?fbclid=IwAR2pwFpZ-IMNoOwWcTX5OJgg_9HHnBP-tgojR-NyBzL- Accessed on 23/01/2020.

There was also a dialog with the Secretariat of Science, Technology, and Innovation (SECTI-RJ) which was strongly harmed by UERJ not having its demands met, since the state government gave priority to the payment of public servants from the Secretariats of Education, Health, and Public Safety.

4.1 Public arena on university autonomy

The crisis of the state government has unveiled an aspect that for more than three decades has gone unnoticed or was inexpressively discussed, which was the administrative and financial autonomy of UERJ. In this context, this issue gained center stage and has been discussed over the last few years. With the progress of ongoing legal actions taken by legislators, as discussed by Ribeiro (2019), we can glimpse a horizon of autonomy for the public universities of the state of Rio de Janeiro, which is not limited to the financial transfer of twelfths, but also in the construction of their budgets in their own way. The university cannot be at the mercy of a government policy, because it is one of the five autonomous entities, as assured by article 207 of the Federal Constitution of Brazil (1988).

In Figure 5 we can observe how this public arena is constituted, pointing out the processes that were triggered by the public to solve the problems experienced.

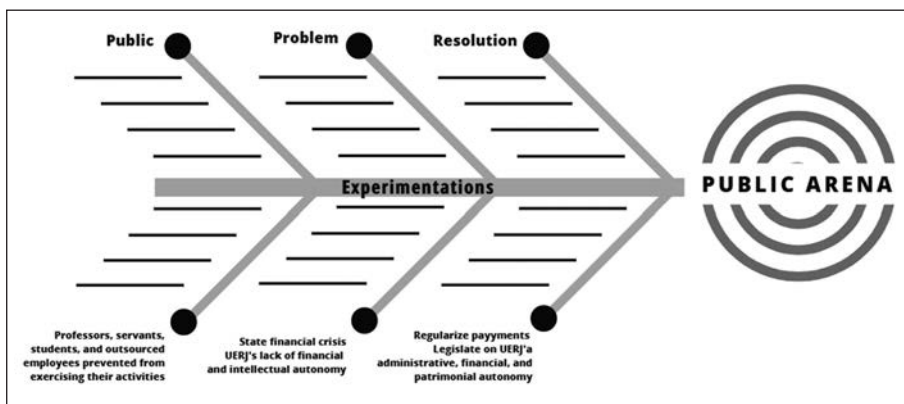**FIGURE 5.** Framework of the public arena on UERJ's autonomy
Source: Prepared by the authors.

We observe in situational analysis that the public was constituted from the problem of the financial crisis generated by the government of the state of Rio de Janeiro, which fails to meet its commitments to its employees, therefore resulting in blocking the operation of UERJ. From this, the associations engage their action

mechanisms to solve the problem presented. We understand that the problem for ASDUERJ is the lack of autonomy of the university, which will be solved when the payments of salaries and services of UERJ are regularized, as well as the legislation about this autonomy, so that the university can build its budget and make its choices with independence.

From here we will address the issues raised during the interview with Prof. Renê Forster, to understand the role of #UERJResiste, as well as its communication strategies in this public arena. Forster says that the creation of the page arose from a need observed by members of ASDUERJ to communicate in a homogeneous manner what was happening with the university to both internal and external audiences. The page was created by ASDUERJ's board of directors and was used as a communication tool. The page was conceived as a reflection of the union's agendas, according to the interview excerpts in Figures 6 and 7, which deal with the origin and organization of the group that manages the #UERJResiste page.
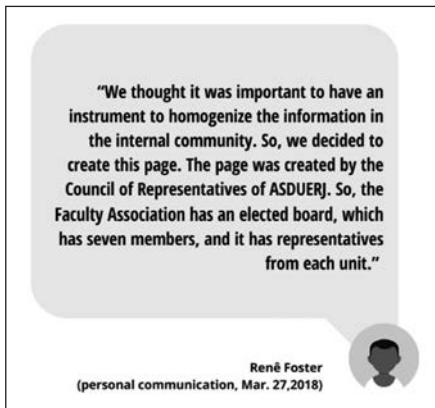
"We thought it was important to have an instrument to homogenize the information in the internal community. So, we decided to create this page. The page was created by the Council of Representatives of ASDUERJ. So, the Faculty Association has an elected board, which has seven members, and it has representatives from each unit."

Renê Foster
(personal communication, Mar. 27,2018)

FIGURE 6. Origin of the page

"When we started it was a committee. That committee must have had about ten members. So, in the beginning, as the process was, we presented a plan of posting with images, with text, we submitted it to the commission, the commission approved it, we posted it. There were always effectively two or three people posting, but the whole commission had about ten people. Today there are four people posting, three teachers and one student. There is no longer a commission. So basically, we post, we think and post."

Renê Foster
(personal communication, Mar. 27,2018)

FIGURE 7. Group composition and organization

Prof. Renê Forster is not from the communication area, but demonstrated concrete knowledge about communication in social media, highlighting the concern with audience schedules, volume of daily content and monitoring of the surrounding opinions in the media. The page also had the support of internal collaborators, such as professors and students from several academic units who sent photos, videos, news links, reports, which helped in the maintenance of the page contents.

We understand that the strategy of maintaining a so-called non-partisan page, without identifying whether the page is made by a union or by the university, maintains a certain independence in its positioning and gains fundamental cred-

ibility with the press. Allied to the strategy of expanding the hashtag, which is posted indistinctly, a true mosaic was created on social media that placed the resistance of the public university as a favorable topic for debate in the corporate media.

Regarding the relationship with other participants of the public arena of which #UERJResiste is part, we highlight that the corporate media sought the page as a spokesperson for the university, as Forster pointed out in the interview (Figure 8). The issue of visibility is observed as varying according to the issues that are promoted more or have greater visibility in the public arena, i.e., if there is some uncertainty about the functioning of the university or if a strike of some social movement of the community takes place. The group showed no interest in exploring possibilities other than attempting to mobilize during the most critical periods (Figure 9).

"It is curious because after a while the press started looking for UERJResiste, so many times we received several calls from the press saying, 'Do you have someone to talk about this?', people wanting to record a documentary. It gained an institutional character by functioning like that, because none of the people who do it, they are professors, but they don't have an institutional character to represent the institution."

Renê Foster
(personal communication, Mar. 27, 2018)

FIGURE 8. Relationship with the press

"(...) we don't really know what's going to become of the page itself, for a couple of reasons. The first is that the repercussion is always greater at times when UERJ goes through difficulties. (...) We try to manage this, because we think that regardless of this, we think that this attack that happened to UERJ was an attack that was crueler and more critical at a certain moment, but it is a continuous attack that has been going on for a long time, that has been implemented by defunding policies."

Renê Foster
(personal communication, Mar. 27, 2018)

FIGURE 9. Facebook limitations

Despite the account in Figure 9, Renê Forster states that the attacks on public education are permanent and systematic, which makes him maintain some communication on the page for future mobilizations. But he also highlights the problem of Facebook's algorithm for political engagement. The monopoly of these large internet corporations over data can turn into surveillance and compromise democracies around the world, which generates the need for regulation, as suggested by Castells (2016). Another concern regards the instability and lack of transparency of Facebook's algorithm to establish strategies that convert into mobilization in the street, as he points out in Figures 10 and 11.

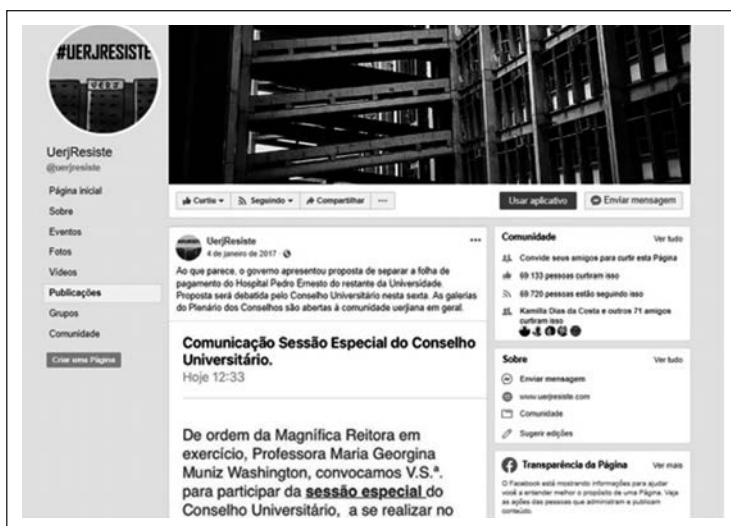**FIGURE 10.** Benefits versus limitations

FIGURE 11. Future of the page

FIGURE 12. Overview of the page on 04/01/2017
Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

4.3 Communication Strategies of the #UERJ Facebook page

The #UERJResiste page (Figure 12) was created on January 28, 2016, and currently has more than 68,000 followers.[5] In a comparison with other university-related pages, we can see its reach. For example, the official UERJ page has 96,000 follow-

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5. Data checked on 08/23/2020.

ers, UERJ of Depression has 83,000, ASDUERJ has 20,000, DCE-UERJ has 19,000. It is important to highlight that during the period studied, the year 2017, the other pages had lower numbers than those recently consulted, including the official UERJ page, which started to have a higher posting frequency from that year on.

To make it easier to understand how the page's communication strategies were organized, we created a table in which we identified the characteristics and objectives of the posts in terms of their form and content, highlighting what we consider to be significant in each category.

TABLE 3. Classification of communication strategies by characteristics and content produced and their highlights

| | COMMUNICATION STRATEGIES | | | |
	MEDIA POLITICS	DISCOURSES OF RESISTING	EDUCATIONAL SHARING	POETICS OF IDENTITY
OBJECTIVE	Inform	Create bonds	Make people reflect	Build Identity
CHARACTERISTIC / FORM	Informative, corporate media re-posts	Persuasive, authored content	Reflexive, authored content	Testimonials, re-postings from internet users
CONTENT	Dissemination of events, news, works as a media of the movement	Motions and statements of support	Reflections on the situation of the university	Testimonials from the Uerjian community[6]
	Mobilization Actions	Demonstrations of artistic, political, intellectual and samba personalities	Voice of experts, point of view on the issues	Building a collective identity
	Event Coverage	Demonstrations in support of other social causes	Reflections on social issues directly linked to the university's causes	Sense of Belonging
	Republishing of TV news, newspapers and magazines, political personalities	Dramatization of public scenes	Questions, possibilities for dialogues	—
HIGHLIGHTS	24 events held in the period, photo and cover customization	Relationship with samba, support to CEDAE's servers and to MTST	Release of the Book *Hoje eu Acordei pra Luta* [Today I Woke up for the Fight], Video Sequence "How the Government Treats UERJ"	Campaign #SouUERJ [I am UERJ]

6. Demonym adopted by the UERJ community.

4.3.1 Media politics

Among the contents published in this strategy are the reposts of corporate media, which occurred mainly among TVs, newspapers, and magazines. For example, videos referring to TV Globo's regional news program RJTV were posted in March, on the 9th and 10th, with a large number of comments and shares. They featured Prof. Tânia Carvalho Netto (who gave several interviews) and the Dean of UERJ. Despite the visibility of these posts, the media coverage generated great controversy, as mentioned in the situational analysis.

It is important to highlight that the page administrators organized the "act show" *Viva UERJ!* which took place at the university's Concha Acústica on February 14, 2017. Other important events were publicized, such as *UERJ in the Square*, whose goal was to show research and laboratory activities in Maracanã Square, seeking to bring the university closer to society. The same event was also carried out in Duque de Caxias, in the Faculty of Education of Baixada Fluminense (FEBF), where it was named *FBEF in the Square*. Other examples were the *Blocato*[7] *"Atocha que importa"*, *ESDI Aberta* and *UERJ na Porta do Pezão*. These events were used as a resource to change the profile picture of the page and the cover (Figure 13) as a strategy to customize the profile.

FIGURE 13. Page profile customization
Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

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7. A combination of a carnival block and an act as a political demonstration.

4.3.2 Discourses of resisting

The slogan "UERJ de LUTO na LUTA" was widely disseminated in the actions undertaken, black banners were unfolded, coffins arranged with the name of UERJ, wreaths of flowers and many other elements related to the dramaturgy of pain, suffering, oppression operated by the state governor.

The posts also highlighted the university's strong connection with samba. Because the analyzed period included Carnival, we emphasize that mobilization turned into celebration and sadness temporarily gave way to joy.

FIGURE 14. Disclosure of the event Bloco Popular Fora Temer[8]
Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

On April 9, one day before the return of classes at UERJ, the page published a video of actor Mateus Solano (Figure 15) highlighting the importance of the uni-

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8. Post translation: Because there is no samba in a coup! With less than a year in office, the fake president [Michel Temer] has messed up rights that took years to be conquered. And as it turns out, the man has no brakes: after making a mockery of the constitutional minimum for Education, he is now vetoing aid to bankrupt states and plotting a law that will lead, in practice, to the end of the right to social security. It's time to stop, right? For no less rights, come with us and shout Out Temer! For these and other reasons, UERJ joins the Bloco Popular Fora Temer! which will take place in Cinelândia, on the 24th at 5pm. Let's make our wing in this block that will bring together various entities.

versity and calling the population to support it. In the video, the Rede Globo actor, famous in several prime-time soap operas, says in an excerpt of his speech: "[...] UERJ is a symbol of hope, hope that life can be better through education, hope that everyone can get to university. But it seems that the state government and the federal government don't know this. They are trying to suffocate UERJ." The post had over 79,000 shares, over 2.4 million views, and 707 comments, making it the most viewed post on the page in the year 2017.

FIGURE 15. Video of actor Mateus Solano
Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

4.3.3 Educational Shares

The first post that we consider educational was made on January 14 and had the title "Why for free?" (Figure 16). The post promotes a reflection on the importance of having a public, free and plural university. This is one of the central issues of the page, so the post is made immediately after the university's temporary closure on January 10. The text serves to elucidate the situation of the university at that moment, as well as present two links to reports from TV Brasil and TV Record (R7 site). The image of the ramp between the blocks with the illuminated background and windows can easily be recognized as UERJ and offers a dramatic and thought-provoking tone.

FIGURE 16. Post "Why for free?"[9]

Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

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9. Post translation: How many people in recent years were able to write a different story for themselves and their families because they had access to higher education?

Education is one of the determining factors of a worker's income. In general, the more educated a worker is, the more he/she earns. Therefore, a public and free higher education is an important instrument for the reduction of inequalities and for income distribution. A free university allows a person to get a degree (or a post-graduate course) regardless of their income.

Of course, much still needs to be done to make access to university broad and democratic. But the Pezão government is going in the opposite direction: it is increasingly reducing the funds destined to its universities. And with less and less funds and without the payment of professors, scholarship holders and outsourced workers, UERJ has been forced to suspend several of its activities due to lack of operating conditions.

UERJ's struggle is for free access to the university to continue to exist and for higher education not to be a privilege, but a right!

Every publication and posting on social media sites is a form of sharing, especially those that propose reflections and engagement in political actions. But not all information is intended to be educational. That is, learning becomes collaborative and continuous, and is based, above all, on dialogue and on the mediation of worldviews and on the lived experience of each individual involved in the educational process, giving room for speaking and listening, seeking communication as a principle and not domestication.

We highlight in Figures 17 and 18 a sequence of videos in which the crisis is explained by approaching situations of everyday life of citizens. The videos are 50 seconds long and use metaphors that relate the state government, for example, to a worker in a store and a housewife.

FIGURE 17. Video "How the government treats UERJ" – Housewife

Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

FIGURE 18. Video "How the government treats UERJ" – Shop assistant

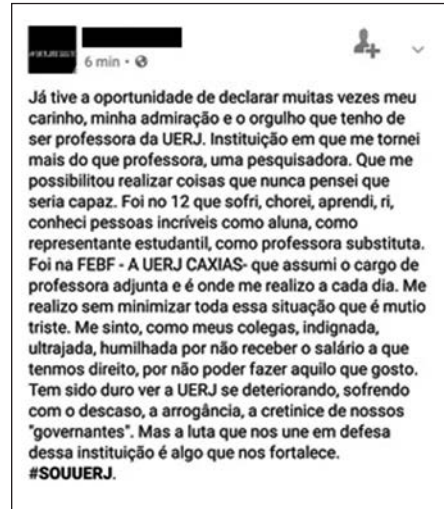**Source:** UerjResiste, 2017.

4.3.4 Poetics of Identity

This category stands out for the name of the hashtag used in the first of these posts (*#SouUERJ* [I am UERJ]), which makes evident the existence and recognition of an identity and a collective belonging, which we understand as a construction of identity, i.e., a poetics of identity.

It is important to note that the action occurred in apparent simultaneity, at least at the time the screen was printed or copied, because apparently, as people posted using this hashtag, the page already captured the image and replied, taking an interval of 6 to 24 minutes in these first five posts. In Figures 19 and 20 we observe two publications that were made by the page.

FIGURE 19. Student posts #SouUERJ[10]

Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

FIGURE 20. Professor posts #SouUERJ[11]

Source: UerjResiste, 2017.

Through the analysis of these posts, we were able to synthesize the production of some characteristics that permeate all the texts. We understand that this synthesis provides us with some clues to the formation of an identity of the #UERJResiste movement, from which we extract the following characteristics: resistant, communitarian, relational, emotional, remarkable, peripheral, of struggle, powerful and united. In general, we understand that the strategy adopted by the #UERJResiste profile to reproduce the posts made using the hashtag #SouUERJ

10. Post translation: It was there that the dream of being in college came true, that I fell in love with nursing, that I made friends and will carry them with me for life, that I was able to have the experience of learning and informing, that I matured ideas and relearned concepts, that I learned that we are all important, that I learned the sense of community, that made me understand the importance of information and that I am responsible for it, that I feel at home, that I wish with all my heart to be able to finish my degree.
I am proud to be Uerjian.
I am proud to be from UERJ.
#IAmUERJ, #UERJResiste

11. Post translation: I have already had the opportunity to declare many times my affection, my admiration, and how proud I am to be a professor at UERJ. It is an institution where I became more than a teacher, I became a researcher. It has made possible for me to accomplish things I never thought I was capable of. It was in the 12th grade that I suffered, cried, learned, laughed, met incredible people as a student, as a student representative, as a substitute teacher. It was at FEBF – UERJ CAXIAS – that I took on the position of adjunct professor and it is where I realize myself every day. I am fulfilled without minimizing this whole situation, which is very sad. Like my colleagues, I feel indignant, outraged, humiliated, for not receiving the salary to which we are entitled, for not being able to do what I like. It has been hard to see UERJ deteriorating, suffering with the neglect, the arrogance, the 'cretinousness' of our "rulers". But the fight that unites us in defense of this institution is something that strengthens us. #IAMUERJ.

goes through the construction of subjects with differentiated experiences, but that converge in a collective identity, which highlights the importance of preserving the public university.

5. Conclusions

This research aimed to understand the role of #UERJResiste in the public arena to confront the attacks unleashed by the state government, and convince public opinion for its defense, mainly during the first three months of 2017.

Through an interview with one of the administrators of #UERJResiste (Renê Forster) and the researchers' experiences as subjects implicated in the research, a situational analysis was built in which we drew an ecology of publics (Cefaï, 2017a, 2017b). In this ecology we identified the main actors in this public arena, and, through ethnographic description (Laplantine, 2004), we mentioned some public scenes that were dramatized in the main media outlets of the country. From the analysis of the Facebook page of #UERJResiste we could understand how the movement acted and mobilized participants and public opinion through communication strategies named by: media politics, discourses of resisting, educational shares and poetics of identity.

It is important to highlight that the agendas of #UERJResiste were met and consolidated, and a path of democratization of the university budget has been traced since 2019. Despite the questioning of our interlocutor about the transparency and effectiveness of Facebook for social movements, the page remains active. Thus, we highlight the important role of communication in social movements through social media sites, which are privileged spaces to connect people, share their indignation, and motivate themselves to build alternative projects for themselves and society (Castells, 2017).

Because this is a more generalist study, it is possible that more specific analyses could be drawn on the situations, relationships, and organizations addressed. In addition to this limitation, it is important to note that it was not our intention to conduct a systematic survey of the media nor of all the participating characters, including those who remain in the "shadows" of the public scenes, which would certainly contribute to understanding a resurgence or reactivation of this public arena. For this type of analysis, it would be necessary to spend much more time in the participation of the daily life of ASDUERJ. Thus, we leave possibilities for new studies to bring new understandings about the situation of the struggle for the public university in Brazil.

Finally, we observe a growing circulation of reactionary and authoritarian ideas, which seek to make public education unviable in a free, plural, and diverse way. This is even more evident when we consider the political actions after the

period studied, which demonstrate the fragility that Brazilian democracy suffers to maintain itself as a system of government that meets the desires of the population. That is why we believe in the importance of social movements in networks as a possibility to relearn and strengthen democratic ideals. In this sense, public university is a fundamental element for social, technological, and economic development, for national sovereignty, for social inclusion, for the reduction of social inequalities, for the improvement of social conditions in general, and for the improvement of democracy itself. With these systematic attacks, public university must prepare itself by assertively using strategic communication in the face of the authoritarian and neoliberal challenges in Latin America.