"Hate the media? Be the media!" Indymedia contributions for an in-action media reform

"No odies los medios, conviértete en ellos". Contribuciones del Indymedia para una reforma activa de medios

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Abstract:

This research focuses on the historical process of Indymedia throughout the 2000s and its legacy for contemporary media activism in a digital convergence era. It highlights Indymedia's contributions to the media reform movement in connection among social

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movements, strengthening the role of communication in their specific agendas. Indymedia legacy is a reference for communication democratization beyond regulation and public policies' perspectives, but also clarifies the need for social mobilization with communication products and processes for a society that demands democracy.

Keywords: media, Indymedia, media activism, media reform.

Resumen:

Esta investigación analiza el proceso histórico de Indymedia en los 2000 y su legado para el activismo mediático contemporáneo en tiempos de convergencia digital. Destaca contribuciones de Indymedia para el movimiento de reforma de medios, en conexiones con los movimientos sociales, fortaleciendo el papel de la comunicación en sus agendas específicas. El legado de Indymedia es una referencia para la democratización de la comunicación más allá de las perspectivas de regulación y políticas públicas, pero también aclara la necesidad de la movilización social con productos y procesos de comunicación para una sociedad que demanda democracia.

Palabras clave: medios independientes, Indymedia, activism mediático, reforma de los medios.

1. INTRODUCTION

The Independent Media Center [IMC] was originally created in 1999 as a live media coverage of the Third Ministerial Meeting of the World Trade Organization (WTO) in Seattle due to an active communication group during the protests. This action generated a website developed by independent journalists that received and stored contents of various formats and themes along with material from the protests. During the meeting in Seattle, the IMC emerged as a global articulation of individuals and groups, who continually used the website to produce and share media among their contact channels.

Within a few years, the IMC became an articulated online organization on local, regional, national and global levels, navigating available resources inside the Internet (available

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resources of websites, mailing lists and chats) - and from the Internet (activities, events and coverage of news), giving form to what are here considered as social sharing communities.

The idea behind the creation and practice of the IMC is quite simple and attractive: inspired by the motto "*Hate the media? Be the media!*" by Jello Biafra, former lead singer of the Dead Kennedys band, over 200 IMCs were established on a global scale in the name of the so-called anti-globalization protests, which were generally held in parallel to the meetings of government leaders and multilateral organizations, such as the United Nations (UN) and the WTO.

The IMC in Brazil was organized as a result of a protest in September 2000. IMC-Brazil uploaded its website in December 2000, reaching 11 local collectives in the cities of: Belo Horizonte; Brasília, Campinas; Caxias do Sul; Florianópolis; Fortaleza; Goiânia; Porto Alegre; Rio de Janeiro; Salvador; and São Paulo (including collectives in the ABC metropolitan industrial region[1]); Aracaju; Cuiabá; Curitiba; Florianópolis; Joinville; Juiz de Fora; Recife; São José dos Campos; São Luís; and Vitória. Participation has always been opened with decentralized organization, and it is the collectives' responsibility to commit to the Global Principles of the IMC Network, with the Membership Criteria and the Editorial Policy that the IMC establishes for its members.

The IMC local collectives' group organized the IMC-Brazil Network, as a network of independent media activists and producers concerned and committed to building a free, egalitarian and environmentally friendly society. Their use of the Internet was a suggestive relationship between political and communication activism, stimulating the production of news not usually published by traditional media, thereby criticizing the news produced by corporate media companies. They also elaborate and disseminate messages in the context of a new media, but not without publishing nor making reference to the news of their interest, which is published by commercial media. Although the Internet was not decisive for participation and involvement in those activities which involved the IMC, the organization's proposal could only become

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[1] The ABC industrial region is known by its main three cities: Santo André, São Bernardo do Campo and São Caetano do Sul.

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possible through the resources and services provided in the network, especially websites, mailing lists and chats.

The IMC activism is comprised of collectives with thematic diversity of different approaches —from the democratization of communication practices, and restructuring of the relationship between producers and the audience in the communication process— all of which, built a sense of belonging and mutual exchange in a multilevel scale (global, regional and local). In addition, the direct involvement in communication practices that could only occur via the Internet was achieved by providing a combination of digital support and network technologies, aimed at the production and dissemination of content from various media outlets.

The development of an open publishing technology, made available on the IMC website favors the articulation of people and groups around a common project —producing independent media— that is appropriated in various ways by website users and collective volunteers: publishing news omitted from conventional media or mentioned in a partial or limited way; sharing material from conventional media that legitimates positions or events relevant for the authors of the contents; disseminating technical, scientific publications or other similar stuff; and making distinct comments in relation to the contents or in an isolated way.

Independent media as a way to democratize communication is therefore an attribute that sustains common goals among its participants. It is translated into a contemporary way of conceiving unity, conceptualized by Lévy (1999), as a non-totalizing universal that "(...) shows precisely that there is another way of establishing the virtual presence of humanity in itself (the universal), other than through the identity of meaning (the totality)" (p. 121). This novelty, in terms of identification, organization and mobilization of the IMC participants (among other groups on a bigger or lower scale), is evidenced by no party or religious identification among its members; the ideological conceptions brought into the IMC, are to ultimately strengthen a common area, in order to preserve the way in which the network operates.

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From the IMC website, several principles have not only established the creation of new collectives but have enabled the maintenance of existing ones: a simple set of norms that identify and preserve the IMC-Brazil Network collectives, as well as its operation both internally and externally. A particular mechanism of these principles is the mutual exchange of messages, which are identified in the reporting of the periodic meetings of each collective. Thus, the network is able to: observe the way in which its members are maintaining the principles to which they have agreed; identify ways to make improvements; consider ways to apply interesting ideas implemented in other cities or even replicate a project that has been successful; and overall, making it common to all collectives, and integrating them as network activity.

The affinity built around these various actors in the context of the IMC has no geographical limitation: the IMC transforms itself from the encounter of experiences at the local level and continues to act on a global scale. This is produced not by the application of a totalizing idea, but by the continuous discovery of ways to operate regarding the initiatives that they implement. It includes the constant encounter with the most diverse movements that make new directions for their activities possible, constituting an active, differentiated and rich participation of social structure reformulation coming from individuals who create real communities in the IMC.

2. INDYMEDIA AND THE MOVEMENT FOR COMMUNICATION DEMOCRATIZATION

The IMC is characterized by its structure inside and outside the Internet: characterization formed by digital media producers who contribute to the movement for the democratization of communication; maintaining its action, identity and ideology in articulation with new social movements in the context of what corporate media named "antiglobalization" and its own collectives renamed as "alterglobalization". It involves several world-wide collectives in what is commonly known as digital or cyber-activism. Thinking and acting globally from constant learning with local initiatives is a fundamental factor related to the IMC collectives' identity.

Democratic communication without this technological apparatus would not allow a series of resources, services, functions and even experiences: a communication which is

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part of daily life of all ages. However, it is necessary to emphasize that the environment that approximates does not necessarily lead to the communities building, but digital technology in a network environment such as the Internet reinforces affinities already built and settled among its members.

It is therefore considered, that the social appropriation of the Internet in a community context reinforces the effectiveness of a communication environment, in which individuals —as users of technology— stop using the technological apparatus among transmitters and receivers as mere spectators (print readers, radio listeners, and TV viewers).

Thus, for Lévy (1993), the metaphor of hypertext accounts for the "indefinitely recursive structure of meaning, since it connects words and phrases whose meanings refer to each other, they discuss and echo each other beyond the linearity of discourse" (p. 73). The text, contrary to what the author affirms, does not constitute a network of associations as such, since such associations are only made possible by the communication actors involved.

Likewise, technology alone does not consolidate the welfare of societies or organizations, if their resources are not appropriated and practiced by those who can effectively benefit from them. In this sense, Castells (2003) identified an interesting difference of the community's performance on the net, "the Internet seems to have a positive effect on social interaction, and tends to increase exposure to other sources of information" (p. 102). As such, the more refined groupings of individuals use the Internet intensively.

In the context of the IMC, it should be acknowledged that the appropriation of the resources available through digital network technology strengthens community ties, consolidating the construction of its identity with its members. In addition, their members also establish common cultural values, in which the sharing of social practices is what consolidates this sense of affinity and belonging, based on a series of attributes —volunteerism, direct action, copy-left, consensus, and others— that deserve to be highlighted by themselves, and which will be discussed later.

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These communities are formed within the Internet environment, reinforced and broadened in local collectives that give visibility to the IMC in relation to the whole society; developing activities, events and news coverage that are also published on the site, as well as debated in lists and chats.

Far greater than networks and communities, the IMC collectives not only use the Internet and organize themselves based on it, they also have common perspectives and mobilization, even with diversified profiles. This occurs not only because of the affinity they demonstrate and reinforce in everyday life, but also as a result of the constant exchange of people involved. It is a factor that makes them expand and increasingly provides meaning; using the Internet for purposes such as generating ways of action on several fronts, confronting ideas, and socializing information.

3. NEW PATHS, NEW CHALLENGES

The world-wide spread of Indymedia practices has created a tradition of media activists based on the connections between the streets and the digital platforms. In the 2000s, when the IMC started in Brazil, the Internet was a mere novelty to the majority of the Brazilian population. It was inevitable though that with free accessible infrastructure, connections with many other social movements around the world, and the idea of making public the demands of social movement through the Internet, would transform the IMC website into a very powerful tool to communicate the social struggle. Anyone can now publish articles, photos or videos onto the IMC website and gain visibility. Until 2009, it was the most visited left-wing website in Brazil (Santos, 2010).

From 2001 to 2005 the IMC expanded its activities around the country in Brazil, but these changed in many ways since 2006. From 2006, some local collectives faced a decline in the number of activists, which can be explained by: 1) some activists migrate their action to other local movements, where they could see more tangible results, for example, some embraced the free transportation movement, homeless and landless movement; or another type of media activist movements as the "Popular Video movement", in which former members of IMC from Brasília (DF) and Goiânia (GO) took in 2009 (Sousa, 2013); 2) the majority of the IMC members were young people who as

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adults took on several responsibilities, and could no longer divide their time between work, family and activism; 3) specifically in Brazil, Santos (2010) highlighted that, by 2003 the Workers Party (PT) implemented a cultural policy enabling many activists to work in digital and cultural projects that were institutionally financed by the Brazilian government; 4) finally, the technological aspect, which has, at least, two components: a) the loss of technological autonomy from 2006, when the IMC started experiencing trouble in developing their own platform (Santos, 2010) and b) the popularization of the social media networking sites, such as *Twitter*, *Facebook* and *YouTube*, making it much easier for anyone to produce and to share content through these platforms, reaching a global audience.

In June 2013, when large social protests took place on Brazilian streets, a new media activist wave followed the protests. The activist communication strategies were multiplied to expressive levels in the country. Cyberspace became the main arena for communications created by social movements, especially on *Facebook*. Activists launched more than three hundred "fanpages", aiming to provide counter-information about the uprising. The recorded videos of the riots went viral very quickly and thus, a network was being created, formed by groups and individuals who became media activists.

The rise of IMC-Brazil, in the 2000s, was the most expressive media activist performance in the country. Thus, we can argue that many similar strategies have been applied in this current era, and that this is the Indymedia legacy. We may consider that in 2013, there were more than ten years of experience and popularization of the idea that young people and the social movements alone could be their own media. Also, there was a strong tradition in direct action through the cameras, and the IMC was the most important reference in this field in the last twenty years.

Thus, it must be highlighted that the first big wave of media activism took place in Seattle during 1999. This well documented event was marked by the connection between video and the Internet. According to Pasquinelli (2002), this first media activism cyclone and the birth of the IMC would not have been possible without this alliance between video and the Internet. Thereafter, "the turn to social networks, the pervasive Internet, and

the always accessible mobile phone" (Wellman and Rainie, 2013, p.1) have expressively changed the social and communication practices, and in particular media activism. Nowadays, an increasing number of people have access to mobile devices, with accessibility to take photographs, film and connect to the Internet, with better image quality; consequently, important changes are introduced to the process and practice of media activism. With a mobile phone, basic filmmaking, editing, uploading and streaming have been made possible: any citizen or activist can use communication as a tool to promote social justice. A consequence of the pervasive technology in this current era is that the know-how to keep the protests as news has become very simple enabling any individual to be a "media activist", even without being affiliated to an organized collective such as the IMC.

So, in this present era, urban protests world-wide are being recorded. Every minute can now be captured by what Pasquinelli (2002) refers to as a "media activist army"; and transmitted live via streaming or sharing on social networking sites, such as *Facebook*, *YouTube* and *Vimeo*. These platforms have generated a change in the structures for production and circulation of the images created by media activism. The Internet was appropriated by several organizations and social movements that had no access to mainstream media, allowing the distribution of free content to a global audience. Thus, contemporary activism is increasingly moving into virtual spaces.

In 2014, although the protests were being observed in all regions of Brazil, media activism was more organized in particular cities, notably Rio de Janeiro: the groups were quickly formed and several independent activists joined this movement. Therefore, those activists interviewed[2] for this paper were from the most active groups in the city: *A Nova Democracia* Newspaper, Mariachi, Carranca, Mídia Ninja, Linhas de Fuga, Mídia Independente Collective, Vinhetando, Tatu Collective and Rio40caos.

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[2] We are considering activity as both action in the street and the social networking sites, since some groups were in the demonstrations filming, but did not upload their videos.

As noted here in the following quote, I-8, media activist in some groups, such as *A Nova Democracia* Newspaper and the *Mariachi* group, explained how the genesis of the movement was a naturally occurring process:

> *At first, I was filming by myself. I did not know anyone. Once I met an old friend in the demonstration. He was filming too. And soon after I got to know all the people and this dynamic where everyone knows everyone started. So, every time an action was about to happen, people sent messages by mobile phone or Facebook. Like that, this big group, which was as big as thirty people, was becoming as an institution* (I-8, personal interviewee, August 20, 2015).

With reference to the above quote, this "big group", however, has personal singularities when it comes to the definition of a media activist. Among those who still use the definition of militant to describe a media activist was heard from interviewee I-4, from A *Nova Democracia* Newspaper (personal interview, July of 2014) "I am a militant with a camera". Another interviewee saw herself as a person uncomfortable with all social injustice:" I see myself as an activist, as a concerned citizen. There are days that I don't even bring my camera" (I-10 personal interview, June 2014). As Pasquinelli (2002), I-1, from *Carranca* group, supports the concept of media activist "I like the media activist concept because to me everyone is an activist. We are all political actors. The concept is really good, but today it is a bit vague since activist can be anything" (personal interview, June 2014).

In spite of possible differences, we have observed joint action among these groups during the protests of our fieldwork. They have formed a large block of activists, sharing social practices and using cameras as a tool for political action. These common practices allow us to enumerate some general features of media activist production during the protests against the FIFA World Cup, in Rio de Janeiro, among which we highlight:

1. Regarding the type of production, most of the groups were reporting news in the form of text, video and photography; except for *Carranca* and Midia Ninja, who were specialized in transmitting live streaming.

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2. The configuration of the groups during demonstrations is usually joint action during calm moments; but when direct conflict erupts, they try to stay in pairs or maintain visibility to their peers, seeking to guarantee the safety of the group.

3. As a general rule, they use press credentials, identifying the name of the activist group they belong to.

4. They use personal protective equipment, such as helmets, body armor, gas masks, etc.

5. During the protests, in general, their mode of action divides them into two groups: those who behave like militants with cameras and those who are seeking to behave like reporters. The first group, in many cases, is in the middle, when they are not the center of direct conflict with the police: shouting slogans, singing, provoking and being provoked by the police. The second group is more moderate and tries to avoid conflict, seeking first to ensure compliance with their work as reporters.

6. In terms of profession, media activists tend to be journalists and filmmakers. However, it is not uncommon to find activists from other professions.

7. Except for *A Nova Democracia* Newspaper, a left-wing newspaper established for over ten years in Rio de Janeiro, the other media activist groups used exclusively militant structures.

8. They use the Internet and especially social networking sites as a platform for organization, production and dissemination of their political activism.

The involvement between practices of media activists and social networking sites is one of the most important aspects for understanding the type of activism developed during the protests of 2014. In Brazil, *Facebook* was the most used social networking site: it had 76 million users in 2013, and its importance was unique in the context of the protests analyzed. One of the activists from *Mariachi* interpreted the use of social networking sites in video activism as important, "we started putting videos on *YouTube* and created a *Facebook* page. At first, this was very important because it created a network and made our images openly available, through the act of sharing" (I-6, personal interview, June 2014). For interviewee 6 (personal interview, July 2014), the networks enhanced

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the work that was already being done, "the popularization of the Internet greatly enhanced our work. It's fundamental. It is through this that we managed to create an echo in the monopoly of the media". In a different interview, the role of the Internet during the protests was also stated:

> *Before, there was a protest of fifty thousand people. The mainstream media did not show it and in the end, no one was aware it was happening. Now if fifty, a hundred thousand or a million people are on the street, as in June, the mainstream media may try to hide it, but through social networking sites, the pages of the groups and YouTube, we will show another point of view* (I-3, personal interview, June 2014).

YouTube channels and *Facebook* pages created by the media activism groups proliferated as fast as the social demonstrations themselves. Although the videos could be shared directly from *Facebook*, most of the audio-visual material was edited before being uploaded to *YouTube* and shared on *Facebook*. Thus, these two social networking sites were deeply connected with the work of media activists.

These contemporary video activist practices are distinct from the IMC practices in many ways. Maybe the most important difference was the use of commercial platforms to communicate the social struggle. Furthermore, we can cite the search of being viral on the Internet as another one. But without a doubt, these video activists follow the IMC legacy, including those former IMC activists.

4. OPEN, DEMOCRATIC AND FREE PUBLICATION

The initiative implemented by the IMC emerged in 1999 with the purpose of being a voice for anti-globalization movements. This enabled the meeting of people, groups and organizations world-wide; using the website to publish news and comments in order to publicize events and other activities, publish ideas and exchange information or even use the website as an arena in which different conceptions are confronted by its users and collective members.

Although a "unique political culture of the media DIY and of unity in diversity" (Coleman, 2004), is revealed in their communication practice, the themes developed

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need to be understood as an interconnecting entanglement of the diverse subjects involved in the movement. So, from the perspective of those who elaborate and also allow access to these resources, sometimes the connection is not fully developed. This makes the open publication mechanism available on the site a simple tool, whose connection with the other demands of the movement must be strengthened for the democratization of communication.

If this happens with the website, the same cannot be said about the articulation of volunteer activists of the IMC collectives and others who participate in the various movements and organizations in the elaboration of common communication projects. Free radios, as one of the main connections of the movement for the broadcasting democratization has a strong identification with IMC activism. This is characterized by the direct action regarding the immediate implementation of projects, and the involvement of people in activities, thereby giving instant visibility to the mobilization for the democratization of communication. In addition, collaborative initiatives with free radios serve to bring the IMC closer to militant movements such as the homeless in São Paulo and the free pass for students in Florianópolis.

The IMC conducts its activity as a plural expression forum, and its contribution to the movement for the democratization of communication could be much greater given the diversity of issues in the field of communication, in which it would be able to participate in a better qualified way, even by applied practices and the visibility of various social movements.

The homeless and student movements are believed to be closer to the IMC, both in the appropriation of the open publication system and in action, working with local collectives, (such as in states of São Paulo, Goiânia and Porto Alegre, which are generally articulated with ENECOS - the National Executive of Social Communication Students); establishing what most defined the IMC's contribution. This new form of politics and claiming democratizing dimensions of a particular field of action is more than an affirmation of a plurality; one that is not consolidated from the perspective of a certain ideological corpus.

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They are not guided by the need for state intervention, but by the inclination to establish relations among groups, with the need to resist and transform relations of oppression. According to Holloway (2003), "there is an immense area of activity aimed at transforming the world that does not have the state as a center and does not aim at gaining positions of power" (pp. 38-39). Although the author referred to this area as the one in which anti-power grows, because it has displaced the importance of state control and a loss of the revolutionary perspective on the basis of the old distinction between reform, revolution and the anarchist way; these theoretical debates and / or strategic issues appear frequently on the IMC website - even as provocations from comments on the news or messages posted by users in general, by the open publication mechanism, thereby influencing participation of local collectives.

Consequently, the IMC has both the state and market not as partners, but as necessary actors because of their conjecture attributions. They are based on the affinity of projects: women's affirmation; alternative agriculture; land and labor; against child labor, among several others; their actions form a model that, in the measure of their interest and capacity of pressure, can come to serve as a contribution to laws and new accessions. As Steven Johnson highlighted (2003, p. 54), emerging systems self-organized in bottom-top processes and in an adaptive way have individual agents who pay attention to their closest neighbors, in spite of waiting for upper orders. They think locally and act locally, but their collective action produces global behavior.

5. AN IMC VIEW OF DEMOCRATIC COMMUNICATION

The IMC role in this context of the communication democratization movement in Brazil reveals possible characteristics of a communication claimed as a human right, with values in the practice affirmed by the IMC; to the extent of the social appropriation of ICTs and the formation of communities of social sharing, based on their local collectives, which are articulated on a global scale.

The plurality of actors and struggle flags, focused on the diversity of conceived, produced and distributed products, is the dimension that presents itself as a determinant in the context of communication democratization. For Santoro (1995), "it

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is necessary for those who are called to decide, or to elect those who should decide, to be placed before real alternatives and put in the condition of choosing" (p. 2); and this is a process so decisive that it also needs to be affirmed in the documents constituting the IMC, and in the daily life of the actions of the movements.

The quantitative aspects of participation related to the number of channels and programs available are essential components of the IMC quality. But they are not the only or the most important ones; in respect to the current capacity of people's involvement in the production, understanding the subjects that are the object of communication, the capacity to effectively transform critical consciousness, and to promote individual and group competencies as far as stimulating the circulation of information.

Analyzing public access television in the United States, Nelson Hoineff (1996) showed that the motto "five hundred channels and nothing to see" originated from this system, in which "the physical cable distribution technology, from fiber optics, made it possible for systems to be able to traffic up to five hundred possible channels, with options for various forms of interactivity" (p. 43). This variety of available channels did not necessarily lead to the improvement of quality in programming, not even the diversification of access, in the sense of including actors who previously could not produce and broadcast their contents. Nowadays, independent producers are more likely to secure arrangements to sell their products and make their projects viable, but within the same market logic that guides mass television.

This structure comes from the programming grids of community radio stations, usually with tracks ranging from thirty minutes to one hour in length, which considerably extends the space open to those interested in putting their projects on air. The quality of programming in general and of programs in particular - which is not limited to the slots in the programming grid - is a determining factor, directly related to the quality of the articulations of individuals, groups and organizations concerned in the placement of its contents.

Therefore, in addition to a plurality - which involves the inclusion of sectors previously lacking possibilities or conditions to access or broadcast their contents, or even to

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understand the dynamics of the communication process - a significant aspect of the communication process is the qualification of participation. The development of informal workshops or meetings regarding content production, as one of the IMC activities, focused not on the appropriation of the operation of a specific media, but on techniques and languages to increase its quality.

Mobilization for the democratization of communication in Brazil demonstrates that there are many spaces to be won by social movements, regarding the full and non-hierarchical involvement of people and organizations. For Holloway (2003), "the existence of power-making as power-over means that the vast majority of doers are converted into objects of doing" (p. 50); and this is not only the privilege of capitalist relations, but also a fact that social movements need to face and overcome.

Leveling information and acting capacities are also part of people's effective involvement. Communication is an apparently simple and accessible assimilation activity, yet the understanding of its functioning at the state and market level is quite complex. The diversity of participation in this scenario can be a great gain if demands are claimed, and new and different experiences are implemented, provided that there is complete awareness of the role of social actors in this context.

From the IMC's perspective, the ability to aggregate several sectors from its open publication system enables an informal articulation of social movements that do not necessarily promote joint actions. Yet they do have space enabling the insertion of comments to published material, and this has the potential to function as a permanent meeting. However, after a period of strong identification of the IMC as a representative for anti-capitalist movements - assimilated and incorporated into the dynamics of its collectives and of the sites they publish - its members face a new challenge, which is to build a movement with values that the IMC accumulated since its beginning in 1999, going beyond the spaces achieved.

According to Downing (2001, p.14-15), three aspects are relevant in the open dimension of IMC publications: "Appropriate connections between IMC and possibilities for coordinated action, issues of freedom of expression and editorial control [of content in

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the site] and the relationship between media activism and state repression". These aspects are relevant to the internal debate on the functioning and intentions of the activities promoted by the IMC. They determine the quality of the dialogues and the possibilities to generate concrete outcomes in the execution of activities, in which IMC members are not only operators and maintainers of a technological apparatus at the disposal of social movements, but also actors who enable technological and social tools to provide an increasingly radical activism.

The promotion of the meeting of these diverse forces for the understanding of a communication that pretends to be democratic has, as its purpose, the design of the characteristics of the information that circulates, from the most varied actors, whose participation is encouraged, as far as mobilization of its members and of what is possible in the dynamics, articulations and initiatives of the movements.

Therefore, a dialogical perspective is contemplated by the knowledge promoted from the shared information which is accessible to all. Communication is then rescued, and its practice needs to be not only claimed, but also affirmed in the identity of its own actions. With ingredients such as participation, plurality, horizontality, interaction and dialogicity, communication can be understood as effectively democratic.

As Johnson highlighted (2003), by generating non-hierarchical processes, permanently adjusted to maintain network articulation in an adaptive way, because local relations affect changes in the global process. This differs from traditional social organizations, as they are articulated in a centralized way, and sometimes in top-bottom processes. These relations are reflected in the news production by volunteers who act, select and publish their themes and issues involving closer relations in the everyday life of local collectives.

6. CONCLUSION

What can we learn with this IMC journey of resistance and continuity of more than 20 years? Without a doubt, the rise of Indymedia in 1999 changed media activism practices world-wide. It is the appropriate time to reflect on its legacy and the challenges to the field —both for academic researchers and media practitioners. First, we can say the

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popularization of DIY by the IMC offered an important path for media activism. It is evident we also need to consider that the technological and political favorable moment for that, but since 1999, any social movement which claims not to have been correctly framed by the mainstream media can build their own media, or use the IMC platforms to share their voice. Thus, in the current climate when we witness citizens reporting the social protests, or daily problems in the big cities or villages and from an indigenous tribe in Amazonia, it can also be viewed as part of the IMC legacy.

A key lesson from Indymedia is how to act as a window to different social movements. Since its origin, the IMC has been a media activism movement, connected to various movements at grassroots level world-wide, encouraging participation and implementing democracy. It could also be seen —not deeply as it was within IMC— in the last media activist wave in Brazil that occurred in 2012-2015.

Nowadays, the challenge is to utilize its legacy and build a media activist movement that recovers many of the lessons from the IMC, in the context of the pervasive commercial social media platforms —once these platforms operate in an opposite idea of democratization of the communication (Hintz, 2016). As many social movements migrate their media activist practices to *Facebook*, *Twitter*, *Instagram*, etc., they start to lose some very important principles set out by IMC as participation, plurality, horizontality, interaction and dialogicity. Thus, the current challenge is to consider how to deepen the democratization of the media through media activism without being a hostage of the commercial platforms.

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