Political blogs in Portugal
Has the device created new actors?
[Portuguese version]

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Índice

Abstract

During a short span of time, weblogs (or blogs) have moved from a simple computer application, to an important communication device. In teaching, literature, science and politics the use of blogs has increased rapidly due to two simultaneous characteristics: low cost and easy use.

Blogs establish privileged relationships with others that deal with the same themes, creating small webs of interests. One of the more interesting communities is the one related to current politics, which is largely produced by people unknown to the traditional media. This paper aims to understand if the blogsphere is creating new social players and what are the motives that lead to the creation of a political blog.

1 Portuguese blogshepere is born

Although some authors argue that the birth of blogs overlaps the first web pages, the concept of blog – with a meaning as synonym of a chronologically order page with links to other pages – was used for the first time in December 1997 by Jon Barger. As such, the first post[1], would have been written on the 1 of April 1997.

Also in Portugal, there is some controversy about which should be considered the first Portuguese blog. Considering the earlier description and leaving aside the cases of collaborative/combined journalism –with submission of one article to an administrator – the first Portuguese blog must have been *Macacos sem Galho*[2], born on the 30th March 1999.

However, the explosion of blogosphere only occurred during 2003. In January 174

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[1]http://archive.scripting.com/1997/04/01
[2]http://www.macacos.com

blogs were indexed to BLOGSemPT[3], in July their number was 925 and in November already 2724[4].

The appearance of Pacheco Pereira[5] in blogosphere was a very important moment in the growth of Portuguese blogosphere as it attracted traditional media interest, especially those of the more generalist press. *Diário Económico* (May) and *Público* (23rd June) and *Visão* (26th June) gave visibility to a phenomenon which was in full growth and that continued to grow after this point, both in blog numbers but also number of visits.

Television Channels have also done some pieces about blogs, and as with the papers, *Abrupto*, *Coluna Infame*[6], *Blog de Esquerda*[7], *País Relativo*[8], *Cruzes Canhoto*[9], O *Meu Pipi*[10], Blogue dos *Marretas*[11] or O *Gato Fedorento*[12], all blogs related to politics or humour, while in some cases they are a mixed of the two.

The sudden interest and attention of the traditional media led to a new growth in Portuguese blogsphere which at the end of 2004 already had 90,000 blogs although only 25.000 were updated on the last thirty days of the year.

One of the issues present in the Portuguese blogsphere from its beginning is the political discussion between Left and Right Wings. Born in October 2002 *Coluna Infame* was one of the first political blogs with

great impact in Portugal, and although it has ended, remains a reference to Right Wing blogs. During some time Left Wing opinion was supported by the *Blog de Esquerda,* born on the 1st of January 2003, yet on the 23rd of March it was joined by *País Relativo*.

Some of the political blogs which marked the beginning of the Portuguese blogosphere have in the mean time been cancelled, with some of the bloggers joining common projects. The new leading actors are now others, but Portuguese blogosphere remains sparkling, with a new level of arguments not seen in the traditional media. The variety and quality of available opinions in the blogosphere has transformed this virtual space into a unique discussion forum, with complete freedom of access to blog- cyberspace. This is why, although growth levels have decreased, the numbers of political blogs continue to rise.

However, free access to an opinion space is not the only requisite for a person who wants to create his/her own blog. If the large majority of users do it because of the need to convey and share their opinion, 32% create a blog to share information[13]. This implies an audience, which in this case, has to be won.

This problem is dealt with by Katie Hafner[14] in a simple phrase in the New York Times "Never have so many people written so much to be read by so few". In Portugal, the number of blogs with more than 500 readers per day does not cross 50. However, blogs such as *Abrupto* and *Barnabé*[15] have

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[3]http://blogsempt.blogspot.com

[4]Data from http://blocodenotas.blogspot.com

[5]http://abrupto.blogspot.com

[6]http://colunainfame.blogspot.com

[7]Actually en http://bde.blogue.com.pt

[8]http://paisrelativo.blogspot.com

[9]http://cruzescanhoto.blogue.com.pt

[10]http://omeupipi.blogspot.com

[11]http://marretas.blogspot.com

[12]http://www.gatofedorento.blogspot.com

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[13]Joana Batista – O Fenómeno dos Blogues em Portugal em http://seminarioinvestigacao.blogspot.com./

[14]Katie Hafner, "For Some, the Blogging Never Stops," *New York Times,* 27 May 2004.

[15]http://barnabe.weblog.com.pt

around 4000 daily visits, which says much about their importance. On the Blogosphere it matters 'how many read' but more importantly 'who reads'. It is obviously not a mass information media but it has a considerable high importance, as it is here that some of the traditional media come to collect information and opinions, reproducing and enlarging on blogosphere effects to a larger audience. This rising importance of the political blogosphere has been the starting point of this study which aims to understand the motives that make a normal citizen spend much of his/her time keeping their own opinion space active.

2 Blogosphere and its relations

Governments always have had the tendency to restrict the media's freedom of expression, resorting to more radical or efficient mechanisms –such as censorship – or through direct control actions, such as financial pressure of the media organizations.

The alternating political changes in power ended up creating media groups, which although they allege independence, are either in favour of the political *status quo*, or in opposition.

It is in this context of media control that blogosphere arose, universal and abstract, seen by some as the new Agora but in opposition with the Athens space – concrete and localised. On the blogosphere, the contributor shares an idiom with its recipients. On blogosphere, bloggers do not need to reveal their true identities, which allow uncommitted participation. On the blogosphere, access to media space is not dependent on any type of organization. For all these, blogosphere is understood as a true space of free

opinion. However, the beginning of Portuguese blogosphere was marked by a more intimate phase, when blogs limited themselves to being a cyber diary of its authors. Afterwards, blogosphere enter a new, more political phase, with the appearance of different people that did not find true space for debate in the papers/journals. Others with no political affiliation but with strong political convictions and opinions soon joined, which led to intense and passionate debates. Actually the blogosphere can be seen as a mirror of society. Any political convulsion or event has immediate effect in the blogosphere with an increase on visits and edited posts. This was what happened at the time of the Madrid incidents, the death of Sousa Franco and during the process that led to the proposal of Santana Lopes to occupy the Prime Ministerial seat.

Despite the growing importance of blogosphere, until late 2004, this phenomenon had been practically ignored by politicians. With the exception of José Magalhães and, later, Pacheco Pereira, Portuguese politicians only paid attention to blogs after the press reference to blog thematic. During the European campaign there were some candidates that used blogs, such as Manuel Monteiro, and later on the Assembleia da República[16] itself offered the deputies a change to have a blog. In the recent Presidential elections (January 2006), all the candidates have an official weblog and some reference newspapers publish diary posts from the most important portuguese weblogs.

Internationally, the 2nd Gulf War, and specifically the American presidential elections, were two high moments both on the blo-

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[16]http://blogs.parlamento.pt/indice/

gosphere and traditional media which resorted to this new media. In July 2004 CNN communicated that it would follow the Democratic Convention through blogs. Showing the importance given to this support, CNN called their best journalists to this function, such as Candy Crowley. Interest in this theme caught the attention of Technorati, which for the first time opened a specific section[17] to follow it. David Sifry, the company's founder, justified this initiative as aiming to help bloggers, journalists and the audiences in general to follow the Conventions in a closer way and through varied opinions.

2.1 Blogs and journalism

One of the phenomena associated with the growth of the Internet was the birth of online journals. At the same time, all over the world, online informative publications without the participation of a journalist started to appear as well as publications born out of Collaborative Journalism, also called Participative Journalism. This is what happened with the South-Korean newspaper *OhmyNews*[18] for instance, where thousands of anonymous citizens send news of their home place for daily publication.

Participative Journalism is understood as 'the act of any individual or group of individuals to perform an active role in the choosing, analysis, production and distribution of news and information. The aim of this participation/involvement is to offer independent, faithful, varied, accurate and relevant information to the maintenance/work of democracy.'[19]

This concept seems encompassing enough to include blogs, especially those dedicated to present day politics. If we think about journalists' blogs then this definition becomes even more accurate.

However, between blogs and this type of publication there is an essential difference: Participative Journalism sites have a panel of editors filtering and sifting the information received, whilst in exclusive control blogs, the blogger is the only gatekeeper.

The similarity between blogs and journalism happens thus at a specific level of genre: opinion texts published by papers convey authors' positions in relation to certain events that arouse their interest, blogs on the other hand are by definition, the author's private/personal opinion space. At this level, a blog may be seen as a journalistic product but only in this case or when a journalist, following specific journalistic rules, produces its contents.

There are other levels where the relationship between blogs and journalism is closer, with benefits for both. It is undeniable that blogs became an important information source for traditional media. Editors, redaction chiefs and journalists all over the world access blogs to gather specialised opinions or fast reactions to certain events. Dresnel and Farrel[20] point out four reasons which justify the relationship between the mediasphere and the blogosphere:

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[17]politics.technorati.com

[18]http://www.ohmynews.com

[19]We Media, download in http://www.hypergene.net/wemedia/download/we_media.pdf

[20]Drezner, D, W. e Farrell, H. , [2004] *The power and politics of blogs*

1. **Material benefits:** the growth of paid contents and consequent loss of readers, made newspapers maintain free offers, as a way to keep readers and eventually to attract them into paying for its contents. Resorting to blogs was the solution found for an offer of information without investment in technical expenditure. The alliance between press companies and the blogosphere goes even further: some companies are offering readers the change of having their own blogspace.

2. **Personal webs:** there is a direct relationship between the first bloggers and journalists, as many of the blogosphere pioneers were journalists. This created an environment of complicity between bloggers and opinion makers, making an atmosphere of credibility where new blogs appeared.

3. **Specialization:** by their own nature, bloggers are a group marked by a large cultural, social and geographical diversity. This diversity allows a deep specialization in certain subjects, exactly the opposite of what happens in the traditional reference media.

4. **Speed:** blogs versatility and low cost are two competitive advantages as they allow fast reactions. Many papers use them to cover certain events in real-time, thus creating a stronger relationship with their traditional readers.

To these four prime characteristics we can add many others: as an example, the resource to blogrolls[21] allows the creation of webs between blogs which focus on similar themes, allowing the reader to quickly and easily access different visions of an event. Furthermore, comment systems allow fast feed back on the subjects. This sharing of interests overcame an initial tension between the blogosphere and journals, creating a new phase of collaboration. Blogs do not at present perform much field research on the news published and as such their activity is centred around comments and research on some of the news published on online papers. Using Internet tools, bloggers develop their work and publish investigations which are used by papers on many occasions.

3 Actors/ players/ performers and mechanisms

3.1 Concepts definition

For Blumer and Gurevitch[22], the process of political communication must be seen as a relational system between political institutions and media organizations. The system is based on mutual interdependency and on the fact that both parts are legitimated in society, one through vote, the other through audience.

Media rely on political organizations as they are both the motor and the vehicle of economical, social and cultural institutions, as the producers of events and opinions.

Political institutions on the other hand, depend on media as they are the ones that own the system which allows them to reach large audiences, the public, who can legitimate the renovation of power.

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[21]blogger favourite links

[22]Blumler, J. e Gurevitch (1995), 12-13

Thus, two preponderant elements are clearly distinguishable in the process of political communication: the players and the communication mechanisms.

Players are the active participants in the process of communication, and are those that want to renovate their power through the legitimation of public opinion. Missika and Wolton[23] identified four kinds of players in political communication:

- **Political Man** - legitimated through elections.

- **Journalists** – legitimated by readers, and through the performance of a social need for freedom of expression.

- **Key/ lead players and professionals** – legitimated through peer election.

- **Intellectuals** – legitimated through the media that invites them due to their relationship to education and culture.

The mechanisms[24] here considered in a larger sense, are the passive elements of the system, those that allow the player to reach the power legitimating element, the audience. Thus, the following mechanisms will be mentioned.

1. **Social Communication media**

2. **Political intervention stages**: campaign speeches, conferences, discussion sessions

[23]Jean-Louis Missika e Dominique Wolton, La Folle du Logis, Paris, Gallimard, 1983, pp 313-316

[24]Adaptation from Mário Mesquita, O Quarto Equívoco, Coimbra, Minerva, 2004, p 94

3. **Social organizations**: professional associations, educational institutions, etc.

4. **Cultural supports**: books, cd's etc.

The existence of differences between the varied mechanisms is clear, which constrain the definitive form of projection of the player which uses them. These differences are clear in three levels:

1. **Access conditions**: Who can access these mechanism and how?

2. **Audience dimension**: How many individuals can potentially have contact, even if only virtually with the actor?

3. **Distribution**: audience's access

Considering this information it becomes easy to understand, with no great surprise, that the most powerful mechanisms are those that have larger audiences, which in the case of television, is a consequence of optimal distribution, as it gets inside people's houses with no intervention required. Aside from television, the most powerful media, the remaining channels have a predominant role in the projection of new actors, being the more powerful mechanisms. Thus, access to media appears a fundamental question, when public and media space seems to be enmeshed together.

However, access to media is not dependent on only one of the parts, but of the negotiation between both. Journalist ethics implies media independence, but in reality it is known that there is an editorial politic which privileges the covering of certain events or people to the detriment of others. Warren Breed[25] highlights that editorial politics is

[25]Jornalismo: Questões, teorias e histórias, de Nelson Traquina, Lisboa, Veja, 1983, pp 152-154

determined by the senior board members of the organisation this being usually followed by the journalists. To achieve integration and recognition from their peers, young journalists try to redefine their values to the more pragmatic level of the editing stand. Thus, editorial politics end up being dictated by the organization, as it is the proprietor key holder which leads access to the media.

From the above it is possible to understand why the mechanism achieves a crucial role in the creation of new actors in the system of political information.

3.2   The new actor legitimacy

When writing to a reference paper, the author of an opinion text knows that it will get to the readers of that publication, thus having a guarantied audience by the power of that journal on public opinion. The space that publishes his opinion – the paper – is legitimated though its readers numbers. The authors of opinions are legitimated through the recognition conferred on them, when being invited to express their opinion in a paper. Finally, the editor is legitimated by his peers or by the company, as he was chosen for a position that confers on him that power.

In the case of bloggers, access to space is free, but bloggers are conscious that they have to create their own public audience. This will depend on the credibility the blogger is able to manage among the community, through references made by or to other members of the community. The references are links to their own page, either through a permanent link or through quotation. In technical terms, these references are divided in two groups:

- Inbound links: links made through other sites, blogs or others.

- Inbound blogs: links though other blogs, only one record is accounted with each connection, i.e independently of the number of links made through a blog the counter considers only one inbound by blog.

The credibility achieved by the number of links, can be measured using different tools, such as Technnorati, a tool which counts the links and provides a position score. As a rule, the more links a blog has, the more it is considered to be amongst the community, thus mechanisms are created to raise position. Two of the more common methods are the change of links or mutual quotations. There are also fraudulent ways to raise ranking, such as creating web pages with hundreds of links to a blog making that blog gain on the inbound blogs, thus these blogs end up being cleaned out of the scoring system by their administrators.

It is also possible to assess a blogs prestige or reputation though its audience, i.e., through the number of visitors, but also in this case there are ways to move up the scoring position. The most used ways are counting the authors own visits and the insertion of words, these being most investigated in the tags of the source code or on the name of the pictures included in the posts. The majority of search motors have a monthly list of the most searched for words. In particularly in Portugal the word sex – and those other related to it – wallpaper, mobile phones, games or mp3 are sure baits to attract visitors.

However, in the same way as with a marketing campaign, if the blog does not have

quality, visitors do not return. This strategy works for a short period, but in the medium-long run the blog will return to its usual visitor numbers.

Hence, the best way to measure a blog credibility amongst the community ends up being through crossing numbers of inbound logs with visitors numbers. It is not by chance that the most recognised blogs are simultaneously on the inbound blogs Top 25[26] and on the Bloggmeter Top 25[27].

There are other tools which measure the importance of a blog such as Blogstreet[28], for instance, which adds an interesting variable to the measurements, as it previously measures every link. In this case, the link made through a well quoted blog is more valuable than a link on an unknown blog. This internal legitimation form, similar to those in every socio-professional institutions, is criticised by some authors. Paulo Serra[29] puts down this form of legitimation, as he sees in the blog0sphere certain co-operativism. According to him bloggers would create a 'web' of relationship' more or less blurred to the common individual, which will point to links of their own texts or of other blogs with which they feel a greater connection and vice-versa – hence reinforcing their mutual visibility and consequently, the invisibility of others, namely the recent-arrivals'. This alleged web of interests constrains the reader's choice, making only certain blogs visible. It is obvious that a web of interests

linking blogs exists. It can even be considered one of the fundamental distinctions of the blogosphere, as the high level of specialization of blogs leads undoubtedly, to the creation of small webs. If we consider that the blogosphere is a dynamic book and compare it with paper books, we reach the conclusion that the existence of links related to the subjects dealt with, is no more than the translation of something we already know: the permalink- a foot note, and the blogroll the bibliography, both with dynamic and immediate access.

This web works then, as a distinctive mark of a specific thematic group and not as a system to constrain the entrance of new blogs to the more visited group. Blogosphere is full of examples of blogs whose authors do not belong to the political-mediatic mainstream, but ended up in the position score of blogs with more links/visits. Moreover, the stability of numbers of visitors and achieving quotations will always be dependent of the quality of the product. Visiting some of the visitor counters makes clear that a link made through a reference blog exponentially raises the number of visits, but a few days later numbers go back to normal. Thus, in this as in other activities, new members announce themselves though electronic messages sent to the more famous. Entrance to the list of 'recommended links' will undoubtedly be dependent on the blogs quality. However, in the particular case of the blogosphere there is still another independent and free way of promotion, which does not happen in the other mechanisms: the possibility of self-promotion in the comment boxes of the more known blogs.

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[26]Top 25 for daily visits:
http://blogue.com.pt/portal/blogometro/
[27]Top 25 portugueses in Technorati:
http://blogue.com.pt/portal/technorati/
[28]http://www.blogstreet.com
[29]*Contributos para uma teoria neo-darwiniana da comunicação*, texto apresentado no VI Lusocom.

4 Results

4.1 The sample

For this study fifty-one blogs were chosen, in these the main topics discussed are of a political actuality, either national or local. It was possible to gather 35 answers to the questionnaires sent, which a return value of 68%

Questioned about their political positioning, 18 blogs considered themselves Centre-Right or Right wing (9/9), 15 Centre-Left or Left (8/7) and 2 did not define their position.

The first conclusion, which can be made, is that Right wing blogs are mainly individual (72.2%), while the ones on the Left range between individual (46%) and collective (54%).

Data confirms that 2003 was the year of the big boom in Portuguese political blogosphere, with 94% of these blogs born on this year. July was the month that saw the dawn of more blogs (8) and the third quarter saw the peak with 13 of the 35 blogs born in 2003.

Concerning production terms 45.7% of the blogs put out one to ten posts weekly, 34.3% do 11 to 20, and 8.9% put out 21 to 30, the same percentage of blogs which put out more than fifty posts weekly.

In respect of daily visits, 79.4% of blogs registered less than 400 visits, there were 23.6% with less that 100, 26.6% with between 100 and 200 and 4 % with 201 to 400 daily visits.

The average age of visitors represented amongst present day politics is 22/33 (44.1%), followed by 34/41 (38.2%), from 41-50 (11.8%) and from 18/25 (5.9%). The questionnaire also illustrated that the average age of the Left bloggers is lower than the one from the Right wing.

Professionally, a large variety of professions were registered, managers and teachers lead the professional representation.

To understand those bloggers dealing in the political actuality motifs, twelve affirmations were presented (one more for journalists) which the subjects classified in a scale ranged from 'complete agreement' to 'complete disagreement'.

4.2 Bloggers motivations

4.2.1 Results revealed that the two strongest reasons to create a blog are the desire to 'inform and be informed' and the need to 'have civic involvement', both with the same values.

When analysing the political positioning, the right favours the 'inform and be informed' variant while the left favoured to 'have civic involvement'.

4.2.2 The third aspect noted as motivation to create a blog was the 'need for a space for opinion not available on the traditional media'. In this case, the Left and Right present similar values.

4.2.3 Subsequent aspects are 'feeling the immediate reaction of the readers' and 'the creation of relationships with people with similar interests'. Once more a coincidence between Left and Right is registered.

4.2.4 The 'possibility of participation in a truly democratic community' is a strong motivation for the peopled questioned. The left reinforces this motivation with 40% of the subjects answering in 'complete

agreement', a value considerably higher than the 28% of the Right.

4.2.5 Other reasons that lead bloggers to create their own space is to 'help readers to interpret/understand the news', this was the 6th most referred motif.

4.2.6 The seventh reason for creating a blog was the 'chance to create an alternative to traditional media'.

4.2.7 Lastly the subjects also agreed that the creation of blogs wanted to 'reach alternative audiences', with the Left being more enthusiastic.

4.2.8 The subjects only disagreed with two of the 12 sentences. The need to 'achieve public recognition' and to 'mark the political/mediatic agenda' seem not be reasons to create a blog. In the first case the Left answered with 47% in 'complete disagreement' against 23% of the Right.

5 Conclusion

To what extent can the blogosphere influence public opinion, achieving thus one of the strongest motivations behind the creation of these blogs?

It is known that the questions discussed in public opinion result from the conformity between the interests of certain social groups. These groups use the more accessible resources and mechanisms to obtain the limelight of the stronger mechanisms, the media, trying to insert their /topics on to the media agenda. One way or another, these groups end up as hostages to the media, as

the remaining mechanisms have a more restricted geographical influence and force the dislocation of the audience from the real venue of the debate. Thus there remains the difficulty in identifying the ideal relationship between media and public debate.

To answer this question, Wilson Gomes[30] introduced the concept of 'public visibility sphere'. This sphere would be the mediatic filter of what happens in the 'public sphere', i.e., on the public opinion debate. According to this author, the capacity of this 'public visibility sphere' to influence the public opinion would be related to the possibility of the public to access a re-edition of the mediatic information through the light of their own interpretative competencies. For this, the audience would have the opportunity of searching alternative information sources which would allow them a posterior intervention on the media debates.

In the concept defined by Wilson is possible to distinguish four moments:

1. Selection of certain/specific events

2. Interpretation of events and publication of post without any type of constraints

3. Interaction, thanks to the chance for the audience to comment the text

4. Return of the text, or part of it to the traditional media

Cross referencing these 4 stages with the motivations that led to the subjects of the questionnaire to create a blog, we found some interesting points.

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[30]Wilson Gomes, Esfera pública política e media - II. *Anais do VII Encontro anual da COMPÓS*, São Paulo, 1998.

a) Usually the starting point to the redaction of a post is a news feature. The blogger detaches the part of the news that interests him and puts a link to the original text. Basically, the blogger is informing and being informed, the motif which gathered the most agreement as reason for commencing blogging. This step is the materialisation of Wilson's moment 1

b) After the link, the blogger writes a text about his perspective of the event, (moment 2). The blogger considerers that he is helping the readers to interpret the news and, consequently to have a civic intervention.

A good example of this need for intervention outside the mediatic sphere is that of the Spanish blog *Voto en blanco*[31]. In this space, a group of journalists and writers 'all of them disappointed with the mediocre democracy that surrounds us, and also convinced that criticism and the counterweight of power are elements of a true democracy'.

c) The existing system of comments found in the large majority of blogs allows 'feeling the immediate reaction of the readers' which frequently leads to heated arguments. This is the materialisation of the 3rd moment. . This interaction creates an alternative to the traditional media environment. Some studies[32] concerning the importance of comments revealed that feed-back is vital to the maintenance of the bloggers community.

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[31]http://www.votoenblanco.com/bitacora/index.html
[32]See Gumbrecht M, Blogs as "Protected Space"

d)The transposition of the arguments generated in the blogosphere to the traditional media is already a common event. As noted in the introduction, papers, radios and television channels have paid attention to the blogosphere, and there are even some journals and radios which have spaces exclusively dedicated to this phenomenon.

The simplicity of creating a blog, the freedom of edition and the mediatic reflexes explain why one of the motives most mentioned by bloggers is the wish to 'participate in a truly democratic community'. Under the light of the present results, blogosphere could be that 'public visibility sphere' which in ideal conditions can allow the whole functioning of a system of political communication where all players have a similar degree of intervention.

What can be seen is the necessity of public intervention mentioned by the subjects as a strong motivation to begin a blog. This motivation is, one of the common characteristics of all the actors, politics, journalists, intellectuals or leaders of any association.

5.1 In the end, did the mechanism created new players?

The way to the public sphere seems to be dependent on the propulsion of the traditional media, hence it could be said that actually blogs are not creating new players. However, three points need to be considered.

1. The use of traditional media results from a negotiation between the mediasphere and the blogosphere, and as such it should

not be seen as a dependency of one of the parts in relation to the other. Implicitly, the mediatic projection of the opinions produced in blogs is the 'payment' for the use of traditional media of blogs, while information sources and versatile tools which allow fast information, are supplementary to their traditional product. Moreover blogs work as a kind of test case to understand if audiences are ready for certain approaches. The Brazilian blog *Mothern*[33] is a good example. In this space, two young mothers commenting on their daily lives, bring to the fore some subjects not discussed by Brazilian society. This blogs result was that the two unknown Brazilians were invited to write a column in a famous magazine *TPM*[34] (Trip para Mulheres)

Two Portuguese examples of people in the blogsphere are Daniel Oliveira (Blog *Barnabé*) who signs a weekly column in the weekly paper Expresso and is one of the commentators of the tv program Eixo do Mal in *SIC Noticias* and also Carla Quevedo Hilario (Blog *Bomba Inteligente*) also with a weekly column on *Expresso).*

2. Although the majority of contact with public opinion can only happen through the traditional media, to achieve that space, the blogger needs to be legitimated amongst their peers and only then move to the public visibility sphere earlier mentioned. Access then follows a defined set of rules, as also happens in the other mass media.

3. If we look at the history of the media, Internet is a very recent vehicle; hence it is

not yet ratified *en masse*. Nevertheless there are blogs with more visitors than the number of copies put out by certain Portuguese papers. *Instapundit*[35] or *Boingboing*[36] are examples of blogs with more that 150,000 daily visitors, which says much about their importance.

The huge numbers and ready availability of computers and PDA's with web connection will lead to a similar effect to that verified on other mass media, with the resulting projection of blogs reaching a level of public visibility similar to that presently occupied by the traditional media. Being the first to broadcast information or comment on an event seems to be the energy that moves the blogosphere, projecting on it a dimension capable of being useful to other media. The possibility of internet access and the characteristics of the system which allows the blogosphere to work, allows us to predict a media in the future of the information field, to the point that certain analysts point towards blogosphere as the next generation of editorial or opinion pages, the mediatic spaces that will carry more weight in public opinion.

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