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The news will be tweeted: multiple uses of Twitter around a major political event

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Abstract

In November 2014, José Socrates, former prime-minister of Portugal, was arrested under suspicions of tax fraud, money laundering and corruption. This remarkable event makes a profound commotion in the public sphere and particularly in the media.

This article aims to discuss this issue from the perspective of online social networks and particularly Twitter. It is part of an ongoing project called *MISNIS - Intelligent Mining of Public Social Networks' Influence in Society*, coordinated by INESC-ID, in partnership with the CIES, ISCTE-IUL¹ aiming, on one hand, the development and implementation of an intelligent platform that would allow the collection and storage of a high percentage of the tweets produced in the Portuguese geographic space and, on the other hand, the content analysis of these tweets from a sociological perspective.

On the following pages, we will analyze a large set of tweets that have been produced on the two days after the detention. We will draw attention to the diversity of tweets on this topic, from simply breaking the news to the expressive domestication of the topic for humorous or intimate purposes.

¹ "This work was supported by national funds through Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia (FCT) under project PTDC/IVC-ESCT/4919/2012 and funds with reference UID/CEC/50021/2013".

1. Introduction – from a singular event to a multiplicity of Twitter uses

On 21 November 2014, José Sócrates, a former prime-minister of Portugal, was arrested when he arrives to the Lisbon International Airport. The detention was part of an operation involving other personalities, led by the Central Department of Investigation and Penal Action (DCIAP). Sócrates is considered suspect of tax fraud, money laundering and corruption, and stays in preventive detention.

This event, absolutely remarkable and unique in Portuguese History, makes a profound commotion in the public sphere and particularly in the media. Both traditional media and new information platforms give wide coverage to the event. Online social networks as Facebook or Twitter are also discussing the subject and a myriad of posts are shared on the topic, breaking the news, sharing personal feelings on the detention and propagating different theories about what happened.

This article aims to discuss this issue from the perspective of online social networks and particularly Twitter. It draws upon an on-going interdisciplinary project that combine software development, data mining and social sciences. The purpose of this project was, on the one hand, the development and implementation of an intelligent platform that would allow the collection and storage of a high percentage of the tweets produced in the Portuguese geographic space and, on the other hand, the content analysis of these tweets from a sociological perspective.

Tweets arise here as a mirror of social reality and, at the same time, as part of that reality. The sociological potential of the analysis of tweets is huge. It allows us to

understand, in a particularly interesting way, a succession of events, from its preparation to its repercussions, gathering factual data on the practices and representations of the actors involved.

Socrates detention, as unique as it was, appears as a particularly interesting strategic point of observation of the interaction between Twitter and its users and social reality. On the following pages, we will analyze a large set of tweets that have been produced on the two days immediately after the detention. Throughout a qualitative content analysis, we will draw attention to the diversity of tweets on this topic, organized on a set of different categories, highlighting the fact that, for each subject, one can find a myriad of specific uses of Twitter, from simply breaking the news, to personal engagement on public discussions and to the expressive domestication of the topic for humorous or intimate purposes.

2. Uses of Twitter

The online microblogging platform Twitter, launched in 2006, allows users to send and read short messages of no more than 140 characters, known as tweets. The platform had a quick growth since its launch and, at the beginning of 2015, it had 284 million new users monthly and 200 million new tweets per day, according to data released by Twitter. In Portugal, according to an OberCom study, only 9% of Internet users had created a profile on Twitter in 2013.

Although often being categorized as a social network, Twitter do not have the characteristics of a social network, mainly for the low reciprocity between "followers".

(Rogers, 2013: 15). There are, however, three possible interpersonal interaction between users: to "follow" other users, in order to see their tweets in the personal timeline; share tweets posted by other users (also known as retweet); and respond to or comment on tweets of other users (also known as "mentioning"). (Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto & Gummadi, 2010: 12).

The uses of the platform changed over the years, as well as the perception of its social relevance and the focus of the studies undertaken on Twitter uses. These changes are due to a complex process influenced by several factors. Among them are technical and content adjustments that were made by Twitter creators (eg. lists, changing of status question), and the "domestication" (Silverstone, Hirsch & Morley, 1999) of the technology that was made by users on their everyday usage (eg. replies, retweets, hashtags and shortened url's).

Among the innovations created by users listed above, we underline the hashtags which are probably the most recent and the use of which is less linear. The hashtags are key words preceded by the symbol '#'. They are generally used in order to mark a tweet as especially relevant to a particular topic, making it possible to communicate with a "community of interests" (Bruns & Burgess, 2014: 1) without the follower- followed relation. "In fact, it is even possible to follow the stream of messages containing a given hashtag without becoming a registered Twitter user." (Bruns & Burgess, 2014: 1). Hashtags are created by anyone, without any kind of supervision, these characteristics means that different hashtags arise for the same topic in different regions of Twitter environment "or that the same hashtag may be used for vastly different events taking place simultaneously" (Bruns & Burgess, 2014: 3). Hashtags are also often used to gain

broader visibility to a tweet, in such cases, several hashtags are placed in a tweet which may not be fully associated with the topic referred to in the hashtag. Another common case is the use of hashtags to express sarcasm, emotions or express a comment aside the tweet (Halavais, 2014; Bruns & Burgess, 2014). This function, completely different from its original purpose, set up a new appropriation of this tool. “[Hashtags] are used to convey extratextual meaning, in a Twitter-specific style” (Bruns & Burgess, 2014: 5).

For Rogers (2013) the studies on Twitter can be systematized in three periods: a first phase where it is seen as a machine of "ambient intimacy," a second approach which sees the platform as a news source and a third phase, that would be now emerging in which Twitter is seen as an anticipatory machine. According to this analysis, during the first phase of Twitter, the studies were based on the content of tweets and focused on its banality. “As became the norm in Twitter research, they conceived of a series of tweet types, beginning with the senseless” (Rogers, 2013: 12). The types of tweets focused on the following categories: “I’m eating a sandwich” type; “Conversional”; “Pass-along value”; “Self-promotional”; “Spam” (Rogers, 2013: 13).

Along this lines, Miller (2008) stresses the significance of Twitter as enhancer of the "pathic culture" where “the maintenance of a network itself has become the primary focus.” (Miller, 2008: 398). Thus, the most relevant is not the content, “content is not king, but ‘keeping in touch’ is” (Miller, 2008: 395). In the same vein, the concepts of "digital intimacy" and "connected presence" show Twitter as a tool to stay digitally connected with pre-existing friends and maintain a constant digital presence and availability. According to Rogers, these idea is amongst the original purpose for the

platform: "Twitter in that sense was conceived to and used also as an ambient, friend-following tool" (Rogers, 2013: 11). "Such users imagined their audience as people they already knew, conceptualizing Twitter as a social space where they could communicate with pre-existing friends. This follows the argument that Twitter's strength is in its encouragement of "digital intimacy" (Thompson, 2008). Many tweets are phatic in nature (Miller, 2008) and serve a social function, reinforcing connections and maintaining social bonds (Crawford, 2009)" (Marwick & Boyd, 2011: 5).

In December 2009, Twitter changes the question posed to the users, which until then had been "What are you doing?" to "What's happening?", showing the intention of Twitter to establish itself as a kind of news source, a platform to find out what is happening at the moment. This marks the second period of Twitter, it is then seen mainly as a news source to follow events. At this stage, studies on Twitter focused where Twitter went well: Events, disasters and elections, giving new focus to the research on types of tweets and its goals.

Rogers (2013) describes a third stage of Twitter, which highlights two new uses and functions for the platform: Twitter analyzed as a set of data, which in the United States, the Library of Congress will archive; and as an anticipatory machine. Therefore, Twitter is currently seen as a fruitful source of data for different range of social issues, founded on different methodologies, remaining itself subject of studies.

Today, Twitter is subject of several types of analysis, anchored in a range of components of its characteristics: Analysis of relevant tweets use retweets (rt); for categorizing important issues the hashtags (#) are analyzed; for network analysis replies are used and also the relationship between the followers and the users a profile

is following; for references analysis, shortened url's are used (Rogers, 2013). Although specific uses and goal of Twitter may be especially relevant for a given period of time, we can see that, now-a-days, a lot of different uses coexist, and the same user can use the platform according to different purposes.

2.1 Twitter as an information platform

The success of Twitter as a news platform leads, on the one hand, to an enthusiasm with the new possibility of citizen-reporter and, on the other hand, raises several questions about the quality of amateur follow-up of the news that can be done through Twitter. Particularly in view of the concomitant weakening of professional journalism, consequence of low resources that result of a failure of the traditional media business model, triggered by the new Internet paradigm. In this regard, Andrew Keen (2007) argues that Internet encourages the "cult of the amateur" and it is responsible for the decline of quality in journalism (Keen extends the arguments to other various sectors of society).

"Twitter increasingly has come to be studied as an emergency communication channel in times of disasters and other major events, as well as an event-following and aid machine for revolution and uprising in the Middle East and beyond" (Rogers, 2013, p. 21). In fact, the role of Twitter in the revolutions that became known as "Arab Spring" has been widely studied and its greater or lesser relevance on the revolution extensively discussed. "It was Sullivan [American political blogger] who famously proclaimed "The Revolution Will Be Twittered" and called Twitter "the critical tool for

organizing the resistance in Iran.” (Morozov, 2009: 10). Other voices, such as from Morozov, believe the role of Twitter in these revolutions is not so significant, noting that “Twitter revolution is only possible in a regime where the state apparatus is completely ignorant of the Internet and has no virtual presence of its own.” (2009: 12).

Among all the social uses of Twitter, sharing and following information are for which the tool is most recognized and probably the type of uses which gave rise to more studies and analysis. Twitter has become a key tool for sharing news and following information on major events. According to Rogers (2014, p.16) was in this area that the platform “went well”. Changing the question that Twitter poses to its users from “What are you doing?” to “What’s happening?” illustrates well this change of Twitter as a platform for “digital intimacy” to a tool for following and commenting the news.

The proliferation of news on platforms like Twitter has changed the way people interact with information. This relationship is increasingly portable, personalized and participatory (Purcell et al, 2010). To Hermida (2010) digital platforms contribute to the intensification of the phenomenon, described in 2002 by Hargreaves and Thomas, that the news have become environment such as the air we breathe. The concept of “ambient news” means news today are “ubiquitous” (Purcell et al, 2010). They are available everywhere and people can become aware of what is happening in the world while carrying out their daily activities (Hermida, 2010: 1).

In addition, the news are also increasingly a social experience (Hermida, 2010: 2). The news became a participatory activity, to the extent that people contribute with their own stories, experiences and react with their comments and perspectives on the events.

In this sense, for Hermida (2010), "ambient news" evolved into what she calls "ambient journalism", where people contribute to the creation, dissemination and discussion of the news through online social media platforms, such as Twitter. "Twitter has emerged as a significant platform for people to report, comment and share news about major events" (Hermida, 2010: 4).

The idea that news have become a social experience can also be interesting to explore in what extent the will of personal expression affects how people interact with news on platforms like Twitter.

Thelwall et al. (2011: 416) analyzing tweets about a specific event realized that only a small percentage of users (13%) expressed personal opinion. The remaining users used the event as a pretext to use humor, express sympathy, cynicism or indifference, analyze the event or give information on it. They concluded that Twitter is not so much used to respond to external events but rather to explore the possibilities created by the events to express preexisting personal goals such as use humor, or apply analytical skills.

3. Methodological note

The analysis of events on Twitter is dependent on the ability to collect, filter and select relevant data. It is estimated that currently 500 million tweets are produced per day. Twitter provides, through various API's, the possibility of random and free collection of up to 1% of tweets. Any search or filter in the universe of tweets, either by geographic area or by #hashtag, is always made within these 1% of the total produced tweets. In

this project, we tried to work around these limitations, by developing a platform for the collection and storage of a high percentage of tweets produced in the Portuguese geographic space (it is estimated around 80%) (Authors, 2015; Authors, 2014; Authors, 2015).

Assuming it is possible to have access to all the produced tweets, numerous difficulties arise regarding its analysis due to the high volume of information to be processed. So, another of the other objectives of the MISNIS project was the development of tools to deal with all this information, extracting quasi-automatically tweets that are relevant to a particular topic and providing a series of tools that aim to assist their subsequent sociological analysis.

In this particular case, it was found that 3280449 tweets have been extracted by MISNIS platform through the Twitter API. Among the tweets available, only a small percentage have content of interest to the study. Given the difficulty and cost of manually search for relevant tweets within this universe, we created an automatic filtering using a mechanism called Fuzzy Fingerprints, a text-based classification system that identifies topics within large collections of tweets with high precision and low computational cost (Authors, 2014; Authors, 2014). For this case study we've considered the following #hashtags: #socrates, #socratesdetido, #freesocrates, #socratesgrade and #socratesgate.

The obtained fingerprint consists of 21 key words, sorted in order of importance. Based on the "fuzzification" of the fingerprint, 10128 tweets were selected, relating to this specific event. Note that the tweets considered were only the ones written in

Portuguese and posted in the geographical area of Portugal. After completion of the collection, a content analysis of these 10128 tweets was performed. This content analysis highlighted some particularly interesting and recurrent points, reconstructing the history of the debate generated by the event in twittosphere. In the pages that follow, we will seek to highlight the most relevant conclusions, not before globally analyze the set of tweets related to the subject.

4. A multiplicity of uses of Twitter

For the content analysis, we used a set of categories previously defined on several studies about Twitter, particularly the one conducted by Stephen Dann (2010) that analyzed and systematized the literature on tweets' content analysis. On our analytical grid we include general categories proposed by Perreault & Ruths (2011); Dann (2010); (Java et al.) 2007; Pear Analytics (2009) and Naaman et al. (2010) but also categories elaborated for specific events as the ones proposed by Chew & Eysenbach (2010) on the 2009 H1N1 outburst; Tumasjan et al. (2010) on German federal elections and by Jansen et al. (2009) on different brands.

We add to these categories the ones that came out in our sample after a preliminary analysis (humor, surprise, neutrality, comments on media and comments on Twitter).

On the following table we can see the general distribution according to our categories

Table 1 – General categories

	Absolute Frequency	Percentage
2.1.3. Retweet (RT)	4527	46,4%
2.2.5. Neutral/unclear	1589	16,3%
2.2.3. Humor	690	7,1%
2.2.7. On media	667	6,8%
2.2.1. Positive opinions	488	5,0%
2.1.2. Sharing the news (with url)	464	4,8%
2.3.2. [@] Mentions and Replies	336	3,4%
*unconnected	332	3,4%
2.2.6. Meta comments on twitter	183	1,9%
2.2.2. Negative opinions	141	1,4%
2.2.4. Surprise	133	1,4%
2.3.1. Questions	105	1,1%
2.1.1. Sharing the news	103	1,1%
TOTAL	9758	100,0%

Table 1 shows the overall results after the categorization of tweets. In the pages that follow we will take a closer look into each category starting in a first analysis with a look at the type of tweet. Although often being categorized as a social network, Twitter do not have the characteristics of a social network, mainly for the low reciprocity between "followers". (Rogers, 2013: 15). There are, however, three possible interpersonal interaction between users: to "follow" other users, in order to

see their tweets in the personal timeline; share tweets posted by other users (also known as retweet); and respond to or comment on tweets of other users (also known as "mentioning"). (Cha, Haddadi, Benevenuto & Gummadi, 2010: 12).

Nearly half (46.4%) of the analyzed tweets are retweets, this being the category more frequent in our analysis. This means that almost half the flow generated in the two days following the detention were created by copying and reposting original content. There are 38 more tweets that although being retweets, have some content added that significantly changed or added its meaning. Boyd et al. (201: 6) in a study on retweets argue that this convention is not only a form of dissemination of information but it is also a way to participate in a diffuse conversation. "While retweeting can simply be seen the act of copying and rebroadcasting, the practice contributes to the conversational ecology in which conversations are composed of a public interplay of voices that give rise to an emotional sense of shared conversational context." (Boyd et al. 2010: 1). The same study suggests that retweets contents are varied, but there seems to be a preference for last-minute news.

TABELA 2 – Categorization of Retweets

	Absolute Frequency	Percentage
2.2.3. Humor	1644	36,3%
2.2.5. Neutral/Unclear	1097	24,2%
2.2.7. On media	642	14,2%
2.2.1. Positive opinions	376	8,3%

2.1.2. Sharing the news (with url)	328	7,2%
*blank	120	2,7%
2.2.6. Meta comment on Twitter	117	2,6%
2.2.2. Negative opinion	86	1,9%
2.1.1. Sharing the news	62	1,4%
2.2.4. Surprise	35	0,8%
2.3.1. Question	13	0,3%
2.1.3. Retweet (RT)	7	0,2%
2.3.2. [@] Mentioning e Replies	0	0,0%
TOTAL	4527	100,0%

We analyzed the content of retweets (Table 2) according to the same categories and we could see that retweets are of various types, humoristic ones being the most significant (36, 3%) followed by neutral / unclear (24, 2%). The retweets talking about the media or the functioning of the media appear as the third most important category, representing 14.2% of retweets under review. Table 2 shows us a hierarchy similar to the categories of the overall tweets analyzed (Table 1), we can see that the tweets of humor, neutral or that are not clear and tweets about the media are the categories with the most significant percentages of retweets. Which suggests that humor and media criticism are relevant factors when deciding to make a retweet. If retweets stand, only 3.4% of tweets are mentionings or replies, showing that this more direct interaction and dialogue is not nearly as used, at least in this case.

With regard to general characterization of tweets (table 1) the second category with most cases is neutral/unclear tweets and so they do not fall into any other category. This category include tweets whether it is not possible to understand if a positive or negative opinion is being expressed and also others who seem to pretend to be humoristic.

Amongst the tweets whose content is clear, those on which the content analysis focused more directly, the Humor category is the most significant, representing 7.1% of total Tweets analyzed, and it represents also 36.3% of the retweets. The use of humor in Twitter was one of the most significant categories of tweets analyzed but also one of the most surprising results of our analysis taking into account the few studies that focus on this type of use of the platform. Humor is used in different forms, often it is used to comment on the event, but sometimes the detention seems to be only a pretext for doing funny tweets, fulfilling a need for self-expression.

'They told me that Jose Socrates was arrested [detido] !!! It's half past midnight, is not laying instead [deitado]?'

'Socrates. Today he is arrested, tomorrow he will be sore'

'Socrates held? I only know that I know nothing'

'Did Socrates has weed on his luggage??'

Moreover, the list of the 13 most important users in our sample includes three well-known comedians and a fictitious profile of humorous character.

In a study conducted on sentiment in the events of Twitter, Thelwaal et al. (2011) concluded that a reported event in the media is often seen by Twitter users as an

opportunity to meet objectives that are not directly related, creating humor, showing analytical skills and asserting moral perspectives. (Thelwaal et al.: 408). Twitter enhances the idea of news as an environment, such as the air we breathe (Hermida, 2010) and specific events are used for other purposes as to share a personal mood or a particular detail. The powerful feeling that exciting or scandalous news need to be tweeted leads to a lot of users posting and retweeting personal comments and diverse form of self-expression even without engaging on the core – in this case political – discussion.

Let us consider now the tweets focused on sharing and comment the news. The categories 'to ask a question on the topic' and 'breaking the news without a link' represent, each one, 1.1% of analyzed tweets. These are essentially tweets that give account of what happened. They are naturally more common in the beginning of our timeline, right after the detention.

"Explain to me what happened to Socrates, please. Thanks."

"Why was Socrates arrested?"

"The judge is Carlos Alexandre?"

"Socrates was arrested."

"Socrates was arrested, for those unaware"

"SOCRATES WAS ARRESTED"

There are also 4.8% of tweets that share the news using a link. In the early hours of the time period under review, these tweets essentially share news to report on Socrates' imprisonment. There as we move forward in the timeline other news about the theme

and opinion pieces are added to this category. To give or share the news with a url has a much broader spectrum since people do not just share the initial news, they will then share the following news related to the topic and recover old news with a new interpretation. This set of tweets is also quite significant, suggesting that Twitter users feel the urge to share current events, even without anything particular to add or comment and even when the event is already spread on the traditional mean of communication.

The expression of a clearly positive opinion (5%) or negative opinion (1.4) in relation to Socrates detention was rather sparse and not very significant within the tweets analyzed, contrary to what was our initial expectations. The positive opinion was, however, predominant. Regarding the positive opinion if some tweets explicitly express an opinion regarding the event, many other tweets express more positive feelings without necessarily exposing an opinion or, at least, without an elaborated opinion on the subject. They do this using "smiles" and expressions like "lol", etc. These reflect a coded language of the Internet and suggest young people and adolescents users. The idea that there is a specific internet language is not new. And several studies approach this issue using terms as "netspeak", "chatspeak", "computer mediated communication (CMC)" or "electronically mediated language" highlighting the use of acronyms, special orthographies, use of foreign (mostly English) vocabularies, emoticons, and abbreviations. (Dahström, 2013, p. 1; Merchant, 2001, p. 302, Varnhagen et al, 2010, p. 720). Twitter enhances this fact, by its character limitation.

"Socrates arrested, ahahaha xD"

"Kids, Socrates was arrested □□□□□"

"Socrates was arrested xD"

'I love to share good news: José Socrates was arrested!!!!'

Tweets expressing a negative opinion (1.4%) are generally less effusive and directly suggesting that the reasons for Socrates detention are political rather than legal.

"Socrates arrested! The guys from gold visas and Tecnoforma [mentioning two scandals related with the current government] can now sleep peacefully during the months to come! "

"So but Socrates walks around for so many years and is held one week after all the scandal of gold visas affecting the government?"

Adding to positive and negative feelings, we have another set of tweets that also express a powerful emotion: surprise. Tweets that show surprise by Socrates detention represent 1.4% of the analyzed sample. The surprise and disbelief is also usually expressed in a language associated with a very young population:

"WHAT? SOCRATES WAS HELD IN THE AIRPORT WTF"

"Socrates was arrested, Whatiiiiiii?"

Finally, let us pay attention to a set of categories related to the meta-discourse produced on the media in general and particularly on twitter. Tweets that talk about the functioning of the media represent 6.8% of the analyzed. Comments on the media

tend to express criticism and they appear right after the first news of Socrates detention (often critical to how the media give the news, especially the repetition of the car image that led Socrates held) and at the end, in the afternoon and evening of the second day after the news. The final section includes several tweets that show saturation and exhaustion with the news. These criticisms focus mainly on television. There seems to be a phenomenon of directly commenting what is being watched on television, similar to what happens at conferences and other events where Twitter is used by people who watch as backstage and to keep a kind of parallel conversation (Rogers, 2014). This use of Twitter as a space for direct comment on the news that come on television is a very interesting phenomenon that deserves more attention in the future, suggesting a convergence between new media and traditional media.

"I saw a car with people inside and SIC [Tv channel] says that are exclusive images from Socrates' imprisonment."

"As I see the SICNoticias [Tv channel] images, I can say with some certainty that that is not the nose of Socrates."

"Now the news program boils down to one name: Socrates"

"I have not seen the news ahead of Socrates"

The metacommentary on the Twitter account for 1.9% of analyzed tweets and are mainly tweets showing surprise with the fact that Socrates detention is one of the "trends" in Twitter, or tweets that express its saturation,

"Socrates in the trends? ahahahahahahah ok. "

"Now everybody only speaks of Socrates #TwitterOff"

"Enough with the jokes about SOCRATES, change the subject?"

4.1 A note on the most relevant actors

Additionally, we have built a ranking of the most important actors in the universe of tweets analyzed using two different criteria.

We analyzed the profiles of the 13 major players and we realize that three of them are famous comedians, and a user profile is a fictional satirical character. This observation reinforces the prevalence of the use of humor in Twitter. We were unable to access the profile of four of the major users, probably because these have since been deleted.

There is only one female user among the 13 most relevant actors, although one of the inaccessible profiles can also be female given the user name.

In addition to the comedians and fictitious profile, the other users are anonymous users with personal accounts and amongst such users are the ones occupying the top three places in the ranking of relevant actors. All seem very young according to the username or the profile photo, the language used, the themes of their last tweets and the particular approach to this topic.

Although they are not public figures these young people have many followers and seem to have become public figures on Twitter, at least among a certain community of users. Or "micro-celebrities", a concept developed by Senft (2008) and used by Marwick and Boyd (2010) to describe the users who invest in maintaining a large number of followers using various techniques to attract attention. "Micro-celebrity

implies all Individuals that have an audience they can strategically maintain through ongoing communication and interaction" (Marwick and Boyd, 2010: 8)

5- Conclusion

The news of the arrest of José Sócrates, and its impact on Twitter, appears as an emblematic case and an episode for strategic observation that allows us a more accurate reflection on Twitter, its interrelation with the offline world and its multiple uses. We finish this article by raising some central research clues that could be pursued in other articles on the subject.

Firstly, this episode clearly illustrates the interconnection between the sphere of Twitter (its users and messages) and news events that occur in the offline sphere. Somehow, Twitter appears mirroring the social reality in an almost synchronous manner, in real-time. A piece of news with national, or even international impact, transversally discussed and presented in all the media, arises also, and necessarily, on Twitter, with the strength that lets it quickly stand out and get into the trends of the platform.

This largely transcends the number - reduced in our sample – of users connected to politics or to the media. On the contrary, such a relevant news raises the need for all kinds of users to give the news, share the event and mirroring the event on Twitter. Many of the early posts are just focused on sharing the event, and are posted by anonymous individuals, who are not necessarily interested in the subject and, often, do not have any information to add to the simple disclosure of an event.

Seen in this terms, the reality will project their shadow on Twitter, but the rapid spread of this and other news also has a significant social impact by allowing access to information to a growing number of individuals, even if they are not near a traditional media (TV, radio) and much longer before the news is available in newspapers. Evidently this is not unique to Twitter, and the news have also circulated in other online social networks as well as the online pages of the media.

Simultaneously, the impact of this news on Twitter and other social networks will exponentially increase the debate on the subject in semi-public spaces. This is the full circle, the news goes through Twitter and is transformed and reinterpreted on the social network, changing the way it is received and perceived. It was not a purpose of this study to analyze the impact of this fact but it is certainly interesting to understand what are the social consequences of the expansion of the public discussion on certain topics, multiplying the access to much more information/ opinions of different social groups, beyond the narrow social circle of each individual.

The rapid spread of this news in an almost synchronous manner will also result in a very short news cycle. On the one hand the dissemination of news is fast, on the other hand saturation with the topic is also fast. Tweets commenting the impact of news on Twitter trends quickly succeed as well as tweets complaining about the excessive visibility of the topic, which is also interesting because it demonstrates a remarkable reflexivity.

It is also important to reinforce that the impact of this news on Twitter is also a result of the action of users, as mentioned previously, who are not particularly focused on

the topic, but give the news (by retweeting or through personal tweets) often without any further reflection. At other times, we find that people use the topics /news that are arousing interest at the time, not for commenting them but to fulfil self-expression purposes. The most common examples in our data are the use of the news for humor or to tell episodes of their everyday life.

This take us to other major conclusion of this analysis: the multiplicity of uses of Twitter condensed in a particular episode that emerge as a strategic space-time of observation. The imprisonment of Sócrates emerge as a case study in which, around the same paradigmatic news, we find all possible uses of Twitter, and comments with multiple purposes, languages, styles and intentions. The analysis by category shows the diversity of uses of Twitter is extremely significant, even when we are working on a particular news, within the scope of national politics.

There are multiple purposes behind each tweet (giving the news that everybody is giving, telling episodes of personal life at the time the news has giving, express an opinion, make humor, commenting on the impact of the news), as many are the emotions behind every share (indifference, excitement, joy, discontent, joke, etc ...).

The same news calls for different types of users (institutional, famous and anonymous, apparently with some emphasis on youngsters) and different languages are used, since the nearest of media to the coded ones, with terms and acronyms specific of Twitter.

In this regard, taking up what was said above, this case perfectly illustrates the different possible uses of this social network, from the more informative to the more expressive, through a more intimate tone, focused on the individual and not so much

on the event. No segmentation of actors and languages, according to the thematic was noted. Twitter, mirror of reality and social diversity, emerges simultaneously as a parallel world, as diverse as the real offline world around us.

A specific social structure can then be seen, with specific actors, not necessarily famous outside their online sphere of action, and with their favorite encoded languages, their specific networked interactions and their particular topics of interest. In this game of converging multiplicities in the same network, mirror and shadow of social reality, it is built the Twitter sphere.

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