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# Kluwer Mediation Blog

## #WHITEMONDAY

Andrea Maia (Mediar360 – Dispute Resolution ) · Tuesday, June 25th, 2013

In an unthinkable movement, unseen in Brazil for at least 20 years, the most important cities in the country have witnessed massive street protests over price increases in public transportation in the last few days.

Much like in several other social movements throughout the world, social networks were the tool used to spread the initial word and to report every single stage of the protest (#whitemonday). Last Monday, when over 250 thousand people took the streets and, in less than one hour, more than 18.000 images were posted at Instagram.

Surprisingly, political parties, or any other traditional entities like Student Associations, were absent in the mentoring process of the demonstrations. It was a genuine “peaceful street movement”, basically apolitical.

After endless intellectual discussions about the real nature of the protests, which grew as the politicians tried to discredit it and apparently ordered the police to violently prevent the demonstrations, the general consensus was that the bus fare price increase, although highly relevant, just served to ignite a feeling that was dormant inside many Brazilians. In a few words, the population just wanted to shout out loud “We had enough !”.

The protests are yet far from over, growing nationally and internationally (Brazilians ex-pats are also staging demonstrations in several parts of the world) and no one can clearly predict what is to come next. Regardless of how and when it is going to end, since it may be at its very beginning, the movement is already seen as a turning point for a better Brazilian society.

From the mediator’s perspective, one could easily find several cooperation, collaborative, communication systems that helped not only keeping the movement alive, but also enabling it to grow steadily.

Maps with best routes, medical assistance for injured protesters and even [legal support to those arrested](#), were all there, spontaneously provided by different participants. At the other side of the table, politicians denying any form of negotiation and trying to find someone to blame and attack.

As a matter of fact, in a social gathering of such large proportions, scattered throughout the country and with no central coordination, the situation could (and in fact it did) get out of control in some places. But it started from a small minority trying to respond to the initial, unnecessary, police brutality. It took the politicians too long to realize that sitting behind their desks was no longer

their only and obvious option. The following days more peaceful protesters decided to take the streets in order to show that violence was not part of their agenda.

This strong non-violence response to violent behavior reminded me of Marshall's Rosenberg work on **NVC – Non Violent Communication** , which brings out the debate of achieving a better society through self-assessment and improvement of our own communication methods.

Contrary to what most people may think, Non-Violence does not mean being passive, but pacific. It does not mean not reacting, but reacting peacefully to stop a vicious circle of increasing violence.

The non violent, peaceful and collaborative spirit of the protesters' was clearly a powerful tool that strengthened and united the movement.

It looks as if Brazilians are trying to change a paradigm and feel that it is possible to make a difference.

At the end of the day, what most people want to rescue are basic moral and social values such as dignity, cooperation and hope. Changing ourselves, will change our surroundings. And therefore, the world we live in.

*" You must be the change you want to see in the world."* Mahatma Gandhi

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