

**Sérgio Barbosa** is a PhD candidate at the Centre for Social Studies (CES) of the University of Coimbra, where he is part of the program "Democracy in the Twenty-First Century". He holds a BA in Sociology from the University of Brasilia (UnB) and a MA in Political Sociology from the Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC). Sérgio has been a Portuguese Foundation for Science and Technology (FCT) fellow (2020-2024). Previously, he was a Digital Humanism Junior Visiting Fellow at the Institute for Human Sciences (IWM) in Vienna, as well as a fellow at the Center for Advanced Internet Studies (CAIS) in Bochum, Germany. In addition, Sérgio was awarded with a Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship Fund (SYLFF) grant (2019). He has been studying WhatsApp activism in Brazil for almost 7 years. His research focuses on the creative uses and appropriations of chat apps and local-based activism to foster social change, particularly in the contexts of everyday social interactions mainly played on and with chat apps. He investigates how chat apps and local activism create emerging forms of political participation, with a specific focus on the so-called Global South. His work has been published in peer-reviewed journals such as the Political Studies Review, Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture, and First Monday, among others.

## **Project at IAS-STIS: Navigating the Sunny Side of WhatsAppers from the Global South**

The project investigates at the everyday progressive (digital) activism of WhatsApp in the Global South, looking at Brazil. I argue that a new type of political activist is emerging amongst contemporary social mobilizations in the XXI century: the so-called WhatsApper, a (digital) activist who intensely appropriates the chat app leveraging its app affordances for emerging forms of political participation. The qualitative approach includes a long-term digital ethnography of two pro-democracy WhatsApp groups, chat scrapping, and several face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. It explores WhatsApp activism as emerging repertoires that allow everyday activists to connect to their political activities in which they live, construct and experiment with their fellow group members, namely: i) how local communities adopt and appropriate WhatsApp affordances, ii) how these grassroots groups creatively enhance emerging action repertoires combining WhatsApp online chats with activities on the ground, and iii) how a progressive agenda to foster social change at the local level is intertwined with WhatsApp-mediated activism beyond US and Europe, contextualizing their use and appropriation in Global South countries.

## **Selected Publications**

Barbosa, S. (2021). WhatsAppers for social good: networks of solidarity during COVID-19 pandemic in Brazil, policy brief, ICLD (Swedish International Centre for Local Democracy), Sweden. <https://icld.se/en/publications/sergio-barbosa-2021-whatsappers-for-social-good-local-community-response-to-covid-19-in-brazil/>

Barbosa, S. (2020). COMUNIX WhatsAppers: The Community School in Portugal and Spain. *Political Studies Review*, 1-8. doi: <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/1478929920951076>

Milan, S. & Barbosa, S. (2020). Enter the WhatsApper: Reinventing digital activism at the time of chat apps. *First Monday*, 25(12). doi: <https://doi.org/10.5210/fm.v25i12.10414>

Barbosa, Sérgio & Back, Charlott (2020). "The Dark Side of Brazilian WhatsAppers", Jesús Sabariego, Augusto Jobim do Amaral and Eduardo Baldissera Carvalho Salles (org.), *Algoritarismos*. Tirant lo Blanch: São Paulo-Valencia, pp. 454-467. [https://editorial.tirant.com/free\\_ebooks/9788418329715.pdf](https://editorial.tirant.com/free_ebooks/9788418329715.pdf)

Barbosa, S. & Milan, S. (2019). "Do not harm in private chat apps: Ethical issues for research on and with WhatsApp," *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture*, volume 14, number 1, pp. 49–65. doi: <http://doi.org/10.16997/wpcc.313>