

Volume 38
issue 3 / 2019

Contracampo e-ISSN 2238-2577
Niterói (RJ), 38 (3)
dez/2019-mar/2020

Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication is a quarterly publication of the Graduate Programme in Communication Studies (PPGCOM) at Fluminense Federal University (UFF). It aims to contribute to critical reflection within the field of Media Studies, being a space for dissemination of research and scientific thought.

BEYOND IDENTITY AND RECOGNITION: towards a digital communication that generates difference

ANTONINO CONDORELLI

Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte (UFRN) - Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil. Antonino Condorelli is professor at the Department of Social Communication of Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. Graduated in Communication Sciences at Università degli Studi di Siena, Italy. Master in Education and PhD in Social Sciences at Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte. He has studies and publications in the areas of digital communication and cyberactivism, cyberculture, biopolitics, subjectivity production, dialogue of knowledges, nature-culture relationship, human and non-human relationship, semiotics and epistemology of complexity. Email: profantoninocondorelli@gmail.com. ORCID: 0000-0002-6878-8151

TO REFERENCE THIS ARTICLE, PLEASE USE THE FOLLOWING CITATION:

Condorelli, A. (2019). Beyond identity and recognition: towards a digital communication that generates difference. *Contracampo – Brazilian Journal of Communication*, v. 38, n. 3, p. XXX-XXY, December 2019/March 2020.

Submitted on: 5 April 2019 / Accepted on: 24 September 2019

DOI – <http://dx.doi.org/10.22409/contracampo.v38i3.28443>

Abstract¹

This article criticizes the conceptions of emancipatory communication in digital networks associated with the ideas of reprogramming networks and narrative dispute, arguing that they reproduce identity as the organizing principle of modern western biopower. To operate this critique, it proposes a conception of politics of transformation as a production of becomings and develops a notion of emancipatory communication as a practice of desimbolization of the prevailing order of determination. It then questions the political-epistemological assumptions of the struggle for recognition and its aforementioned communicational developments in digital networks, defending a digital communication that tenses the transcendentalization of identity and opens itself to the generation of becomings.

Keywords

Communication; Social transformation; Digital networks.

¹ Parts of this text form part of the author's doctoral thesis. Extensive excerpts from that study are used, with or without alterations, to construct the arguments that respond to the specific theoretical purposes of this article, organized differently from the work from which they were extracted.

Introduction

This article develops an ontological and epistemological reflection that problematizes the hegemonic conceptions of emancipatory communication in digital networks, associated with the ideas of reprogramming networks and narrative dispute, arguing that - instead of encouraging the promotion of diversity as a flowering of becomings - they reproduce and they strengthen the principle of identity, which I understand as the logic that underlies the regime of production of subjectivities and relations of the hegemonic - capitalist, colonial and patriarchal - version of Euro-North-American-centric modernity. This reflection implies a critique of the idea, which has liberal roots, of struggle for the recognition of identities, which assumes as its presuppositions the organizing principles of modern Western biopower² (in its multiple variants), and its overcoming by a conception of the institution of diversity as incessant generation of creative indeterminacy.

Western social thinking has been reflecting on the concept of identity after the emergence, from the 1970s, of emancipatory movements and struggles of historically subordinated groups and in the face of the increasingly strong ethnic, linguistic, cultural, religious, sexual, gender and other kinds of diversity that characterizes contemporary urban societies, posing the problem of the organization of social relations between actors who experience themselves as heterogeneous. Castells (2008) presents a conceptualization of identity that incorporates the prevailing view in contemporary thinking: identity as symbolic identification with a system of meanings and a set of shared experiences, an identification that can be produced by the dominant institutions with the purpose of normating values and conducts; by stigmatized actors, with the aim of opposing the structures, processes and values that undermine them, and by insurgent actors that aim to modify the structure and values of the whole society. This perspective allows Castells to conceive both social movements and phenomena as religious fundamentalisms, nationalisms, etc. as mechanisms of subjectivation by identity, that is, based on the identification with meanings and experiences of resistance or opposition to structures and values considered as dominant, an identification that generates communities or groups that organize themselves around a project.

On the other hand, Hall (2006) points out that the current proliferation of identities does not only affect collective subjectivations, but the process of individuation: the contemporary individual subject is increasingly fragmented, crossed by multiple, provisional, sometimes contradictory identifications non-unified around a coherent “*Self*”; the differences in which societies are articulated produce for individuals varying subject positions.

The dominant epistemologies of identity in contemporary Western social thought, well systematized by Castells (2008) and Hall (2006), adopt as an unquestioned assumption the idea of *identification* (with meanings and experiences or with characteristics, behaviors, etc.) as the foundation of subjectivity, either for the setting of a stable and consistent “*Self*” (sticking or opposing the dominant structures) or of multiple identities, subjective variable positions, but that to institute themselves as such require the assumption - even temporarily - of defining elements of a temporary “*Self*”.

In his critique of identity, which considers the a priori category that underlies the regime of determination built and consolidated by modernity, Safatle (2015) points to *identification* as a general principle of invariance: regardless of how it is produced (stable or provisional, generating a coherent or a fragmented “*Self*”), it requires defining characteristics or *predicates* (chosen or innate) that takes as *properties*. In this mode of determination, beings - subjects, objects, immaterial entities, etc. - constitute themselves, are predicated on what they *own* or *appropriate*, stable or provisionally, and the condition

² Hardt and Negri (2010) borrow from Foucault the idea of biopower, which refers to all socially constructed mechanisms and processes for the regulation and control of life, which determine the field of the visible, of the thinkable, of the utterable, of what can be felt and experienced, as well as the techniques of production and reproduction of life, and ranks bodies by determining which ones can live (and how) and which ones can die (and how).

of possibility of their relation to each other is their *common essence* of identities defined by properties, which in the subject's perspective makes the *other* just *another version of itself*. The multiple or *open* identities conceptualized by Hall (2006) continue, in this perspective, being identities: products of processes - albeit changeable - of identification. Safatle calls this symbolic order "formal determination of predication by property" (Safatle, 2015, p. 195, free translation by the author). Western modernity has shaped different historical formations and has generated criteria of possibility and possibilities of thinking about the real and about itself in the (violent, producer of domination) relationship/encounter with other thoughts and ways of instituting the real and acting in it. But all the heterogeneity of temporary configurations of networks of connections that define and experience themselves as modern respond to a general mode of formal determination of beings reducible to the principle of *predication by property*.

For this reason, to think of a politics and a digital communication of *transformation* and promotion/production of *diversity* implies to conceive ways of constructing political subjects and of producing/organizing social relations that are not grounded and do not strengthen or perpetuate the category of identity, which, as a transcendental construction, sustains the tension between regulation and emancipation that operates on the emergent side - the Euro-North-Americancentric - of the abyssal line³ that the hegemonic version of western modernity has instituted, as Santos (2009) points out, to demarcate its field of the visible and the thinkable.

The reflections exposed in this article propose to problematize the dominant conceptions of digital communication for the emancipation of subordinated social groups, based on the notions of reprogramming networks and narrative dispute, in order to open research ways to think about a politics and a communication of transformation in digital networks that does not reproduce identity as a transcendent criterion of subjectivation and organization of the sensible, which permeates the logic of regulation and emancipation conceivable and thinkable in the regime of determination of Western modernity.

Politics of transformation as production of becomings

Based on Safatle (2015), I propose to consider that a politics is one of transformation when it aims to question or to break the mode of determination of modern western subjectivities and relations, based on identity, and does not intend to replace it with another transcendental form of organizing experience, but generate *productive indeterminacy* and work procedurally with it. When, for example, a feminist subjectivation questions the concept of gender and, instead of proposing a substitutive principle, it opens itself to the production of experiences and ways of life that do not presuppose any kind of *identification*.

I therefore conceive the generation of creative indeterminacy as a bet on the production, least limited as possible, of *difference*, that is, on the establishment of conditions for the emergence of *singularities*. Deleuze (1988) conceives *singularity* as a *virtuality* neither transcendent nor transcendental, totally immanent to the bodies in which and through which it expresses itself. It is a field of *intensities* (bundles of possibilities without any previous form and existence, which only come into being as they pass to exist) not coincident with any kind of individuals, objects or persons⁴, either individual or collective,

³ Santos (2009) conceives modern Western thought as an abyssal thinking: "a system of visible and invisible distinctions, the invisible ones grounding the visible ones" (Santos, 2009, p. 23). According to the sociologist, the coloniality that permeates power relations and knowledge instituted "radical lines that divide social reality into two distinct universes" (Ibidem, p. 23, free translation by the author), relegating to nonexistence (disappearance as reality and inability to be thought) anything that is on the "other side" of this abyssal line, that is, all forms of thought produced in epistemic loci different from the modern western matrix of knowledge production.

⁴ I use the term individual to refer to any concrete being that is or can be experienced as unity and person to refer to any subject who conceives and is conceived as a set of predicates or attributes, self-chosen or attributed.

but susceptible to *individuation* in concrete units, people or groups. The difference, in this perspective, is not a body or a quality, but pure *relationship*. In this conception of being as pure difference, phenomena, although they have similarities and patterns of regularity, are never *identical*, that is, reducible to a transcendent or transcendental principle of identity that predetermines their individual manifestations by the predication by property.

From this perspective, the generation of difference - which is expressed by singularities - can be conceived as the generation of *becomings*. As Viveiros de Castro (2015) points out in his interpretation of Deleuze, becoming is an *unnatural* alliance outside stable combinations, an expression of multiplicity not reducible to predictable regularities. This implies that to participate in a becoming does not mean to become anything else: it means to be involved in the generation of a relationship that changes the criteria for defining all the terms implied in it. As stated by Hardt and Negri (2010), a man's becoming-woman is not a man becoming a woman: it is a process that redefines the criteria for determining "being a woman" and "being a man". Becoming is the very multiplicity of the possible, it is the realization of the difference, it is the constituent relation that defines the conditions of possibility of the terms it puts into interaction.

Communication as action of the common

To think of a politics of transformation as a production of becomings implies to the question of what kind of *communication* should be promoted between singularities that express difference and, therefore, of how to think of communication in a perspective that does not assume identity as its transcendentalized foundation.

Sodré (2014) points out that, although the etymology of the term has nothing to do with the idea of *transmitting* information or messages, "this dictionary meaning in Western languages eventually imposed itself on the primordial meaning of 'common action' or something like 'action of the common' " (Sodré, 2014, p. 11, free translation by the author). Recovering this original meaning, the author proposes to think of communication as presemantic and prerelational action that defines a "condition of possibility, an *a priori*, which is not a reciprocal convention, but a generative void (just like the number zero), an abstract principle of organization - the *common*" (Ibidem, p. 15, free translation by the author, emphasis in the original). Not, therefore, *exchange* or *transmission* of messages based on shared codes, nor semantic field or system of meanings around which to structure codes and organize exchanges, but the *general form* of commonality that enables semantic organization, codification and the exchanges. Communication as an action that establishes the criteria for the possibility of sharing the sensitive.

In Sodré's proposal, communication as action of the common operates by symbolization:

Symbol is not meant here as a secondary figure of speech or as a linguistic epiphenomenon but as the work of putting into relation, concatenate or pooling (*synballein*) separated forms, as a general equivalent, (...) that is, as originating symbolic mediations that unfold in economics, psyche, kinship, politics and language (Sodré, 2014, p. 15, free translation by the author).

Thus, the symbol is constituted as a formal operator of equivalence that defines the coordinates of the perceivable, the thinkable, the sayable and the achievable and determines the possibilities of subjectivation, relationship and affectation.

Symbolization as an institution of criteria of invariance, for Sodré (2014), is what produces a *link* between what is put in common. But unlike the perspective I propose, the communicologist does not conceive the bond as what "Deleuze calls *disjunctive synthesis* or *inclusive disjunction*, a relational mode that has no resemblance or identity as its cause (formal or final), but divergence or distance" (Viveiros de Castro, 2015, p. 119, free translation by the author, emphasis in the original), that is, becoming, but as

a determination of equivalences that become transcendental. The bond, for Sodré (2014), is the formal way of putting in common that enables social relations. It is understood as the mode of existence of being, unlike the ontology and epistemology proposed here that place the irreducibility of difference, the impossibility of singularities being identical with themselves as the way of being existing and manifesting. For the perspective that I propose of transformative politics, therefore, this implies thinking of communication for transformation as *a desimbolizing practice*: an action that tenses the instituted symbolization, the invariance transcendentalized by an order of determination and open in the existing symbols cracks through which to infiltrate unthinkable becomings.

While reconfiguring policies operate at the level of semantic possibilities predefined by the existing symbolization to wage narrative disputes, reprogramming networks of production and dissemination of meaning and producing resignifications of terms and narratives, transformative policies establish new causalities that generate subjectivations and relationships, putting into effect invisible virtualities that stretch the limits of the possible. Feminist, anti-racist movements, collectives fighting for the affirmation of the rights of individual and collective subjects that express diversity of gender identifications and sexual orientations, for the rights of indigenous peoples or for environmental preservation can act at a reconfiguring level of subjectivities and relations if, assuming the *identity* as a priori category, act to re-signify the connotations attributed by hegemonic power/knowledge relations to the subjects that these relations constituted (women, black people, homosexuals, bisexuals, transgenders, indigenous, “environment”) producing new narratives about them. The resignification of identity terms and the production and circulation of new narratives that enter into the dispute of meanings confronting hegemonic histories produce emancipated subjectivities that push for a reconfiguration of social relations, whether legal or institutional (policies and laws that protect and affirm women’s rights, ethnic minorities, etc.), whether micropolitical (interpersonal relationships within the family, educational environments, digital networks, etc.). These kinds of changes are significant because they tend toward a relative increase in the ability of individual singularities to exist and to act by breaking with certain mechanisms of power and regulation. However, they remain anchored to the possibilities of meaning, subjectivation and relationship established by the modern regime of determination. When emancipatory movements do not question *identity* - and its derivatives: gender, sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, nature, culture, etc. - as a transcendentalized category that organizes their way of ontologically constituting and of thinking themselves, even though their practices and actions reconfigure systems of meanings, they do not change the production conditions of the hegemonic biopower that regulates subjectivities and relations.

Transformation policies can be produced, however, when, voluntarily or not, emancipatory movements weave connections with virtualities not thinkable or possible in the constituted semantic field and, in this relationship, *become* others. When, for example, the questioning of gender and sexual orientation relations, ethno-racial relations, or relations between society and nature establishes the possibility of not only rearranging these relations, but leaving the frames of reference that shape the possibilities of thinking them and projecting themselves into the formless, into what cannot be said or conceived in existing categories, but intuited, interviewed, far-sighted even without definite or definable boundaries: the idea of subjectivities and experiences beyond gender, sexual orientation, race or ethnicity, nature and society, identity.

In this second perspective, the most useful for thinking about the place of communication in transformative political processes, communication can be understood as a relation that cannot be subsumed by any principles of invariance, which transforms the multiplicity, the irreducible difference of heterogeneous elements that imply each other asymmetrically in the very nature of the relationship. Communication conceived as becoming, therefore, is by its very nature a *transformative communication*.

Epistemological-political traps of the struggle for recognition of identities

In light of the foregoing reflections, I argue that assuming the reconfiguration of hegemonic power/knowledge relations as the purpose of disruptive political actions and practices, although these reorganizations are necessary to open breaches of self-governance of the subjectivities in the meshes of biopower, does not strain either the way of formal predication by properties, nor the devices of identity production and organization capable of reabsorbing the rebellions, the subjectivities they produce and their practices in the hegemonic mode of regulation. It is the trap, pointed by Safatle (2015), of politics conceived as a struggle for recognition, summarized in Axel Honneth's idea that "subjects expect from society, above all, recognition of their demands of identity" (Honneth, 2003, p. 114 apud Safatle, 2015, p. 331, free translation by the author, emphasis in the original). Identity that is the generating principle of the conditions of possibility, organization of the sensible and production of subjectivities of the modern regime of determination and is constituted by the predication by attributes conceived as properties. To recognize identities means therefore to get legitimacy for certain individual and collective constructions configured as sameness (versions of the same formal way of determination), legitimacy based on the acceptance by the other identities of a shared universality - constituted by eliminating other possibilities of subjective definition - which would consist in the assumption of a common "formal essence" (the predication by properties).

As Safatle shows, this conception has generated, since the 1970s, an "understanding of the struggles of historically vulnerable and despoiled rights groups (blacks, gays, women) as struggles for cultural affirmation of differences" (Ibidem, p. 326, free translation by the author). On the one hand, it produces "an image of society as an atomized network of strongly identitarian groups endlessly negotiating their recognition within a fragile dynamic of tolerance" (Ibidem, p. 348, free translation by the author). On the other hand, it transforms the political action of emancipation into an essentially defensive practice, of *confirming* identity constructions that have as their presupposition the formal determination by attributes (identity as form is something *given*; therefore, "individual" or of "group identity" is assumed to be already defined and comparable to that of the "other") or, at most, to the *resignification* of identities, rather than as an *affirmation* of possibilities of difference (not foreseeable or already given), obliterating the fact that these constructions "are defined by opposition or exclusion" (Ibidem, p. 349, free translation by the author), that is, they are configured "within asymmetrical power relations, thus being expressions of defense or domination strategies" (Ibidem, p. 349, free translation by the author). Most historically vulnerable "identities" were, in fact, constructed by the very biopower relationships that undermine them: "woman" as an identity is a construction of modern Western patriarchy⁵; the "black" is a construction of colonialism, etc. Taking them, consolidating them and reproducing them, while reframing them, confirms the domain that engendered them.

Rancière (1996) warns of the danger of a resorption in the *police* administration of the sensible (the regulation of what can be experienced, thought, said and practiced) of the ruptures caused by *political* action, which he conceives as the eruption of causalities and subjectivities that are unthinkable

⁵ The concept of patriarchy, dear to most feminist movements, is not consensual within gender studies, and is conceived by some currents as a system of male domination structured to subject, exploit, and inferiorize women (either with an ahistorical nature, based on the Weberian conception of patriarchy as an ideal type, or - from a nonessentialist perspective - historically and geographically situated and changing its configuration according to the social, cultural and economic transformations of gender relations in different societies; and, for certain strands of Marxist feminism, subordinated in modernity to the capitalist system) and, by other currents, as a form of ideology (Saffioti, 1992). For these reflections, we understand patriarchy - according to Saffioti (1992) - as a system of domination and exploitation of women based on a socially constructed hierarchy of genders that assumes different configurations in different societies and historical moments, articulating with other systems of regulation of subjectivities and social relations.

and unpredictable in the categories of the dominant order. Multiculturalism, understood as a regime of differences regulation configured and classified as identities (Safatle, 2015), product of the struggles for recognition, represents a danger for the politics of transformation because, by encouraging identitarian subjectivation, it transforms all the time into *identities* with *own* demands and characteristics the subjects that shake or tension the existing symbolization, reintegrating them into its categories (gender, race, etc.), and makes that struggles and emancipation practices assume in an uncritical way the recognition of identities as their purpose. This is why Žižek (2012) states that the “liberal answer to domination is recognition” (Žižek, 2012, p. 1004), which by legally and discursively reorganizing the relationships between individual and collective subjects constituted as identities produces a sense of end or absence of domination, at the same time maintaining it by the reiteration of mechanisms of inferiorization within *formally* free and equal relations and by presetting predication by properties determination as a condition of any subjectivation.

That is why, for a politics of transformation that has as its horizon the modification of modern determination regime in its neoliberal capitalist version, I argue like Hardt and Negri (2010) that the current struggles for liberation should take as their practice the *self-abolition of identity*, the establishment of conditions for the production of subjectivities and relationships unthinkable in an identitarian way. Self-abolishing identity implies *suppressing it as a defining category for the production of subjectivity and the organization of relationships*. This is not to say that a rigid distinction can be made, or it is desirable, between emancipatory struggles to reconfigure existing relationships and those aimed at altering the domination-generating frame of reference. As Hardt and Negri admit, rebellious expressions of identity (feminist, anti-racist, anti-colonialist and other struggles) may, throughout the process, raise awareness of the need for an overcoming or abolition of identity that they use as an instrument of self-assertion by realizing that *control of the conditions of production of this identity* is the generating core of the domination they suffer. Moreover - as Butler (2004) points out - the conceptual, discursive, linguistic, affective material produced and used in an emancipation struggle and the relationships that rebel identity political subjects weave in the process trigger connections, conscious or not, with becomings erased by the mode of determination by identity, opening gaps for its tensioning. This also happens, as Hardt and Negri (2010) point out, unfolding Wittgenstein's ideas, when language games deliberately or involuntarily open to misconception or referential alterity, which is extremely important for a politics of transformation in digital social networks operated at the semantic level of interaction between actors.

Limits of reprogramming networks and of narratives dispute as emancipatory communication practices in digital networks

For the purpose of this reflection, I conceptualize digital networks as a meta-dispositif of subjectivation and production of relationships⁶ instituted by transcendentalization (the transformation into

⁶ In another study (Condorelli, 2017), I propose a conceptualization of digital networks as a constructed universal that defined logics that became transcendent criteria of subjectivation and relationship. These principles are connectivity (as a ceaseless drive toward connection), interactivity (as a permanent need for interaction), sharing, hacking (as a constant recombination of elements), and speed that, acting in a crisis-cross manner sustaining and being sustained by a set of dispositifs (graphical interfaces, transparency discourse, connectivity discourse, technological convergence, big data, and programming algorithms) produce subjectivation and interaction tendencies. The main of these tendencies are the production and distribution of relational capital between network nodes, the formation of hubs (message distribution centers, rich in connections) and authorities (nodes with high intensity of interaction and strong influence even if poor of connections), self-management - in the marketing sense of building strategies to arouse interest in other actors and provoke engagement - as a mode of relational capital accumulation, the emergence of network perspectives that construct subjectivities, subjectivation by combination and recombination of properties reiterated by imitation and counter-imitation movements and the affectation by emotion that has as its generating principle of affectation the fear of indetermination, which founds of the principle of identity.

regulatory principles) of logics of production and permanent private appropriation of exchange value. This meta-dispositif has incessantly generated and nurtures a “sharing culture” that presents itself, as Castells (2009) points out, as a meta-culture of shared communication protocols that enables exchanges between different cultures. This perception, supported by an idea of culture as a “set of values and beliefs” (Ibidem, p. 36) that guides the subjects behaviors and an idea of subjects as ready entities constituted by predication by properties (therefore, supported by a notion of culture and subject as *identities*), can easily be integrated into a digital communication approach that conceive the struggles in digital networks of historically subordinated subjectivities as struggles for recognition. From this perspective, the path to the emancipation of historically subordinated social actors would be the multicultural recognition of the *other* - conceived as *another version* of an identitarian *self* predicated by properties - through dialogue in digital networks.

Without neglecting the emergence of new enunciative visibilities and the narrative dispute in digital networks as emancipatory possibilities, we must go beyond dialogue and network dispute, made possible by a transcendental regulating meta-power (networks as a meta-dispositif) that defines the terms in which they can be locked (the possibilities of the semantic field) and the criteria that allow us to think about them, and promote forms and processes of communication that favor the *common construction of conditions of production of subjectivities and relations*. This leads to the questioning of the dominant perspective, founded on the transcendentalization of the identity principle, about the political and communicational struggle in digital networks: what Castells (2009) conceptualizes as the struggle for *reprogramming networks*. In this conception, the reproduction of power - understood as “the ability to exercise control over others” (ibid, p. 45) - and the struggle for counterpower - the ability of the controlled ones to disentangle themselves from these controls and to self-govern - would be linked to two general mechanisms:

(1) the ability to constitute network(s), and to program/reprogram the network(s) in terms of the goals assigned to the network; and (2) the ability to connect and ensure the cooperation of different networks by sharing common goals and combining resources (...) (ibid, p. 45).

Actors who produce networks are called *programmers* by the sociologist as and they generate their *programs* (set of goals and operating procedures or protocols, meant as self-organizing standards) from “ideas, visions, projects, and frames⁷” (Castells, p. 46), therefore, from ready mental elements constituted as sets of properties.

How ideas reach the nodes of each network, and are absorbed or rejected by them, becoming, in both cases, producers of subjectivities by imitation or counter-imitation, depending on the exposure level of these nodes to communication processes that disseminate and consolidate concepts/perspectives, “the ability to create an effective process of communication and persuasion along the lines that favor the projects of the would-be programmers,” (Ibidem, p. 46) would be the most important factor in programming or reprogramming networks. On the other hand, Castells calls *switches* the mechanisms that control the connection points between various networks constituted as such. To build power relationships, switches need to set compatible goals among the interrelated network programs. The construction of counterpower, in turn, come from three processes: the redefinition of network programs by the dissemination within it of alternative hegemonic ideas that produce agencies, in an attempt to make them gain majority adhesions in a narrative dispute; actions and relationships that aim to reconcile alternative goals that arise within a network with those of other networks with which it connects; the creation of new networks with alternative programs to those of the networks to be changed and switching actions aimed at making the programs of the new networks compatible with those of the networks to be changed.

⁷ Based on cognitive and neuroscientific theories, Castells (2009) conceives frames as sets of guiding meanings, fixed in the brain as synaptic pathways, which organize the perception of the subjects’ world.

Even without using Castells' concepts of reprogramming networks and network switching, the conception of cyberactivism by Malini and Antoun (2013), who mapped a large number of emancipation politics experiences in digital networks, is based on the same assumptions. All the practices that the authors conceptualize as digital activism promote the creation of horizontally self-organized networks for the production and dissemination of ideas and narratives (network perspectives) alternative to the hegemonic ones, mainly thanks to the action of many nodes whose intensity of interactions makes them gain the status of *authorities*. This process aims to schedule the debate on networks - usually dominated by perspectives imposed by *hubs* linked to large groups of economic, political and media power - and, consequently, to *reschedule* (which is a form of reprogramming) the agendas of other networks with which the counter power networks interconnect in switching actions.

In most cases, the struggle for reprogramming networks by social actors subjectivated by identity as predication by properties is operated through the narratives dispute, that is, the dispute on the production of meanings in the semantic plane of communication. This is what happened, for example, with the feminist digital campaigns, conducted between 2015 and 2016, *#MeuPrimeiroAssédio* (My First Harassment), *#MeuAmigoSecreto* (My Secret Friend), and *#BelaRecatadaEDoLar* (Beautiful, Caste and Housewife)⁸. In all three cases, the spontaneous sharing of messages constructed with those hashtags⁹ by thousands of nodes has not only produced *clusters* around concepts of those campaigns and other ideas, narratives and discourses that have emerged from them (both for affirmation or denial), that is, created new networks with their own programs and brokering perspectives (and their opposing networks), but, above all, they made these perspectives traverse various ready networks (virtual communities of affinities, networks of personal relationships, commercial media networks, alternative media networks, corporate networks, etc.), helping to schedule their interactions by the commutating action of myriads of very active common nodes. Campaigns have therefore turned thousands of user nodes into network switches, using some of the modes of subjectivation and relationship that, as Malini and Antoun (2013) and Castells (2009) point out, are dominant in social networks: the social capital of *authorities*, generated by the intensity of interactions and affectation by emotion. Most profiles of social networking sites such as Facebook and Twitter, in fact, are simultaneously multiple network nodes, some of which have credibility (*authority*) to

⁸ The three mentioned campaigns emerged a few months from each other at the end of 2015 and the beginning of 2016. The first one was prompted by a wave of comments about sexual harassment on digital networks against a 12-year-old female participant of a television food show: in reaction to these comments, a feminist collective working on Facebook and Twitter, Think Olga, created a hashtag that viralized in a short time, shared by thousands of women who reported their first sexual harassment. The second one, which was kicked off by another feminist collective present on digital networks, Não Me Kahlo, did not emerge as a planned action, but soon became a collective construction of widespread dissemination on networks. Inspired by the tweet (up to 140 characters post on Twitter) of a follower of the collective, who complained that she did not like the secret friend who took the draw, members of Não Me Kahlo launched in November 2015 a series of tweets with a feminist perspective about the situation described in the opening post. Soon after these posts were published, followers of the collective Facebook page began submitting their own reports, which Não Me Kahlo released. In a short time, thousands of women spontaneously appropriated the hashtag and, interacting with each other, turned it into a plural and collaborative narrative about the ways sexism practices everyday violence and reproduces itself in practices and discourses. The third campaign came as a spontaneous reaction by thousands of women to the publication of an article by *Veja* magazine in April 2016. As part of a strategy of constructing and disseminating perspectives that would sustain and legitimize the President Dilma Rousseff's impeachment process, the article featured as archetype of "good woman" the wife of the then vice-president, who would take office after the fall of the elected president, reproducing a traditional conservative discourse according to which the role of women would be to aesthetically please the man (responding to a model instituted as hegemonic that associates aesthetic affectation to white skin and thinness, among other characteristics), be submissive to his wishes and take care of the house and offspring, ideas summarized in the emblematic title of the article: "Beautiful, caste and housewife". Reframing this title as a discursive synthesis of a system of oppression, thousands of women turned it into a hashtag that immediately viralized, disseminating messages critical to the model of femininity and gender relations that it presupposed and reinforced.

⁹ Hashtags are keywords associated with certain content circulating on the Internet, preceded by the hash symbol (#), which become hyperlinks - texts that allow access to other texts - indexable by search engines, allowing access to all messages produced on a subject and composing collective narratives.

groups - even small ones - from other nodes. This has meant that women who participate in non-feminist virtual communities and personal networks where feminist themes do not circulate interacted with posts from these campaigns from some of their contacts and were affected by these messages (because of the relationship the messages allowed to establish with situations experienced in daily life or other reasons), contributing to disseminate them or producing new ones with the same hashtags, thus becoming, in turn, switches of other networks. The campaigns did not break, therefore, with the logic of interaction instituted by the digital networks as a meta-dispositif, but crossed them and made use of their relationship organization mechanisms.

Within the scope of subjectivation, I consider that these processes contributed to institute the *hashtags* of those campaigns in political subjects, as they provoked the emergence not only of shared affective ambiances, but also of bundles - multiple, but with the same generating core - of perceptions, concepts, common discourses and objectives: that is, they produced collective identitarian subjects (because they were constructed by *identification* with a perspective, which defines the possible - albeit multiple - *properties* to be integrated into the new subjective configuration), internally plural (but whose heterogeneous vectors respond a mode of determination and a core of common concepts), with their own agendas. This collective subjectivation caused reconfigurations in individual subjectivities, bringing many women to feminist ideas and encouraging the perception of certain experiences (in the case of *#MeuPrimeiroAssédio*), certain everyday situations (in the case of *#MeuAmigoSecreto*) and certain discourses (in the case of *#BelaRecatadaEDoLar*) as violence. The campaign *#MeuAmigoSecreto*, as tells us the digital feminist collective *Não Me Kahlo* that provided her fuse, made many women perceive abusive relationships they were experiencing and, off the internet, "had a significant impact: the number of complaints made to the 180 - the Secretariat of Policies for Women' 'hotline' - reached 63,090, 40% more than a year earlier" (Lara et al., 2016, p. 16, free translation by the author).

As these campaigns show, therefore, the reprogramming of networks by the action of switches and the narratives dispute can effectively trigger processes of emancipatory reconfiguration of subjectivities and relationships. But at the same time, it is not difficult to realize that this reconfiguration does not change the mode of determination that gives rise to the power relations that those practices soften, nor does it necessarily give rise to a common production of subjectivation and relationship conditions. Moreover, both power systems that those practices oppose and conservative cyberactivist movements rely on exactly the same mechanisms to construct/reproduce their domination. For example, it was through the action of thousands of anonymous nodes that movements such as *Revoltados Online* and *Vem pra Rua* were able to spread conservative perspectives so capillary in 2015 and 2016, setting up collective subjectivations. Moreover, the feminist campaigns I discussed were themselves internally crisscrossed by a strong narratives dispute. Actors and networks interested in promoting contrary perspectives tried to reprogram the networks built by the campaigns, which assumed the configuration of *clusters*, using the same hashtags to circulate aggressive, disqualifying or denial messages of their concepts and discourses, which led to antagonistic clusters that, even if minorities, also were potential switches. In the case of *#BelaRecatadaEDoLar*, the hashtag was appropriated by actors without adherence to the cause, which led to the dissemination of perspectives not related to the campaign's meaning bundles, which contributed to the partial depoliticization of the main concept and its conversion into an ironic slogan.

All this points to the fact that the principles of (re)programming/switching and of narratives dispute that have as their foundation the affirmation of identities, which are the dominant perspectives for conceiving the political action and communication practices of transformation in digital networks, presuppose the same transcendental logics and subjectivation tendencies that underpin the formation and reproduction of biopower in networks. It is a conception anchored at the semantic level of digital communication, which reiterates the mode of determination by predication by properties of the dominant symbolization.

Final considerations

In the light of the discussion, I consider it important to study and reflect on whether emancipatory movements' political and communication practices in digital networks tension, question or short-circuit the logics established by the networks themselves and, consequently, the formal way of determining subjectivities and relationships that they reiterate or strengthen and reproduce, as well as develop concepts that support transformative and not just reconfiguring practices. Horizontality, decentralization, collaborative character, and the "sharing culture" of networks do not necessarily or inherently produce transformative political differences and subjectivations. Likewise, thinking about *liberation* and not just *emancipation* politics implies assuming that there is no "strategic use" or "appropriation" of technologies for political purposes by individual and collective *identities* already constituted, but common production of principles for defining networks and the subjects.

In the modern regime of determination in its neoliberal capitalist version, a transformative communication in digital networks needs to promote the modification of the transcendent criteria of possibility of the subjects and networks and not only, by reiterating these criteria and sustaining them, to promote dialogues and narratives disputes aimed at reconfiguring subjectivities and relationships. Like Žižek (2012), I understand that a transformative politics emerges as an unforeseen event in current regimes of determination and representation, changing the modes of subjectivation and retroactively instituting its own need. Also like Žižek (2012), therefore, I argue that

we should abandon the entire paradigm of "resistance to a *dispositif*": the idea that, while a *dispositif* determines the network of the Self's activity, it simultaneously opens up the space for the subject's "resistance", for its (partial and marginal) undermining and displacement of the *dispositif*. The task of emancipatory politics lies elsewhere: not in elaborating a proliferation of strategies of how to "resist" the predominant *dispositif* from marginal subjective positions, but in thinking about the modalities of a possible radical rupture in the predominant *dispositif* itself (Žižek, 2012, p. 994).

In the case of digital networks, the "predominant *dispositif*" are the networks themselves as constructed universal and their transcendent logics (connectivity, interactivity, sharing, hacking, speed): a meta-*dispositif* that constantly produces and reiterates modes of subjectivation that, although multiple, are originated by the same principle of identity as predication by properties; modes of relationship centered on exchange value as a formal principle of equivalence and semantic fields (sets of possibilities of meaning) based on these three generating principles.

To think about a digital communication of transformation for movements that fight for the affirmation of historically subordinated social subjects, therefore, implies in elaborating ways of short-circuiting the logics of the networks converted into transcendental, thus tensioning the (re)production of subjectivities, relations and semantic fields based on the neoliberal capitalist criteria of determination that generate these logics and which they recursively constantly reiterate. This includes rethinking the idea of the *struggle for recognition* in digital networks by proposing onto-epistemological alternatives that do not sacrifice diversity on the altar of an exclusionary abstract universality, a producer of invisibility and a product of transcendentalization of Western-centered modes of subjectivation, but favor the emergence of singular collective political subjects capable of redefining the conditions of possibility of the hegemonic regimes of enunciation and visibility.

References

Butler, J. (2004). Universalidades en competencia. In: Butler, J.; Laclau, E.; Žižek, S. (Eds.). *Contingencia, hegemonía, universalidad. Diálogos contemporáneos en la izquierda* (p. 141-184). Buenos Aires: Fondo de Cultura Económica de Argentina.

- Castells, M. (2009). *Communication power*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Castells, M. (2008). *O poder da identidade*. São Paulo/Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.
- Condorelli, A. (2017). *Comunicação para uma política de transformação em redes digitais: Desidentificação, despossessão, desprogramação*. [Doctoral Thesis in Social Science]. Natal: Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte.
- Deleuze, G. (1988). *Diferença e repetição*. Rio de Janeiro: Graal.
- Hall, S. (2006). *A identidade cultural na pós-modernidade*. 11. ed. Rio de Janeiro: DP&A.
- Hardt, M.; Negri, A. (2010). *Comune. Oltre il privato e il pubblico*. Milan: RCS Libri.
- Malini, F. Antoun, H. (2013). *A internet e a rua: ciberativismo e mobilização nas redes sociais*. Porto Alegre: Sulina.
- Lara, B. de; Rangel, B.; Moura, G. (2016). *#MeuAmigoSecreto: Feminismo além das redes*. Rio de Janeiro: Edições de Janeiro.
- Rancière, J. (1996). *O desentendimento – política e filosofia*. São Paulo: Editora 34.
- Safatle, V. (2015). *O circuito dos afetos. Corpos políticos, desamparo e o fim do indivíduo*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.
- Saffioti, H. I. B. (1992). Rearticulando gênero e classe social. In: Costa, A. de O.; Bruschini, C. (Eds.). *Uma questão de gênero* (p. 183-215). Rio de Janeiro: Rosa dos tempos.
- Santos, B. de S. (2009). Para além do Pensamento Abissal: das linhas globais a uma ecologia de saberes. In: Santos, B. de S.; Meneses, M. P. (Eds.). *Epistemologias do Sul* (p. 23-71). Coimbra: Almedina/CES.
- Sodré, M. (2014). *A ciência do comum: notas para o método comunicacional*. Petrópolis: Vozes.
- Viveiros de Castro, E. (2015). *Metafísicas canibais: elementos para uma antropologia pós-estrutural*. São Paulo: Cosac Naify.
- Žižek, S. (2012). *Less than nothing: Hegel and the shadow of dialectical materialism*. London/New York: Verso.