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## Networked bodies and the right to appear: National Transgender Day of Visibility on YouTube

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## Abstract

Taking the National Transgender Day of Visibility as a performance, this paper aims to discuss the ways in which trans visibility is shaped in audiovisual productions posted on YouTube. We take this date as a starting point to think about the power of dissident bodies - seen here as a grouping of bodies in alliance (bodies in network) -, against the regime of trauma and violence to which these individuals are subjected by the gender policies of global capitalism. Based on a theoretical and methodological approach that articulates performance and performativity, we have analyzed a set of publications circulating on YouTube that allude to the Transgender Day of Visibility in order to understand the creation of other scenarios of actions and embodiments. These scenarios point to new possibilities of existence, which creates room for this population's right to appear.

### Keywords

Transgender; YouTube; performance.

## Introduction

On January 29, 2004, a campaign carried out by the Ministry of Health's STD/AIDS program, which had the participation of 27 leaders of the country's main trans activist groups (Biancarelli, 2004), has become a milestone in the trajectory of a social movement historically erased and exposed to countless forms of violence. The National Transgender Day of Visibility became part of the country's calendar of affirmative dates. This is an action maintained by activist groupings that are fighting for public policies and against the violence and marginalization of trans people.

One of the ways to exist (and resist) in the date has everything to do with its spreading on social networks through a web of rituals and expressive practices incorporated by subjects who stage, reenact, configure and reconfigure their visibility as a political action. Based on these findings, the paper<sup>1</sup> proposes to map and discuss the construction of scenarios about trans visibility in Brazil from audiovisual productions circulating on YouTube and that allude to the National Transgender Day of Visibility (January 29). Our analytical and contextual effort seeks to apprehend the engagements around sexual and gender dissidences by taking this date as a performance, in the terms of Diana Taylor (2013). For the identification and analysis of these scenarios, we have focused on a theoretical-methodological approach that articulates the notion of performance with the concept of performativity, as thought by Judith Butler (2003; 2019).

We set the concept of performance as a theoretical and methodological tool for an exploratory study of the expressions related to the National Transgender Day of Visibility in circulation on YouTube. Through the notion of performance, we seek to analyze how these audiovisual materialities allow us to think about broader contexts related to the struggles of the trans population. With this gesture, we aim to understand tensions and disputes that cross the transgender experience in Brazil, using the performances related to the Transgender Day of Visibility staged on YouTube as the starting point of our study. This statement implies a double and challenging conceptual investment both on performance - as an analytical category of the phenomenon - and on performativity - as an anchor dimension for thinking about gender identities and their ways of existing in alliance.

When we look at the presence of transgender bodies in the digital environment, it is interesting to notice how the Transgender Day of Visibility takes place on and appropriates YouTube as a repository for gestures and actions which are permanently updated. On the platform, live broadcasts of events and lectures, artistic performances, documentary videos, news reports, music videos, vlogs, etc. are archived in allusion to the date. These audiovisuals are produced not only by the trans individuals and organizations linked to the cause, but also by instances of the executive power, the third sector, brands, youtubers, users and by media outlets. This material is coated with other layers of meaning (likes, dislikes, comments, shares, etc.) that weave a network of alliances for the existence of this Day as a performative act.

As such, the phenomenon seems to us powerful as a place for the incorporation of repertoires that contribute to thinking about other ways of feeling, inhabit the world and constitute presence in collectives not foreseen by the cis-heteronormative and cis-heteropatriarchal power. The occupation of the *cis-tem*<sup>2</sup>, as a micropolitical action, allows us to see the power of dissident bodies in the face of global capitalism's high degree of perversion. These bodies act as a kind of force field that creates a "space of otherness" from which we feel required to reinvent the terms of both subjectivity and binary identity policy (Rolnik, 2013; 2018). We agree with Mombaça (2016), for whom the project of "coloniality" and

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<sup>1</sup> The development of this paper is the result of research with funding from CNPq.

<sup>2</sup> Viviane Vergueiro (2015) characterizes cisgenerity and normativity as a set of cisnormative processes that establish "colonialities of knowledge, power and being that operate violently through systemes" (Vergueiro, 2015, p. 9). From a decolonial perspective, it proposes a methodology and trans epistemology "against these cisnormative processes and cystic colonialities", with the aim of "promoting self-determination, autonomy, dignity and freedom to bodily diversities and gender identities" (Vergueiro, 2015, p. 9).

“christianization” requires trans bodies, “monstrous ones”, to exist in the space of the norm to wage an “inglorious and risky battle” (Mombaça, 2016, p. 344), if we take into account the dangers of excluding institutional knowledge.

When thinking about the Transgender Day of Visibility and the violence to which this community is exposed daily, Vergueiro (2015) states that, in addition to the agendas and political demands of the population (for dignity, access to the labor market, health, etc.), it is urgent that the perspectives, narratives and the constitution of trans knowledge for themselves and for others become multiplied and complexified.” In terms of how they deal with their bodies, gender expressions and social interactions (institutional or not), in a way that broadens the horizons of their (our) inclusion in the world” (Vergueiro, 2015, p. 215). The date, similar to other political mobilizations around gender issues, such as the International Day to Fight Homophobia (May, 17), the LGBTQIA+ International Pride Day (June 28), the National Lesbian Day of Visibility (August 29) and the Intersex Day of Visibility (November 8), therefore acts here as an operator of shares that allows us to see how the appearance of these gender expressions are claimed and how tensions and conflicts involved in this process are evidenced in the digital network.

Our choice to observe the phenomenon on the YouTube environment is justified by the strong presence and visibility of trans people on the platform (Yu, 2017; Gutmann, Mota Junior, Silva, 2019) and because this digital environment is still the most used site in the country to broadcast videos. Altogether, Brazil has 105 million monthly users<sup>3</sup>, appearing as the second country in the world with more watched hours. The expansion of the platform’s uses by dissident subjects and their greater presence in soap operas, television series and reality shows occur concomitantly with the context of the rising power of the extreme right-wing in Brazil. This political force has the gender issues as part of its institutional political conflict and enables, through the social networks, ostensible violence directed to this population.

The methodological procedure that guided the construction of this paper corpus was based on the notion of audiovisual vector (Gutmann, 2021): phenomenon or event that triggers a set of audiooverbovisual expressions and whose tracking, on social networks, should be done by the researcher who must have as anchor point his research problem. In this sense, the date was analyzed as a vector that triggered a plot of audiovisual productions in the digital environment. From the search conducted in March 2021 through data scraping (web scraping), using the term “Trans Visibility Day”, we mapped a set of publications that were published between 2017 and 2021, totaling 230 videos. After this searching, we obtained a list of links that have used either the term in the description or the tags #DiadaVisibilidade, #VisibilidadeTrans and #Trans. In order to conduct a more in-depth analysis, we selected eight publications from four types of sources: press (including large and independent media), government sectors, non-governmental organizations and artists. The criteria used to choose the corpus for this more in-depth analytical treatment sought to articulate public and private discourses, from the governmental and civil society spheres, from the political and artistic fields.

The material analyzed consists of the following audiovisual productions available on YouTube: Transgender Day of Visibility - Salvador City Hall; 2021 Day of the #VisibilityTrans - UN Brazil; Live Transgender Day of Visibility - PSOL in the Chamber; National Transgender Day of Visibility is celebrated with lectures - *Balanço Geral Manhã* - TV Atalaia; *Pluralidades* - Episode 6 - Neon Cunha – *Ponte Jornalismo*; Leandrinha Du Art - Transgender Day of Visibility - *Mídia Ninja*; Live, shine and rock! - Transgender Day of Visibility - Linn da Quebrada; Trans Visibility: the story of Thais de Azevedo - *Catraca Livre*. The protocol used for the treatment of these videos mobilized a set of categories relevant to the concept of performance (scenarios, archive, body and repertoire) for the analysis of audiovisual materialities on the platform (color, scenery, costumes, speeches, gestures, graphic interventions, comments, tags etc.) in articulation with their cultural, social and political contexts. In a second phase of the study, we activated the notion

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<sup>3</sup> Retrieved March 5, 2022 from < <https://bityli.com/bmrYw> >.

of performativity to guide us in the identification of violent regimes strained in narratives and discourses.

In the Brazilian communication field, several researchers have invested in articulated approaches to gender and sexuality studies to account for these dynamics of networked media expressions that destabilize the normative inscriptions of corporalities (Xavier; Soares; Evangelista, 2016; Leal; Antunes, 2019; Dias, 2021; Rocha, 2021; Dias; Mendonça, Medeiros, 2021; Yu et al, 2021; Mendonça; Medeiros, Araújo 2021, among others). Following the thoughts of these authors, we are interested in theoretical-methodological perspectives that highlight the dimension of experience and the different realities and socio-historical nuances of the phenomenon (Leal; Antunes, 2019). Thus, if we understand that practices of hatred against dissident populations constitutes a complex regime of violence that is systemic, that in its performative act hierarchize and oppresses non-hegemonic experiences (Mendonça, Medeiros, Araújo, 2021), our challenge in this study is to observe the performative force of the trans mobilizations on digital social networks, as a way of acting before this regime of violence (Mota Junior, 2022).

The paper is organized in three parts, besides this introduction and the final considerations, in which we aim to present the results of the empirical study in a way that is articulated to the theoretical and methodological references which constitute our analytical protocol. At first, we discuss relationships between performance, scenarios and embodied memory, following Diana Taylor's thought (2013), to then consider how transgender bodies set up interactional spaces for the construction of collective arrangements, other kinds of knowledge, sensibilities and identity engagements around the Trans Visibility Day on YouTube, taking the commemorative date as a performance. In a third moment, based on articulations between the notion of performance and Judith Butler's understanding of performativity, we analyzed the actions seen as a collective act that claims existence in the public sphere. The struggle for the right to appear, which is seen in the audioverbovisual forms mapped in this paper, is discussed as a right that establishes the body in the political field.

Based on the analytical findings, we understand the actions and interactions that occur in the digital environment as a right that, in its expressive strength, transmits a bodily demand for economic, social and political conditions "no longer affected by the induced forms of precarious condition" (Butler, 2019, p. 11). More than trying to apprehend the phenomenon located on a specific day, we seek to understand the configuration of alliances between subjects who want to be seen beyond their identifications; and who therefore need and deserve the right to a possible life to be lived without the threat of violence.

## Performances, scripts and embodied memories

Our research gesture seeks to assess the relationships arising between performativity and performance, from the observation of the networked audiovisuals (Gutmann, 2021) as places for the constitution of identity engagements around the trans bodies (bodies seen in a network of alliances). Based on the contributions of Schechner (2006) and Taylor (2013), Gutmann (2021) considers the notion of performance as a methodological concept that allows access to cultures in digital environments not only by the act performed by a body, but by the various interactional processes that this body triggers. By networked audiovisuals, the author understands the plot of audioverbovisual expressions (videos, comments, reactions, etc.) that constitutes the communicative fabric of a given phenomenon (Gutmann, 2021).

When looking at the Transgender Day of Visibility on YouTube as a performance, we are following the path of Schechner (2006), for whom events can be seen as performances. For the author, these performances are everyday actions that take place in processual arrangements and that involve interactions, repetitions and restorations. Thinking about events as performances show us behaviors that express a know-how and a make-believe typical of the games (Schechner, 2006), as a kind of memory in action. In a similar perspective, Taylor (2013) bets on an understanding of performance as a praxis and, mainly, as

an episteme. Performances involve reiteration, transmission of knowledge, temporalities and identities, and it constitute a kind of methodological lens by which we can “dig” for embodied cultural memories, not only in the processes of reiterations, but also in their anthropophagic dimension, agglutinating and transcultural before the colonization processes in the Americas (Taylor, 2013). It is in the wake of these discussions that the author invests in the topics of the archive and the repertoire as possibilities to access performances. Despite distinguishing the archive, the supposedly lasting materials such as books, videos, photographs, etc.; and the repertoire, usually associated with the fleeting: dances, gestures, oralities, etc; Taylor does not understand them as antagonistic forces. On the contrary, it is precisely in the game of articulations between archives and repertoires that the performances are constructed.

Looking at events as performances does not mean to circumscribe liminal events, but to seek the scripts that conform collective imaginaries, indicate disputes of power and also possibilities of erasure. By departing from a strictly textual or narrative analysis, Taylor (2013) considers that the script allows us to historicize specific cultural practices. Scripts include the scene as a physical/scenographic place and the corporalities of social actors. They are structures that always leave room for inversion, fracture and change, and therefore use a grammar that articulates various discursive and performative practices (writing, orality, mimicry, gesture, etc.). The scripts also predicate interlocution, that is, they always position an “other” as part of the “act of transference” (whether participants, spectators or witnesses). Finally, the script is not necessarily mimetic, it is done by restoration and not imitation or duplication, hence lies the power of the transcultural idea (Taylor, 2013).

This reenactment, although loaded with embodied memories that impel our expectation/reaction to an expected or possible end (Soares, 2016), also points to changes and reinventions. On a trip through the scripts of the Brazilian Transgender Day of Visibility, we have realized how the struggle of trans people establishes a bridge with scripts already staged. At the same time, such scripts dispute alternatives of existence beyond the binary norm and claim better scripts, in the terms of Taylor (2013), for this population.

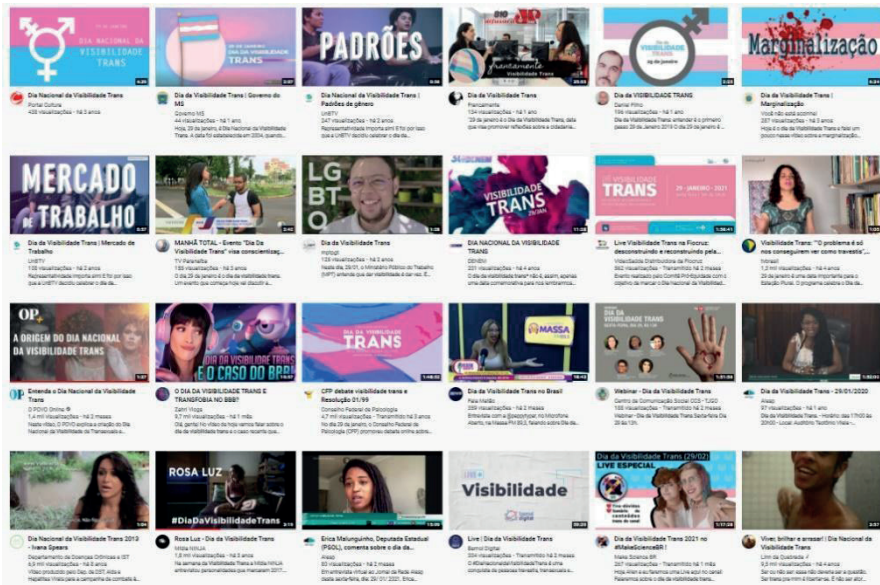
## Trans Visibility Day as performance

When we immersed ourselves in the YouTube environment, using the search term “Trans Visibility Day” or the hashtag #VisibilidadeTrans, the platform offered us around 230 posts<sup>4</sup>. There were institutional videos of political parties, organizations of the executive power and professional class entities. We also found audiovisuals produced by national and regional media, as well as a series of individual and collective products, live debates, vlogs and artistic/audiovisual performances. In this network of audiovisual expressions something caught our attention: the use of the trans flag colors in the thumbnails, images that function as miniatures and a kind of headline for the audiovisual content published on the platform.

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<sup>4</sup> Information collected in March 2021 with data scraping (webscraping).

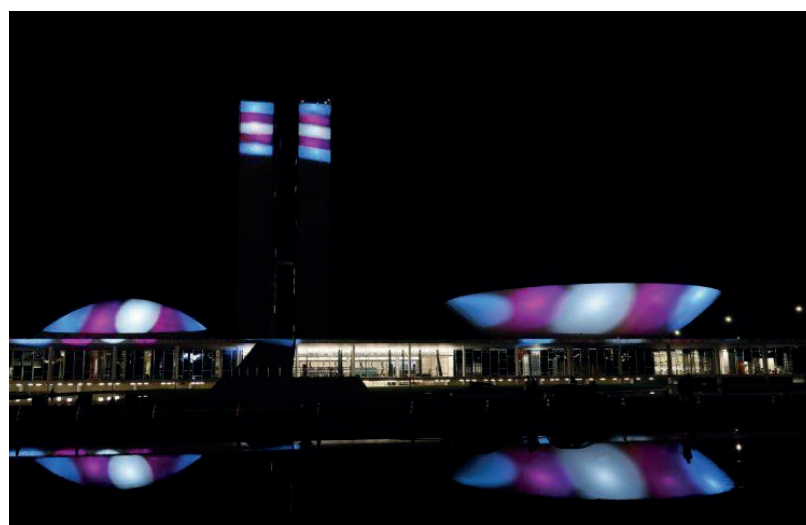
Figure 1 - Search section of YouTube highlights colors of the trans flag



Source: Retrieved from YouTube

In this mosaic of the flag colors, there is a sense of occupation, which also appears in the events that mark the day throughout the streets of the country and in spaces of institutional power. In 2021, for example, the National Congress was illuminated by the colors of the trans flag for the first time (see image 2). On the streets and/or on the digital networks, we are struck by the growth in recent years of channels and profiles on YouTube that deal with transgender experiences. Trans audiovisual content gains visibility on the platform and constitutes a locus of sharing experiences through the account of oneself (Yu, 2017; Gutmann, Mota Junior, Silva, 2019).

Figure 2 – The House of Representatives illuminated by the colors of the trans flag



Source: House of Representatives Website<sup>5</sup>

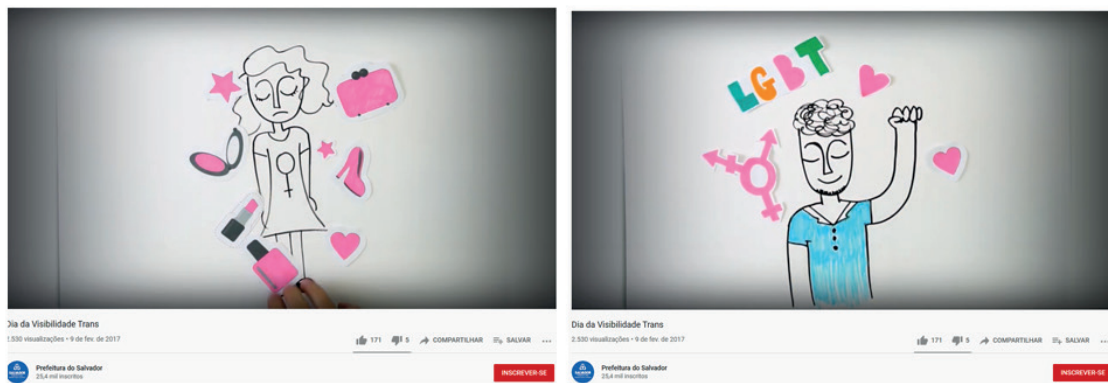
<sup>5</sup> Retrieved March 9, 2022 from <<https://bit.ly/3CpOR3v>>.

By placing themselves in social networks, trans bodies dispute the platforms as public space(s) where one can appear and/or act. We agree with Yu (2017), for whom this occupation helps to “hijack the narratives’ and to fight not only for visibility, but for “the very definition of our identities” (Yu, 2017, p. 119).

These regimes of visibility in and through digital social networks are understood by Pereira de Sá and Polivanov (2012) as ways of performing our identities. The concept of self-reflexivity proposed by Anthony Giddens is seized by the authors as a mechanism for constructing “narratives of the self”, in which the value of authenticity is summoned by the sense of a “shared history” (Pereira de Sá; Polivanov, 2012) continuously built and negotiated between the actors. This dynamic is called “expressive coherence”, a “process that occurs in tension, subject to noise, since it is always crossed by the relationship with the other actors of the socio-technical network” (Pereira de Sá; Polivanov, 2012, p. 581).

In the video published by the city hall of Salvador in 2017<sup>6</sup> (image 3), the date is addressed from the testimony of an intern on his/hers transition process: high shoes and makeup appear on the screen at the moment in which the character explains (in voice over), that he is a trans man because he did not identify with the female universe. The corporealities summoned by the illustrations reinforce the binary division, while the editing evokes a hegemonic narrative about what it is to be woman/man, setting the trans person’s destiny to the framework of only two possible identifications.

Image 3 – Binary division in the video published by the city hall of Salvador



Source: Retrieved from YouTube<sup>7</sup>

The accounting of oneself can also be seen in the testimonies of trans activists in other institutional videos. In the 2021 UN Brazil video (image 4), the shades of pink, blue and white of the trans flag appear as a backdrop of a horizontal image filmed with a smartphone that, in turn, shows testimonies in the format of a documentary. Although each story is unique, they all seem to be crossed by a common issue: violence.

Figure 4 – Testimonies of trans leaders in the UN Brazil video



Source: Retrieved from YouTube

<sup>6</sup> Video retrieved on July 2, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/3AmUxJT>>.



Words such as “struggle”, “visibility”, “marginalized” and “rights” are repeated in the testimonies that are interspersed with data about the violent scenario in which Brazilian trans people live. The video published by the UN Brazil<sup>7</sup> points out that 175 trans people were murdered in the country throughout 2020, according to a dossier developed by the National Association of Transvestites and Transsexuals (ANTRA<sup>8</sup>). According to the survey, this number may be even higher if we consider the underreporting of cases, especially when they are related to trans men: as stated in the dossier, usually there is a “non-recognition of their gender identities” (Benevides; Nogueira, 2021).

When institutions such as UN Brazil, the Ministry of Health and the City of Salvador; university channels such as UNBTV; media outlets such as TV Cultura; youtubers and major record labels such as Universal Music, create content about the date beyond the discourse built in their audiovisual production, it emerges - in a broader way - a web engendered in and by the digital networks that let us see the Trans Visibility Day as performance. From a dynamic of governability, references to the date are “part of practices and events involving rehearsed, theatrical or conventional/appropriate behaviors for the occasion” (Taylor, 2013, p. 27).

In these “appropriate for the occasion” behaviors, we have recognized the recurrence of testimonies related to violence, educational materials that explain what transgenerity is, reports and dossiers conducted by institutions such as ANTRA, as well as the valuation of exceptional cases in which people prospered, even in the face of the abjection suffered by the trans community in Brazil. In addition to the content, it was possible to observe audiovisual conventions coming from multiple formats, such as the use of testimonies retrieved from the documentary language, the account of oneself connected to the vlog narrative form, the camera framing coming from television, the newscast format, the gestural and body dynamics that connect to the presentations performed in marches, such as in the LGBTQIA+ parades.

Among these conventional acts, we have noticed the strength of institutionality in Brazil when we perceive the amount of materials posted by television stations, radio programs and professional entities, most of them related to the health area. In journalistic coverage, the commemorative date acquires a dimension of news from the annual report released by ANTRA. The efforts made by the Association in the development of a dossier that talks about the rage against trans people and its wide exposure in the media follow the acts staged by the main organizations in defense of human rights, ensuring their place as spokespersons of the transgender struggle in Brazil. On the other hand, the media position of the entity as an official source endorses the degree of institutionality, on the part of Brazilian journalism, with regard to their omission in the coverage of transphobia in the country.

Another important element identified in the analyses is how social movements have used the platform for political mobilizations. In 2021, the PSOL party chose the date to perform, from the Chamber of Deputies, a live broadcast<sup>9</sup> on their YouTube and Facebook profiles which exposed, in small windows, newly elected deputies. The collective dimension materialized in the mosaic of windows reveals not only the quantitative growth of political candidacies, but points to an important vector of transformation in Brazilian culture from the insertion of trans subjects in the spaces of state power.

Many of the parliamentarians seen in the videos are part of collective mandates. These tenures have emerged in Brazilian politics from a web of alliances that question the centrality of political decisions in a single figure. The collective mandates seek to insert more bodies to the political collective. The presence of trans bodies in these spaces has strained the values and meanings of society, also changing the visual landscape of Brazilian institutional politics<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>7</sup> Video retrieved July 2, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/2TyU1bb>>.

<sup>8</sup> Acronym in Brazilian Portuguese.

<sup>9</sup> Debate held by the PSOL trans bench on the International Transgender Day of Visibility. Retrieved July 2, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/36acMEQ>>.

<sup>10</sup> In 2020, the number of transgender people elected in Brazil was four times higher than in the 2016 elections. Data retrieved on June 30, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/3Am5nzW>>.

By taking the Trans Visibility Day as a performance, it is possible to notice that these acts and actions embody a common gesture for the right to rewrite the script of transgender existence in the country. They are ways to access the very terms of the normative system - the media environment - to constitute rewriting spaces of what is conceived as normal, natural and/or organic (Preciado, 2014, p. 168). This indicates an insistent and persistent way in the construction of other realities in spaces where micropolitics operate: in assembly, collectives, gatherings, groups of followers who welcome and support each other.

## Fruitful frictions: performance, performativity and the right to appear

When looking at the Transgender Day of Visibility event as a performance, it was necessary to outline the corporealities' modes being assembled in the scripts staged in celebration of the commemorative date. We understand these corporealities as discursive practices produced in a regulatory system capable of standardizing ways of expressing gender and sexuality, in reference to a kind of gender reality that is itself performative (Butler, 2003). In this context, performativity is not reduced to an adjective of performance, because it operates as a way of producing a language from the repetition of acts. Performance and performativity are distinct concepts, but as Dias states (2021), it is possible to build certain connections and fruitful frictions between the two notions to think about gender identity in its relationship with the transgender struggle.

We move forward with the performance/performativity articulation to think how the oppressive structures attribute to trans existence an invisibility based on a regime of truth about gender with traumatic consequences. Following Grada Kilomba (2002) and her inspiration on Freudian thought, we understand that repression is the removal of something from the conscious. The idea is close to what Butler calls processes of abjection (2003), based on the cumulative repetition of performativity as the imprisonment of gender in norms; a symbolic exclusion that produces violence.

As we can see in the analyzed material, the regulations that try to stabilize bodily modes of gender and/or sexual expression, operated by the State, by capital, by medicine and by psychoanalysis, for example, are attached by conflicts of interest. Thus, sex and gender identity always have a political dimension, which leads us to think that one of the ways to renegotiate the binomial sex/gender identity is to fight for new ways of understanding them (Rubin, 1993).

The audiovisual production analyzed in this paper points to a specific and constructed knowledge about transgenerity, an incorporated and performative knowledge that in some moments quarrels for the status quo and, in others - mainly when coming from institutional sectors -, reinforces the binarism man/woman, sex/gender. While the accounts of oneself in the analyzed audioverbovisual network express the trans experiences in their particularities, the journalistic coverage made by the mainstream media builds a normative script about transgenerity. This way of narrating is associated with a regime of truth founded on patriarchy and in other forms of oppression that constitute it, such as the gendered racism (Kilomba, 2020). For Taylor (2013), the script is designed in historical narratives that are always reenacted, sometimes reinforcing paradigms, sometimes fighting them, but overall acting as a transformative power as new stories are told.

The National Transgender Day of Visibility on Youtube follows scripts staged in political acts and affirmative dates, such as in the feminist and ethnic-racial movements, to name a few. However, the action itself for the recognition of the trans identity proposes a frontier related to who can be recognized as a transgender person. And if there is a limit, there is also an exclusion. With this in mind, we ask ourselves: if some dissident corporealities manage to cross the margins and appear on the Transgender Day of Visibility, which ones are relegated to the background, to the invisibility and to the oblivion? The

ANTRA dossier itself (Benevides; Nogueira, 2021) brings a clue, also found in the material analyzed by this paper. Non-binary people suffer even more exclusion “due to the invisibility of this population or the lack of knowledge/interest on gender diversity”, as pointed out in the entity’s report when referring to the absence of death notifications related to this population.

By the audiovisual web built in this study, it was possible to identify the journalistic institution as a regulatory and castrating dimension, whose daily coverage usually defines these bodies invisibility to a precarious condition, from the narrative framework of violence and marginality. The same TV station that localizes itself as an ally of the trans movements in the National Transgender Day of Visibility Day - giving space to one of its militants (image 5)<sup>11</sup> in a news report broadcasted in 2020, for example -, also exposes the body of a dead transvestite while referring to her by a male name - therefore denying her gender identity - in the coverage of a transgender person’s murder broadcasted in 2018 (image 6)<sup>12</sup>.

Figure 5 – News report with Linda Brasil on TV Atalaia (SE)



Source: Retrieved from YouTube

Figure 6 – Coverage of a transgender person’s murder case on TV Atalaia (SE)



Source: Retrieved from YouTube

These archives expose the continuity of specific practices that compose a project of power related

<sup>11</sup> Retrieved July 1, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/2SIa6uL>>.

<sup>12</sup> Retrieved July 1, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/3jCkvTS>>.

to the annihilation of dissident bodies. In an interview given to the Ponte Jornalismo project in 2021<sup>13</sup>, Neon Cunha, a black transgender activist, talks about the Tarantula Operation, which took place during the military coup. In these operations, transvestites were persecuted by police forces in order to “sanitize” the urban spaces (Vieira; Bagagli, 2018). According to Neon Cunha, the State and the press joined forces. “The commissioner José Wilson Richetti was sharing the agenda of the police assaults to journalists so that they could adequately cover the cleanup promoted by the State” (Santos, 2021). This statement, identified in Neon Cunha’s speech, points not only to something from the past, but also to a kind of residue that still operates in the present and embodies itself in the trauma linked to the condition called by Kilomba as “absolute otherness” (2020, p. 40). This state of affairs deprives specific subjects of a connection with the society which is constituted a priori as a cisgender, heterosexual and white one.

The Tarântula Operation exemplifies how the distinct temporalities and spatialities scattered in the digital environment can be read as a form of hypertextuality, that is, a “text that lets itself be erased, but not completely, enabling the erased past to appear - although blurred - between the lines that are written about the compressed and uptight present” (Martín-Barbero, 2014, p. 117-118). They also tell us about deleted or restricted memories that, now spread across the social networks, resurface and are rewritten in multiple bodies.

The access to these embodied memories - which would be in the realm of the repertoire, if we follow the thought of Diana Taylor (2013) - now occupy the archive, that is, the YouTube platform, an environment which integrates a structure that supports the logics related to the regulatory power of bodies. In other words, the embodied knowledge of exclusion and violence to people who deviate from gender norms crosses daily life and is consolidated also in the archive, in the press and in the official history, in a mutual relationship between modes of oppression and processes of abjection. Butler (2019) warns us about the oppression of media images that either paralyze us in commotion or affect us as an ethical request for action to express objections and to record resistance (Butler, 2019).

In this sense, a video published by *Mídia Ninja* in 2018<sup>14</sup> is quite combative when bringing the testimony of youtuber and activist Leandrinha du Art, a trans woman with disabilities who acts in the confrontation of ableism. In the video, Leandrinha fights the forgetfulness that tries to put the disabled bodies as devoid of desires and therefore less visible in social spaces. Thinking with Taylor (2013), corporealities bring knowledge infused by the action they keep and transform choreographies of meaning.

We position the author’s idea of embodied action in dialogue with Butler’s notion of gender (2003), understood here as a series of acts reenacted in a regulatory context, which produces the appearance of something solid and natural. As a proposal to access the constructed character of the gender, Butler (2003) brings the notion of performativity, turning the discursive beams into a kind of implosion of the binary division to think about the displacement of the identity categories.

Judith Butler suggests this detachment as a possible opening to multiplicity and directs the gaze towards the resistance against the sedimentation of naturalized signifiers. In this perspective, considering the disidentification process is to observe refusals, failures, and deviations in the performance act that offer new possibilities of existence. Performativity is then understood as a process engendered in heteronormativity, whereby deviant corporalities are violently excluded to the detriment of bodies that are legible, that matter and that are validated by law, by psychoanalysis, medicine and other institutions. These normative bodies are crossed by what the author calls the right to appear.

The claim to inhabit the transits and the path of disidentification can be seen as “a claim that is linked to the right to appear in public and that is implicitly linked to all other struggles to appear on the

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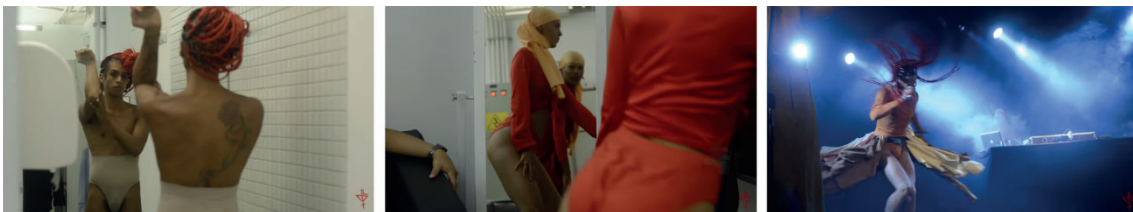
<sup>13</sup> Interview retrieved July 2, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/3dBk5cs>>.

<sup>14</sup> Retrieved July 2, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/2UTzdLS>>.

streets without the threat of violence” (Butler, 2019, p. 62). In this perspective, if a supposed coherence between sex/gender makes someone viable and is precondition to the recognition of that body, then sex is the premise by which normativity is announced and which enables the subjects to be intelligible.. We advance the argument to think that if a possible, feasible and coherent body is also visible, the sphere of visibility would be linked to a life framed by the norm, where gender is performed in its binarisms.

To advance the discussion about the process of disidentification, we bring up a video of Linn da Quebrada, published on her YouTube channel in 2017. In this material, the singer and transvestite actress “shape her very existence, or re-existence [...] in a self-reflective activism” (Rocha; Rezende, 2021, p. 110). Among the networked audiovisuals published on the Transgender Day of Visibility, Linn da Quebrada draws attention by frictioning performativity via performance, in this sense questioning the very biologizing notion of gender. She appears singing her song called “blasFêmea”, in which Linn da Quebrada proclaims “she has a woman’s face, she has a woman’s body/ she has a way, has an ass, has a breast and a woman’s cock”<sup>15</sup>. In the first seconds of the video<sup>16</sup>, the singer shows herself wearing tight panties, with her genitalia demarcated, praising that her female identification has nothing to do with her sexual organ. The video (image 7) is pervaded by images of the artist’s shows with intimate images shot in a dressing room - between baths and makeup sessions -, that let us see alliances highlighted in this excerpt of the song: “Clap your hands for the transvestites who fight to exist/ and who every day battle to earn their right to live, shine and raze”<sup>17</sup>.

Figure 7 – Frames of the Linn da Quebrada video



Source: Retrieved from YouTube

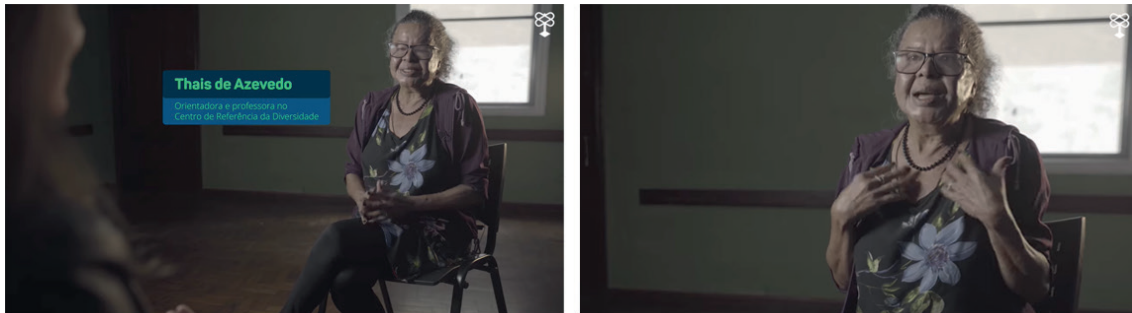
The YouTube channel of the portal *Catraca Livre* also published a video on this date. In the video, Thaís de Azevedo tells her story and is placed in the role of a survivor: the 70-year-old transvestite says people always see her as carrying an excessive womanhood, and when she ceases to identify herself with this character, they don’t recognize her as a woman. In Thaís’s testimony, published in 2020, her refusal to change civil records - with the maintenance of the male name in the document - is considered an act of resistance in itself. She says that her gender identification is located in a much broader spectrum than the binary division. “It’s a display of endurance. If I put female gender in my document, I am fitting in one of the only two possibilities, which are the female or the male gender”, says Thaís.

<sup>15</sup> “Ela tem cara de mulher, ela tem corpo de mulher/ Ela tem jeito, tem bunda, tem peito e o pau de mulher” (in free translation).

<sup>16</sup> Retrieved July 2, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/2V1GpFY>>.

<sup>17</sup> “Batam palmas para as travestis que lutam para existir/ e a cada dia batalhando conquistar o seu direito de viver, brilhar e arrasar” (in free translation).

Figure 8 – Thais de Azevedo in an interview for the portal Catraca Livre

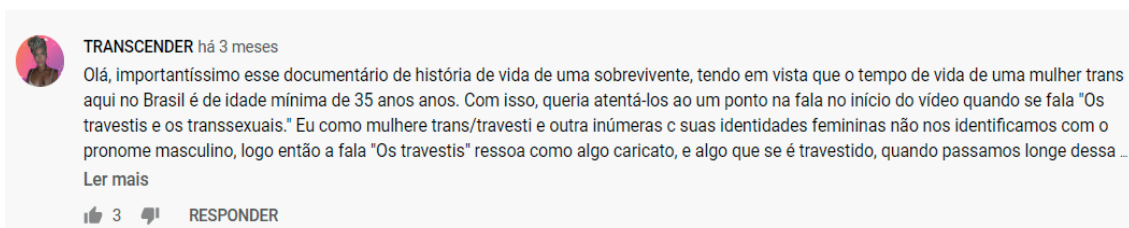


Source: Retrieved from YouTube

The experience reported by Thais calls out attention to the spaces of transgender bodies' sociability, which involve the right to appear on the public scene. In her testimony, she says that for many transvestites prostitution<sup>18</sup> - in addition to a way of obtaining financial resources -, is a mechanism of socialization between them and their transvestite friends: "I prostituted myself to be among my friends. They were intelligent people who had no right to express themselves except through their bodies"<sup>19</sup>. If in the cities the right to appear of the transvestite subject is located in the environment of prostitution, in the audiovisual productions about the Transgender Day of Visibility published on YouTube, this production of knowledge and sociability appropriates the features of the platform to create other collective spaces.

The audiovisual material produced by Catraca Livre allows us to examine the dimension of sharing experiences reinforced by users in the comments section (image 9). Such publications recognize the importance of Thais' testimony, which "trumps" the life expectancy statistics of transvestites. However, some comments also dismiss those who do not recognize the constructed character of gender, and these interactions contain violent uses of hate speech (image 10).

Figure 9 – Comment reinforces a sense of sharing between production and consumption<sup>20</sup>



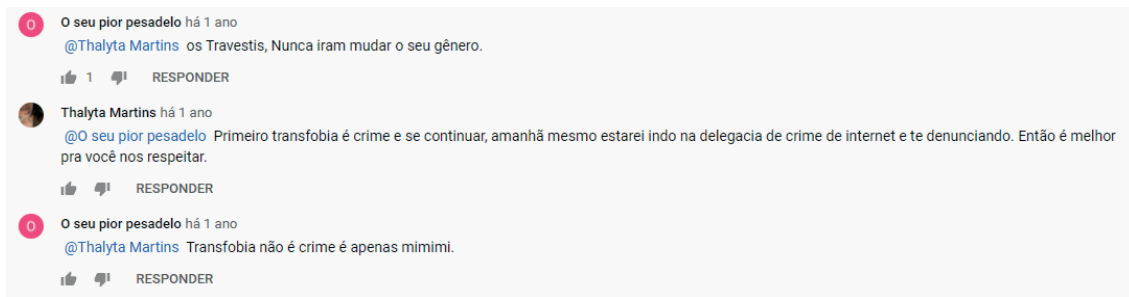
Source: Retrieved from YouTube

18 According to Benevides and Nogueira (2021), 90% of trans people in Brazil prostitute themselves.

19 Information retrieved July, 2021 from <<https://bit.ly/3sNhQs9>>.

20 @TRANSCENDER: Hello! This documentary about the life story of a survivor is very important, given that the lifetime of a trans woman here in Brazil is 35 years. With that said, I wanted to warn you about one topic of the speech at the beginning of the video, when she says: "The transvestites and transsexuals." I, as a trans/transvestite woman who speaks for countless other subjects, with our/their feminine identities, we do not identify with the masculine pronoun, so the speech "the transvestites" resonates as something cartoonish, as something that is transvestite, when we pass away from this (...)

Figura 10 – Violent attacks on the Catraca Livre video page<sup>21</sup>



Source: Retrieved from YouTube

Then, we understand that corporealities mediated by regulatory schemes engendered in power relations enable bodies as “eligible” for appearance, to the detriment of “ineligible” bodies which are crossed by processes of exclusion (Butler, 2019). The construction of alliances appears as an important instrument to fight for a multiplicity of modes of existence, as claimed by the Transgender Day of Visibility in Brazil. Therefore, the “gathering” of bodies in public space reveals a performative exercise of appearance that “states and establishes the body in the middle of the political field and that [...] transmits a bodily requirement [...] no longer affected by induced forms of precarious condition” (Butler, 2019, p. 11).

Corporealities are understood here as mediators of cultural codes which operate through performativity, embodied memories, dissidence and struggles that scramble the sex/gender binomial and rewrite the visibility script of these people. Therefore, we understand that the claim for the right to appear of the transgender community could be linked to the struggle for the establishment of a place for those precarious lives that live on the margins of compulsory sex/gender bonding.

According to Butler (2019), if the guarantee of rights for a group is instrumentalized to deprive the rights for others, then we need to recognize that social justice is a much broader struggle and does not contain itself under the law. This does not mean denying constitutional rights: it means crossing them to reach an “ethic of cohabitation” (Butler, 2019). In other words: a policy of alliances that include the other beyond their identifications; that include the other as a human being who needs and deserves to have the right to a possible life to be lived.

## Final remarks

If we take the conjunctions and disjunctions of experiences lived in some countries of the Global South, marked by late modernization and colonizing projects, it is necessary to consider how trans bodies re-exist in the symbolic and affective dimensions of our reality. Rogério Haesbaert (2021) discusses colonial projects from the perspective of the body by taking the territory as “territory of r-existence”, taking the relations of space-power as his starting point. To some extent, YouTube - as an ambience that brings together a series of performance scripts - becomes the territory for the trans bodies to assemble an alliance that seeks to break, through the corporality, exercises of power (even if these scripts follow the guidelines established by the norm).

According to Haesbaert (2021), the concept of “body-territory” helps us to look at the embodied and gendered experiences, placing the community as a way of life at the center of the debate. The bodies reveal “the concreteness of countless other scales of oppression, resistance” (Haesbaert, 2021, P. 175). In

21 @O seu pior pesadelo: Transvestites will never change their gender.

@Thalyta Martins: First of all, transphobia is a crime, and if you keep it up, tomorrow I'll be going to the internet crime precinct to report you. Then you better respect us.

@O seu pior pesadelo: Transphobia is not a crime, it is just *mimimi*.

this sense, the findings presented in this work fortifies our argument about how the transgender bodies, in the production of knowledge for themselves and for others, merge themselves in the public space, establishing the body as the center of the political field.

Thinking about the trans bodies who inhabit the digital environment and the way they destabilize devices of sexuality - of heteronormative, cisgender and colonial order -, means to assume that the multiplicity of corporealities operate permeable and mutable borders, even if they are still regulated by the hierarchies that determine the gender expressions. The body would be a “performatively ordered significant” because it disorganizes the “naturalized and reified notions of gender that support male hegemony and heterosexist power” (Butler, 2003, p. 60), creating gender problems not by mere representational strategies, but by subversive mobilization and confusion.

When looking into the publications about the Transgender Day of Visibility circulating on YouTube, we have tried to demonstrate how the methodological lens of performance could mobilize scripts, embodiments, archives and repertoires to interpret struggles for modes of appearance reclaimed by the transgender population. In this movement, the understanding of the date as a performance proved to be productive since it made it possible to identify spaces of interaction between bodies, accountings of oneself, ways of staging and appearance, scenarios, colors, camera framings and institutionalized narratives. These corporealities update the records (the material archived on the platform) and create other archives from their own repertoires, requiring us to think about our own existence and the future in place of ruined structures.

From the theoretical articulation that we propose with the notion of performativity (Butler, 2003; 2019), the performances analyzed by the paper made visible ways of regulation and its possibilities of erasure. This is because performativity “should be interpreted neither as self-expression nor as self-presentation, but as the unique possibility of giving new meaning to terms invested with great power” (Butler, 2002, p.76). In the materials mapped on YouTube, other scripts are disputed. The stagings of the Day proved to be a way to build other and better stories, that is, as a “way to intervene in the world” (Taylor, 2013, p. 44).

Thus, we can observe how a script that responds for the strength of institutionality in Brazil is shown, but, at the same time, how it also operates micropolitics whose “power of invention” seeks “to break the power of the prevailing forces [...], those that make up bodies that try to pimp the vital pulse of others” (Rolnik, 2018, p. 39). By appropriating the grammars of the audiovisual and the platform, producers and consumers are connected by a sense of collectivity that articulates networks of identity engagement (Mota Junior; Gutmann, 2020). The circulation of these networked audiovisuals encompasses productive dynamics and trajectories of reading linked to tastes, conditions and habits of cultural and media consumption in a symbolic nexus. However, sharing spaces are not free from the historical violence that shapes trans experiences. As we have shown, these spaces also expose attacks against sexual and gender dissidences seen in numerous hate comments.

In this perspective, we consider that this study can help in the understanding of the transformations that interconnect audiovisual processes and transgender struggles in the country. With this paper, we propose theoretical and methodological contributions to gender and communication studies, as well as contributions to the public debate on the subject. It is also noteworthy the social commitment that the academia should have in the construction and circulation of this knowledge among trans people. This is because, more than an identity struggle, this population claims to live and inhabit the transits, something that the queer studies conceive as “monstrous” and what Bento (2017) calls “transviado” sexual and gender dissidence), in the terms of a political ethic (Muñoz, 1999) and an alliance (Butler, 2019).

Taking into account the materialities of the analyzed productions, their aesthetic, political and discursive dimensions, the aim of this paper was to build wider contexts by which it was possible to understand how the bodily demands, which are located in the right to appear, claim a plural set of bodies



that come together in potential alliances (Butler, 2019). Looking at YouTube as an environment in which it is possible to appear has shown us contradictions and ambiguities that shape visibilities to the dissident bodies on the platform. However, from the perspective of a political ethic, transgender narratives and knowledge are configured in a way that they reinforce alliances and identity engagements in the spaces of sharing. We refer to a web of bodies that fight for other scripts infused by an ethics of cohabitation in which the right to exist and appear is guaranteed to all.

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