

Néstor García Canclini: Reordering and Dissent of Culture in Digital Institutionalities in Latin American

Néstor García Canclini: Reordenações e Dissidências da Cultura nas Institucionalidades Digitais na América Latina

Interview with

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¹ Federal law no. 14.017, published on June 29, 2020, by the President of the Republic, provides for emergency actions aimed at the cultural sector in Brazil to be adopted during the state of public calamity caused by the COVID-19 pandemic.

A CONSOLIDATED NAME IN the Brazilian academic field for over 30 years, especially in cultural studies, Argentine anthropologist Néstor García Canclini renewed his proximity to Brazil in 2020 and 2021. Despite staying in Mexico City, where he has lived since 1976, Canclini took over the Cátedra Olavo Setubal de Arte, Cultura e Ciência (Olavo Setubal Chair in Art, Culture, and Science) at Universidade de São Paulo (USP). During the COVID-19 pandemic, he remotely developed research on “The Institutionality of Culture in the Current Context of Sociocultural Changes”. A conference scheduled for 2022 will disclose the results of this research.

In this interview, conducted by video, Néstor García Canclini spoke with us while sitting in front of his library, in the same position in which he has been conducting his field research during the pandemic. With his team, formed by postdoctoral students Sharine Machado Cabral Melo and Juan Ignacio Brizuela, he interviewed notable figures in the cultural sector of Brazil and Mexico. The anthropologist first reveals that he and his team focused on community productions and on the Aldir Blanc Law¹, an emergency support law for the Brazilian cultural sector during the pandemic. Canclini considers one of their findings unparalleled in all of Latin America: the enormous participation – which began in social media – to write and pass the law in Congress and then receive funding.

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“Most municipalities didn’t have local cultural councils, they had to create them to receive the fund, and this generated mobilization processes in the middle of the pandemic, which was exceptional, all digital and very little face-to-face”, he observes. Canclini concludes that Mexico’s situation is very different from Brazil’s. “It is curious that, from international information about the two countries, one can get the feeling that Brazil is Bolsonaro’s Brazil, where the Ministry of Culture has been degraded. And the international version of some sectors in Mexico is that we are experiencing a government with a greater interest in supporting the popular sectors and doing more social work, [a government] which proclaims itself as anti-neoliberal”, he compares. According to Canclini, however, the federal budget for Culture in Mexico has been declining for a decade, since before the current government; this created a complex situation that has worsened with all the paralysis from the pandemic.

The anthropologist thus believes that rethinking the classical institutions, museums, cinemas, theaters, and their contemporary forms of institutionality – digital forms – is essential to digitally provide cultural content that cannot be offered physically. He states that “there is a reaccommodation of everything we understand by institutions” and asks, “to what extent are digital platforms institutions or forms of institutionalizing, to what extent can social movements institutionalize or compete, or debate with institutions?”

The script of this interview naturally considered the pandemic context, its technological aspects, and subsequent recent Latin American political-cultural insurgencies. We also included questions regarding cultural studies which relate to the interviewers’ own research interests. Whereas an area of culture studies in Latin America is constituted as a theoretical-methodological paradigm, hybridisms are an analytical key to “slow and divergent” (García Canclini, 2003, p. 188) arts and music.

Canclini, who is 82 years old, commented on his main works, considering the latest technological-cultural transformations. He remembered his colleague Jesús Martín-Barbero, who his peers consider as another pillar of Latin American cultural studies even if Martín-Barbero does not identify himself within this line of research.

Consumption and citizenship are important bases of his intellectual production and were synthesized in the book *Consumidores e Cidadãos* (Consumers and Citizens), published in Brazil in 1995. In his most recent publication, *Cidadãos Substituídos por Algoritmos* (Citizens Replaced by Algorithms) (2021), Caclini resumes this reflection. He first emphasizes how the increased television distribution in open and paid channels gives receivers more powers whereas the “small interactive screens” expand, opposing ideas. However, he warns that being

active spectators or prosumers is different than being citizens. In the interview, the author applies this thesis to the North American theories produced since the 2000s on the convergence culture/connectivity/participation/propagation of digital content, emphasizing local differences.

Latin America as an object of critical and programmatic essay inspired another important book in the author's trajectory: *Latinoamericanos Buscando Lugar en este Siglo* (Latin Americans Looking for a Place in this Century) (2002). In this book, Canclini sought to understand the complexification caused by the globalization process in Latin America, considering the continent's cultural heterogeneity. "How to delimit what we understand as 'our culture' if much of the Argentine, Brazilian, Colombian, Cuban and Mexican music is edited in Los Angeles, Miami, Madrid and is danced in these countries almost as much as in the countries where it originated?" (García Canclini, 2014, p. 94). The author thus proposed several tasks to contribute to Latin America's reconstitution as a region, participating more creatively and competitively in global exchanges. Today, after observing demonstrations and emerging social movements, especially in Chile in 2019, Canclini reassesses the difficulties and possibilities of this continental project.

Culturas Híbridas (Hybrid Cultures) (1990/2000) was first published in Brazil in 1997, becoming one of Canclini's most cited and referenced books in the country. The book proposes a theoretical key and analyzes deep transformations from the late 1980s, before the internet boom, and the current use of the word 'hybrid' to refer to working and teaching practices conducted both in person and remotely with digital technologies and web connection. We thus sought the author's response to critiques and assessment of the relevance of hybridity for culture in Latin America today.

Interviews occupy a peculiar place in the field of intellectual and scientific production. They can present syntheses, operate in leaps, cross different temporalities, and risk simplification and loss of complexity. Considering that interviewees often talk about themselves – our interviewee did so after a little over an hour of conversation –, interviews, even non-biographical ones, create a character, bringing them closer to the reader.

We crossed several themes covering more than three decades, from his current research to books produced in different moments, including those aforementioned and classics such as *Las Culturas Populares en el Capitalismo* (The Popular Cultures in Capitalism) (1981) and *Culturas Híbridas* (Hybrid Cultures) (1990/2000). Very calmly and frankly, Canclini told us that some of the reflections in these books have lost potential, as if he were saying "well, I said that, it was 1990, today we are in 2020, thirty years later, I can't say the



same thing”. His retrospective thinking, greatness, honesty, and responsibility of speaking as one of the most important Latin American intellectuals in culture shows what an exemplar of an intellectual Canclini is.

This is how, that afternoon, we concluded the interview, thanking him for his availability and reverencing his words. Our interviewee, very nice, thanked us in Portuguese with “muito obrigado” (thank you very much), adding that what had moved his trajectory up to this point were curiosity, fun, and pleasure.

MATRIZes: For the USP Chair project, the pandemic placed your research team in front of a new situation. If, at first, you continued to think about institutionality, let’s say, in the more traditional ways, mapping institutions, observing legislation, did the context we are living through change this situation?

Néstor García Canclini: Yes, now we have to say that one piece of the evidence has become international: the pandemic has changed a lot, but in part it has accelerated and radicalized pre-existing contradictions. Jean-Luc Nancy² (2020) said that the pandemic is like a magnifying mirror, it shows us what we already were, in an aggrandized way.

² French philosopher who died on August 23, 2021.

MATRIZes: For example, the Aldir Blanc Law is an emergency project, whose future we cannot know. How can we think of institutionalizing public policies for culture in Brazil with an ephemeral law?

NGC: Yes, that’s right, you’re absolutely right. We don’t know, we would have to do another investigation in two years.

MATRIZes: How do you see yourself today in relation to your nomination as one of the great mentors of Latin American cultural studies? We know that you have spoken a lot about this in other interviews, but still we would like to strengthen [this subject] and continue talking about it, especially now, with the recent loss of Jesús Martín-Barbero, another of the great creators of Latin American cultural studies.

NGC: It’s a bit strange this situation because I think it’s a scenario that is more than thirty years old if we think that the great diffusion of Jesús Martín-Barbero’s work began with the book *De los Medios a las Mediaciones* (From Media to Mediation), published in 1987. From the sales and citations, my 1990 book, *Culturas Híbridas* (Hybrid Cultures), seems to have played a relatively equivalent role [with my work]. In fact, when I was writing the book – and it took me about four years to write it – I modified some aspects of my project work because when I saw Jesús’ book I said: “There are issues there that have already been studied... I will quote them, but it is not the content that I should

follow”. So since then and since before, even, there was a friendship and a very vivid exchange of materials between us.

But, in fact, what we have experienced since then is the effervescence of studies about culture – I don’t know if I would call them cultural studies – and they have expanded enormously in all or almost all the countries of Latin America. And, well, those two books, Jesús’ and mine, may have a sort of foundational character, but both Jesús and I have changed the axis. For me hybridity would no longer be the central issue today; it would be better to call the same processes “mixing interculturality”. And, among other reasons, because I made interpretations about the notion of hybridization that implied reconciliations between cultures, and this is not what I think or what I thought when I wrote the book. Also the book by Homi K. Bhabha (1998)³, which was more polar, since it distinguished between hegemonic and subaltern hybridizations, and others that appeared in the 1990s, paved the way for me to write a rather long introduction, published by Edusp, in Portuguese, in 1997. All this intervened in this debate, clarifying some of the ideas that had been attributed to me and, in some aspects, I recognized that perhaps my first approach was insufficient to identify some of the contradictions of contemporary capitalist societies. But what I wanted to emphasize is that we have seen, in these last three decades, an explosion of studies on culture, on communication, in all Latin American countries, and the production is enormous. However, the landscape has changed, that is, digital networks have been incorporated, [but they] did not exist when we wrote these books, and there has been a decomposition of Latin American societies, a disgovernance that, for me, is central at this moment and that will occupy part of what we will analyze in the book that will be published with the results of the Chair at USP. In other words, there is evidence of failed states, of party systems without credibility – not one or two parties, but the whole party system –, of international organizations incapable of articulating the global complexity of the relations of economic and cultural interdependence. So it is research on culture and communication, it seems to me, that needs to take charge of the general decomposition of Latin America.

MATRIZES: So, today, is it better to articulate and speak of interculturality rather than of hybrid cultures or hybridization processes?

NGC: The process of hybridization has intensified enormously since that time, and the use of the word has spread. When I wrote *Culturas Híbridas* (1990/2000) there were no hybrid cars and many other things that today are called hybrid. This relationship between the in-person and the virtual is also called hybridization, and the use of the word has expanded. In other words,

³In this book, the Indian English critic Homi K. Bhabha analyzes themes such as hybridity, post-colonialism, identity, and difference. For the author, hybrid processes do not occur in the binarism that separates two cultures in a border, but in the space of passage, where translation occurs and where the novelty enters the world, in the “in-between place”. For Bhabha (1998), “the space of intervention that emerges in the cultural interstices is what introduces creative invention into existence” (p. 29).



hybridity is still a characteristic of contemporary societies and an irreversible process, despite all the fundamentalisms. At the same time, there are terms that have a cycle of fertility in theoretical discussion and empirical research. Today, the notion of interculturality seems richer to me, more open, more neutral, and allows us to talk about intercultural conflicts or intercultural policies, intercultural universities. The term is used in many territories, many zones, for example, the real and the virtual and the combinations between them. There is no opposition between interculturality and hybridity, but I see an opposition between the notion of interculturality and that of culture, and I have said several times that the object of study of anthropology, for me, is not culture, but interculturality.

MATRIZES: The notion of hybridization has been widely used and problematized in studies related to processes of intersection between the modern, the traditional, the popular, and the massive. On the other hand, the current criticism, or possibly the almost abandonment of this analytical key, would be related to the emergence of theories considered postmodern that do not assume states, nations, or global arrangements as their horizon, but products of circulation, tribal behaviors, fluid identities. Do you see any relevance in this assessment that relates to postmodern theories?

NGC: My impression is that postmodern thinking has emerged simultaneously in many disciplines: architecture, contemporary art, social sciences. There are postmodern anthropologies, there are postmodern philosophies. [Postmodernity] had momentum in the 1990s and somewhat in the first decade of the 21st century. Its value was in critiquing the totalizing accounts of modernity or with pretensions to totalize very heterogeneous processes, and it also had the audacity to move us from the theories of the social sciences to the narratives or the accounts of what we tell ourselves about how society and culture work. My impression, again, is that the cycle of these interpretive rather than explanatory keys is exhausted. Looking at the international bibliography, it has been at least a decade, or perhaps more, since the notion of postmodernity was replaced by the notion of globalization. And what is problematic today is how we globalize and, more recently, how we de-globalize. And that's partly to do with hybridization because, as you remember, hybridization was thought of more as something that happened within a national society and partly with immigrants coming in or going out, a blending between literate or high culture and popular culture, and also between ethnicities. The notion of hybridization moved in many directions. It would be necessary to include the question of gender, which has changed. It would be necessary to think about

hybridization in relation to gender, to free ourselves from binarisms and think about the many variants of gender, since there are not only two.

Another major change I would like to refer to is that which has to do with the increase in migration, the transnationalization of capital, and the transnational corporate reorganization of production, circulation, and consumption. The highly conflictive and destructuring effects on the international, economic, social, and symbolic orders. It is impressive how many processes of deglobalization we have experienced in this last decade: the Brexit, Trump and his entrenchment in the white American society, the separatism in Europe, the loss of importance of regional bodies such as the European Union and Mercosur, which were factors of integration, of finding joint positions among several countries. And the last [process] I would mention in this list that could be much longer is the United States' withdrawal from Afghanistan, which seems to me one of the endings of globalization, understood as the imperial expansion of the West, of Euro-America, as David Morley called it⁴. We cannot idealize these defeats of the United States or Euro-America in colonized or imperialized countries, because those who come to replace them are the Taliban, the Arab Emirates – which are not precisely democratic models –, or others that are not [models] either, such as the authoritarian governments of China and Russia. There is an extraordinary complexity that does not allow one to choose, but I simply observe, from the field of social sciences, very important phenomena of globalization that are also de-westernization of the world – a de-westernization of the African, Asian, and Arab countries, and this means a loss of confidence in the project of modern Western enlightenment governance.

So, to close the answer a little bit, in this whole picture, I see that the role of postmodernity is very small. Modernity has [suffered] a very long crisis – the two World Wars are examples of this inability to build governability, governance, and this crisis became worse. All this cannot be understood with the partial and localized accounts in the postmodern way. I don't see in it powerful keys to understanding this new situation. We have to think again in open, incomplete, contradictory totalizations.

MATRIZES: Maria Elisa Cevasco, a researcher at USP, in a text published in 2006, says that the transit between cultures is an almost inescapable aspect of cultural production. She complements her reasoning by saying that contemporary notions such as hybridism would be conceptual elaborations that would formulate what everyone wants to hear and would allow the co-optation of those who exercise cultural hegemony. Moreover, from the side of those who assume themselves as peripheral, “thinking of themselves as hybrid opens

⁴ David Morley has dealt with this issue in, for example, “EurAm, Modernity, Reason and Alterity: After the West?” (Morley, 2006).

the way for a re-enactment of the old aspiration of integration into a norm that was made to exclude us” (Cevasco, 2006, p. 135). Could you comment on this interpretation?

NGC: A key question is to ask ourselves in the face of each hybridization process who the actors are and what their projects are. No doubt there are, as Homi Bhabha had already seen 25 years ago in his book *The Location of Culture* (1998), dominant or hegemonic hybridizations that want to integrate, that want to submit to a norm, such as English Imperialism in India, etc. The examples Homi Bhabha was thinking of could be seen analogously, not equally, in Latin America, with Spanish and Portuguese colonization. But there are also other hybridizations [which] Homi Bhabha would say [are] made from below, [but that] I would say, better yet, [are] made by the interaction between the many from above and the many from below.

In my own field research in Mexico, when the notion of hybridization first came to mind, I was working with the indigenous people of Michoacán, the Purépechas, and their traditional crafts that they still make. Even back then, in the early 1980s, they were trying to relate their crafts to the culture they wanted to sell them to: tourists and urban markets. They even traveled to the United States and had somehow internalized aesthetic patterns and iconographies that they tried to include, sometimes ironically, in the Ocumicho Devils, in fabric and masks, the handcrafted goods they produced. Already there we could see an interaction and hybridization as something that transcended the position between hegemonic and subaltern.

I don't want to go back to this discussion, which seems to me to have had its time of debate when Gramsci's great influence in Latin America occurred. I remember reading many theses that lined up on one side the hegemonic actors and, on the other, the subaltern actors, as if these differentiations were so clear. My job was often to say, for example, that we had to think about how they relate to each other, to think about the confusions, not just the distinctions. And that had – and has – important political effects. For a long time and even now we still think that we have to take up the cause of the subalterns and all their confrontation and struggle. In reality, in the daily life of the subaltern sectors there is negotiation, there are pacts, sometimes with the mass media, sometimes with the corporations – of electronics and others – where one can do less because they are more authoritarian. Then I think of hundreds of aesthetic mixtures, graffiti and rock music, salsa, hip hop, bossa nova, or country melodies that enjoy taking over the repertoire of images and compositional resources of cultured or popular music from other nations and combining them, reworking them. It seems more attractive to

me to study this complexity of interactions, of playful, practical, commercial games, this line seems more productive and more complex.

MATRIZES: Can you call them slow and divergent artistic creations as you wrote in the book *A Globalização Imaginada* (Imagined Globalization) (2003), pointing out tangential globalizations occurring simultaneously, mainly through art? The “slow and divergent” artistic creations would represent the unresolved contradictions of global politics, such as inequality and the need of the marginalized to assert themselves despite totalizing tendencies. So, what “slow and divergent” creations could be cited today?

NGC: In fact, I am very interested in this topic. I don't know if I would present it that way today. That is, what entwines the slow with the divergent, sometimes, yes. But everything has accelerated so much, communication, cultural consumptions, uses of cultures, that I don't know if only “slow” and “divergent” go together. I appreciate both words very much, but perhaps it would be the case to think, in relation to “divergent”, of dissenters and discrepant. Sometimes they are simply divergent, they go in one direction and don't care at all about those who want to propose a standardization of society. Sometimes these forms are discrepant, dissident because they fight, they confront [each other].

In a way, to be slow today is to be divergent, to oppose the excessive acceleration, the agitation that sometimes you don't know why [it's happening]. I can think of several examples. There is an Argentine writer, I think one of the best there is in Latin America, Alan Pauls, a novelist and essayist, and the main collection of essays he did, published by a Chilean publisher, is called *Temas Lentos* (Slow Themes) (2012). I would say that these essays are very reflective, they give a very elaborate opinion. We need that slowness. There are many examples in Brazilian culture. In music, one of the songs that attracts me most from Lenine is *Paciência*, and so we could add others.

And, on the other hand, I am thinking of Geert Lovink, theorist and critic of communications and networks, especially networks. He talks about dissident knowledge in so-called “simulated communities” in digital networks. One of his phrases is “the idea of Facebook as a community is a joke” (Lovink, 2019), and that strikes me as a big question right now. Why are we on Facebook? Why do we want to be on the networks? On WhatsApp, on Instagram, especially on Instagram. There is definitely a desire to be seen, but in being seen, we accept being watched. And how do we work with this option? It seems that this is one of the disjunctive aspects of today's dissidence, and perhaps of the way of being slow, of leaving the daily schedules, sometimes for a few hours of tweets, Facebook, Instagram, to then move on to something else, something else, something else...



Let's stop to think what are the agendas that matter today. Jumping to a quick generalization, I see in the international press, not only in Mexico, Argentina, and Brazil, that every day the anecdotes change, or last one week at most. And by anecdote I mean the report of what happened: a scandalous dialogue that created many conflicts, polemics in the networks. None of these themes is related to the central dramas of society, and rarely do I find in these discussions anything about what the actors that intervene in these networks think. For example, about what could be done about femicides and all the other forms of violence that also happen to men [and] also in other types of relationships with the advance of the cartels that make it impossible to visit a large part of the Latin American territories, neither as a tourist, nor to do field work, nor to live there. And displacement is an increasingly important part of migration, displacement as an escape from a place where one can no longer live. These issues, or the economic precariousness of young people, or the difficulty of subsistence, I see very rarely in the fiery polemics of the media and networks.

MATRIZes: Beyond the critique of the networks, how do you evaluate the social mobilizations in Chile and Colombia? Do you consider them as political insurgencies that rely on digital technologies to mobilize?

NGC: I also add Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico to the list. Well, these are reasons for hope, explanatory and interpretative keys that need to take center stage in our investigation and in our social conversation. Of all these countries, the one that gave me the most expectations in the last two years was Chile – that rapid fall of the heirs of Pinochetism and the conciliators of the agreement (the classical parties). It seems to me very good news that they have not even reached the percentage of one-third of the vote to appoint those who will write the new Constitution and who will have the ability to veto. Not even that was achieved. This is some of the best news I have had from Latin America. And in turn, 78% of the Chilean population said, “we want a new constitution, we want it to be egalitarian, to have indigenous people writing it”, [meaning] egalitarian in terms of gender, regions as well, and all of that sounds like great news to me. Now there is an overlapping debate that a new president should be elected at the same time that the new constitution is being written, it's a very difficult situation to predict because of its complexity, it's very encouraging. This is the result of the violent emergence of unbearable social malaise, the malaise of gender, of the youth, and of many others, the indigenous [malaise] as well. Therefore, the main demonstrations that have managed to change the country's agenda are the Mapuche and other indigenous groups; the women's struggle or the gender struggle and the struggle of young high school students

who, since 2011, have been demanding free education and have continued to fight and have joined, in many cases, other causes, such as the indigenous struggle and the gender struggle. So, this is not clear, with that energy, that strength, with the capacity to change the institutions, that is, most of the struggles that are occurring also in other Latin American countries that have an analogy with Chile and are struggles against the institutions, with very little possibility of change. Perhaps the Aldir Blanc Law has been an interruption in these institutional operations that weaken cultural life. But we don't know what continuity this interruption will have. It seems that in the Chilean case we are in a transformation of the institutions, a new Constitution is going to be written, I don't see this gesture of re-founding as visible in other Latin American countries. There are some who, yes, try to do this, but there are, for example, countless feminists who don't want to talk to the State, and maybe they are right or partly right. There are countless precarious young people who don't expect anything from political parties. Ten years ago, when we studied the so-called creative and entrepreneurial youth in Mexico, several of them told us "politics is no longer about the parties".

MATRIZes: While listening to you we realized, on the one hand, how difficult it is to be a scholar of culture today, with so many changes, with this acceleration that you mentioned, with horizons that are not very clear. There are so many changes, and many are extremely fast. On the other hand, we heard you emphasize the interpretative key and not so much the explanatory key. How could Néstor García Canclini be defined in epistemological terms?

NGC: I have tried in many research papers to produce explanations and interpretations together with teams, most of the times I have done this with teams – research as I am doing now, with two post-doctoral students from USP and also with an assistant who is an anthropologist and works with me in Mexico.

What is the difference I see between interpretations and explanations? For those with a background in social sciences who read this interview, I think it is well known that the explanatory line is the one that seeks, at one time, causal relations, and later, more complex, multidirectional, multifactorial structural relations between phenomena, but that reach a certain degree of objectivity, that have a scientific character in the classical sense of science. And the interpretative line is that of hermeneutics, that of Paul Ricoeur, who directed my doctoral thesis in France, and many others who came to work [in the field] later, who have been producing important knowledge in the last decades, for example, in the Social History of Art, but social history not only with hard data, but with discourse, symbolic structures, understanding, or rather, trying to understand

this ambivalent, ambiguous complexity of symbolic meaning that has an effect on social life, has efficacy. It also seems to me that we have to follow both lines: one of the learnings of knowledge development in the West and also in China, India, Japan, in which the interpretative [line], the work with signs, is something inevitable. But it seems to me that working only with the symbolic, without dealing with explanations aspiring to objectivity, can be delusional; there are many examples in contemporary philosophy of conceptual delirium for working only with occurrences that rely on one aspect of the symbolic.

MATRIZES: On the institutional issue, situated in the political axis, in your most recent publication, *Cidadãos Substituídos por Algoritmos* (2021), you highlight the amplified powers of receptors in front of screens, with the growth of television supply and its distribution in open and paid channels at the same time as the “small interactive screens” are amplified, enabling the confrontation of ideas. However, you warn that the activity of “active spectator” or “prosumer” is not synonymous with that of citizen. The question, then, is: beyond technological empowerment, does citizenship depend on an institutional configuration that makes room for it?

NGC: Yes, but for all the things we are saying, we need to redefine the notion of institution. I like turning it into a verb: institutionalize, that is, actions, movements that seek to institutionalize the social, to organize it, to give it meaning, structure, if possible, but, as a dynamic act, as performative institutions. There is a very fertile line in contemporary thought, for example, that speaks of performative museums, which are those that do not exist only as an institution structured with a building, they may not have a building, and they perform, they configure themselves as Austin’s performative acts of language in the process of social interaction.

There is a magnificent book by Chilean author Carla Pinochet Cobos, an anthropologist who worked with me at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana (Mexico), called *Derivas Críticas de los Museos en América Latina* (Critical Drifts of Museums in Latin America) (2016). She has worked with two museums that are examples of performing institutions, one is the Museo de Barro de Asunción, Paraguay, and the other is the Micromuseo Peruano, and [she] makes this distinction between performing institutions and more traditional, classical ones.

Returning to the core of the question, effectively, social networking sites, the technological devices, invite us to performativity. We can act, we can write messages, reply, others can comment, from likes to elaborations a little more complex, but we do not modify what is on Instagram and we have very little

capacity to intervene and reject what electronic corporations do with our data. In this sense, we can be users, we can even be *producers*, produce within the uses; however, this does not mean that we can be, in a precise sense, citizens, because being a citizen implies changing institutions, changing the ways of institutionalizing to more agile, less configured, what we can call institutions without buildings or whose buildings do not matter; it does not matter much where the central building of Facebook or Instagram is, its institutionalization operates in a transnational, opaque, and virtual way.

MATRIZes: Néstor, [we are] going back in time to comment on the axis of citizenship today. In the book *Consumidores e Cidadãos* (1995), you argue that citizenship was built in the context of consumption and these displaced markers that were once central, such as social class. Is this an idea that will be the same today with the transformations, with new technologies and social media?

NGC: With changes, I keep thinking that citizenship is also, though not only, constituted in consumption. Some communication researchers have been differentiating consumption and access. Consumption is more applied to the use of goods that are located in places in a city: I go to the cinema, I go to the theater, I go to a music festival that takes place in such a park, in such a place, in such a stadium. And I am a user of delocalized networks, other localized ones, so these networks did not exist at the time I wrote *Consumidores e Cidadãos* (1995), so it seems to me that the notion of consumption and that of access have to be expanded, we have to think as consumers and users, and as producers, too. This expands the horizon of investigation and of social practices. It also expands the horizon of possible action and unresolved questions about how to be citizens in these new virtual scenarios. However, we cannot do without [the virtual] either, because we know that there, too, citizenship is constituted by very different forces that can be mobilized [to] find alternatives to failed states, failed parties, and sometimes dispute with them.

It is not easy at all. There is one word that hasn't come up in the conversation yet, and I want to put it in: bots. Because we don't fight only against corporations. I see in many countries, including Mexico, that all the political parties, in the last elections, used bots, [including] the party that is in government, which by the way is a conglomeration of forces from several parties, and the opposition parties. I recently read a very angry article by a very young Mexican novelist named Antonio Ortuño (2021), a current affairs analyst and columnist for the daily *El País*, who spoke, for example, of "digital sicários", those who attack those who oppose the opponent, be it the government or the opposition. This neutralizes the space for reflective debate, for the confrontation of

arguments. It is a rather desperate situation, we have to take on this responsibility to think about it, and that is why I bring it up, although I am not going to develop this idea now. ■

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