

Youth political practices: Foundations and precepts

Práticas políticas juvenis: Fundamentos e preceitos

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ABSTRACT

We critically review research trajectories on the political practices of Brazilian youth since the 2000s. With a cultural and communicational emphasis, we address how the fields of aesthetics and politics are intertwined in these processes, highlighting the main emerging epistemic and theoretical interlocutors and operators. We conclude that youth resistance has been expanding and erasing the classic concepts of politics through new uses of culture, technologies, communication, and aesthetic experiences. As they denounce inequalities and necropolitics, they negotiate with certain institutionalities and constitute themselves as subjects, occupying municipalities and networks with their political bodies.

Keywords: Youth, aesthetic-political practices, politicities, technicities, urban cultures

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma revisão crítica de trajetórias de pesquisa sobre práticas políticas de juventudes brasileiras desde os anos 2000. Com uma ênfase cultural e comunicacional, aborda-se como os campos da estética e da política se entrelaçam nesses processos, destacando os principais interlocutores e operadores teóricos e epistêmicos deles emergentes. Conclui-se que as resistências juvenis vêm dilatando e rasurando os conceitos clássicos de política por meio de novos usos da cultura,

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das tecnologias, da comunicação e das experiências estéticas. Ao mesmo tempo em que denunciam as desigualdades e a necropolítica, negociam com algumas institucionalidades e se constituem como sujeitos/as, ocupando as cidades e as redes com seus corpos políticos.

Palavras-chave: Juventudes, práticas estético-políticas, politicidades, tecnicidades, culturas urbanas

THIS ARTICLE SEEKS to carry out a critical review of research trajectories in the field of youth and urban cultures developed since the mid-2000s, with an emphasis on monitoring and analyzing the political practices of Brazilian youth, with a focus on the city of São Paulo. The particularity of these studies is centered on the aesthetic and cultural focus as the analytical guide of the investigations carried out. From this epistemological marker emerges both the selection of actions carried out by collectives and young militants, activists and *artists*, as well as unique theoretical-methodological perspectives, which, as Martín-Barbero (2000) advocated in 1987, seek to locate and dialogue with the practices and meanings of the so-called “new political movements, new social subject-actors, new spaces” (p. 76, free translation) that are emerging. In this sense, we are interested in detailing some of the conceptual operators with which we work, as well as indicating the reading perspectives arising from our different field experiences.

It should be emphasized that the critical review proposed here privileges the theoretical-conceptual balance that underlies and results from the dialogue with the empirical results of the research we have carried out. Priority is given to the cross-cutting nature of the approaches taken by each of us along this path—as youth researchers since the mid-2000s¹—to the detriment of the possible particularities of the choices made. Finally, we chose some authors who were considered our precursors, and with them we sewed together, diagonally, the reflection proposed for this article.

The communicational and aesthetic-cultural dimensions of politics and the nuclear nature of self-narratives, expressed by young people in their practices, behaviors, and values, offer us what Martín-Barbero (2022) calls “observatories of the social.” In addition, we believe that some important shifts have been made in relation to other works by contemporary *youthologists*. Firstly, we took a plural approach to youths, in the plural, so as to account for the particularities and intersections between the diversities observed. We also considered the presence of identity markers in the configuration and unfolding of such actions, but paying attention to indicators that locate and intersect these young people

¹ These trajectories can be identified through the following Research Groups in the Directory of Research Groups of the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (DGP/CNPq): Imagens, metrópoles e culturas juvenis (Jovens Urbanos, 2006); Juvenália: questões estéticas, geracionais, raciais e de gênero na comunicação e no consumo (2015); and URBESOM – Culturas urbanas, Música e Comunicação (2019). It should be noted that both are linked to the onsejo Latinoamericano de Ciências Sociales (CLACSO), through the Youth and Childhood Working Group.

in their processes of subjectivation and active confrontation of the subjection and vulnerability they experience.

In the same way, it seemed essential to us to listen to the leading roles of young people, including in the production of their own representations. We are therefore situated in a reflexive place that operates *with* young people, and not *about* or *for* them. The proposal of the methodology of recursive problematization (Fernández, 2013) corroborates this investigative pillar, by privileging the enunciation of open and procedural analytical fields rather than the application of previous conceptual frameworks. Drawing on Deleuzian sources that take *rhizomatic* multiplicities as a guide to conduct, and including Foucauldian recursiveness, it is considered that the instruments—the tools—are built along the research path.

It is therefore a look at embodied practices, in which corporealities and subjectivities have been key elements, in which young people occupy the spaces of the streets and networks, also constituting a field of disputes over meaning, self-expression and political authorship. It is striking that these political actors defend collective and horizontal management processes for their organizations and experiences. At times, personal expression seems to give way to expressiveness that only makes sense when shared, displacing the concept of individual leadership. There is an ever-present *we* there, creating links between transnational movements and activism and local *biocultural* resistance (Valenzuela, 2022).

As Garcia Canclini (2022) notes, when referring to the fundamental inversions made by Martín-Barbero when analyzing youth from the late 1990s onwards, the “new uses of digital technologies,” the “destructuring of the urban” and the “disorientation of schools in the face of these mutations” signal a mutation and a broader questioning of “what we still call democracy,” as well as demanding “reincorporating the informative value of the sensitive and the visible into knowledge” (Garcia Canclini, 2022, pp. 12-13).

Based on these assumptions, we believe that youth cultural actions are a privileged locus for political actions, and that the aesthetic-cultural dimensions become a fundamental indicator for understanding youth political practices in contemporary times. In other words, the aim is to understand the political dimensions embedded in aesthetic-cultural processes carried out, interpreted, and experienced by youth collectives, activists, and artists in large urban centers. The hypothesis is that these practices are linked both to more institutionalized fields—public policies, the third sector, private initiative, regional and international bodies, and social movements—and have historically moved into everyday life, through interventions with a certain degree of independence and autonomy (Borelli & Aboboreira, 2011; Borelli, Rocha, & Oliveira, 2009). This is an approach



that privileges youth practices of resistance and existence, characterizing them as a counter-hegemonic, anti-systemic, critical, and *protagonistic* field of action that produces meaning and acts out new orders of the sensible.

This theoretical-conceptual balance, which has been refined over the last few decades and is the result of the research experiences developed so far, allows us to highlight three analytical axes. The first, centered on conceptions of youth in Latin American contexts, emphasizes the links between culture and politics, public policies, and forms of resistance/counter-hegemonic actions that run counter to the advances of necropolitics and other policies that increase inequality and exclusion. The second analytical axis focuses on urban cultures, urbanities, and technicities, understanding the city as an arena for the making and articulation of flows and networks of citizenships and sensitivities. Finally, the third axis deals with communicational (aesthetic-political) border actions, articulated with audiovisibility policies and processes of youth subjectivation, contemplating corporealities, political subjectivities, political bodies, as well as politicities, *artivisms* and new forms of networked political action.

YOUNG PEOPLE/YOUTHS, CULTURE-POLITICS

Two classic references—“youth is just a word” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 151) and “juvencity/juvenilization” (Morin, 1984, p. 149, free translation)—originally anchored our reflection and have continued to be present even as the dialogue has expanded, particularly in relation to the approaches of British cultural studies and their Latin American resonances: youths always in the plural and young people who are historically situated, but articulated to local, national and global contexts. Young people who propose diversified alternatives for *being together* and acting in a collective and collaborative way, on the streets and in networks; who affirm the need for independence and autonomy, but establish relationships with different institutionalities, through access to social policies, public or private, governmental or non-governmental; who point to the possibility of exercising new counter-hegemonic political practices of resistance, in which culture and aesthetics are fundamental mediators of the actions and strategies adopted.

This is a multiple conception of youth, dynamically constructed from a relational perspective, crossed by historical conditions of class, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality, being a migrant or a refugee, living in this or that area of the city, occupying places, and becoming/consolidating themselves as young people, in process, in the face of events to which they are subjected and their own actions, through which they deal with the confrontations in their daily lives.

Faced with this relational perspective for conceiving of youths—and becoming young in the process—we set out in search of links between youths, aesthetics, culture, politics, and new forms of resistance/counter-hegemonic actions. To this end, we have taken on the challenge of contributing some answers to a fundamental question posed by Martín-Barbero (2022, p. 33, free translation): “Is there anything really new about today’s youth?” In this regard, we consider it important to explain, at this point, the conceptions of culture selected, which are also capable of responding to the theoretical-methodological challenge related to what is *new*, in line with another indication from Martín-Barbero (2000), the category of “nocturnal map.”

In this sense, we consider it fundamental, in order to anchor youth narratives—here configured as a privileged methodological locus for the fieldwork carried out—to conceive of culture as reading, writing and text (Bakhtin, 1993) understood as forms and contents, dialogically inseparable and historically contextualized. Culture is also understood as a multiple and polyphonic discursive fabric (Bakhtin, 2008), which responds to the principle of *listening to each other*, a significant key to understanding the relationships that young people establish between themselves, with others and with the surrounding environment, as well as the connection between subjects and researchers and young protagonists.

Culture is also conceived as a non-exclusionary space of intersection between writing/images/oralities and illustrated/official, popular (Bakhtin, 1987) and media cultural forms, as well as a principle for observing and analyzing the different productions, uses and appropriations of young people in the city of São Paulo. Discourse, language, and narrative are instruments of power, but also points of resistance, circumvention, and transgression; they are characterized as a “a field of force within which different ideologies, styles, and ideologies contend” (Brandist, 1995, p. 2). Through dialogue, there is the possibility of breaking away from one-dimensionality (Bakhtin, 1999) and of searching for gaps, discontinuities, the unsaid and the repressed and buried traces (Zavala, 1996): fundamental assumptions for explaining the possible mediations between culture and political practices, youth cultural production and uses.

From the concept of culture as a discursive, multiple, and polyphonic fabric (Bakhtin, 1987), we see culture as a particular form of life and conflict, as symbolic practices of resistance and contestation, but also of consent and negotiation, present in all aspects of everyday life (Gramsci, 2000, 2002; Williams, 1992, 1997). This includes artistic and intellectual activities, cultural products/production and their forms and processes of production and appropriation, negotiation, and struggle for the constitution of hegemonies. Culture not as synonymous with erudition, nor as a field divided into popular, mass, cultured



and illustrated dimensions, but as a place of conflicting mixtures, resulting from complex negotiation processes (material and symbolic) and diverse interests (individual and collective) between social classes, class fragments, population segments, and lifestyles.

In this reflection on the privileged place of culture in collective youth actions, the centrality of reflection on popular culture stands out: the popular constituted by critical dialogue with historical strands, which sometimes relegate it to the condition of folklore, sometimes electing it as the basis of political resistance of the subalternized, in opposition to the dominant. Popular culture emerges as a privileged space for reflection on the links between culture and politics, between the symbolic and power—popular culture not as an expression *en bloc* of a homogeneously constituted class in relation to another, but the popular entangled in a web of conflicts, interests, and negotiations, at the focus of the debate. This is Gramsci's conception of hegemony (2000, 2002) and the way in which Williams (1997) chose him as one of his precursors, transforming *hegemony* into a category that can contain a “seed of life” to be “received” and “recreated” (Williams, 1969, p. 346).

Therefore, based on the explanation of these references, it was possible to decide the search paths and choices for the design of the methodological protocols adopted, as well as the justifications for the use of field research instruments, such as the selection of qualitative techniques related to ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, the construction of an image/audiovisual collection, among others. We highlight the principle that a methodological proposal should not be delimited a priori, but built through the process of defining epistemological, theoretical, and conceptual presuppositions. This results in an exercise in *reflexivity* about how and what the paths of discovery were (Lopes et al., 2002, 2006), which presupposes taking a position in relation to doing science and the epistemic relationships that are established between subject and object.

In this sense, the dialogue with Williams (1969), who repeatedly indicates the need to update traditional conceptions—articulating residual and emerging traits—so that they can be given their historical particularity (Williams, 1997), is taken up again as an epistemological principle. This premise was reiterated decades later by Martín-Barbero (2000), who proposed taking up Williams' assumption—redrawing a map of “basic concepts”—by building a “nocturnal map”:

Once the guarantees sought by inertia have been lost and the markers that demarcated the instances have been displaced, what we need to draw is the map of the “basic concepts” that Williams is talking about. However, I don't think this is possible

without “changing places,” without changing the place from which the questions are formulated . . . accepting that the times don’t favor synthesis, that we can only sense and suspect that there are still unexplored areas even in the closest reality. . . A map that serves to question the same things—domination, production, and work—but from the other side: the gaps, consumption, and leisure. A map that does not serve to escape, but to recognize the situation from the mediations and the subjects. (Martín-Barbero, 2000, p. 300, free translation)

It is understood that the challenge of changing the place, questioning from another point of view, has been faced in the research carried out, and some choices can be reported in order to reiterate some assumptions. The first of these refers to considering the principle that youth narratives—or the “discursive fabric” (Bakhtin, 1999)—should be incorporated as a methodological locus; not just talking about young people or about young people, but conceiving a multiplicity/polyphony of youth voices that are competent to bring out and guide the direction of the research, and thus respond to a basic question, transformed into a research problem: what do young people think about themselves, their surroundings, their own ways of being and living and the others around them? What do young people say about the possible links between culture and politics?

The second assumption involves repositioning the relationship between culture and politics in a way that is not fissile, as it has been hegemonically treated in many epistemological approaches. To this end, we propose to go against trends that conceive of culture and politics as distinct and exclusionary places, in scenarios related to both the production of knowledge and everyday practices; to question the restriction of culture to the fields of anthropology, the arts, aesthetics and language studies and the notion that politics could do without its symbolic, imaginary matrices; refute notions of culture emptied of power relations and political activity; challenge the political as the exclusive place for reflection on power; contradict perspectives that situate politics as a privileged and restricted locus for macro actions and practices related, for example, to domination and the class struggle.

Consequently, and going against previous trends, it can be assumed—based on the dialogue established between Martín-Barbero (1987) and Gramsci (2000, 2002)—that culture and politics merge, since culture comes to be conceived as a “strategic field of struggle and a space for articulating conflicts” (Martín-Barbero, 1987, p. 85, free translation). This reiterates the concept previously announced, in which culture is made explicit as a particular way of life and of confronting differences and as symbolic and political practices, which can manifest themselves as resistance and contestation, or as negotiation and



² Also noteworthy are the works of Silva (1992), Vargas and Román-Velázquez (2011), Badenes (2007), Cuesta Moreno and Meléndez-Labrador (2017), Borelli, Rocha et al. (2009), Borelli and Freitas (2009), Borelli and Freire Filho (2008), Borelli and Rocha (2008), Pereira, Neves and Budag (2021), Prysthon (2007), Herschmann and Fernandes (2014), among others.

³ The formation and consolidation of two important institutional spaces stand out in the constitution of this subfield of Communication: the founding of the Communication and City Working Group within the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIIC) in 1994, initially proposed by Rossana Reguillo and still in force today; and the founding in 2005 (under the leadership of Silvia H. S. Borelli) of the Communication and Urban Cultures Research Group at the Brazilian Society for Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (Intercom). S. Borelli, the Communication and Urban Cultures Research Group” (now Communication, Technicities and Urban Cultures), at the Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (Intercom), which is still in force today. Throughout their careers, both have been privileged spaces for reflection, debate, publication and joint research that has deepened and unfolded the fruitful field of urban communication and urbanities, such as youth and youth cultures, urban representations and imaginaries, power and territorialities, methodologies for the study of cities and urban communication media, corporealities and aestheticization, political actions and urban activisms, migrations, consumer practices, cultural-artistic productions in the city, among others.

consent. Culture, therefore, is a way of life, of diverging conceptions and worldviews and of fighting for the constitution of hegemonies and counter-hegemonies (Gramsci, 2002).

URBANITIES, TECHNICITIES AND YOUTHS

In this path of research and reflection on young people, the urban issue and urbanities is another vector that has been central. In the intersections between socio-cultural, communicational and political aspects *in* and *of* cities, the theme of urban communication (Cuesta Moreno & Meléndez-Labrador, 2017; Reguillo, 1995) presents itself as a field of research that, since the 1990s, has been a privileged locus for investigating and analyzing prominent issues in the field of communication, such as symbolic universes and urban imaginaries, cities and youth cultural production, socialities and interactions engendered in and by cities, hybridizations between local and global, itineraries, urban routes and communication flows between streets and networks.

Although broad and with different nuances, concepts and methods, this gaze and attentive listening to urbanities in order to reflect on young people resonates and dialogues with the reflections of Garcia Canclini (2001), Sarlo (2004), Martín-Barbero (2004, 2022), Garcia Canclini et al. (2012), and Reguillo (1995, 2000), since it highlights the fundamental articulation between urban lifestyles, culture, and communication². Although the approaches, methods and theoretical contributions are diverse, there is a concern to reveal the complex relationships between cities and their vicissitudes based on media cultures, in which sonorities, visualities, corporealities, identities, consumption, uses of the city, cultural practices, sensories and affections are placed as vectors of social communicability in everyday life³.

The epistemic and theoretical-conceptual impact—in Latin American communication and cultural studies in the 1990s—caused by the consideration of political-cultural mediations (Martín-Barbero, 2000, 2004) beyond the media and “mediacentrism” (Badenes, 2007) also brought about the emergence of new themes, questions and places of observation, including cities and urban cultures as communication objects, formulating the subfield that has been called “urban communication” (Álvarez Pedrossian et al, 2021; Cuesta Moreno & Meléndez-Labrador, 2017). According to Badenes (2007, p. 3, free translation), this subfield focuses on “the uses of communication, the various modes of symbolization, production and consumption of collective meanings in a society”⁴, seeing communication as “a cultural process of production, reproduction, circulation and uses of social meanings, and as a question of

subjects and not just apparatuses” (p. 1, free translation)⁵. These notions have served as an important contribution to our reflections and research on urban young people.

From a perspective based on everyday life (Williams, 1997) and on unforeseen, cunning and ordinary actions (Certeau, 1994), we emphasize the notion of urbanities (Borelli et al., 2009; Pereira & Paiva, 2023), 2009; Pereira & Paiva, 2023), which is concerned not only with looking at the city in its official and structural dimension (in socio-economic, urbanistic and institutional terms), but also with focusing on the practiced city, listening to the plots that are constituted in everyday life, which are often invisible, subalternized and excluded from the hegemonic circuits of the planned city. We do not disregard, for example, the São Paulo of official history, of monuments, of road structure, the result of a model of European modernization implemented by managers, urban planners and architects and referred to the great metropolises, such as Paris or Vienna in the 19th century, or to urban models articulated to the modern and segregating functionalism of 20th century American cities. The notion of urbanity incorporated in this text leads us to observe and interpret the ways in which young people appropriate the city, create interactions and socialities, (re)territorialize spaces and compose audiovisual, digital, sound and image cultural productions, which are intertwined with the languages of the urban configuration itself, between its fixes and flows (Santos & Becker, 2006). In this process, cities are not merely a backdrop, but interact with subjects, bodies, aesthetics, and itineraries, engendering complex political and dynamic meanings that can be thought of through the notion of an urban palimpsest (Martín-Barbero, 2022), in which marks are printed and constantly overlaid by others. In such contexts, young people “break and re-imagine the meaning of coexistence, unmaking and remaking faces and figures of identity” (Martín-Barbero, 1998, p. 14, free translation)⁶.

In the 1990s, Carrión (1996, p. 45) wrote a presentation for a dossier in the journal *Chasqui* on “Communication in the Urban Space”, in which he emphasized the city as a symbolic structure, as well as a forum for communication and information. In dialogue with this perspective, we have understood the city as an arena (Borelli & Rocha, 2008), in the interrelationship between subjects, spaces, actions and imaginaries in which the city is not a background or an object in itself, but something dynamic (Reguillo, 1995) and in whose imbrications “things are produced” (Álvarez Pedrosian et al., 2021). Young people’s strategies for being in the world and in cities “clearly allow them to be associated with an effectively communicational field of action” in the ways they experience and interpret “metropolitan life, with all its conflicts and all its charms [which]

⁴ In the original: “los usos de la comunicación, los diversos modos de simbolización, producción y consumo de significaciones colectivas en una sociedad”.

⁵ In the original: “proceso cultural de producción, reproducción, circulación y usos de significados sociales, y como cuestión de sujetos y no sólo de aparatos”.

⁶ In the original: “rompen y reimaginan el sentido del convi-vir deshaciendo y rehaciendo los rostros y las figuras de la identidad”.



means, in these terms, perceiving the city itself as a medium and young bodies as media-bodies” (Borelli & Rocha, 2008, p. 28, free translation).

The city shows itself as an arena and support through which a myriad of youth languages circulate, at the same time as it inscribes itself on these bodies, materializing ways of walking, dressing, performing identities and belonging, creating urban trajectories and negotiating meanings. As they oscillate “between nomadism—taking to the streets, crossing the city, getting to know the world beyond territorial borders—and gregariousness—returning home, seeking refuge and safety, rebuilding networks of sociability” (Borelli & Rocha, 2008, p. 30, free translation), they point to the paradoxes and ambiguities of the urban experience in large metropolises: on the one hand, the excess of stimuli and acceleration, encounters and interactions, invitations to consumption and media-urban languages in profusion; on the other, the stigmas, confrontations, tensions, and violence, exclusions, immobility and precariousness. In a tense negotiation, the urban arena is developed as a place of expression, disputing heterogeneous practices and youthful imaginaries, which involve social reproduction, as well as possibilities of resistance, in the formulation of gaps and fissures to make themselves subjects of discourse, enunciation and social action (Reguillo, 2000).

In the complex and dynamic articulations between young people, urban cultures and urbanities, there are cultural disorders (Martín-Barbero, 2022) that emphasize the development of new sensibilities for time, space, and technologies, in which young people appear as protagonists. An attentive and sensitive reader of Walter Benjamin, Martín-Barbero (2000) drew attention to the German philosopher’s perspective of looking at the fragmentary aspects that occur on the margins, in stories and in everyday life; this approach would have enabled Benjamin to shift the focus away from works of art and think about the perceptual changes of receptors, with their new senses energized by the modern and urban experience of capitalism, big cities, crowds, the presence of the media and technology. These new perceptive senses were formed in conjunction with the experience of the shocks lived daily in the context of metropolises, with the whirlwind of novelties, differences, images, shop windows, architecture, galleries, masses, and consumption, collaborating in the development of a kaleidoscopic modern subjectivity (Benjamin, 2007).

It is in dialogue with these notions that Martín-Barbero (1998, 2004) constructs the notion (or mediation) of technicity, not emphasizing the technique itself, but its anthropological dimension of *techné* (Lopes, 2018), its uses and modes of internalization and elaboration. It is a notion that seeks to highlight

how the technological devices through which new languages and identity, cognitive and aesthetic experimentation are central to thinking about young people are appropriated. This is how Martín-Barbero defined it in an interview with Mariluce Moura (2009, p. 14, free translation):

...there is the compression of time, the compression of space, and this is where I recompose the two fundamental mediations today: identity and technicity—I use this word not out of snobbery, but because a French anthropologist, André Leroi-Gourhan, a contemporary of Marcel Mauss, forged the idea that technique among “primitive peoples” is also a system, not just a set of tools. I link technicity to what is moving in the direction of identity.

Technicity appears in the author’s maps of mediations as early as 1998, in the preface to the fifth edition of *De los Medios a las Mediaciones* (Martín-Barbero, 1998). Firstly, it appears as a mediation that has been repositioned in the dynamic updates of the Barberian cartography (Lopes, 2018) over time; in the fourth and final map drawn up by Martín-Barbero in 2017, technicity appears as a structuring axis or basic mediation of the horizontal axis, along with sensoriality—of Benjaminian inspiration—with which it forms “co-productions that inhabit each other” (Martín-Barbero & Rincón, 2019, p. 20, free translation)⁷. They are interdependent and feed off each other.

⁷In the original: “coproducciones que se habitan.”

The notion of technicity has been useful in understanding how young urbanites not only make use of devices, but—based on technological mediation—create languages, political-cultural transformations, ways of being together, of being in the world, as well as other relationships with time and space. As Lopes (2018, p. 57, free translation) argues, technicity concerns “dexterity, the ability to do, but also to argue, express, create and communicate through material forms, a dexterity that is updated based on new ways of dealing with language.” Technicity is thus “embedded in the very structure of cognition/logos and everyday life” (p. 58, free translation).

In this sense, in the last Barberian map, technicities are articulated with sensoriality and socialities, implying their reconfiguration (Lopes, 2018). This is because the forms of expression of technicities interfere and often alter the ways in which many youth groups enter and have a voice and enunciation in the public spaces of cities and digital networks. The interactive and connective possibilities of networks (Martín-Barbero & Rincón, 2019) have enabled young people to create other ways of being together, to develop collaborative practices, as well as to present themselves with their identities, corporealities and audiovisualities. In this way, technicities characterize a conceptual tool that allows us to glimpse



young people's ways of "managing discursive skills and reticular potentialities" (Borelli, Pereira et al., 2023, p. 15, free translation) in cities and in the digital world.

COMMUNICATIONAL ACTIONS, YOUTH SUBJECTIVITIES, CORPORALITIES AND POLITICITIES

As part of our journey of getting closer to young people and their political practices, which are manifested through communicational actions of resistance, other theoretical-methodological markers have been formed and consolidated over the course of our field experience and different reflective productions. In particular, we are struck, as already indicated, by the recurring observation of the centrality of culture and aesthetics in the way the practices and subjectivities of these social actors and actresses are configured today. When we turn to the communicational plane that constitutes these ways of being in the world, certain aspects become evident. As this is an analytical scope that, in our case, focuses on processes and perspectives of resistance, we were attentive to some questions. If there is no doubt about the growing mobilization of networked communication, of mobile technologies and audiovisuals as a driving force, as a structuring vector for society and culture, what is special about the way in which contemporary young people mobilize this data and materiality in their way of acting politically and purposefully?

Given the socio-historical variables that have permeated Brazilian youth political practices since the 2000s, we note the permanence of some categories of analysis that have emerged systematically in our monitoring and reflection on these young people. Going beyond what has been called the "disenchanted" generation and sensibility of the 1990s (Gadea, 2007), the marching, activist, and activist youths of the 2000s to the present day resonate with a warm and plastic mobilization, in which humor, direct action, and a certain political eroticism are present.

Since the first major marches that took the streets of our metropolises by storm in the 2000s (with the Marijuana March), and gained momentum in the 2010s (with the Slut Walk), generating what has come to be called "brand new social movements" (Augusto et al., 2016, free translation), an evident performative conformation and a particular enunciative basis have been configured. The mobilization of technological tools and the presence on social networks to publicize their agendas and as a way of engaging other young people in their public action initiatives is mixed with the occupation of the streets with intense corporealities. As Neder (2017) notes, there is an articulation between "subjectivation, corporeality, and social transformation" (free translation).

The body is thus an essential category in the dynamics of the political events shaped by these young people. This new militant body, sensorial and sensitive, recovers the political memory of the student marches, but does so from an iconoclastic and irreverent mobilization. It's interesting to see how young people's corporealities will gradually compose another way of doing politics, which will mix different discursive regimes and explanatory references. Thus, for example, we see the resort to *memoriographical* baggage coming not only from classical politics, but also from contact with and appropriation of references from music, art, audiovisuals, technologies, leisure practices and habits and the consumption of culture, in its different expressions.

The studies carried out by Cerbino et al. (2001) continue to provide us with solid theoretical references and important methodological approaches for thinking about youth cultures, from their relationship with the body, music, sociability, and gender issues, the last of which is where the greatest gaps are to be found, or the problem areas that most require updating and revision. In the authors' proposal, youths are approached from a cultural perspective and in a regime of complexity, which leads them to enunciate an interesting "anthropology of the youth body" (Cerbino et al., 2001, free translation), crossed by cultural consumption, social interactions, emotional communities, and gender distinctions.

In our analysis of the marching youths and those more clearly focused on activist practices with an aesthetic and audiovisual bias, we identified a *corpographic* understanding (Santo & Lotufo, 2014) of their actions. In our observations, in addition to these contributions, there was also an understanding of how different activisms assume the interface between politics, subjectivation and identities, resulting in themes such as gender and sexuality being put on the agenda, increasingly crossed by ethnic-racial issues.

As presented by Colling (2018, p. 157, free translation):

Feminists, like other social movements, such as the black movement and its theater, have always realized that the arts and cultural products in general are powerful strategies for producing other subjectivities capable of attacking misogyny, sexism and racism.

Saavedra (2017, p. 1), referring to feminist activism, suggests that "there is a direct action (creation) that constructs, through experience, the political subject" (free translation). In this respect, perhaps we can speak in terms of an activist subjectivity, in which "bodies . . . intervene and, with their poetic movements of resistance and subversion, reposition themselves and others in their surroundings" (p. 2, free translation).



Because of perceptions like these, the concept of *politicity* has been fundamental to our interpretations of these “full-bodied political subjectivities” (Díaz Gómez & Alvarado Salgado, 2012). Paulo Freire’s view of the political dimension of education, associated by the author with the idea of politicality, presupposes the mutual determination between autonomy and power dynamics, since this autonomy cannot mean and/or result in the submission of others (Demo, 2002). Critical consciousness and self-criticism are combined, since the former will not be imposed by subjects (educators) in any supposed condition of superiority, but emerges, as (embodied) praxis of everyday life, from the very culture of those who will be autonomously liberated (Freire, 2001).

Political-communicational activisms and aesthetic-political activisms are endowed with politicality, even when they move through or negotiate with institutional spaces, and in a way they update, even if as a “residual tradition” (Williams, 1992), quite peculiar political and cultural legacies. The originality of their way of producing and disseminating audiovisual culture, for example, in a context of technological decentralization and cultural decompression, does not prevent us from locating a specific way of *remixing* and rearranging references and belonging, activating, in their own register and sometimes with biographical intonations, vast *memoriographical* collections, read, in the sense of Feixa (2000), not as a deposit of facts, but as a matrix of meanings and values.

This activist memory (Chaia, 2007) also resonates in initiatives to occupy the city, the media and social networks with artistic events supported by public cultural policies, especially those materialized by the Virada Cultural and the LGBT Pride Parade in São Paulo. As well as obviously echoing a whole movement of recent youth actions that mix aesthetics and politicality (Rocha, 2016) and being historically contemporary with the “brand new social movements” (Augusto et al., 2016, free translation) and collaborative cultural production practices, we understand that there are particularities in the way they configure new regimes of social, urban, cultural and artistic intelligibility. It seems to us that, in their ethical-aesthetic affiliation, these networks (of affection, creation, professional collaboration and subjective support) have enabled the transfiguration of the normative grammar of life, shuffling the semiosis of Western capitalism and the political and communicational mainstream itself.

At this point, we should pay attention to the interesting arguments of Di Giovanni (2015, p. 2, free translation), when he clarifies that

... the emergence of the term *artivism* as an analytical category marks a political and theoretical interest in forms of collective action whose effect and possible interpretations are not exhausted by the taxonomy of the probable ideological

orientation of the participants, nor by the possible functionality that they may fulfill in the political-electoral and media games of representative democracies, whose explanation does not end with the identification of the contextual, historical or socioeconomic factors that fostered their eruption.

In this respect, there is convergence with Sarlo (2004, p. 36) in his observation that “youth is not an age, but an aesthetic of everyday life” (free translation). This principle is echoed in Reguillo’s (2000) research into the practices and dynamics of cultural consumption led by youth groups and collectives. Reguillo sees the constitution of young people as subjects, more precisely subjects of discourse and subjects of action, “with the competence to refer in an objectifying attitude to the entities of the world, . . . with the ability to appropriate (and mobilize) social and symbolic objects” (Reguillo, 2000, p. 36, free translation)⁸.

We believe that this analytical operator includes, according to Ouviaña (2013, p. 78), “a type of construction that is defined by trying ‘from now on’ to produce transformations in its own practices of struggle”⁹, and which refer, in different ways, to precepts of autonomy, *anticipating* or *prefiguring* the new society to which they aspire. This could include the utopian dimension that we have identified in some artivisms, especially musical gender artivisms (Rocha, 2021) and the “aesthetic artivisms of sexual and gender dissidence” (Colling, 2018, p. 1). This possibility is in line with Lourenço’s (2019, p. 20, free translation) reading of “*critical action in urban space* [which] has been gaining adherents, sensitive forms, forcefulness capable of unveiling meanders kept quiet for ulterior motives,” to which the author associates, in a poetic game, the idea of “living and foreseeing politics of space.”

Hybrid, polysemic and plastic concepts, which are so because of political perspectives, seem to us to be suitable for analyzing equally hybrid phenomena of youth political action. Fernández (2013), in order to identify modalities of subjectivation and collective logics in his research with vulnerable Argentinian youths, uses the concept of “corporealities in action” apprehended in their intensity markers, in which the body is itself an epistemic place. In contemporary times, several activist expressions mobilize the place of audiovisual expressivity as an important space for subjective construction, representation, and existence. In a complementary direction, they affirm that their bodies are political, articulating the struggle against, for example, structural racial and gender violence in Brazilian society.

Body as an epistemic place, body as a referent of investigative processuality, political corporealities configured by *speaking bodies* (Preciado, 2014) and by *bodies in alliance* (Butler, 2019), activist bodies occupying urban and digital

⁸In the original: “con competencias para referirse en actitud objetivante a las entidades del mundo, . . . con capacidad para apropiarse (y movilizar) los objetos. . . sociales y simbólicos”.

⁹In the original: “un tipo de construcción que se define por intentar ‘desde el ahora’ producir transformaciones en sus propias prácticas de lucha, que anticipen –o ‘prefiguren’– la nueva sociedad a la que aspiran”.



bodies. Audiovisualities as bodies, affecting bodies. Bodies resisting and existing from a tentacular circuit, in which audiovisible bodies occupy audiovisual bodies and transform human, technological and urban bodies. In other words, as Fernández (2013, p. 20, free translation) points out, “transversalizing the problematics of bodies . . . makes it possible to think of conceptual tools that allow to incorporate the desiring dimensions that animate the ‘between bodies’ of collective actions”¹⁰.

¹⁰In the original: “[t]ransversalizar la problemática de los cuerpos también hace posible pensar herramientas conceptuales que permite incorporar las dimensiones deseantes que animan los ‘entre los cuerpos’ de las acciones colectivas.”

The anthropological and interdisciplinary perspectives offered by Garcia Canclini et al. (2012) in the wide-ranging study they coordinated on young people, urban cultures and digital networks in Mexico and Spain also offer us important clues and perspectives for analysis. The fact that they considered “networked actors” in their methodological choices; the communicational, i.e. “the non-visible networks that organize the city”; the insufficiency of understanding “the logic of the cultural industries” to account for the processes and actors studied; the decompression of the concept of “cultural field” so as to account for the “many transversal processes” that shape the way young people circulate in the publishing, musical, literary and artistic spheres; the realization that “the position of young people is, in reality, neither as free as is sometimes supposed, nor, on the other hand, completely subjected, determined”¹¹ (Garcia Canclini et al., 2012, free translation), presented itself as a perspective significantly in tune with our own perceptions and understandings of the social actors we studied.

¹¹In the original: “la posición de los jóvenes no es, en realidad, ni necesariamente tan libre como a veces se supone ni, por otro lado, tampoco completamente sometida, determinada.”

BALANCES, CONSIDERATIONS, CONTINUITIES

In the context of the resurgence of conservative forces, youth practices and struggles have been signaling the power that emerges from narratives and expressions of resistance, as well as indicating mutations in the ways of appropriating cities and networks in their political doing. They also have a strategic ability to enunciate their identities and subjectivities and their representations, manifested through activism, artivism and various political mobilizations. To do so, they activate languages and aesthetics, technicities, and corporealities.

We are alluding to another central issue in Barbero’s latest map: the notion of *urbanitas*, derived from and in dialog with citizenships, which are more stable and linked to the notion of *civitas*. As the author suggested (Martín-Barbero & Rincón, 2019), *urbanitas* is the way of exercising global/communicational citizenship in networks and flows, which are always moving, with “roots that walk” (Martín-Barbero, 2022) and transform the city and digital environments. *Urbanitas* that reverberate in the notion of urbanity that we have brought up here and that are updated and dynamize the daily life of the lived city, amidst

the techniques, networks, socialities, and ways of doing and living the political. That is, an experience endowed with politicality, an instrument for self-awareness and for collective and liberating social transformations.

We bring to these final considerations the perspective of communicational expressiveness or the enunciative potential of youth political practices as an important core of reflection. It seems central to us to understand how, in the midst of setbacks and systemic reversals, resistance actions multiply and change, building a horizon of action specific to Brazilian youth. The activist and artist heritage has been consolidating enunciative practices that include corporeality and occupy the networks and digital media with a mode of vocalization that starts from the bodies and returns to them. They speak to their people, as well as participating in a public scene that includes differences and confronts restrictions and argumentative clashes. They thus break with dichotomous forms and formats of little complexity, highlighting nuances and pluralities of understanding of the political agenda itself.

It was possible to capture, through the polyphony of voices (Bakhtin, 2008), world views and conceptions and the struggles for the constitution of hegemonies (Gramsci, 2000, 2002), the ways of being, living and constituting—through the mediation of culture, aesthetics, activism, and technicity—new youth political practices. They presuppose the protagonism of young people in the ways they present and place themselves on the public agenda, modifying and re-signifying it. ■

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