

INTRODUCTORY NOTE – CULTURAL STUDIES, CITIZENSHIP AND DEMOCRACY

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Models of social belonging have altered radically over recent decades, due to the impact of technological mobilisation on the lives of individuals and societies in the modern era. Information technologies – that have unstoppable consequences on global flows, interpenetration of cultures, and the demand for new identity-based, religious, ethnic and gender rights – have overturned traditional loyalties to the nation, religion, class, and gender identities. However, the multiplication of information and the accompanying encircling influence of the media in modern society, have meant that socio-technical networks now occupy a core position in affirmation of new social movements, with a decisive impact on culture and the arts.

In this context, it is possible to state that technological transformations have caused profound changes to social structures and to the organisation of communities. The concept of citizenship has therefore been expanded, and even reformulated, paving the way to political, social and economic recognition of new forms of belonging, and responding to the demand for new social rights, in particular those based on diversity and difference at a sexual, racial, ethnic, diasporic, ecological, technological and cosmopolitan level.

This issue of the *Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies* aims to reflect on how individuals are constituted and emerge in the media, as talking subjects and social actors, with a special focus on asymmetries and inequalities in distribution of the right to make one's voice heard. Some of the topics addressed and furthered herein include social and political movements, digital activism, and mobilisation of the media and cultural networks, in the struggle for social, cultural, political and economic rights, and the power that such networks can exert in modern society, thereby contributing to social and political change.

The idea of power runs throughout this issue, which is dedicated to questions of democracy and citizenship. As Foucault (1975, 2010, p. 12) states, “truth does not exist beyond power or without power”, because we never act as we wish, but rather as we can, in specific conditions of space, time and interaction. Moreover, societies construct regimes of truth, and mobilise discourses that make them appear to be true (Martins, 2017). Indeed, the dialectical game of discourse “repeats orders, when it seems to be simply affirming freedom” (Martins, 2017, p. 11).

The specific perspective that Cultural Studies develop in relation to phenomena of power, which they both assume and challenge, is through analysis of the division between hegemonic and counterhegemonic aspects, i.e. questioning the frontier between the peripheries and the centre, as well as structural divisions, or the tenuous boundaries that exist between culture, society and the economy (Durin, 1992/2007).

The introduction to the debate on the relations between culture and power, which is the central theme addressed in this issue, is written by Paulo Serra and Bruno Serra. Aligning with Cultural Studies' view of cultural diversity and the media as core elements of contemporary societies, the authors question current conditions for the achievement of democracy and citizenship. They consider that any researcher working in the field of Cultural Studies will always adopt a critical and political stance. Exploring the concept of plural democracy, as defined by Laclau and Mouffe (1985/2001), for whom “a radical and democratic political approach” seeks to respect cultural diversity and differences, the authors extol the democratic organisation which is capable of respecting cultural differences and plurality, not only at the national level, but also at the global level.

The texts by Albino Rubim and Sérgio Silveira analyse the complex political, socio-cultural and economic panorama in contemporary Brazil. The broad debate about the nature of democracy, with endless struggles for the definition and demarcation of the democratic order, has assumed a key place in the national and international scene. Albino Rubim believes that a similar debate occurs in relation to culture, although less intense, given that the social field in question has less central importance. He refers to the absence of communication and cultural policies in Brazil, capable of combating the absence of pluralism in the Brazilian media, as well as the existence of markedly partisan positions. In a very particular way, he considers that the absence of a democratic balance in the press and communication sector has constituted a serious obstacle to the process of democratisation of Brazilian society. Sérgio Silveira, in turn, analyses the Brazilian political situation and the “coup d'état”, which ousted the elected president, Dilma Rousseff. This understanding is also based on the undemocratic role played by the media in this process. Articulating Foucault's concepts of the regime of truth and discursive practice, with the concept he calls a “policy of scandal”, he describes the formation of a hegemonic social and political bloc, consisting of the media, the Ministério Público [Public Prosecutor's Office] and the Judiciary. He affirms that the state policy based on the idea of fighting corruption is actually a form of institutional cynicism.

Paula Espírito Santo and Bruno Ferreira Costa analyse the profiles of party affiliation in a comparative perspective of the three main Portuguese parties, that hold parliamentary seats. The authors seek to identify the reasons for the decrease and lack of interest in public involvement in political parties, and also in relation to politics in general. Their study aims to understand the manner in which the various agents of political socialisation, in particular the family, become involved in political parties. After conducting an online survey with members of the PS and CDS/PP parties, and of delegates of the PSD party, between late December 2012 and late September 2014, the authors seek to explore the relationship between citizens' educational, professional and social backgrounds and their involvement in political parties. Although the authors consider that new social movements have the potential to create alternatives to citizens' participation and civic engagement, the trend revealed in their results is for self-definition of respondents as being reasonably active in political parties.

The following article, written by Esser Silva and Moisés de Lemos Martins, analyses the main professions that become involved in the political sphere. Their article mobilises

Foucault's studies on *parresia* and *elutéria*, as well as Weber's concept of partisan closure, examining how professionals involved in the political sphere articulate their civil life and state life. Addressing the case of MPs elected to the Portuguese Assembly of the Republic, the authors note that "economists", "lawyers" and "teachers" are the predominant members of the *elite class*. The question of power is once again addressed in this text. As Esser Silva and Moisés de Lemos Martins state, the action of the members of a modern political party seems to be primarily orientated towards wealth accumulation, in which "two specifically political powers ... military and judicial authority" are exercised "by the master as components of his patrimonial power" (Weber, 2004, p. 240).

José Eduardo Franco reflects on how certain biblical theological axioms have provided grounds for the universalist ideology of Christianity as the first religious tradition with an expansionist horizon on a global scale. The author analyses the phenomenon of proto-globalisation as having been rooted in a religious goal, considering that this environment engendered the first global solutions and instruments to respond to the challenges brought by expansion of our knowledge of the world.

Fernando Pereira Marques proposes rejection of the dominance of the economic and financial spheres over the fields of politics, culture, education, information and communication and the need to foster a new critical awareness, in confrontation with the current situation. He believes that the use of the media to propagate the spectacle of power and of the state, helps conceal mercantile technological dehumanisation, which marks society as a whole and, in particular, the fields of education and culture, as mentioned in some of the other texts of this issue (see the articles by Albino Rubim, Sérgio Silveira or Esser Silva and Moisés de Lemos Martins).

José Gomes Pinto advocates common sense as his main guiding principle. He uses this notion as a problem-solving mechanism, while also drawing attention to the fact that it can constitute a choice, when there is a need to think about something new. The author reveals how, historically, the problem has been displaced, causing disturbance in our understanding of media-based phenomena, which always assume a certain literacy, precisely that which is involved in the use of any technique. The construction of media phenomena must undoubtedly be analysed, as suggested by Fernando Pereira Marques, in his text, and by Moisés de Lemos Martins (2015), in his article, "The media in the contemporary world. From the promise of historical emancipation to its ruin".

Assuming a counter-hegemonic and critical perspective, Danielle Miranda's article analyses the identity-based manifestations in student narratives, in the Facebook fan pages, of the "Ocupa Escola" (Occupy School) movement in Brazil. The author adopts the concept of multitude (Negri, 2004) to investigate how the people involved in the "Occupy School" movement used their Facebook profiles to manifest their expressions of identity. Themes of horizontality, autonomy, and the constitution of a movement without leadership are also highlighted; as well as openness to diversity and the need to reaffirm public concern for schools. The author's proposal is to rethink the established statutes of the identity of social movements. In her opinion, this question must be based on finding singularities and exploring how events occur and organising a common language, as a result of indignation and protest.

Closing the section of thematic articles, Alexandre Ferreira and Jean-Martin Rabot reflect on the ambiguities found within current discourses on electronic dance music, in particular *house* and *techno*. They aim to reveal the socially constructed nature of such discourses. Technology has played a central role in transforming the modes of production and understanding of music in the 21st century. Once again, the heart of the question is linked to the current discursive regime, which, by combining archaism and technological development (Maffesoli, 2000, p. 35), e.g. mixing “popular” music with “erudite” music, enables new perceptions of music, even though Western “erudite” musical forms continue to prevail in school’s music curricula. Embracing the perspective defended by Cultural Studies, the authors insist that electronic dance music can be considered a mark of resistance against the growing elitism of music and against established powers and discourses.

In the Varia section, Maria do Carmo Nino recounts her vast experience within the fine arts, in different sectors, where she has assumed several roles – producer, curator, analyst, teacher –, placing special emphasis on two of her works as a curator: the MAMÃE Project and the *ContidoNãoContido* exhibition, held in the Aloísio Magalhães Museum (MAMAM), that was open to the public between March and September 2010.

Closing this issue of the Revista Lusófona de Estudos Culturais / Lusophone Journal of Cultural Studies, Carla Cerqueira provides a book review of the work on *Gender inequalities and policies*, organised by Manuel Carlos Silva, Maria Luísa Lima, José Manuel Sobral, Helena Araújo and Fernando Bessa Ribeiro. She considers that the main question at stake in this book is multiple gender inequalities, that remain rooted in society and manifest themselves in public, both explicitly and implicitly. She concludes that there is still a long way to go in terms of public policies that will be able to combat such inequalities.

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