

DEMOCRACY AND CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Through the Latin saying *Hic rhodus hic saltus*, mentioned in the preface of his *Philosophy of Right*, Hegel intended to emphasise that it is Philosophy's duty to study what is real, rather than what ought to be. During the 60's of the 20th century, what was real was, as far as British Cultural Studies were concerned, the cultural revolution ongoing since the end of the II World War, which made critical the study of such issues as the relationship between culture and power, popular culture and mass culture, cultural homogeneity and cultural diversity. The considerations on these issues produced by cultural studies' authors – British and otherwise – remain crucial today, perhaps more so than ever. Setting the work carried through by cultural studies in the domain of culture, this paper aims to reflect upon the condition of a democracy that respects plurality and cultural differences, not only at national state level – presently undergoing deep changes – but also at a global level. In order to do so, we will somewhat anachronistically move beyond Hegel and his tethering to the real by returning to Kant and his ideal for a cosmopolitan society.

KEYWORDS

Cultural studies; cultural diversity; democracy; participation; globalization

RESUMO

Com o dito latino *Hic rhodus hic saltus*, referido no prefácio da sua *Filosofia do Direito*, pretendia Hegel sublinhar que cabe à filosofia estudar o que é, o real, e não o que deveria ser. Nos anos 60 do século XX, o real era, para os estudos culturais ingleses, a revolução cultural em curso desde os finais da II Guerra Mundial, e que tornava crucial o estudo de questões como as da relação entre cultura e poder, cultura popular e cultura de massa, homogeneidade cultural e diversidade cultural. As reflexões dos autores dos estudos culturais, ingleses e outros, em relação a estas questões, continuam hoje a ser cruciais e, diríamos mesmo, mais cruciais do que nunca. Partindo do trabalho levado a cabo pelos estudos culturais no domínio da cultura, o presente artigo reflete sobre as condições de uma democracia que respeite a pluralidade e a diferença das culturas, não só a nível do estado nacional, hoje em profunda mudança, mas também a nível mundial/global. De forma algo anacrónica, deixamos Hegel e a sua ancoragem ao real para regressarmos a Kant e ao seu ideal de uma sociedade cosmopolita.

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Estudos culturais; diversidade cultural; democracia; participação; globalização

INTRODUCTION

The starting point for the considerations contained in this text is provided by the considerable work within the domain of cultural studies produced by the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS) at the University of Birmingham, founded in 1964 by Richard Hoggart, who was also its first director, and later (from 1969 on) led by Stuart Hall.

These cultural studies decisively contributed for the cultural turn which took place during the second half of the 20th century, and which may be regarded as a continuation of the linguistic turn that occurred early in the same century (Chaney, 1994, pp. 1-2; Hall, 2007). The main effect and sign of such a turn lies in the “centrality of culture”, translated into aspects such as the development of culture industries, the growing importance of culture in several facets of social and economic life, the effects of culture on various discourses and disciplines, as well as the affirmation of culture as a central category in the analysis of contemporary social life (Hall, 2007, p. 39).

As such, British Cultural Studies ultimately became one of the key sources for what we nowadays term simply “studies of culture”, broader in range than the former and not necessarily entailing any affiliation with the political left or otherwise.

It is not, however, always easy to clearly determine what we might understand as “cultural studies”. Taking the case of the United States as an example of this, Hall (1992, p. 22) argued that the notion of “cultural studies” had become “an umbrella for just about anything”. What one calls “cultural studies” has, in fact, always been comprised by a great variety and diversity of objects and subjects rooted in humanities and social sciences, something that has prevented them from being legitimately reduced to a single school – be it Birmingham’s or any other (Hall, 1992).

Despite its affiliation to Marxism – or, at the very least, to a certain Gramscian version of Marxism, centred on the notion of “hegemony” – cultural studies may be distinguished from Marxist orthodoxy in two key aspects: i) they do not reduce contemporary societies to the distinction between bourgeoisie and proletariat, instead sustaining that they are much more diverse from a cultural standpoint, involving differences of gender, race, ethnicity, age, etc.; ii) they devote a substantial amount of attention to the media, without – however – assuming the quasi-apocalyptic position of the Frankfurt School on the subject (Adorno and Horkheimer), and moving closer to positions such as those of Walter Benjamin or Hans Erzensberger instead.

This consideration of cultural diversity and the media as central elements of contemporary societies renders cultural studies as an almost obligatory starting point for any serious reflection on the issues of democracy and citizenship in our times, ultimately allowing us to bring into the fold what we will later term a plural and radical democracy, and a global citizenship.

THE CRITIQUE OF CULTURE FROM FRANKFURT TO BIRMINGHAM

When referring to cultural studies and its critical analysis of contemporary societies, it would be practically impossible – and outright unjust – not to mention the Frankfurt School.

Indeed, despite the roughly four decades separating the creation of the Institut für Sozialforschung of the University of Frankfurt (in 1923, by Felix Weil) and that of the Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies at the University of Birmingham (in 1964, by Richard Hoggart), they both share several common aspects (Kellner, 1997): their Marxist affiliation; their refusal of a primary version of Marxism, grounded upon the distinction between infrastructure and superstructure, along with the supposed determination of the latter by the former; the emphasis put on the subject of culture, which transcends the infrastructure/superstructure distinction; their critical vision of what Adorno and Horkheimer (1944/2002) dub “culture industry” [*Kulturindustrie*] and Hoggart (1957/2009) “mass culture”.

There are also, however, critical differences between the two: the resistance to mass culture originates, as far as the Frankfurt School is concerned, in “high culture”, whereas according to cultural studies it is a product of popular culture, particularly that of the working class; the Frankfurt School regards resistance to mass culture as a near impossibility, since reception is totally determined by the production, while cultural studies see the actuality of resistance in many instances, inasmuch as reception can plausibly occur in the direction intended by production, in a different direction to that intended, or even in the opposite one – what Stuart Hall (1973/1980) dubs the dominant-hegemonic position, the negotiated position, and the oppositional position.

The Frankfurt School’s critique of culture industry lies, at heart, on two basic assumptions: the distinction between high and low culture; and the identification of the culture produced by the culture industry with low culture.

Now, both assumptions are problematic.

Concerning the distinction between high and low culture, it neglects the fact that any national or group-based culture is an heterogeneous whole, encompassing elements of both “high culture” – the arts, philosophy, science – and “low culture”, which includes popular culture, in the sense of a predominantly oral culture inherited from previous generations through a sort of osmosis, as well as mass culture itself, the culture usually broadcast via mass media in a transnational manner. This very understanding of culture as an heterogeneous whole is shared by Unesco (2002, Preamble), for whom

culture must be regarded as the sum of distinctive spiritual and material, intellectual and affective traits that characterize a society or social group, and it encompasses, in addition to the arts and humanities, the ways of life, the modes of communal living, value systems, traditions and beliefs.

These several traits coexist in any culture in a more or less harmonious manner, communicating among themselves either via a common language, or via what Luhmann dubs symbolically generalized communication media, which include money, power, influence, commitments of value, truth, or love (Luhmann, 1981). As such, phrases like “high culture” and “low culture” are but mere abstractions, reliant on value judgements which, within a society or social group, certain social strata posit regarding others and their respective culture with the ultimate aim to legitimize their own hegemony – even when those former strata are allegedly “humanist” or “leftist intellectuals”.

In what pertains to the identification of culture produced by the culture industry with low culture, it is a premise that forgets, on the one hand, how much of “high culture” becomes “industrial” culture – such as the art of Picasso or Andy Warhol – and that, on the other hand, much of that so-called “industrial” culture is truly “high culture” – for instance, the films of Charlie Chaplin or Orson Welles. In truth, the phrase “culture industry” refers more accurately to a process of cultural production and diffusion – culture as information in the industrial age – than to its content.

Cultural studies are precisely a symptom of what we could, paraphrasing Arthur Danto and his “end of art” (Danto, 1984), call the end of (high) culture as aura and distinction, leading culture to be regarded as “ordinary” reality (Williams, 1958/1989). In both cases, what is at stake is the lack of belief in a canon, a normative criterion that universally defines what is valuable and what is not, instead transitioning into a paradigm of empirical, sociological and anthropologically-based – and therefore particular – criteria.

This end of high culture as canon leads to a sort of negationism by the defenders of “high culture”, of whom one of the most recent and well-known examples is Vargas Llosa, who sees in the present “entertainment culture” – exemplified by products such as the Brazilian *telenovelas*, Hollywood movies, or music shows of Shakira – the demise of true culture, which aimed for eternity instead of immediate consumption and oblivion (Vargas Llosa, 2013). More restrained in his criticism, Steiner (1971) preceded Vargas Llosa by a few decades in theorizing the coming of a post-culture. There is certainly a curious attachment to the so-called “high culture” on the part of many “humanist” intellectuals of the West, considering that if the former was not partially responsible for the two world wars that took place in the 20th century and the barbarism that accompanied them, it certainly did nothing to prevent them or it – with no shortage of instances of concentration camp executioners who delighted in sending prisoners to their death at the sound of erudite music...

If during the time when (the idea of) high culture reigned its privileged spaces were museums, libraries, and universities, culture is regarded today as belonging to all places, including those but also others: the factory (working class culture), the kitchen (gastro-nomic culture), the stadium (sport culture), and so on. That does not mean, however, that within a given culture everything is considered equally important; the question of defining what is and is not important, as well as what is more or less important, should instead lead us to consider the fundamental relationship between culture and power.

CULTURE AND POWER: FROM THE CULTURAL TURN TO THE POPULIST TURN

The issue of the relation between culture and power is immediately present in British cultural studies from their inception. Raymond Williams’ *The long revolution* – one of the three works regarded by Stuart Hall (1980) as seminal to cultural studies (along with Richard Hoggart’s *Uses of literacy* and E. P. Thompson’s *Making of the English working class*) – affirms the necessity to think as a whole, as parts of the same process, the industrial revolution, the democratic revolution, and the cultural revolution, in order to realize the ongoing “long revolution” (Williams, 1961/1963, pp. 9-15).

Stuart Hall's aforementioned text underlines, on the other hand, the connection of the line of reasoning of the three authors/books with the New Left agenda, which placed the "politics of intellectual work" in the centre of that new current of thought (Hall, 1980, p. 58).

Members of more recent generations of cultural studies thinkers share the concern to reflect upon the relationship between culture and power, particularly upon the relationships of power that determine who is represented and who is not, who speaks and who is silenced, and even what counts as "culture" (Couldry, 2000, p. 2). Regarding such relationships of power, the values affirmed by cultural studies are "those of cultural and political democracy and the progressive undermining of inequalities of power" (Couldry, 2000, p. 6). In what concerns the kind of democracy here at stake, the same author quotes the following extract from *The long revolution*: "If man is essentially a learning, creating, communicating being, the only social organization adequate to his nature is a participating democracy in which all of us, as unique individuals, learn, communicate and control" (Williams, quoted in Couldry, 2000, p. 26). On a more recent work, Couldry (2006) lists as characteristics of cultural studies not only the emphasis on the consumption of culture and popular culture but, mainly, the concern about the profound inequalities in the way that subjects are able to take the floor, "to emerge as speaking subjects" (p. 26). Similarly, when referring to Raymond Williams, Storey (2017) posits that the object of cultural studies is culture and power, the former being understood as simultaneously shared and contested meanings; regarding the latter, the same author underlines the influence of Gramsci's concept of hegemony upon cultural studies and its distancing from classical Marxism's notion of the determination of the infrastructure, by considering everything else – namely gender – as "merely cultural" (Butler, 1997).

From the 80's onward, cultural studies undergo a twofold process of internationalization and institutionalization. The first of those, which may not have always produced positive results for cultural studies (Grossberg, 1993), leads them to be present in academies all around the world (Miller, 2001), including in Portugal (Baptista, 2009; Martins, 2010; Sampaio, 2013) and in Brazil (Escosteguy, 2010). The second refers precisely to the process through which cultural studies enter academia, giving birth to graduate and post-graduate courses, research projects, etc., partly as a response to the crisis in Humanities (Hall, 1992).

But this (seeming) success of cultural studies was simultaneously cause and consequence of a populist turn, leading up to a "cultural populism" that ends up considering capitalism as "cool" (McGuigan, 2011).

Cultural studies thus become mere studies of reception, falling prey to "cultural compliance" (Miller & Philo, 2000), by celebrating the "popular" and "active audiences" (Miller & Philo, 2001), forgetting the moments for – and power of – the production and circulation of culture, as well as establishing the "great divide" between analysis of culture and political economy (Murdock, 1995; for a broader critical perspective on this process, see Ferguson & Golding, 1997).

The alleged power of audience at the moment of reception makes one fail to remember that such reception is, from inception, conditioned by what is given to be

received, its framing, the channels through which it is transmitted, its cost, etc. – by that which, as a whole, may be synthesized as the conditions for the production, circulation, and reproduction of culture. Put differently: to situate cultural studies solely on the moment of reception means to implicitly accept and legitimize everything that precedes that moment – this is, the essential constituents of the “culture industry” (Adorno & Horkheimer, 1944/2002) and of “mass culture” (Hoggart, 1957/2009).

To be sure, it may still be possible, in this regard, to account for a third turn – the reflexive turn – in order to bear witness to the fact that the critique of the “populist turn”, undertaken from both within and outside cultural studies, created the conditions for that very populism to be overcome. The endeavours of critics like McGuigan (2011), Coudry (2000, 2006, 2010) or Storey (2017), to mention only a few, contributed to return the relationship between culture and power to the agenda of cultural studies, and therefore corroborate precisely this reflexive turn. Cultural studies hence recover the fundamental inspiration of its “founders”, even if the objects under scrutiny may be different, such as the Web, social networks, globalization, and so on.

MASS DEMOCRACY AND THE ISSUE OF PARTICIPATION

The assertion that the Greeks invented democracy is true but incomplete: the Greeks did indeed invent a certain kind of democracy – participative democracy – significantly different from what we contemporarily understand by that notion.

In what pertains to its form, democracy is characterized by two fundamental principles: the equality of all citizens before the law, and the respect for the will of the majority when it comes to the making of decisions. These principles, however, define precisely that: the *form* of democracy – not its content or substance. The Greeks added to those principles a third one, the principle of participation: participation not only in public debates and political decision-making processes, but also in the various governing bodies of the Polis, so that each citizen would simultaneously become governed and governor.

We know that such a form of participative democracy entails problems of space (which cannot be too large), of time (which cannot be too long), and of number (of citizens involved, who cannot be too many). In establishing equivalence between individual and citizen, modern democracy exponentially increases the critical nature of these problems of space, time, and number. In order to solve them, and against the views of philosophers such as Rousseau, Modernity made its democracy rely on a principle different to participation: that of representation and delegation of power.

Thus, the process of inclusion of all individuals, that distinguishes modern democracy from its Greek counterpart, was made possible solely by abdicating from the principle of participation and replacing it with the principle of representation – limiting the participation of those represented essentially to the choice regarding their representatives.

Now, this representation entails that each citizen is considered abstractly, as a numerical entity, an x equal to another x . The so-called “general will” does not therefore originate here from the coordination of private interests and differences among citizens, but rather from the effacement – the suspension – of those interests and differences.

Within representative democracy, to be a citizen means to negate oneself as a citizen. Representation thus entails a true paradox: one can only be represented under the condition of not representing one as a concrete individual, but as an abstraction.

The only ones that escape this logic of negation are the chosen ones, understood here in all the ambiguity of that notion: the ones who are chosen by the people as representatives, but also often themselves representatives of the cultural, economic, and even aristocratic elites.

Nevertheless, and reciprocally to what happens with the represented, the representatives – the chosen ones – are also characterized by a number, that of their electoral influence, translated into a number of votes.

These problems of representation, which lead to a transmutation of politics into mere (electoral) statistics, become increasingly acute in light of the transition from a “society (or community) of publics” into a “society of masses” (Mills, 1956/2000, pp. 300-301).

This transformation, which likely began in the mid-19th century, is based upon factors such as “industrialization, urbanization, the growth of literacy and the popular press, and not least the rise of the administrative and interventionist state” (Dahlgren, 1991, p. 4). To these factors one must add, particularly considering the growing importance they will assume, mass media (Dahlgren, 1991, p. 1).

Hence, we will find masses in all domains of society: in the cities – masses of private individuals, inhabiting a space characterized by anonymity, impersonality, and indifference regarding people and things (consider Georg Simmel’s essay on the metropolis and mental life, dated from 1903); in the productive sector – masses of workers attached to machines on production lines, interchangeable and easily replaceable (Taylorism, such as it is portrayed in Chaplin’s *Modern Times*, which premiered in 1936); in consumption – masses of consumers for whom mass-produced objects are meant (Henry Ford’s Model T, launched in 1908); in culture – readers, listeners, or spectators who enjoy the same cultural products, produced in a more or less uniform manner (the Hollywood movie production system from the 20’s of the 20th century, for instance); masses, ultimately, in politics as well – configuring that which has been commonly called mass democracy (Mills 1956/2000, p. 307; Stoker, 2006).

Although the advent of “mass society” is regarded by authors like Gustave Le Bon (1895) or Ortega y Gasset (1929) as the beginning of the domination of the political stage by the masses and the consequent loss of power by the elites, that is not the belief of thinkers such as Wright Mills, whose view on this matter we espouse.

Indeed, while a certain proximity between representatives and represented (who create voluntary associations), as well as a belief that politics ought to equate to a rational and critical debate on the common good, still endure in the liberal democracy of the 18th and 19th centuries, mass democracy comes to deepen the divide between representatives and represented via the introduction of political parties and other self-governing mass organizations, within which the elites converse among themselves and thus replace civic debate with propaganda and manipulation through mass media. These are hence not

merely some of the new aspects emerging out of a mass society, but also some of the key instruments employed by economic and political elites to exert their power over the masses (Mills, 1956/2000, p. 315).

What is lacking from a democracy laid upon the principle of representation in order for it to genuinely become democratic is, as we mentioned earlier, the principle of participation. It is only by participating in the several circles within which one's social life unfolds that each citizen becomes able to "represent" him or herself, defending their interests and differences.

It is not the case that the principle of representation must be denied; rather, the true issue is ascertaining how both principles can be articulated within mass democracy in a manner that encompasses all the levels at which political decision-making takes place, from the workplace to the national (or even supranational) parliament.

This was, so to speak, the fundamental theoretical and practical – militant, political, and pedagogical – demand made to British cultural studies at their inception: how to make mass democracy more democratic? How to radicalize democracy? As we have seen above, the "long revolution" mentioned by Raymond Williams presupposed that the "democratic revolution" would be accompanied, besides an "industrial revolution", by a "cultural revolution" – in other words, that politics, economy, and culture would be regarded as parts of a whole. This is precisely the subject of the following section.

A RADICAL AND PLURAL DEMOCRACY

Any democracy that is not merely formal – that is, one that does not restrict civic participation to voting – entails a political and legal respect for the differences among individuals and groups, as well as for cultural diversity¹. But the differences at stake here are those which are specifically cultural – that is, those which individuals or groups discursively employ to set themselves apart from other individuals or groups, and thus define their own cultural identity (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 12-13).

As we have mentioned previously, one of the fundamental guidelines of British cultural studies was to pay close attention to cultural differences – differences in gender, race, age, ethnicity, etc. – greatly transcending in that respect the class differences formerly emphasised by orthodox Marxism.

The stance adopted by cultural studies concerning the importance of cultural diversity, which had been previously sustained also by Lévi-Strauss (1952/1987, particularly pp. 13-17), has recently been (re)affirmed by Unesco (2002), in a declaration that regards cultural diversity as crucial for humankind as biodiversity for the order of living beings, and thus as something that can only be legitimately limited by human rights issues (this too was, essentially, the view sustained by Lévi-Strauss).

¹ Although some dictionaries regard them as near synonyms, we employ the terms "difference" and "diversity" to represent distinct meanings. Thus, while *difference* is to be understood as the thing that allows us to discern among various individuals and groups, *diversity* represents the fact that different individuals and groups exist. Diversity will hence increase proportionally with the number of different individuals or groups, as well as with the vastness of the differences between individuals or groups.

A position in stark contrast to the former endures today which, by defending the notion of *one* culture – sometimes dubbed “humanist” – sustains that diversity is nothing more than a way to value what is in fact no longer culture, but its surrogate. This position, which we have referred to before, stems out from an ethnocentric view that values what is Judaeo-Christian, Greek, and European to the detriment of what is not, which is merely most of the world (not even cultures as ancient and significant as China and India feature in this Eurocentric mental map of the “humanists”).

Diversity is a political issue because its affirmation or negation entail either the acknowledgement of every individual or the denial to some the right to visibility and participation in social life. There can be no diversity if what is diverse is not visible to everyone’s eyes in the public space (Arendt, 1958).

A democracy that seeks to respect cultural differences and diversity presupposes a kind of politics which authors such as Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe (1985/2001) dub “radical democratic politics”.

This “radical democratic politics” is characterized by Laclau and Mouffe as a project aiming to join the historical struggles of the workers with the new struggles of the minorities (women, young people, homosexuals, black people, etc.) and economic redistribution with social acknowledgment – by extending demands of democracy, freedom, and equality from the economic domain to the domains of gender, race, ethnicity, etc. According to the same authors, this form of democracy is radical because each of the collective identities contained within it is valuable in itself; and it is plural because it regards each of those different identities as equally important. It does not, however, call on us to renounce deliberative democracy, but rather seek to extend its democratizing, libertarian, and equalitarian impulse towards the direction of a democracy which may harbour many forms of participation and exercise, depending on the collectives and the spaces that define its existence.

In a similar fashion, Grossberg (2015) mentions the need for articulation, to the left, between “vertical politics” and “horizontal politics”, a deliberative/representative democracy and a participative democracy – although, much like in the case of Laclau and Mouffe, the crucial question of how to accomplish such an articulation in practice remains largely open.

If democracy is about the inclusion of the different, citizenship is about participation in democracy (Storey, 2017), being possible to speak of a “culture” of citizenship (Couldry, 2006).

It is therefore imperative to realize a cultural citizenship which, alongside political citizenship (“the right to reside and to vote”) and economic citizenship (“the right to thrive and to prosper”) insists on “a right to communication and to the representation of cultural difference” (Miller, 2011, p. 57).

Adopting here a distinction made by Giroux (2000), we cannot do without a “culture of politics” that drives citizens to participate in civic and political life, and which is indissociable from a “politics of culture” that must be learned, fomented, and deepened. Hence the importance of a pedagogy of cultural studies that is not only political but also

insurgent (Giroux, 2001) – insurgent in the sense that it does not limit itself to avert the gaze or even produce an apology of present-day neoliberalism (which would amount to little else than elementary social Darwinism).

According to Couldry (2010), a “post-liberal” politics, able to challenge the prevailing neoliberalism, must lay on the idea that all voices should be heard, that they all should be afforded visibility in the social space. Now, new information technologies present novel possibilities to make those voices heard, inasmuch they allow precisely for: the hearing of new voices; the mutual awareness of these new voices; a new scale of collective organization; other spaces (non-spaces) of intervention; new intensities of listening (pp. 139-141). It is nevertheless still important to question what the real impact of these new voices on the democratic system might be: will they be heard only within a logic of protest and counter-democracy? Can they be articulated with “institutional” voices? These are decisive questions, insofar as “the fundamental deficit in neoliberal democracies is (...) not one of voice but of ways of valuing voice, of putting voice to work within processes of social cooperation” (Couldry, 2010, p. 144).

A new politics demands new kinds of action. One of them, cited by Couldry, is the act of greeting – for instance, “letting migrant workers attend, speak at, and have their views taken into account at a councillor town hall meeting”. Generally speaking, Couldry adds, “Acts of greeting address the forms of *invisibility* that exclude people from the range of possible political actors” (Couldry, 2010, p. 146).

This matter of the acceptance of the Other must be regarded as being of critical importance in a world where migratory and cultural flows have truly become the rule.

A GLOBAL CITIZENSHIP

Classic political thinking on democracy tends to more or less specifically refer to a democracy that exists within the context of a nation-state; the very classical idea of democracy lays on the assumption of that nation-state.

Now, in the times we live in, a “post-liberal” democratic politics should entail an expansion of democracy in two different and complementary directions: inwardly – beyond the national into the regional and local, i.e. the local council, the school, the workplace, etc. – and outwardly – beyond the national to the transnational and the global.

The need to extend the issue of democracy to the global level, and to pose the question of a global citizenship, ensues from the very characteristics of globalization, namely those that pertain to the cultural domain.

As Giddens well-known formulation underlines (1990, p. 64), globalization can be defined as “the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa”.

In light of this definition, globalization implies a number of flows that transcend and efface all borders, which despite not being exclusive of our times, find in the latter the chance to reach a much larger scope: flows of people (migrants, students, tourists,

refugees...), of communications (radio, cable and satellite TV, the internet...), of money and other financial products (stocks, investments, etc.), and of merchandise – including the so-called cultural commodities (books, movies, records...). The open and reticular system of globalization, most clearly symbolized by the internet, thus markedly contrasts with the closed and linear system of the Cold War, whose greatest symbol – the Berlin wall – was brought down in 1989 (Friedman, 1999).

In what concerns cultural globalization, and out of all the aforementioned kinds of flows, anthropologist Arjun Appadurai singles out the joint effect of electronic communications – particularly of the images they broadcast – and of migrations. It is an effect whose ultimate result lays in the creation of a space which, more than being de-localized, incorporates many different symbolic spaces (Appadurai, 1996, pp. 2-4). To illustrate of the integrated working of both processes, Appadurai provides the following examples:

as Turkish guest workers in Germany watch Turkish films in their German flats, as Koreans in Philadelphia watch the 1988 Olympics in Seoul through satellite feeds from Korea, and as Pakistani cabdrivers in Chicago listen to cassettes of sermons recorded in mosques in Pakistan or Iran, we see moving images meet deterritorialized viewers. These create diasporic public spheres, phenomena that confound theories that depend on the continued salience of the nation-state as the key arbiter of important social changes (Appadurai, 1996, p. 4)

Appadurai's perspective in the matter is grounded upon Benedict Anderson's work on "imagined communities": just as written mass communications, namely newspapers and novellas, contributed to the emergence of the nation-state, so too – Appadurai argues – are electronic communication causing a post-national globalized world to appear (Appadurai, 1996, p. 8).

The "diasporic public spheres" mentioned by Appadurai present us with several political challenges, all of which are not easily solved.

A first challenge, concerning the national states which come to harbour migrants, lays in integrating the latter by conciliating their legal and political equality with their cultural differences, the "Jacobin model" with the "multicultural model" (Gignac, 1997) – not exactly by condescending to those cultural differences but by acknowledging them, while promoting the involvement of those who are "different" in civic and political action on the common good (Taylor, 1992/1994). The current situation in several European nations and the US – the self-proclaimed "humanist West" – characterized by certain nationalistic, xenophobic, and racist trends, demonstrates how difficult it truly is, in practice, to accept the principle of plurality and cultural difference.

A second challenge, in what concerns the bilateral or multilateral relationship between national states, is that of the free circulation of migrants in search of better living conditions. As clearly exemplified the recent vote on the Brexit by a majority of the British population or by the absurd proposal of Donald Trump to build a wall between Mexico and the US and have the former pay for it, the circulation of migrants is permanently threatened by new walls – both symbolic and real.

A third challenge, found at a global or quasi-global level, consists in the realization of the utopian ideal of constructing a supranational, global, or European citizenship espoused by organizations such as the United Nations and the European Union. In addition to being hindered by their lack of real power, these organizations would require better democracy and a greater equality among their constituent countries – under penalty of, following a strictly neoliberal logical, continuing to be determined by the will of the strongest, be it at an economic, political, or military level.

Each and every one of these challenges should lead us to once again realize that, just as Grossberg (2017) writes on the title of his paper about the current crisis (in the US), “there are no guarantees in history”. In other words, once the belief in the historical redemption promised by Faith, Reason, or Party is lost forever, nothing can replace the actions of each of us – actions that are always frail and contingent but that, together with all other frail and contingent actions, provide us with the only way to progressively set courses in time.

And this leads us to return, in the final section of this paper, to the political and critical nature of cultural studies, in order to question the place of the intellectuals who research, teach, and discuss them a little all over the world.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Whether or not it was intended to rescue a field of Humanities in crisis, cultural studies made their way into academia: into research centres, into graduate and post-graduate courses, into academic subjects. They multiplied the objects of their study, diversified, occupied the crevices of knowledge and practice. In many instances, critics and nonconformists have become respected and respectful – institutional, no longer “political”.

One could point out, regarding this situation, that it is not the intellectual’s duty to be “political”, in the sense of proposing concrete policy, even though there is not a clear and simple distinction between intellectual and political labour (Grossberg, 2010, pp. 242-243).

Indeed, intellectual labour is never *not* political. We recover here once more Marx and his 11th thesis on Feuerbach: “The philosophers have only *interpreted* the world, in various ways; the point is to change it” (Marx, 1845/2007, p. 536).

Even if one accepts that interpreting the world is a different thing from changing it – which is highly debatable, given that all interpretation transforms, at once, the interpreter and the interpreted – what remains is that there are certain interpretations that lead us to view the world in a different fashion, sometimes radically so, and incite us to actually change it – which was precisely the case with Marx’s own interpretation of history; and that, conversely, there are other interpretations that help us accept the prevailing status quo, to leave everything as it is.

Speaking concretely, it seems indisputable that the intellectual labour of authors like Richard Hoggart, Raymond Williams, Edward P. Thompson or Stuart Hall, in England,

or Roland Barthes, Michel Foucault or Pierre Bourdieu, in France – to cite only a few – is political from its very beginnings: in the subjects being chosen, in the manner in which they are approached, in the consequences being derived from that approach².

The intellectual labour of these authors did not produce solely theoretical effects, at the level of a knowledge to be learned, discussed, either contested or accepted – which would already be plenty; it produced also practical effects, leading many people, young and less young, workers or students, militants or not, to associate, take stands, take to the streets, etc.; in this aspect, as we have stated, Foucault's case is paradigmatic.

Hence, intellectual labour is always political, though it can be political in different ways: it can support the status quo, stand against the latter, or merely abstain from taking a position on the matter (which is a position all the same).

In the specific case of cultural studies, they find at their genesis a critique of power in the name of culture and democracy. "To conduct cultural studies", being true to the real meaning of the phrase, necessarily implies to adopt such a critical and political position.

If and when that is not the case, one cannot truly speak of cultural studies; it is certainly something else: a profession, a career, even something as fleeting as a thesis or a dissertation.

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² In regards to the particular – and exemplary – case of Foucault, François Caillat's documentary, *Foucault contre lui-même*, France, 2014, is particularly illustrative of what is being argued here.

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* Submitted: 15-05-2017

* Accepted: 15-07-2017