Anais de Resumos Expandidos
IV Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais
ISSN 2675-4169 Vol. 1, N. 4 (2020)

Mídia-ativismo transvestigênere nas redes sociais: a mediatização do trans-cuidado[1]

Transvestigender social media activism: the mediatization of trans-care

Isabel Löfgren

During the months leading up to Jair Bolsonaro's election to the Brazilian presidency in 2018, hate speech against non-normative bodies escalated and created a "moral panic" (Cohen 1972, Hall 1974) that affected urban transsexual communities directly, leading up to an alarming rate of trans-victimization, including censorship, beatings and murders during the electoral period. In this turbulent period some collectives such as @324artes, @designativista, #coleraalegria and countless other new trans-disciplinary formations started to mobilize and self-organize through social media campaigns and parallel, situated cultural initiatives against the rise of conservatism. These formations created an opportunity for political mobilization not only as creative and symbolic resistance, but also to promote knowledge about human and constitutional rights for wider audiences using a mixture of voices that included celebrity endorsements and the amplification of marginalized voices, such as in the LGBTQIA+ community. These "autonomous zones of resistance" (Labra 2008) which consist both of formal organizations and loose social and artistic formations (without fixed members

[1] Trabalho apresentado ao IV Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais. PPGCC-Unisinos. São Leopoldo, RS.

ISSN 2675-4169 Vol. 1, N. 4 (2020)

or situated practices), have since then created a complex ecology of social media campaigns and mobilizations, grassroots social movements, cultural programs, as well as spawning new situated practices and organizations, often with the establishment of physical spaces of mutual and self-care. One such "autonomous zone of resistance" that took shape in the city of São Paulo during this turbulent period is *Casa Chama*, an artist-run space that provides a shared infrastructure of care for LGBTIA+ population sited in a large apartment in the center of the city, with focus on artistic processes and life support structures specifically for transgender artists brought together not only by the need to protect art and culture itself, but also to protect those vulnerable and marginalized trans-bodies that produce art and culture.

Casa Chama emerged between the first and second rounds of the 2018 elections as a response to the threat to the LGBTIA+ community within the arts. They held several initial meetings with large groups of LGBTIA+ artists and community members in a fragile state threatened by an ambient fear (Papastergiadis 2004) of transbodies, ranging from creative workshops to create material for protests to arranging sessions with psychologists to address the insecurities generated by the coming Bolsonaro administration. Rodrigo Franco, one of the founders of Casa Chama, is a trans artist and designer who began by merging several LGBTIA+ scattered networks in the city, first in the center and then expanding to several groups from the peripheries as a means to "share and balance out our privileges within the group" and to form the organization from the needs of the trans artistic population through transversal activities happening across the city, "we are putting intersectionality in practice – we invite each other to each other's events, and look for points of convergence which we are continuously learning how to do," says Franco. This presented an opportunity for structural, power and gender differences within the art world specifically, and in society-at-large, to confront each other and reassess their values. Franco continues, "I don't think things

ISSN 2675-4169 Vol. 1, N. 4 (2020)

were ok in the art world. It reproduces all the bad stuff in society. But this is a great and much needed opportunity to reconsider our agendas, think about our privileges, and rebuild this scene because there will not be a comfortable place for anyone in the near future."

In the first days of the Bolsonaro government in early 2019, the minister for the newly minted Ministry Women, Family and Human Rights, Damares Alves, removed the LGBTQIA+ population from human rights protections in Brazil, which in practice meant that homophobic and transphobic crimes entered the sphere of regular legislation. The civil rights of LGBTQIA+ populations have since then become increasingly diminished, and such crimes have now ceased to require human rights attention. In mid-2020, the COVID-19 pandemic lockdown restrictions added another layer of difficulties faced by urban trans-communities, as the cancellation of all cultural events left many members of the artistic and cultural trans-community without regular sources of income, and therefore even more vulnerable to situations of *de facto* marginalization. This has led many LGBTQIA+ activist and artistic collectives and networks to mobilize support for their communities in terms of distributing food, providing psychological and medical care, finding temporary housing, and offering possibilities for continuing artistic development. As part of a particularly social media savvy community, individuals within the collectives mobilized very quickly on social media as a channel of artistic expression, political mobilization, with the creation of dynamic discursive spaces. Unable to perform on stages and other cultural venues, the use of "lives" on Instagram, for instance, has yielded a rich and wide-ranging online cultural program that has spawned new genres, new audiences and new modes of address.

If the Bolsonaro administration and increased police repression wasn't enough, the pandemic has added new challenges for LGTBIA+ populations. As many cultural events were cancelled due to lockdown, and main streams of income have ceased, many

ISSN 2675-4169 Vol. 1, N. 4 (2020)

trans artists have found themselves in even more precarious situations, which has in turn beckoned new strategies for survival, both objectively, in terms of providing basic food and lodging, but also new strategies for artistic and subjective subsistence, which has resulted in a series of communicative strategies meant to keep the community together as well as to ensure a continued existence. This presents a new set of challenges for LGBTIA+ populations concerning data privacy, digital security, and surveillance but also presents a range of opportunities for new forms of communication and expression that are part of a wider movement for digital and social justice, enriched by innovative practices of mediatization by, for, with and through trans- and other non-normative bodies.

This paper will investigate these challenges and opportunities by highlighting a few case studies such as Instagram live programs, interviewing leaders of mobilizations and campaigns, and understanding the kinds of organizational structures that provide discursive platforms for trans-voices and trans-agency. The role of social media is seen here not as a passive site of consumption of alienation, but as a site of political organization and education, symbolic resistance, cultural expression, as well as discursive platform that helps develop a micro-politics of mutual care. In these spaces, individuals as well as the communit(ies) rearticulate their notions of desire and expression, their expectations for recognition and reward and the amplification of their voices in order to maintain their rights in an overall struggle for social and gender justice. Media and mediatization epitesmologies can contribute to expand the knowledge of mediatization practices within specific communities, but also, through a medium theory perspective understand the particular circumstances and techno-social conditions that enable these practices.

Anais de Resumos Expandidos
IV Seminário Internacional de Pesquisas em Midiatização e Processos Sociais
ISSN 2675-4169 Vol. 1, N. 4 (2020)

References

Cohen, Stan, 1980, *Folk Devils and Moral Panics: The creation of the mods and rockers*, Martin Robertson, Oxford. 2nd edn First published 1972

Hall, Stuart (1974), 'Deviance, Politics and the Media', in Deviance and Social Control, eds Rock, P, McIntosh, M, Tavistock, London. First published as Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies Stencilled Occasional Paper No. 11, undated, University of Birmingham.

Mann, Patricia S. (1994) *Micro-Politics: Agency in a Postfeminist Era,* Minnesota University Press.

Papastergiadis, Nikos (2003) 'Ambient Fear'. Fallout Special Issue, *Artlink*, Vol 23, No 1: pp 28-34.