

Original Article

Policy and resistance in the homosexual nightlife¹

Política e resistência no lazer noturno homossexual

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Abstract

This study aimed to explore the political power of nighttime leisure in São Paulo created for consumers of dissident sexuality and gender, through an ethnography. Daily life was taken as an analytical key, providing timely dialogues between Occupational Therapy and social/human sciences about the activities in their entirety. Therefore, it was sought to investigate meanings that term *resistance* gains in this context and, secondly, to approach the political-body dimension, addressing affective-sexual practices within some parties. The LGBT pop scene investigated was composed of five parties, three of them in the Augusta region and two in Barra Funda. All places were markedly juvenile, frequented by male homosexuals, linked to the pop style. We used interviews with DJs and party producers and other “night people”, in addition to the ethnographic data. The data analysis based on Cultural Studies, Michel Foucault, and Giorgio Agamben. The term “resistance” gains contingency meanings related to the dispute of gender representations on the media stages. The visibility of the bodies of dissenting sexuality transcends the symbolic domain of social esteem and reinforces the notion of gender as a public political phenomenon. In addition, heterotopic practices of an affective-sexual nature in the darkroom may reveal the political power by the suspension of devices producing sociosexual hierarchies.

Keywords: Occupational Therapy, Leisure Activities, Activities of Daily Living, Gender Performativity, Sexuality.

Resumo

O objetivo deste estudo foi explorar, por meio de uma etnografia, a potência política do lazer noturno paulistano destinado aos consumidores de sexualidade e gênero dissidentes. Tomou-se o cotidiano como chave analítica, ensejando diálogos oportunos entre a terapia ocupacional e ciências sociais/humanas acerca das

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atividades em sua totalidade. Para tanto, buscou-se investigar os significados particulares que o termo *resistência* ganha neste contexto e, em segundo momento, abordar a dimensão político-corporal de algumas práticas de natureza afetiva-sexual no interior de algumas festas. A cena pop LGBT investigada era composta por cinco festas, três delas na região da Rua Augusta e duas no bairro da Barra funda. Tais lugares eram marcadamente juvenis, frequentados por homossexuais masculinos, vinculados ao estilo pop. Foram usadas entrevistas com DJs e produtores de festas e outras pessoas “da noite”, em complemento aos dados etnográficos. A análise se deu por meio de operações conceituais respaldadas nos Estudos Culturais, Nancy Fraser, em Michel Foucault, Giorgio Agamben. O termo “resistência” ganha significados contingenciais relacionados à disputa de representações de gênero nos palcos midiáticos. A visibilidade dos corpos de sexualidade dissidente transcende o domínio simbólico da estima social e reforça a noção de gênero como fenômeno público político. Além disso, práticas heterotópicas de natureza afetivo-sexual no darkroom podem revelar a potência política pela suspensão de dispositivos produtores de hierarquias sociosexuais.

Palavras-chave: Terapia Ocupacional, Atividades de Lazer, Atividades Cotidianas, Performatividade de Gênero, Sexualidade.

1 Introduction

“The exile of politics gives way to a policy of exile” (Agamben, 2017, p. 265).

This article is part of doctoral research, whose objective was to investigate the political power of the São Paulo LGBT pop scene on the particular meanings of the term *resistance* in nightlife. For that, my view will be attentive to the subjective production in nightlife linked to the construction of male homosexuality, proposing an analysis of daily life that privileges the space between leisure and politics, between desire and the social.

Nightlife in the metropolises made up of nightclubs, parties and bars, are part of the daily lives of several young people who recognize themselves as lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transsexuals, transvestites, and other socio-identity expressions. There is an evident scarcity of studies that relate youthful occupations to expressions of gender and sexuality, especially the dimension of leisure in its political dimension. Kiepek et al. (2019) speak of scientific silencing in the face of the so-called non-sanctioned occupations, which would be occupations considered harmful to health, illegal, and/or deviant within the dominant worldviews, and nightlife would be an example of this domain of occupations.

Restricted to specific health and well-being schemes, therapists and occupational scientists tend to understand leisure as a set of self-motivated activities, performed in the opposite time to work, with effects on the sense of competence, self-efficacy, relaxation, participation, and personal development (Wensley & Slade, 2012; Passmore, 2003). There are at least two notes from this approach: first, the importance of seeing leisure and occupations in their socio-political, contestation and subversive meanings, a task that goes beyond their functional use; second, the imperative to overcome

theoretical-methodological matrices with a moralistic, ethnocentric, classist, heteronormative basis, as they tend to neglect a range of non-hegemonic cultural activities (Kiepek et al., 2019).

Some productions in therapy and occupational science address the topic of this article such as the research by Birkholtz & Blair (1999), in which the meanings of leisure enjoyed by lesbians in societies marked by homophobia are discussed, ranging from celebration to support in coming out² because it would be an example of an occupation capable of strengthening identity and facilitating adaptive strategies (coping). Avillo et al. (2015) analyze how homosexual young Chileans have their “occupational elections” regulated by the hetero norm present in the institutional, economic, cultural dimensions. Although the authors do not directly address leisure, they identify how preferences for play and sports are conditioned by gender stereotypes. Brazilian studies based on Social Occupational Therapy produce evidence about the protective action of social support networks and new theoretical-analytical schemes involved with overcoming injustices and oppressions linked to issues of sex/gender, race/skin color, and class (Monzeli, 2013; Melo, 2016; Braga et al., 2020). On the other hand, Murasaki & Galheigo (2016) researched the transformations in the daily lives of young people who became homosexuals through body maps, identifying barriers to autonomy, inclusion, and social participation. The authors point out the need for the greater appropriation of the sexuality and gender theme by occupational therapists to better support professional practice in any area of expertise. Leite Júnior & Lopes (2017) specifically researched issues related to transsexualities and transvestites in graduate training in occupational therapy and found a great gap, a reality that signals the urgency of a more sensitive curriculum in the sex-gender domain.

In Galheigo (2003, 2020), I recognize the possibility of taking *daily life* as a key concept in critical occupational therapy, seeking the tools of the human and social science for research and interventions centered on the daily subject-history, overcoming oppressions of all kinds (Almeida et al. 2020). The dialogue with Cultural Studies theorists, Michel Foucault and Giorgio Agamben will enrich the debate anchored in the political dimension of daily activities, with a focus on nightlife. According to Azanha (2011), taking *daily life* as an analytical key implies: a) adjusting the analytical scale, considering the relationship between particular-generic, micro-macro; b) recognizing the primacy of everyday life over historical landmarks; c) taking daily life as a totality (all non-additive) due to the relational character established between subjectivity, politics, culture, and economics; d) betting on what is surprising in ordinary activities, but without falling into the trivial description of activities. This happens through a conceptual operation in which the chaotic meanings of activities are illuminated by the theory, testing it in its limits.

We expect that the categories triggered can contribute to the critical analysis of leisure activities experienced by male homosexuals in an urban environment.

There is no body of knowledge in Occupational Therapy and Occupational Science about *sexualities and dissident gender expressions*. This term delimits research subjects according to forms of gender identification and non-hegemonic sexual practices, even

²Expression equivalent to “coming out of the closet”, or rather, making public sexual orientation or gender identity that differs from the Cisheterosexual norm.

its use is increasing among Brazilian occupational therapists (Almeida & Lugli, 2018; Correia et al., 2020; Braga et al., 2020). Until the mid-1990s, homosexuality was the category widely used to give unity to the investigative object. In recent decades, other expressions are found in the literature, such as *sexual and gender diversity*, *unconventional gender identities*, *non-normative*, or *non-hegemonic* (Simões & Carrara, 2014). They are terms that name a specific field of multidisciplinary knowledge, varying according to the perspectives adopted by the researcher³. *Male homosexuality* is the expression used here aiming at an analytical unit; however, in some moments of the text, I will be able to use *sexualities and dissident gender expressions* to give greater scope to the arguments.

Finally, the studies mentioned above start from different theoretical-methodological premises. However, they will be rescued as much as possible in the course of discussing the findings of this research, considering the need to consolidate an investigative front in occupational therapy on the topic.

2 Spectacular Leisure

When recapitulating the interest of Cultural Studies in the theme of youth and its forms of resistance, Freire Filho (2007, p. 22) says that young people are seen, academically, as “[...] seismographs, barometers or catalysts for changes in production and consumption cultural, behavior and social relationships”. The author continues in an alert tone, saying that researchers do not always act with the necessary conceptual and methodological rigors, especially on the exaggerated flexibility of the “chameleonic concept of resistance”.

The interest in *resistance* in spectacular leisure was already on the agenda of the members of the Center of Contemporary Cultural Studies (CCCS), who were betting on their transgressive potential, whose meanings could reveal changes in the lives of young people, although not always revolutionary. In Gramsci, the notion of *hegemony* was widely used, understood as a substance, and the limit of common sense, corresponding to the complex reality of social experience (Hall, 2003). They believed that some things would happen outside the hegemonic mode but not everything that is counter-hegemonic is a proponent of solutions, revolutionary, a problem that made them think of the contradictory schemes located between consumption and the insurgency in leisure.

Despite the criticisms received, scholars continued to investigate the *stylized subcultures* as in the case of *punks*, *teddy boys*, *rockers*, *hippies*, convinced that such manifestations did not constitute an effective challenge to the social formation (Freire Filho, 2007). “There is no amount of stylistic enchantment that can alter the oppressive way in which the goods used by the subculture have been produced”, asserted Hebdge (1979, p. 130). Due to the absence of a progressive or revolutionary synthesis, the lack of hope for concrete changes was justified because they emerge in the spheres of leisure

³Simões & Carrara (2014) map the issues and approaches that were highlighted by the criticism of “homosexuality” as a classifying category and encompassing social identity. They find research that articulates around the notion of homosexuality (“male homosexuals”, “female homosexuality”), “homoerotic” and “homo-affective”. More unique categories, such as “gay”, “lesbian”, “bisexual”, “transgender”, “transsexual”, “transvestite”, “transformist”, “drag queen”, “crossdresser”, “queer”. Expressions mobilized by the politicization of the theme, in the form of acronyms, such as “LGBT”, or “GLBT”TTT”. Finally, terms and expressions that seek to designate subjects based on practices: “MSM” (men who have sex with men) and “WSW” (women who have sex with women).

and consumption, lacking vigor and continuous political organization, beyond this sphere of everyday life.

Faced with the dilemmas from traditional analyzes, in terms of cohesive structures and identities, the so-called “Continental Cultural Studies” broadened the scope of analysis, adding mainly the contributions of Michel Foucault's micropolitics, language studies, and post-colonialist criticism. In this sense, instead of the great narratives of political conquest, intellectual investment turned to the capillary politics in relationships, in daily life, in intimacy, in heterogeneous social movements, in bodies, and everything that could express the intra-history movement of socio-cultural changes.

Considering both dimensions of political action - of representations and bodies - would there be something within the São Paulo *LGBT pop scene* that could point to political power? If so, which conception of policy would be pertinent to the analysis of the festive activity outlined in São Paulo night? And also, how do the scene's activities relate to the broader social content?

3 The Scene and the Methodological Construction of Leisure

The concept of leisure as the starting point of the investigation is the one proposed by the sociologist Marcellino (1998). It summarizes leisure in two axes: time and attitude. In this way, leisure should be understood as any cultural experience that occurs in the “released time” of work, in which pleasure, euphoria, joy, relaxation, excitement are mobilized. The author speaks of “liberated time” instead of “free time”, given the social determinations, following the itinerary of critical cultural theorists who seek counter-hegemonic possibilities for leisure.

The music scene is a “sensitizing concept” (Woo et al., 2015) capable of providing an analytical reference for leisure, articulating consumption practices and cultural production, space-temporal characteristics, and sociability. Initially, cultural scenes were proposed by Straw (1991, 2004) to speak of territories without precise geographical limits, destined to production, musical consumption, and media exchanges on a local or global scale. Based on such elaborations, I proposed the review of the concept through the intersectional approach of Brah (1991) not only to delimit the research field according to the consumption of pop music and alliances between spaces but also to capture conflicts attributed to gender/sexuality differences in nighttime sociability spaces (Almeida & Lugli, 2018).

The *scene* had five parties: three of them in the Augusta region and two in Barra Funda, in the city of São Paulo. The age of consumers varied between 18 and 25 years old, constituting a predominantly young audience; the social network formed by a group of professional producers and promoters of parties, DJs and hostesses, also called night people, gave a certain air of continuity between parties; the people were mostly male, admittedly gay; the parties favored the consumption of pop music, including independent productions that circulated on the internet. The São Paulo LGBT pop scene goes beyond the limits indicated here and it would be impossible for an individual project that intended to map it in its entirety. Faced with this challenge of analytical framing, the limits of the scene were given according to age, gender/sexuality, sociability, and musical style. (Almeida & Lugli, 2018).

I sought an ethnographic description, proposing categories of meaning highlighted from the everyday matrix, capable of providing “[...] a vocabulary in which it can be expressed in what the symbolic act has to say about itself” (Geertz, 2008, p. 17). The first contact with the area was through *hiking*, a technique proposed by anthropologist José Guilherme Cantor Magnani (2005), which provides the registration of nuances of the place, and other aspects related to time frames, sociability, shared codes, product prices, etc. As soon as the area was delimited, approximately 100 hours of immersion in the parties were systematically invested, which took place on Thursday to Saturday nights, from December/2015 to March/2017. In addition to the participant observation, I used semi-structured interviews with seven people at night. I managed to talk informally with some interlocutors; however, the information collected was very discontinuous, always cut by events at the party. On the other hand, the frequency in the spaces and the domain of the rules of belonging guaranteed a closer relationship with the scene and their habitués.

The research was approved by the Ethics Committee of the Federal University of São Paulo, and clarifications about anonymity and confidentiality were provided to the interviewees through the Informed Consent Form⁴.

The data recorded in the field notebook and the report of the interviews were analyzed based on Cultural Studies, anthropological, added to the constructs of the political philosophy of Giorgio Agamben, Judith Butler, and Nancy Fraser.

4 In the Valley of Homosexuals

Currently, what would be the importance in terms of the identity of LGBT parties for young people recently out of adolescence, called by them as a whole “Valley of homosexuals”? Would the parties be reduced to that “therapeutic” function, already mentioned by Macrae (2005), promoting self-acceptance in the safer territory? These questions arose at the beginning of my research because the nightlife of those young people already seemed to me something very different from what I had imagined. Either the “cabinets” were wide open or there would even be more, he thought. He was certainly mistaken about the lack of a *closet*, understood here as a device of heteronormative oppression that puts the act of making any dissident sexual expression public (Sedgwick, 2007).

Regarding the threat related to the public *performances* of sexuality, I remember meeting at one of the investigated parties, a nineteen years old white girl who hoped to enter medical school. She said that she was the daughter of medical parents living in Santos/SP and lived alone in an apartment on Avenida Consolação, supported by them, to try a place at a public university. Several times she highlighted her heavy study routine and, as if to justify it, she said that, on that day, exceptionally, she had taken the time to have fun, as she was celebrating her birthday. It was the first time I was in that club and the location was chosen because she had friends who worked there as promoters. She said she felt comfortable in the environment, including the fact of having many more men than women. Claiming to be a lesbian, she regretted that her parents did not

⁴Further reflections on the methodological process, regarding the challenge of approaching and distancing from the area, are described in another article (Almeida & Lugli, 2018).

accept her sexuality. Constant repressive attitudes would have even led her to a depressive situation. Between one subject and another, I noticed a clear concern to appear more feminine to my eyes: “I like female girls, I look feminine, don't I?”. Unfortunately, the conversation was cut off by her companion who took her to another environment. However, her brief words already exemplify how, in many moments, within the “heterosexist regime” (Fraser, 2017), the individual's greatest desire may be to disappear in the crowd, the right to other people's indifference.

Even the girl occupies some places of social privilege, since her parents were educated and her family enjoyed good economic conditions, it was not enough. She even had the opposite action since the situation of economic dependence, even if fantastically, left her subordinate to parental acceptance. Dedicating herself entirely to studies, following the family tradition in medicine, publicly *passing through* (Duque, 2017) a woman, heterosexual, female, was the price paid for family recognition and school possibilities.

Family oppression appears at many times mainly for religious reasons, and the silence of such experiences ends up becoming the means of preserving relationships. The statement by Sara Love (gay boy, black, 27 years old, who usually performs at parties like Drag Queen) illustrates this issue:

For a long time, it was very hard for me. I even felt guilty that they didn't know. My parents have a very closed mind. It is their creation, their religion. My father is a pastor, ex-army officer, ex-policeman. So, my father has a closed mind, totally out of the world. So, unfortunately, I don't have... as I still live with them, I don't dare to push them. I don't think it should be, either. I already tried to test them and I saw that they would not understand [...]. Each has their time and I saw that they will not accept it at the moment. I may be able to talk to them openly about it for a while and make them understand. But I still haven't felt that moment (Interview, Sara Love, February 2017).

Marcos, 28, a DJ and producer at one of the parties, notes that dissident sexuality, which is kept secret, is still a marked condition in the lives of many young people:

[...] at the nightclub some people leave home, I thought it was just my time, but it still happens today, teenagers or pre-teens who leave home and arrive at a mall, arrive here at the street, arrive at a bar and change so people don't see who he is. I think these people deserve more freedom. They need more support (Interview, Marcelo, August 2016).

Even among the “veterans of the night”, openly gay people on virtual social networks and in the spaces of sociability at night, there are many who are in the *closet* in some specific situation. Nightlife in this way, highlights the ambiguities between self-affirmation and silencing of gender and sexuality performances, producing “entrances and exits from the closet” due to the tension generated by situations of discrimination.

Research in Therapy and Occupational Science describe similar dynamics and point out tactics of disclosure, such as verifying previously the perceptions that people have about homosexuality or creating bonds with people for whom it is intended to assume sexual orientation (Murasaki & Galheigo, 2016). Other studies highlight that it may be more problematic to expose non-heterosexuality in institutional settings, such as at work

(Birkholtz & Blair, 1999) or in religious settings triggering disruptions or reinterpretations of spirituality (Beagan & Hattie, 2015). In the family institution, there is a prejudiced parental attitude related to feelings and beliefs of distrust or fear of not being accepted socially (Aவில் et al., 2015).

Considering the methodological implications, the *coming out* meaning a definitive event, which would mark a before and after in the individuals' life history, would not be an adequate approach to the problem. The reports of the interlocutors allow us to say that the concealment of sexuality would be a tactic triggered throughout life, whenever adverse situations imply risks arising from the hetero norm.

Based on these reports of the social-family violence and other situations experienced in the area, it is important to reaffirm the permanence of the “cathartic character” (Macrae, 2005) of the spaces of nocturnal sociability, reducing the feeling of isolation and providing mutual identifications. Although therapists and occupational scientists did not specifically address nightlife, the studies reaffirm the importance of cultural experiences and fun with friends or peers, in places more permissive to sexual and gender diversity (Aவில் et al., 2015; Murasaki & Galheigo, 2016; Birkholtz & Blair, 1999). In the words of Perlongher (1987), as long as heterosexuality is naturalized, places like these will exist as “moral regions” or refuge zones.

However, in addition to the support arising from the identification, the interlocutors highlight the transgressive attitude when breaking with old religious paradigms, family, and gender performances through contact with the night, that is, there is not only a conformist search for permissive places to dissident sexuality.

Marcelo, for example, recalled some tactics used by himself when he said to his parents that he went to church on Sundays, but, in fact, “he fled” to the matinees with other friends of the church who also wanted freedom. TV and the internet appear in the statements as possibilities for secret coping since they are carried out away from parental control. Sara Love, black Drag Queen, 27 years old, resident in the metropolitan region of São Paulo, remembers that through the identification with the characters of the American series “Queers as Folk”, she already dreamed of a life in which her differences and homoaffective desires could be done. Orkut® appeared to her as another media tool used to meet young gay men in a similar situation through chats. In fact, through contact with a virtual community, she had an “orkmeeting” on Rua Augusta and left for the first LGBT party of her life.

After that, I said “my God”. Arriving home, I thought I need to go to more places. When I got home, I remember that I never had as much enthusiasm as I had the first time I went to the club. At the club, I kissed a boy for the first time, so for me, it was 100% discovery of a new world. It opened a portal, so, there is something other than my dull little life! Do you know? (Interview, Sara Love, February 2017).

Although it is not possible to exaggerate the sense of “resistance” in such cultural activities, as Freire Filho (2007) warns, the most careful analysis of the “transgressive tactics” in the *secret daily life* in the threat of “colonizing oppression of sexualities” even if in embryonic form, it can be an aspect of understanding political actions and their scope.

5 Resistances and Struggles for Recognition

According to the statements of DJ João, 52, the night has always been alienated. An alienation that comes “from a lack of awareness in political terms, to the absence of prevention”. He supported his arguments in his experience of failure by proposing preventive actions for sexually transmitted infections (STIs) carried out in the places of the parties, in which he was the proponent of these actions. Despite his efforts, he found that people had no interest in undergoing rapid HIV testing, which he interpreted as “lack of awareness”. Another important issue to understand its place of speech is its involvement with left-wing political parties at the time of the dictatorship so that the concern with STIs and party involvement were important generational differences in political action.

The party bond is exclusive to this DJ, with no generalizations in the researched scene. Occasional participation of other groups of “people of the night” such as “The revolt of the lamp” or even in the “LGBT Pride Parade” stands out. However, the involvement of young people in the scene is neither continuous nor numerically considerable. Other political forms appear linked to pop, whose desires may give other outlines to what is meant by representativeness and visibility, as exemplified in the following statement.

Because today, going back to what I said about representativeness, that's what we want. Even in the gay world. We want, for example, looking at a soap opera, that first kiss was a representation that started like this. If we don't make a revolution like that, claiming, there's no way we can get to the point we want, you know? I think about it I think alone because I don't like to talk. But on my Facebook, I always share these things. To keep it open and for people to know that I'm not a donkey and I understand very well about these issues. To know that I'm also aware of this (Interview, Marcelo, August 2017).

I fight. But I do not participate in any created movement. But I consider myself a militant, for example, of the gay cause and the black cause. As a drag queen, I consider myself a militant [...] I have already received a message, even a handwritten letter from other black gays who said “Look, it wasn't cool. I didn't feel well, I didn't feel included in society. I went to the club and saw Sara Love performing. I saw you playing and performing a song. When I saw you on stage it inspired me. Wow! Look at the black woman over there!”. So I think this is a militancy (Interview, Sara Love, February 2017).

The visibility and representation so desired by young people, cease to be a mere exhibitionist whim or futility and become a struggle for the right to be-appear. Playing in the “LGBT Pride Parade”, dance at nightclubs where differences in race, class, and gender regulate the territorial occupation, see the gay kiss in the nine o'clock soap, or even the internationally successful pop singer supporting behaviors in which young people are identified corroborate the narrative record of these stories, exposing them as a possible text to be lived. They are imaginative metaphors about illegitimate, invisible, or secret lives.

Representativeness through DJ, nighttime performances, or even web activism by posting on virtual platforms may perhaps be read as a craving for cultural authority, through the appropriation of technologies and communication rules inherent in recognition struggles. In this perspective, it is possible to leave the parallel that opposes the real activism of web activism. The internet, as an extended territory of the LGBT pop scene, could be seen as an important source of information in an attempt to express subalternate “needs”.

Rincón (2015) observes the spectacular explosion of leisure with strategic eyes. His political project touches on the ideas of Agamben (2017) since his concept of citizenship falls on the empowerment of the popular, discovering the forms gagged and censored by hegemonic imposition. Within its typology, there would be *weak citizenship*, also referred to as communicative due to the way they are in digital culture: it is the right to be on screens, to have the body projected on them, as well as the right to entertainment and to have their screens. Rincón argues that these current forms of citizenship are not ancillary, but political territories where hegemony is disputed. If in the society of the spectacle recognition also implies being in soap operas, movies, series, websites, news, and music to enjoy happiness and self-esteem, why could some bodies be mediatized and others not?

There is a body of evidence on the precarious living conditions of groups that extrapolate the heteronormative grammar of binary schemes and the supposed coincidence between desire - sexual practice - gender. Therefore, the visibility and representativeness so dreamed of do not strictly concern the symbolic domain of social esteem, but it concerns the materiality of public existence. In this aspect, starting from the critique of capitalism, Fraser (2017) argues that the false recognition guaranteed by capital causes the LGBT population to suffer serious disadvantages, mentioning the social benefits based on family and inheritance, exemption from civil and military positions, aggression with impunity and others. Therefore, false recognition would not be a matter of psychological mastery as it feels intersubjectively despised. Rather, it is having denied the status of an integral partner in social interactions not due to the poor distribution of resources but as a result of the heteronormative culture fed, including, by the media representations.

As for the tendency towards individualism in the contemporary world that challenges classic political theories, Butler (2015) says that there are moments in history when collective action in search of rights appears and other moments of fragmentation in which this same collective subject is in crisis. The problem would be the momentary impossibility of coalition due to different interests, as evidenced in the São Paulo pop scene. In recent years, Butler (2015) has dedicated to understanding the possibility of alliances between “assemblies”: a performance space in which multiple convergences and divergences occur, without obedience to a normative and defining *telos*. As an example, I could mention the demonstrations of 2013, a time when people temporarily “gathered”, without any identity unit or homogeneous interests.

Following the same liberal trend, “empowerment” gains complex meanings in the speeches of the interlocutors. Sometimes it refers to the informal learning of content related to sociological minorities, sometimes it refers to the dynamics of recognition (Fraser, 2017), through the validation of effeminate and racialized homosexuality performances.

[...] some people are younger than me and have this opinion of gay empowerment. In the gay world too, for example, today it is much easier for us to live with transgender people, with bisexuals [laughs]... We live together and we learn. Living with people is also very good.

Some men end up getting married in a straight relationship, only people know that she is gay and suffers about it. So, you have to weigh both sides. But nowadays I much prefer this effeminate empowerment, which we talk about... trans [laughs].

If I wasn't a DJ and I had a track and saw a DJ there playing and was stylish, with dread. I think like that, putting myself in the place of the people who have been touching me today, I talked to many people who told me this very openly. I thought so ... I wanted to be in a place that will have black people playing. That not only a question of Dj but other means. Representativeness because ... the word that always comes to mind ... I think that since last year I have been thinking about it a lot. I have been working harder because I even thought about giving up playing (Interview, Marcelo, August 2017).

Empowerment as learning mediated by the resources on the scene or by the media is an important political practice. According to Fraser (1989), even before a subordinate group found its needs in the political arena, it is necessary to highlight the text about the needs and the context in which it takes place - *socio-cultural means of interpretation and communication*.

Partygoers in several circumstances speak of empirical learning about vocabularies, arguments for dealing with political demands. A notable example of this was the repercussion of the song “*Formation*” by Beyoncé, released at this time. The production raised discussions on the scene about racism, about the number of black DJs at parties, or even who would have cultural authorization to play the music. Thus, in the central discursive arenas of modern democracies, the spaces of nocturnal sociability favorable to the communicational exchanges between its components would be examples of subaltern counter publics (Fraser, 1989), that is, publics excluded from official spaces and legitimized in the bourgeois public sphere, which would need circulate their speeches in parallel and marginal spaces. The parties would be unlikely places of preparation for future organizations in the central arenas of modern society (Silva, 2017), even straining the legitimacy of grammar and political spaces where needs are named and defended.

6 DarkRoom: from Foucault Sadomasochism to the Production of the Form-of-life

When carrying out archeology of law, Agamben (2004) finds in Homo Sacer, a figure in Roman law, the exception that underlies the political-legal model in the West. Sacer is the image of a person pushed out of human jurisdiction without accessing the divine sphere. She is exposed to the will of the gods and, therefore, is liable to death without the perpetrator being accused of being a murderer. The sovereign decrees the *state of exception*. Sovereign power exists in the despot, but also in the gang represented by society, whose power is constituted at the expense of the banishment of deviant

bodies as a device of cohesion and obedience. Through these limited concepts, Agamben (2017) demonstrates that the state of exception is repeated in everyday life, becoming a rule.

The arché of the exception seen in *Homo Sacer* would exist residually as a modern political-legal foundation. It is in the operation that “[...] divides, excludes and rejects to be a foundation” (Agamben, 2017, p. 298). The excluded element is a founding power of that which excluded it. This operation or device can be seen, for example, in anarchy about the state (constituted power), in anomie about the law, or the animal about a man (Agamben, 2017).

The analysis of the device that divides and rejects seems quite elucidative of the everyday forms-of-life excluded from the heterosexual norm. Homosexuality (and other dissident gender and sexuality expressions) is the rejected element that is a reference to the normality of heterosexuality, just as the feminine is for the masculine in misogyny. Others excluded can be listed easily, such as madness in the face of reason, overnight, the body for the spirit. It is a founding violent mechanism of the government machine to remain active and sacred (Agamben, 2017).

When saying that the political crisis in the public sphere only gives attention to the private, every day, the body and its pleasures, Agamben (2017) believes that the political element would be hidden in the clandestine form of each existence. The issue is to overcome the public/private dichotomy, highlighting the eminently political nature of intersubjective relationships, including the forms-of-life experienced in leisure.

Agamben (2017) takes advantage of the reflections of Michel Foucault and other authors to argue about such power existing in practices cataloged as perverse and despicable. However, instead of working with the concept of “self-care”, the Italian author prefers “use of self”, to give an aesthetic-political focus. Like a work of art, the subject who takes care of discovery uses the world without becoming confused with it and, simultaneously, uses himself in the production of new sensitivities, affections, and ideas.

Moving forward on this point, I propose in the reports an analogy between sadomasochism, of which Foucault (2011) spoke, and the sexual practices observed by me in the darkroom of two nightclubs, as both would be emblematic of socially obscured sexual activities, but bringing possibilities for subversive use of self.

Through my notes in a field diary, I recall a day when, around 3 am, I went to the darkroom that is on the pop-dance floor of one of the parties. Although the name means darkness, where the bodies are guided by senses other than vision, I realized that the center of the room was semi-illuminated, leaving only the corners most hidden from view. It was possible to follow some movements of the bystanders. There was an accumulation of people on the sides, only men, standing, leaning against the wall. Visitors walked calmly through the center, looking at the bodies, evaluating them from top to bottom. Many stayed just beside the people who were having sex, just like a third guest, groping and feeling the vibrations of the bodies. I walked around the room, trying to see who the people were who were standing and who were proposing to fellatio. When they moved towards the center, I could see them more clearly, but I could not immediately understand the established sexual dynamics.

I returned some other nights and found that the use of the darkroom happens after the drag queens show, which takes place on the electronic track, an environment that

makes up another simultaneous party. At around three o'clock, part of the people on this track goes to the pop, on the ground floor, and access to the darkroom suspends the vectors of distance and hierarchy in terms of style, age, class, and gender. If at the beginning of the parties, pop was associated with effeminate, popular, and younger gays, that is, homosexual identities contingently devalued by members of the electronic track, at the end of the night, inside the darkroom, "all cats were brown".

I thought that darkness could represent the temporary suspension of the devices that underlie the very *raison d'être* of identities. It is the place of indeterminacy, where individuals experience pleasures without censorship. There, the bodies met with other bodies considered "less interesting" (due to old age, female traits, or low purchasing power), without demands and disputes, giving vent to desire. As this freedom was not stable, some bystanders sought the few beams of light further in the center of the darkroom and, in this insistence on having their eyes as a guide, they did not allow to be carried away entirely by bodily sensations and socially unanswerable desires. Releasing the desire fixed by the instituted (habits, tastes, identities, roles) would be like releasing the excluded element so that it coincides with the production of intense and challenging forms of hegemonic standards (Agamben, 2017).

Outside the darkroom, that is, on the dance floor, something similar also happens as the hours go by. The parties get more chaotic, the movement grows, the music gets more ecstatic, the level of drunkenness also increases. The DJs know about this temporality and even reserve dance hits like funk for the apex of the parties, when most of the people "play on the track". The sovereignty of the gang, expressed in the network of views that ensure the maintenance of territorial codes, and the concern for themselves, are partially overcome by the enjoyment of bodies that are adrift by the force of music or substances.

In these moments, movements are no longer contained and psychomotor agitation becomes an indicator of high entropy in the system. The smallest random touch of one body on another already catalyzes the kiss, which most often happens for seconds. The aim in these situations is to experiment more, "*use the self*" in the other, maintaining the state of uncertainty and temporary contempt for the meaning that follows the action. Such a phenomenon would explain my difficulty in visualizing flirting strategies among young people or even sexually valued characteristics among them, as the hours progress and alcohol consumption increases.

Inspired by Foucault (2011), the experimentation observed in the darkroom consists of an aesthetic issue, the art of living, to which the homosexual movement should pay greater attention. Through desires, new forms of relationships, new forms of love, and new forms of creation are established, that is, processes of (de) subjectivation. For this reason, creating "ways of being gay" instead of assuming a gay identity, would be the nerve issue for the French author. It is more a matter of action than representation. As much as in political terms, it is useful to think about the affirmation of identities at the legal-political level, contradictorily, this mechanism would trigger the harmful effect of limiting experiences according to the very idea of identity. Thinking about the darkroom, the practices, the sadomasochistic, or *fistfucking* clubs of which Foucault was known to be a practitioner in San Francisco, there would be the liberation of excluded sexual forms within the traditional monogamous visibility regime. In other words, sexuality for Foucault in the contemporary world would be both an ethical and aesthetic

problem with political implications, through the becoming of silenced life forms in everyday life. Sadomasochism would be an accurate illustration of this, both due to the social devaluation and the non-fixity of its practices.

There are roles, of course, but anyone knows that these roles can be reversed. Sometimes, when the game begins, one is the master and, in the end, the slave can become a master. Or even when the roles are stable, the protagonists know very well that this is a game: either the rules are broken or there is an agreement, explicit or tacit, that define certain boundaries. This game is very interesting as a source of physical pleasure. But I would not say that it reproduces, within an erotic relationship, the structure of a power relationship. It is an enactment of power structures in a strategic game, capable of seeking sexual or physical pleasure (Foucault, 2011, p. 271).

Doing a parallel with the darkroom, the experimentation is temporary and soon the papers return to the rigid instituted hierarchies. The debate on the scope of the politics of bodies in structuring everyday life is urgent and goes beyond the objectives of this research. However, Agamben bets on desire as political material at the heart of despicable practices and, through them, we may be able to find what is most progressive, in a state of latency, of the policy that is yet to come. This is not a question of denying social structures to fall into the chaos of uncertainty. Territorial codes have a strong influence on the festive game of nightclubs, establishing behaviors, sensitivities, feelings, and identifications. Even so, there is room for what escapes, that is, revolutionary forms-of-life, capable of suspending strong identity mechanisms of hierarchy and exclusion. Something more or less intense happens and leaves residues: it is the becoming of a new subjective organization, a new fixation point that is not known which, without guarantees, without promises, because they are not facing the future, but for the instant.

7 Final Considerations

The *music scene* covered continues to function as an update of the old gay ghetto (Macrae, 2005) regarding catalyzing meetings, elaborating identities and socio-emotional support, for the false recognition provided by the heterosexist regime. Nightlife is a dimension of everyday life as opposed to institutionalized life, more permissive to sexual and gender diversity and, from the day/night dichotomy, gay boys resort to complex dynamics of visibility and concealment of themselves by the *closet device*.

The term “resistance” takes on particular meanings in the context of parties: a dispute for hegemony in terms of gender representations on the media tracks and platforms, as examples of possible political arenas in the current world. Weak citizenship in the words of Rincón (2015), but significant when considering digital culture and what it means to be deprived of identification objects. Transsexuals, transvestites, gays, bisexuals, non-binaries appear (not without disputes with reactionary sectors) in commercials, clips, films, in soap operas, affecting public opinion, and popularizing more diverse and capable of performing gender and sexuality representations. On the other hand, “empowerment” was inscribed in the domain of individualized social

esteem, a liberal nature, although meaningful informal learning about the grammar of needs, through nocturnal sociability. “Empowerment” was also a sign linked to the individual confrontation of misogyny and racism through gay performances that tend to the feminine and/or aesthetically valuing black culture.

There are no consistent and ongoing interests supported by political or collective parties. This fact is challenging, as it implies asking for legitimacy and ways of doing politics in everyday life. However, from the politics of the body, I identified life forms that are excluded from everyday life, but that can be released by the suspension of visual devices or the use of substances. Having sex in a dark room may not reverberate in any social movement or change structures, but it can be emblematic of political power. It is the policy that will come, hidden in the power of the use of the self.

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