

Editorial

Identity and subjectivity: advances and paradoxes for the twenty-first century

To speak of identity and subjectivity is to theorize the polemical. No other contemporary theme has mobilized researchers from such a broad range of disciplines and fields, all concerned with a discussion that runs from the ontological aspects, to the politics of the issue. In contemporary society, we experience the multiple effects of an increasingly complex world marked by technological advances, but also by antagonisms and inequality. In the psycho-social realm, it is possible to denounce the production of subjects who live in isolation, closed off to themselves, in an increasingly exacerbated individualist manner. In the realm of production of collective identities, we can say that at times they advance toward emancipation, but at others, they reproduce old forms of conducting politics and depend on the processes of exclusion-inclusion and of globalization-localism to which they are submit.

Portuguese sociologist Boaventura de Sousa Santos said at a lecture given at PUC/SP in 1995 that globalization always involves local processes, since globalization integrates, incorporates and includes, by the same means that it excludes what is around it. It excludes various localisms, to the same degree in which others are integrated to it, making unique and universal that which is particular to a certain and specific context. Thus, it winds up causing a local impact, by particularizing the universal.

From this perspective, we can perceive that globalization excludes that which it does not integrate, which can be the roots, the identities, the choices, the production of popular knowledge which, upon being strongly devalued, simultaneously devalue the practices resulting from it, and mainly, the destruction of the group that produced it. But on the other hand, globalization does not fail to appropriate that which it excludes, requalifying it as “folklore” “tradition” “tourism” etc. remaining, in a certain way, free to subordinate them to its system.

In this sense, to think and act around the theme of **subjectivity and the construction of identities** can raise important issues about the problematics that we currently face. The subjects constructing what we call cultural, professional, ethnic and other identities can be revealed as subjectivities that objectify constant struggles for their inclusion in the political-economic-cultural realm. If, on one hand, they prove in many ways to be excluded, on the other, they are expressed as metamorphoses in

existential space, by means of affective and reflective factors that objectify them in order to give value to themselves and their partners, in a process of identification that is manifest in the dialectic between difference and equality.

Each subject that is inserted in the processes of collective unification and therefore who builds cultural, professional and ethnic identities, seeks to conquer their rights to citizenship, but seeks, even without knowing, the reaffirmation of his or her dignity as a particular subject. Each singularity that participates in these forms of collective unification, in these identity processes can be considered as an objectification that subjectivity finds to resist oppression from the processes of globalization, whether by criticism, or by fear.

Nevertheless, in our society, these subjects do not experience their participation in these processes in a linear form and without contradictions, since they subjectify during their histories ways of being supported in individualistic and discriminatory proposals, showing that the denial of a movement can take place in the incorporation of that which it denies, in a game of constant setbacks and advances.

Bader B. Sawaia, in analyzing the concept of identity in the book *The artifices of exclusion: psychosocial and ethical analysis of social inequality*, indicates two dangers that are imposed in the construction of identity processes: that of locking oneself into a fetish producing essentialism or that of losing oneself in a volatile perspective. Upon locking oneself into an essentialism, the subjects present themselves in an intolerant manner before the diverse and are resistant to all and any form of transformation, denying the differences, where the logic of the SINGULAR is superimposed on the logic of the multiple. When, to the contrary, identity – by rejecting all forms of definition – is translated into a volatile perspective, it runs the risk of losing a notion of itself. The danger, which can be present in both positions is the exaltation of the I, expressed both in the isolation of the subject by no longer believing in the community, or in the production of fundamentalism, and by locking itself totally in that which it qualifies as community: *ITS community*.

On the other hand, an alternative for overcoming and transcending the oppression lived daily is the construction

of identity ties, lived as unification of differences around a common project. In this perspective, identity is difference and equality, it is oneness and multiplicity, it is construction and deconstruction, it is definition and in-definition, it is totalization that constantly “de-totalizes” and “re-totalizes” itself. From this perspective, the identities present themselves as always unfinished “identifications in process”, as Boaventura de Sousa Santos indicated in his book *By the hand of Alice*.

Subjectivity, in turn, is no less polemical a concept, given that in modernity we find its meaning focused on an individualist and pretentiously universal concept without defined time or space. According to Boaventura de Sousa Santos, it is possible to understand this process as the triumph of an individual subjectivity in relation to a collective subjectivity and of an abstract subjectivity in relation to a concrete subjectivity. The paradigm of modernity indicates subjectivity as the first name to qualify identity.

This is how the elaboration of this issue of *Revista Katálysis* began. The theme of this issue is **Subjectivity and the construction of identities**. Each article reveals that it is necessary to indicate contextualized meanings for the concepts of identity and subjectivity, contributing to the advances of this theme in the twenty-first century.

The article *Identity and Individuation* by Sérgio Lessa leads us to reflect on the way that we have constituted ourselves as subjects, amid exacerbated individualism, where the other is no longer a reference and parameter for the construction of my identity, producing growing suffering, in a way that maintains the social reproduction ruled by capital. Based on a historical dialectical view of identity, it affirms that each one of us is a “particularization that humanity was able to produce and to generate in history”, showing the need to construct a society where sociability is experienced beyond the market.

In the article *Identities in movement: considering national culture by means of cinema*, Adriano Messias de Oliveira presents the notion of identity as multiplicity, showing that the construction of cultural/national identities involves paradoxes and oppositions, which are understood as discursive practices, in which the concept of culture and of nation are ripe with “hybridisms” that are never crystalized or stagnated. It concludes that cinema appears as a “reflector and builder of identity ties” and affirms that Brazilian films realize this function.

In “A desire to be red-skinned”, Manuel Jesús Sabariego Gómez issues a criticism of the categories that compose the modern notion of science, which he maintains is absolutist and separated from other forms of knowledge, experience and interpretation of the world. He indicates that this scientific paradigm creates a large “variety of devices that cut off any emancipative possibility for the

identities fixed by modernity, in the political and the social”. The author also asserts that “queer theory” has allowed “other forms of seeing science” beyond a position of negation and exclusion with the diverse.

Concerned with the discussion about research procedures and their relation with subjectivity and identity, Latif Antonia Cassab, in his article *Subjectivity and research: expression of an identity*, conceives of identity as a movement of difference and equality. Working from a historical, dialectical perspective, the author understands subjectivity as part of identity, revealing “the human being in distinct ways of transiting, through time and space in which it is destined to be always more”. Cassab concludes by indicating that research should “express the unveiling of social meaning that individuals build in their daily interactions”.

The article *Demotivation and identity crises in the teaching profession* by Saul Neves de Jesus is concerned with the “identity crises” of a specific professional group – teachers. Analyzing some characteristics and changes in the educational context, the article attempts to identify the impact of this identity crises on professional motivation among teachers, indicating what is general and specific about this process. The article concludes by presenting the concept of “teacher well-being” and some alternatives to the problematic raised.

Transformation in the world of work and the consequences for subjectivity of individuals, an article by Íris Fenner Bertani and Sirlene A.P. Barretto, points to characteristics of the capitalist system and the centrality of labor in building the identity of men and women. The authors indicate that technological advances and the automatization of tasks lead to new forms of capital and labor relations, leading men and women to physical and psychic suffering as a consequence of the over valuing of capital in detriment to the human.

In the article *Peasant culture and the telenovela: the identity of intimate life at stake*, Andrea Baltazar presents ambivalence in the processes of human communication, indicating that television is alongside other symbolic and complex cultural phenomenon. The author analyzes the construction of the identity of intimate life of rural youth - which is understood as a “contradictory and complementary game between tradition and modernity” – based on their watching of Brazilian *telenovelas*.

Full protection and juvenile delinquency: a study in Santa Catarina, is an article in which Marli Palma Souza discusses the integral protection doctrine and analyses its foundations in international norms. The article examines empiric data stemming from research led by public universities in the State. The studies show that the “option for the role of subject and the consequent respect for

subjectivity, in the elaboration and implementation of policies, has guaranteed the success of some social projects” and has led to emancipative subjectivity, according to the principle of the integral protection doctrine.

Flávia Maria Lacerda Felipe in her article *Obesity as a social problem: new professional demands for Social Work* is dedicated to discussing and understanding “the reach of discrimination and prejudice in relation to overweight individuals, highlighting the role of the media in the construction of a model body”. The author understands obesity as a multidimensional factor “composed of political, economic, social, cultural and historic determinants”. In this perspective, Social Work can work with the question of obesity, contributing to the “creation of public policies for protection, orientation, socialization, the strengthening of autonomy and selection processes”.

Work, unemployment and identity: a case study in a privatized in the telecommunications' sector

company, by Suzana da Rosa Tolfo, *et al.* indicates that the telecommunication sector has been representative of current trends in transformations in the world of labor. Through interviews with subjects laid off by a telecommunications company in Santa Catarina, the authors discovered that the social exclusion the workers experienced is accompanied by a sense of injustice, fear and suffering in the face of unemployment. Labor and unemployment appear as important components in the construction of identity of the subjects.

These articles and authors do a fine job of presenting this issue’s theme of **subjectivity and construction of identities**. I invite the reader to embark on the instigating adventure of navigating these seas. Discover the waves of advances and setbacks presented here and dive into the possibilities that this theme offers for the construction of a more emancipated singular and collective subject.

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