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Aesthetic cosmopolitanism and media consumption of young people in São Paulo

Viviane Riegel
Renato Vercesi Mader
Wilson Roberto Bekesas

THE INCREASED CIRCULATION of cultural goods, to the point that they are disseminated worldwide, develops a sense that a global common knowledge exists. In order to understand this context, we consider global culture as an engine of cosmopolitan ways of being, and our perspective focuses on the interaction of global culture and cultural consumption.

Our research goal is to discuss the meanings of cultural globalization in young people's everyday lives, based both on its mechanical effects and on hybridization, through aesthetic cosmopolitanism. This research is part of an international project, awarded by the French Ministry of Culture and Communication and the SESC-CPF (Center of Research and Formation from Brazil). Within cultural consumption, contexts are spreading because of the indiscriminate increase of technological platforms (TV, tablet, mobile phone, computer...) and of the diversity of patterns of media consumption, meaning that new arrangements for the everyday experiences of young people are created and developed.

In order to discuss the connection of aesthetic cosmopolitanism and media consumption, we analyze both quantitative data from the project "Youth Cosmopolitanisms in Brazil", regarding questions of Cultural Consumption and Global Culture, as well as in-depth interviews, with specific questions regarding media consumption in a global context.

Media consumption of young people in São Paulo

Of all the cultural products' categories, music, social networks and websites/blogs are the ones that stand out for these individuals. The time relationship in consuming each kind, however, indicates priority for social networks, which are continuously connected. Regarding media, most of the cultural products are also consumed through different devices, mainly personal computers, smartphones and tablets.

The origin of cultural products is mostly foreign, especially North-American. This relationship with the American culture can be explained either by the fact that global culture is influenced by a cultural mainstream industry, and also by the knowledge of the English language of these individuals.

From the media consumption perspective, we seek some possibilities of reflexivity of these young people with other cultures, which could develop in them a cosmopolitan stance.

To study this cosmopolitan attitude, we analyze their narratives, in relation to the aesthetic dimension of media consumption. On the debate on the application of aesthetic cosmopolitanism, we note that there is no guarantee that expanding

cultural horizons, and developing cultural and hermeneutical skills, necessarily reflect the emergence of a sense of responsibility to the world.

However, the aesthetic dimension marks a major shift in the way that cosmopolitanism is considered as a lifestyle related to consumption. The issue of global citizenship does not revolve just around the political participation and civic engagement, but also around the cosmopolitan tastes, styles and consumption patterns (Molz, 2011: 37).

To Nikos Papastergiadis, aesthetic and cultural cosmopolitanism is fundamental because it is based on the individual and collective capacity to build a picture of the world (2012: 94), with art being less a way of representing the truth of the world but another tool to imagine its reality.

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The everyday experiences of the young individuals from São Paulo show many degrees of reflexivity. Cosmopolitanism based on media consumption can be disconnected from openness to otherness, but it can also be related to a committed and critical insight, in explicit forms, related both to the discussion of stereotypes or through comparison tools.

We found stereotypes in A. narrative, twenty year-old, which states that consumption of movies and information is globalized, mainly in British and North American origins. For her, to be connected to the world is to have connection with the leading global media and mainstream culture. Similarly, O., twenty-one year-old, says that he only consumes American cultural products, which are part of the mainstream culture. He says that he makes it for fun and to feel part of the world, sharing the same tastes and practices those million others around the world.

Regarding comparison tools, we have F. narrative, twenty-one year-old, for whom the consumption of music and television is related to cultures from other countries, mainly the United States and England. F. understands that when he consumes media he is looking for interaction possibilities, for learning and having fun with other cultures. In a different way, B., twenty-two year-old, shows a critical perspective to the cultural mainstream products. She declares that she consumes American movies, on average three times per week, but

also other countries' products. For her, cinema is a way to connect to the world, and world view means different cultures, people and languages, even if they are distant to her culture.

In the use of these comparison tools, through the mixed use of domestic and foreign cultural products, is the figure of the cosmopolitan amateur (Cicchelli, Octubre and Riegel, 2016).

This is different from other amateurisms because it is dealing with transient and reversible commitments in cultural repertoires that are not strictly defined by education. In addition, this amateurism is fond to the growing importance of horizontal generational socialization among peers in the digital environment, serving also as a resource for young people.

We noticed the figure of the cosmopolitan amateur in R. narrative, twenty-two year-old, when he explains that film and television are completely out of his cultural consumption, and that he focuses in music and video games, as proper channels of culture and entertainment, where he has the ability to exchange information, meet people from other countries and cultures. R., as his peers, proves to be an avid consumer of cultural products for entertainment, because they have the possibility of exchanging and building experiences, mainly through digital consumption, which gives a freedom of interaction.

So, in this amateurism, the question is not measuring the level of knowledge about other cultures, but the degree of perception, its closeness – or distance – with otherness in a massive flow of the cultural context.

As in the case of B., who believes that American cinema is not as interesting as movies from other countries, precisely because they have a different cultural perspective. R. demonstrates deep understanding both of what happens in the American contemporary music scene, as well as the video game one, and he considers both important for entertainment consumption and also for contact with the American culture.

Finally, for I., twenty-four year-old, born in Niger and living in Brazil for eight years, curiosity is a determining factor. His mobility and experiences allow him to build maps, to care with the places he visited and share a local life temporarily.

As he defined, he is a traveler, but wants to really experience the places where he lives. Through affinities with other young people living in the visited and lived places, he builds a shared emotions relationship.

Our discussion from the narrative of these young people can be, hence, understood as: the willingness to exchange experiences with others, with intense use of digital media.

These individuals are connected, and they make

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The analysis brings qualitative and quantitative data from interviews with graduate students (N=40) and from a survey with young people from São Paulo (N=500), all aged between eighteen and twenty-four year-old.

The research results show us hybrid possibilities within these individuals' lives. They are hybrid because:

- 1) Their consumption follows the logic of the global market, mainly in digital media, still it is not standardized, once there are possibilities of incorporating comments and content with local meanings;
- 2) There are different ways of local participation of these young individuals, some are engaged to actions that contribute to a reflexive stance, and others search for entertainment (mainly global) and don't connect to collective or local issues.

the network a potential environment for the experiences they want to live.

As cartographers, the use of their social networks and other environments allows them to build an exclusive map, traced by their mutual recognition. Dealing more with themselves and with other, about the world that surrounds them, they are looking at a mirror, facing a world of diverse appearances and reflections.

Final considerations

Following the same logic of the global market, the media consumption we analyzed, particularly through digital media, focuses on North American products and institutions. It doesn't mean, however, that these young people consume in a standardized way, since there are possibilities of incorporation of comments, content and meanings from local signs.

This leads us to observe that there are both massive standards for consumption, as well as alternative ones, as we have seen in some profiles from São Paulo's individuals.

The acceptance or rejection of American cultural products focuses on symbols of the American culture and its mainstream media products. The refusal of US production in a given cultural production, such as cinema, for example, does not mean, however, distance from products originally from that country, especially if we evaluate the reality of digital cultural consumption and its main media by these individuals.

Cinema, music, comic books, books, television programs and other cultural products are forms of contact with global culture, with production of local realities. Standards, regarding cultural consumption, and in particular the consumption that occurs in media devices, are drivers, because it is in the standardization of audience and content that the cultural industry concentrates its production of cultural consumption goods. Faced with the global standard, there are, still, different forms of local consumption, which can develop different reflective attitudes and forms of participation.

The proposed discussion of media consumption by young people in the city of São Paulo (a global city, perhaps cosmopolitan), from a cultural perspective, reveals that there is presence and use of global products for entertainment, but not necessarily this aesthetic experience results in local reflexivity. Thus, we consider that these young people would be what we call amateur cosmopolitans.

The media consumption of cultural products, notably the global, mainstream ones, could be a way for young people to develop reflexivity. Moreover, interests and affinities for other cultures, for their differences and challenges, also mark an intention to look at the other.

Through reflexivity, it would be possible to build a cosmopolitan attitude, a perspective with foreign interpretations, a step in relation to otherness. These are the questions that follow in our research on the cultural consumption's experiences of young Brazilians. ■

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