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which room for inter-subjectivity?***

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Online political conversation and its interfaces with deliberative processes:  
which room for inter-subjectivity?<sup>1</sup>

Conversação política online e suas interfaces com processos deliberativos:  
qual o lugar para a intersubjetividade?

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### **Abstract**

Deliberative tradition in Political Studies has regarded civic conversation as one of the fundamentals of democracy. However, it seems that less attention has been paid for casual conversations, seen as trivial and therefore unsuitable for political interaction. This paper highlights the role of ordinary conversation in the constitution of citizenship, stressing the political elements that underline it. The argument goes threefold: (1) it states some differences between ‘deliberation’ and ‘conversation’; (b) it argues that ordinary conversation is potentially political conversation; (c) it points the place of self-narratives and of scenes of dissensus as the political elements of ordinary conversations and processes of public opinion formation.

**Keywords:** Online Conversation, Democracy, Deliberation, Identity, Communication.

### **Resumo**

A tradição de estudos deliberativos no campo da Ciência Política considera a conversação cívica como um dos fundamentos da democracia. No entanto, parece que menor atenção foi dada às conversas casuais, vistas como triviais e, portanto, inadequadas para a interação política. Este artigo destaca o papel da conversação casual na constituição da cidadania, enfatizando os elementos políticos que a sublinham. O argumento é triplo: (1) indica algumas diferenças entre "deliberação" e "conversação"; (b) argumenta que a conversação cotidiana é potencialmente política; (c) aponta o lugar das narrativas de si e das cenas de dissenso como dimensões políticas das conversações cotidianas e dos processos de formação de uma opinião pública política.

**Palavras-chave:** Conversação Online, Democracia, Deliberação, Identidade, Comunicação.

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## Introduction

As Goffman (1983) stresses in his *Forms of Talk*, casual conversations often start in informal communicative contexts. We believe that it is as a generating source of public opinion and understanding of issues concerning both everyday life and the political and administrative system. One has to acknowledge, then, that the possible contributions may benefit from that informal ordinary conversation as it might offers insights to deliberative process.

People build communicative contexts in which they talk and discuss their problems and needs. In such relational contexts in everyday life, conversation is fundamental for the constitution of shared frames of reference and for the understanding of the main issues that affect them (Goffman 1974). Not only individual problems are enunciated and discussed, but also broader questions, which make reference to values and procedures.

In ordinary conversation we experience and try our “symbolic gestures” (Mead 2010), our linguistic performances and rituals affect the others (reciprocally oriented actions) and produce a movement towards interlocution and response (Dewey 1998; Carey, 1998). In general, ordinary political conversations combine political issues, common events and personal experiences, bringing the public and the private together (Wyatt, Katz & Kim 2000; Herbst 1996; Dahlgren 2003b, 2009; Gamson 1992). Conversations are fundamental for the mutual understanding of situations, public policies, and problematic issues concerning everyday life (Gamson 1992; Mansbridge 1999; Scheufele, 2000; Conover et al. 2002; Aldé 2001; Marques & Maia 2007, 2010; Marques & Rocha 2007).

Democracy requires free conversation, as it is the way citizens may articulate their claims and establish discussions on themes concerning themselves, while developing the capacities of argumentation, reflection and cognitive mastery of different kinds of information (Calhoun 1992; Habermas 1997; Burkhalter et al. 2002; Dahlberg 2005). However, some researchers have noticed that less attention has been ascribed to casual conversation and their role for citizens to discuss common problems (Eliasoph 1996, 1997; Herbst 1996; Schein 1995; Moy and Gastil 2006).

According to Eliasoph (1999, 2000), even private conversations may reveal how ordinary citizens may propose alternatives of political participation. It also helps to question and redefine the values for judgements of situations, and might even reveal forms of power and oppression (Weil 2001; Spivak 2007; Young 1990; Marques & Maia 2010). Sometimes, what cannot be said in public might be expressed in such conversations which prove themselves efficient for the construction of dissent (Fraser 2008; Scott 2008).

Citizenship, from this point of view, is built day by day, through communicative practices. It shows how citizens constitute themselves – even if facing countless asymmetries and inequalities – as autonomous actors, holding responsibility for their own decisions and developing the ability to justify them before pairs.

As pointed out by some authors (Bohman 1996; Porto 2004; Maia 2004; Norris 2000), democracy is linked to the everyday interactions, in which participants must show the necessary cognitive, emotional and communicative skills to engage in argumentative exchange. The discussion of conflicting views is central for the citizens' political autonomy (Benhabib 1996; Habermas 1997; Fearon 1998). Finally, ordinary conversation favors the processes of construction of empathy among interlocutors, helping them to organize and understand the practical demands of existence, questioning hierarchies, prejudices and forms of subordination (Kim & Kim 2008; Marques & Maia 2008, 2010).

But is every conversation 'political'? How can one tell the difference between a 'simple' conversation and a 'political' one? And how effective might be a ordinary conversation for political decisions? We would like to outline these questions by stating that casual conversation is a strong place for political claims, maybe stronger than open political arenas, as it brings together (1) some of the elements of deliberative and political conversation; (2) the openness and informality of everyday talk and (3) it may rest on personal and biographical examples, bridging the private and the public. In what follows, we develop these arguments.

### **Casual conversation as deliberative processes**

Some authors have pointed the differences between the roles played by ordinary conversation and political or deliberative discussion in reference to issues of public interest or relevance (Fearon 1998; Burkhalter et al. 2002; Sanders 1997; Moy & Gastil 2006). McLeod et al. (1999) and Bohman (2007) share this point of view by claiming that casual conversation, due to its primarily private character (gathering people with similar perspectives) and since it does not demand intense awareness, would not be able to offer the conditions of inclusion and publicity required by deliberation focused on the solution of collective problems. Gutmann and Thompson (1999), insist that the type of valid conversation for deliberation is the one "intentionally directed to issues that the public must discuss and possibly act on" (1999, 274).

Casual conversation, constructed in informal contexts of life, is socially important for the establishment of bonds of association, solidarity, sharing and belonging. It is responsible for the creation of sociability that allow the subjects and groups to express

their dilemmas, longings and needs, offering the opportunity to develop communicative, political and relational capacities.

The political relevance of issues is not determined, however, by the kind of arena to which they are brought, or by the time dedicated to its discussion (considering also each actor's time of speech), though those seem to be important factors. The political involvement of ordinary citizens, as well, cannot be imposed by the context.

We point, then, that it is more interesting to think in terms of complementary sociable conversations and political discussions and deliberations, rather than electing one of them that could be pointed as the source of the conflicts that structure and shape different public spheres. We come from the assumption that deliberative process is formed by the connection among plural communicative contexts, which gather different actors and their specific ways of communication; and that deliberation is an activity that involves public confrontation of the discourses yielding from such multiple contexts.

For Mansbridge (1999), ordinary conversation may achieve results through the combined actions of relatively isolated individuals.<sup>2</sup> Conversely, deliberation may occur in an assembly for decision making, where the results are mainly obtained by the exchange of reasons (Maia & Marques 2002). She thinks deliberation as the integration of different communicative practices and moments connected so as to construct a complex network that takes shape according to the articulation and disarticulation of the parts that intercept each other and tend to interfere in each other. She concedes that, when using the word "system", she does not intend to "suggest that the parts of a whole have in themselves a mechanical or perfectly predictable relation, though both qualities are connotations of the word 'system' and 'systematic' in ordinary discourse". Instead, she seeks to refer to the "relation among parts, so that change in one of them tends to *affect* the others" (1999, 228).

It is important to be aware of the presupposition of mutual understanding among communicative spheres that interact in deliberative process, for not always do they touch each other, not always does their articulation yield democratic results and, most of times, they reciprocally ignore each other. We know that, in a widened deliberative process (one that articulates different spheres of public discussion), communicative dynamics tend to take place in an integrated but not always coordinated and simultaneous fashion.

Habermas has also recently presented a systemic conception of communicative exchanges in public spheres when claiming that:

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<sup>2</sup> For example, experiences of domestic violence, homophobia, sexism and racial prejudice, once they become the focus of a conversation, may help one to contest the rules of discourses taken as non-problematic or incontestable.

Political conversation, moving bottom-up or up-down through a multi leveled system (ranging from ordinary conversation in civil society, to public discourse and media communication until reaching institutionalized discourses in the center of the political system), takes on quite distinct features in different arenas of the political system (Habermas 2006, 415).

However, according to Habermas, ordinary civic conversation holds a degree of political ingenuity for interfering in the actions of administrative power. According to some authors (Kim & Kim 2008; Moy & Gastil 2006; Mutz & Mondak 2006; Duchesne & Haegel 2004, 2006; Gamson 1992; Porto 2004), in order for civic conversation to provide the development of public and deliberative capacities, the interlocutors have to be placed in informal networks of conversation pervaded by mediated deliberation, gathering a diversity of positions and arguments.

Graham (2008) emphasizes the importance of observing conversations encompassing themes from ordinary personal and collective life, in which one or more participants, by paying attention to a theme or topic taken as worthy of public attention and discussion, tend to enable the emergence of political discussion.

In general, many researchers claim that not much theoretical attention has been ascribed to conversations happening in ordinary situations and to the ways how citizens constitute routine contexts of reflection and discussion of public problems (Eliasoph 1997; Mansbridge 1999; Eveland et al. 2011). However, it is not fruitful to assume a hierarchical distinction between fluid, non-structured and “low politicized” conversations, on the one hand, and strongly argumentative, politicized and normatively organized deliberative processes. Besides, conversations and deliberative processes are not necessarily complementary. The spheres of widened deliberative process (extended in time and encompassing different arenas of discussion and conversation) may connect in many moments, but not always does it imply that they find satisfactory means of articulation and communicative transit.

We argue that one must not associate deliberation and conversation based on the principle that conversation needs to adapt itself to the normative principles of deliberation in order to be valid. Conversation and its contributions for the construction of subjects cannot necessarily be seen in the light of the normative principles that sustain deliberation (rationality, publicity, inclusivity, equality, reciprocity and reflexivity), but it may also fit

these principles in certain conditions (Mansbridge 1999; Stromer-Galey 2005).<sup>3</sup> Therefore, analytical focus in conversations may be more interesting if it seeks to reveal the way how conflicts, dissent and disagreements are worked over in interaction (Eveland et al. 2011).

In this approach, implications of conversation and deliberation over each other may be grasped with caution, acknowledging intersections created in specific and non-generalizable situations and happenings. It is based in this reflection that we seek to think of conversation, in the following sections, as a form of political action (2) with special attention to the production of self-reports (3).

### **Conversation as a political element**

Taking on the evident risk of a truism, it is possible to observe that conversation is one of the tangible points of evidence of the constitution of social life. From the beginning, this sentence suggests a specifically communicational point of view for the observation of ordinary relations that, though assumed here, shall not be problematized – one remits to the reading of L.C. Martino (2007) or Signates (2011).

Ordinary discursive interactions are particularly revealing of the intentions of building scenes of reciprocal interpellation, in which verbal discourse, better than any other, presents itself as a way of addressing alterity which may be deliberately ignored, but hardly unnoticed.

Discourse addressed to alterity not only acknowledges it as a presence, but also invites interaction in an unequivocal manner – at least on the part of the speaker: evidently, equivocal claims, etymologically the “equal voice” refers to latent ambiguity in something that is similar without being identical, may exist – to the interaction that shall follow as the perspective of some kind of discursive confluence.

To be sure, not all communication interactions of ordinary life may be taken as relevant for rational public debate. Many potential conflicts dissolve along a conversation in which phrases and ideas follow each other without resolution. Thus, there are moments in which participants may not only publically express their opinions on a given political theme, but, also, defend them and revise them face to another’s questioning. One of the forms of configuration of the process of politicization of civic conversation is that which

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<sup>3</sup> Not all politicization may be measured or qualified based on such principles. There are processes of politicization configured as experimentations and struggles around languages, forms of enunciation and expression, configuration of worlds and ways of being and existing that the current order does not reach or understand. It would not be wrong to suggest that the presence of the alterity to which the discourse is addressed, for its turn, also derives from the political possibility of acknowledging such other – and, as pointed by Gutierrez (2006) and Butler (2018), from the other’s classification into a logical system, which shall designate her a specific place in the set of representations, pervaded by hierarchies, constituting social life.

allows the passage from a level of interaction characterized by a more intuitive communication, towards a level of discursive interaction in which citizens discuss issues of public interest, construct preferences, reflect on their own needs, considering and promoting reasons capable of widening what is understood as the common good (Habermas 1987).<sup>4</sup>

We might draw attention, in this second process, to the production of narratives; explanation of latent perspectives; initiative of assuming the risks posed by debate; the existence of a moment of tension among interlocutors; the exposition of testimonies and life experiences that may lead other participants to acknowledge each other and engage the debate; the exercise of thinking under the other's point of view, exerting mutual respect and reciprocity (Marques 2007).

As Wittgenstein (1998) states, the pragmatics of language, in its dimension as an action towards the other, is invested of a political element in the ambit of a practical reason inserted in ordinary life. The scope of conversation in the possible models of interaction in conversational practice; we are then close to the domain of a pragmatics of enunciative exchanges, in which interlocutors turn their considerations into practices – the act of speech as actions in themselves (Montgomery 1998). Ordinary conversation, even in its simplest dimension, does not seem idle in political terms: on the contrary, is almost immediately invested of a political character as far as conversation, though making reference to events external to the specific space of linguistic exchange construct a narrative about reality; disagreement, also means a political dispute to ascribe the meanings to something.

### Politics in self-narratives

In casual conversations, other kinds of statements are used as support to the presented positions. Appeals to the personal element, biographic narrative or resource to vague arguments, if, on the one hand, challenge the constitution of normatively fit argumentation – in medieval rhetoric, examples were not considered the worthiest element in a *disputatio*, whereas logical demonstrations and resource to the authority of consecrated authors were favored – on the other hand, they ensure that conversation may go on.

An experience of dissent, it seems, is associated to the potencies of creation and recreation of statements and forms of enunciation based on which the subject constructs

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<sup>4</sup> Maia et al. (2017), in a study on conversation concerning the reduction of the minimum age of criminal responsibility, point also the closeness of alterity in the ambit of informal communication – verified, in the study at stake, through the experience reported by focus groups. The research studied the appropriation and elaboration of discourses circulating in media by the participants, showing how the existence of opposite positions was a point of convocation for the perception and acknowledgement of the different.



herself, narratively and in conflict. This perspective might immediately raise the question on the practical possibilities of establishing any kind of political character in conversation, since such “random” or “wandering” element may work as an antipode of the attention necessary for a political conversation. However, this does not seem to invalidate beforehand the possibilities of political interaction: in social life, the political pervades the fabric of conversations referring to many ambits of ordinary life, preferentially driven to the so called “public interest” issues, but increasingly approaching the spaces of private life, as well, insofar as its conditions of possibility do not escape the contingent lines of force of political action.

It is not a coincidence that authors associated to identity politics (Young 1997, 2000) never cease to point the politicization of private life as a contemporary characteristic: a breach for thinking of conversation beyond norms, but as a latent activity in all and any kind of interaction in which points of view concerning ordinary life are exposed and, based on a series of statements, are proposed for appreciation and response to an interlocutor.

The production of self-reports reveals a clear intent to take control over one’s own life, becoming the subject of oneself through the work of reinventing one’s own subjectivity by reporting oneself. It is a matter of becoming the author of one’s own script, based on a specific relation of the individual with herself.

The practice of self-writing requires the commitment of the subject with veracity and truthfulness of her considerations on trajectories, conflicts, frustrations and victories, using writing as a political tool. In this sense, self-writing, “narrating oneself” and reporting oneself (Butler 2015; Rago 2013) are implied in the construction of subjectivity. It reveals the subjective ethics of dissent via writing, which allows the individual to critically examine her condition face to normalizing discourses, searching to affirm new ways of subjective, political and social expression<sup>5</sup>.

In the space of ordinary interaction, narrative recovery of situations lived by oneself or others is a considerable strength of argumentation. As it replaces or complements other demonstrations, the biographical strengthens the argumentation: the story one tells about life present a situation passible of being taken as exemplary of the argument at stake.

Its considerable effect of reality derives, in an almost paradoxical way, from the narrator’s presence as the guarantee of truthfulness. Biography, above all, ensures the

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<sup>5</sup> Foucault (1995, 2004) regards as techniques of the self those procedures through which an individual “appropriates herself”, becoming a subject of her own practices and constructing herself based on an ethical perspective that seeks to disassociate from State regulations and norms.

veracity of what is told – “veracity” not as a philosophical issue, but as the plausibility of the discourse.

But under what conditions can one tell hers or his own history? Couldry (2010) says that the right to speech is unequally shared in ordinary life. It may not be a coincidence that Spivak (2010) questions, in her text on the subaltern, if it is possible for the ‘subaltern’ to ‘speak’: the right to speak of oneself as an affirmative production of an ‘I’ defined by as a protagonist – and not as an aspect glimpsed as a reflex of another’s discourse – is one of the forms of establishing and identifying hierarchical borders in the distribution of social voice.

The acknowledgement of the right to speech is not given, but conquered along with the right to remain in public space: so, questions of identity politics seem to converge with the perspective of a right to the voice of individuals who, when speaking of themselves, speak of their groups, their origins, and strengthen communitarian bonds.

The act of speaking of oneself, in this aspect, blurs some of the borders between personal and public, in favor of the political: biographical narrative is not based on random assembly of strictly personal decision making, as much as it does not rest on a kind of social determinism that would narrow down all and each possibility of change: on the contrary, it is due to an interaction between these two conditions that the social presents itself, in terms of experience, as a conditioned indeterminacy, that is, as a series of elements that, though escaping any deterministic perspective – which, epistemologically, would eliminate any initiative of understanding – on the other hand, it does not escape the conditioning elements of action, either. It is in such tense articulation among conditions and possibilities that one might gaze the right to autonomous speech as a source of political participation.

By speaking of oneself to others, engaging people on a debate on biographical issues, an affective narrative of identity is established, one in which the ‘I’ is established as the protagonist who shall accomplish the reflexive appropriation of alterity and of the world. This is the basic political difference between narrating and being narrated by another: the force of telling, the centrality, even if momentary, of who tells her or his own history. This is why the condition of narrating one’s own life, telling one’s own history, seems to be an essential condition of political life that draws its patterns in ordinary conversations.

This being so, the act of speaking of oneself in an ordinary conversation does not seem to be a trace of banality or lack of better arguments, but, rather, a mark of narrative positions yielding from the possibility, when speaking of oneself, of speaking also of one’s groups, communities, histories that, though certainly experimented in a subjective manner,

are not kept from bringing in themselves the objective – and subjective – conditions of their occurrence.

### **Mediatization of intersubjective communication and online political talk**

The media intervene in the interaction between individuals and in their effects within a given institution and in society in general. Rather than observing a media intervention on the interactions, it is preferable to see how the mediatization processes can reconfigure the interactions. Mediatization refers to the intervention of the media in interactions between individuals, their effects within a given institution as well as in society in general (Braga 2006; Fausto Neto 2008; Ferreira; Braga; Gomes 2010; Ferreira 2010; Martino 2019). Mediatization widens the possibilities of interaction in virtual spaces: they offer new modalities of exchanges, new configurations of the performative scenes, situations and episodes of interaction in which reciprocal inquiry and individual and collective expression are established.

This process is happening today in particular through new social media, like Facebook, which potentially offer spaces for debate and expression of opinions, thus influencing modes of communication and interactions. These online conversations enabled by digital technologies are often thought of as tools for strengthening democracy. Works developed by George (2002), Lev-On and Mannin (2006), Doury and Marcoccia (2007), Witschge (2008, 2011) and Mutz and Mondak (2006) show how the dynamics of online exchange of arguments and mutual justification contribute to a better understanding or resolution of moral and justice problems.

Contrary to certain hopes for more democracy and tolerance, the new forms of mediatization that constitute the spaces for online comments by readers, do not seem to constitute a public space for confrontation of words for more exchanges and mutual understanding. Rather, they appear as a fragmentary space of struggle, where the opposition of beliefs and values polarize opinions and turn agonism into antagonism (Garcêz & Aggio 2017; Mendonça 2015; Altheman et al. 2016). Much more than an exchange of arguments, a desire to understand the other or an effort to understand a common question, we can observe actions that strengthen people taken for granted beliefs.

In virtual social online spaces of sociability, interlocutors can be moved by values and affects, concerns or indifference, empathy or indignation, producing a moral economy that leads to judgments and ethical assessments related to law enforcement and social justice. Incivility is a constant attitude that can undermine the possibilities of democratic communications or reveal hidden forms of appreciation and depreciation of lifestyles and lives (Oliveira; Sarmiento; Mendonça 2014; Mendonça; Amaral 2016). We can find more

evaluative framings that are exchanged or rather that oppose and impose themselves, than a rational justification based on reflexive arguments.

This approach is in line with certain conceptualizations developed in other contexts, particularly concerning online civic conversation. Dahlgren (2002), Bohman (2007) and Miège (2006) emphasize that the mediation made possible by the Internet decentralizes the public sphere, for potential conversational online spaces shelter several audiences instead of a unified and universal public sphere. Conversations, however, can help as much as destroy democratic and civic values. Not all of our communicative interactions are geared towards mutual understanding or sociality, the discussion of political themes or the promotion of democratic objectives. Some authors (Suraud 2007; Dahlgren 2005; Lev-On & Manin 2006; Mendonça & Amaral 2016) assert that discursive conflicts in online public spaces are usually marked by incivilities expressing frameworks of devaluation, prejudice misinterpretations and a denial of recognition (in some cases it is possible to see elements of moral and psychological harassment). Incivility can both prevent argumentative exchanges (depreciation and attack on the figure of the interlocutor, which leads to his outrage) or encourage them when the antagonism between the positions lead to better justification of points of view in front of opposing others.

While these spaces of expression could constitute scenes of speech and dissensus for those who have no voice, we rather see an arena to prevent other forms of expression and discourses. Participating in online conversation could not be about strengthening one's own belief (persuading oneself), strengthening the community of believers to the same and trying to spread the belief outward. We frequently see an impetus to monopolize speech and to disqualify other words. In the vocabulary of Rancière (1995), comments act like a police force which takes care to prevent a change in the sharing of the sensitive, to prevent politics. Rancière (2018) calls for the speaking by those who have no voice, who are denied the right to speak, constituting a scene. Politics is for him precisely the speaking by those whose current sharing of the sensitive does not consider the voice as legitimate.

In our opinion, possibilities for interaction in virtual spaces can be investigated by new modalities and possibilities of emerging scenes of dissensus, where situations and episodes of intersubjective interaction by which a reciprocal interpellation is established, as well as individual and collective expression beyond incivility and symbolic damage.

### **Conversation, online communication and the building of scenes of dissensus**

In any conversation, taking the floor implies assuming a position, revealing the presuppositions that sustain a point of view and creating possibilities of identification, and this leads to a question concerning the character of the discursive space constituted around

a subject who claims to be a citizen, Human, worker, etc. Such act of invention allows the re-description and reconfiguration of the common world of experiences – movements that strongly depend on the abilities of narrating and being responsible (Rancière 1995).

The characterization of the scene of dissensus (or polemical scene) is central to the thinking of Rancière (1995, 2004), since, according to him, the real object of political conflict is precisely the existence of a situation of speech and the status of validity of the participants in this situation. Scenes of dissensus are constituted, according to Rancière, when actions by subjects who did not, until the moment, count as interlocutors, emerge and “provoke a break-through in the unity of that which is granted and in the evidence of the visible so as to draw a new topography of the possible” (2008, 55).

The scene is a little optical machine that shows us thought busy weaving together perceptions, affects, names and ideas, constituting the sensible community that these links create, and the intellectual community that makes such weaving thinkable. The scene captures concepts at work, in their relation to the new objects they seek to appropriate, old objects that they try to reconsider, and the patterns they build or transform to this end. (Rancière 2013, 11)

Such polemical scenes are the ones that allowed the re-disposition of objects and images that form a previously given common world, or the creation of situations fit for modifying our gaze and attitudes towards the collective environment, questioning a dominant order that erases conflicts, differences and resistances. In such scenes, the subjects may experiment politics as a process of creating dissenting forms of expression. And communication that invents new ways of being, seeing and saying, ones that move away from consensus and configure new subjects and new forms of collective enunciation (Marques 2013a).

Consensus, on the other hand, would establish a concept and image framework for any interaction and discussion, whose contradictions turn to be imperceptible since they coincide with hegemonic interests or reflect existent situations seen as unchangeable. Therefore, consensus reduces the subjects to interlocution partners with interests to be defended and turns the political process into a game of experts (Rancière 1995, 2004). If, on the one hand, there is no subject (or community) without norms, on the other hand, reducing the subject and her experiences to the ambit of normativity would mean a perfect conformation to state and institutional regulation.

Rancière’s proposal consists in showing that the configuration of a situation of interlocution depends on the existence of a “scene in which the equality and inequality of the conflict partners as speaking beings is at stake” (1995, 81), besides the existence of

those who feature or may feature such scene. He defends that dissent involves a special kind of situation of speech in which what is at stake is not the possibility of argumentation focused on mutual understanding (communicative action), but the very status of the interlocutors.

Those who count as subjects for the accomplishment of political actions in Rancière are marked by oppressions, asymmetries and constraints of all kinds. And this is precisely why he considers, as opposed to Habermas, that it would be wrong to conceive politics as a process of debate among subjects who disagree and negotiate specific issues<sup>6</sup>, for it is always the case that one of the interlocution partners is subdued to inequality in such a way that her existence as subject and her capacity for participating of the debate is put into question, so that her arguments tend not to be seen as rational by the other partners. Though Rancière emphasizes that the interlocutors in a debate rarely dialogue in conditions of equality, it seems to us that they do not possess egalitarian conditions of creating and reinventing enunciations in scenes of dissent, either. Both thinkers' approach seems not to be able to escape the trap posed by the association between discourse and emancipation. Emancipating does not necessarily mean turning experiences and scenes accessible via discursive means, but rather to cheat, cut, break discourse via experimentation.

For the engagement in a political exchange, it makes itself necessary to invent the scene in which the words to be said become audible, in which the objects may make themselves visible and the individuals may be acknowledged. It is in this sense that one may speak of a “poetics of politics” (Rancière 2000, 116).

Rancière's proposal emphasizes, therefore, the poetical character of constituting “scenes” created by political subjects when desiring to test the egalitarian status warranted by laws and norms (Marques 2013a and b). The poetics of politics, or the existence of an aesthetic basis for politics, besides being a challenge to the opposition among legitimate interlocutors and illegitimate interlocutors, remits to the invention of the scene of interlocution in which the word of the speaking subject is inscribed, and in which the subject constitutes her or himself in a performative, poetic and argumentative manner.

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<sup>6</sup> The distinction established by Rancière between his own political thinking and the *Theory of Communicative Action* is not configured as a deep criticism. It is less a matter of positioning “against” Habermas – for also Rancière is dealing with communicative interlocution – than a movement of stating his argument that the essence of politics is dissent (in Habermas, dissent disturbs the reach of understanding). For Rancière, consensus does not mean argumentative agreement, but rather the victory of the all-encompassing police order, diminishing, then, the chances of a division in common sense, of a dispute over what is granted and the framing according to which one sees that something is granted” Rancière, 2004, p. 69. For detailed reflection on the opposition between Habermas and Rancière, see Marques (2013a) and Doerr (2011).

A scene must redefine the ways in which words and discourses are made available and how they circulate. Such redefinition is what will also characterize the emergence of the political subject and the process of desidentification that defines it (detachment between an imposed social identity and identities constructed and reconstructed in the process of sharing the sensible). The invention of the scene of dissensus also implies the creation of specific arrangements and articulations that work through descriptions and reports that deviate from causality in an attempt to reconstruct the conditions that make a given singularity possible by exploring all the networks of meaning established in its surroundings.

What is important is to be able to construct a whole system of description, intelligibility, and fix it in the form of scenes while allowing these kinds of monads to communicate with other monads according to different relationships that are always expression and never logical or influence chronological achievement (Rancière 2018, 122).

Thus, we consider important to emphasize how the notion of scene of dissensus is linked to the creative and resistance work of those Rancière name as *sans part*. It is worth remembering that those who have no part in the distribution of the sensible are not only the subjects and groups disregarded in the spaces of political decision-making, but also comprise a metaphor for designating those that exist “between” and, therefore, are unclassifiable and slide between representations and crystallized labels (a huge challenge for the police order, which everything wants to name for better control). As Rancière highlights:

Those without parts (*les sans parts*) have to build a controversial scene so that the noises coming out of their mouths can count as argumentative utterances. This extreme situation reminds us of what constitutes the basis of political action: certain subjects who do not count create a common controversial scene where they discuss the objective status of what is given and impose an examination and discussion of those things that were not previously visible or considered. (2000, 125).

In this sense, the scene of dissensus is composed of the interweaving of three specific political gestures: the treatment of harm (objective status of naturalized truths, inequalities and asymmetries); dissensual sharing of the sensible (redefinition of what can be visible, enunciable and thinkable) and desidentification (distancing from imposed social identities and rigid temporalities that define who may or may not participate in the sensitive community of politics).

The theoretical-methodological models conceived for investigating online political conversations and deliberations could be reviewed as one reminds a preoccupation with a two dimensional analysis proper to Communication: the polemical scene of interlocution (which encompasses the ways of “visibilization” of interactors, the discursive design offered by the platform and the dissenting characteristics of exchanges, that is, the way how they displace consensual forms of perception and common sharing) and the dramatic-argumentative constitution of the interactors as autonomous partners of debate.

As pointed by Ruef (2013, 2014), Rancière’s approach brings a contribution to political practices of online conversation precisely as it raises the possibility of analyzing enunciative conflicts as the expression of collective construction of this scene whose main tension is not the quest for discourses that sustain justification, but the quest for understanding, in which the interlocutors may mutually acknowledge each other as morally valuable and legitimate partners of interaction<sup>7</sup>.

Elements for creating scenes of dissensus	What to investigate in online communicative exchanges
Subjects and their emergence in a scene	Investigate ways of visibility, presentation of the subject’s world and her lived experience. Bodies, gestures, performances and narratives are relevant, including self-narratives.
	How the interlocutor constitutes herself: perceiving herself as the subject of a speech, discourse and its implications in the construction of autonomy and in the process of dis-identification.
Invention and creation of a scene	a) Observe the argumentative unfolding of a problem; b) draw attention to the dramatization inscribed in the common space of those who tell and narrate their experiences; c) evaluate the conflictive relation among the names that define a subject.
Interaction	Question the possibility of dialogue and the equality among participants.
Argument and context	Reveal the world in which a subject’s arguments count as such. The argument cannot be separated from the singularity of the subject and her particular universe.

Table 1 – Aesthetic, political and communicative aspects to be observed in theoretical-methodological sketches of deliberative online processes. Source: elaborated by the authors.

<sup>7</sup> Under Rancière’s perspective, it would be more productive to look into online political interactions examining how they “may contribute to the emergence of a polemical space in which the subjectivation of participants demands the creations of a collective (not imposed) identity” (Rueff 2013, 196).



It is through the creation of scenes of dissensus that the subject becomes “capable of speaking in first person and of identifying her statement with the reconfiguration of a universe of possibilities” (Rancière 2011, 250).

We need to examine how online discursive interactions can contribute to the emergence of a "polemical space", in which those who have not taken part in a social order strive to gain visibility and to affirm themselves as speech subjects. Therefore, it is a question of examining the processes of online subjectivation, thanks to which the *sans parts* create a collective identity and, in so doing, asserting themselves as beings of speech and visibility. In other words, to study the interrelationships between Internet and democracy from a rancièrian point of view is to study all the digital resources contributing to produce dissensus rather than consensus (Rueff 2014, 20).

From this viewpoint, the constitution of the social actor as interlocutor must take the following dynamics into consideration: a) each actor must see herself as a subject of speech and not only a voice, apt to construct herself in contact with alterity in a process that requires, simultaneously, the creation and recreation of a polemical scene of expression and argumentation in which reciprocal listening also has its place; b) each actor must construct her political autonomy, that is, her skills to argument, translate experiences and, so, raise empathy and, above all, make them intelligible, not codified, by making explicit the world in which they make sense; c) each actor must dis-identify with names that have been attributed to her in a hierarchical manner (imposed social identity), that is, must seek to exist in connection and disconnection with many names, spaces, scenes and discourses.

## CONCLUSION

A good deal of our ordinary interactions and conversations occurs both in public as in private contexts. On the one hand, individuals and groups learn how to take injustice as unquestionable, and to experiment it as a natural part of common sense. On the other hand, however, the spheres of experience configure the main context in which such crowds exchange impressions and produce self-narratives challenging widely accepted public discourses (Scott 1990; Herbst 1996).

The conversational flux of exchanges constituted in groups feature a dynamics rich in mechanisms able to model political discussions marked by plural points of view, possible worlds and ways of public presentation that involve identification and dis-identification, revealing and hiding, classifying and dis-classifying, mobilizing repertoires and renewing them, creating enunciates that overflow too defined and delimited lexica. But such

operations of experimentation and creation also bring up the need to articulate wit/spontaneity and innovation with institutionalization and norm.

Conversation on publically relevant issues, in order to contribute to deliberative processes, requires that the partners are able to explain their points of view and defend it from other's criticism. This is a particularly hard task due to two main reasons: a) studies point that informal political discussion is not favorable to the expression of disagreement (Duchesne & Haegel 2004; Conover et al. 2002); b) empirical research on political conversations and discussions are rarely developed in routine contexts of circulation and experience of ordinary citizens, since most of them focus on formal deliberative forums, reunions and local assemblies.

In informal conversation, people are more willing to engage complementary interactions in which their experiences, converted into brief narratives and testimonies, tend to converge with the other's speech, a point noticed previously by Maia et al. (2017).

It is specially conflict and moral disagreement, and the strategies for exposing them, what reveal the potential of informal ordinary conversations for constructing diverse forms of political participation (Wyatt; Katz; Kim 1999, 2000; Bennett; Flickinger; Rhine 2000; West & Gastil 2004). In time, civic conversation would be able to contribute to the democratic process through the improvement and sophistication of public judgements that, for their turn, influence the processes of constructing public policies (Moy & Gastil 2006).

Some researchers have spared no efforts as they try to establish contexts and create procedures capable of revealing the moments in which fluid and disperse ordinary conversation makes way for public discussion in which they may prevail: conflictive positions, presentation of clear and logical arguments, explication and revision of premises, mutual respect and reciprocal explication among the many opinions in dispute (Mutz & Mondak 2006; Altheman et al. 2016; Mendonça & Amaral 2016).

From another perspective, conversation has been associated to reflexive production of self-narratives, ones capable of promoting the invention of the scene of interlocution in which the word of the speaking subject inscribes itself, and in which this very subject constitutes herself by speaking in first person and identifying her statement with the reconfiguration of a universe of possibilities and potencies.

In a small scale, this seems to equally happen in ordinary conversational interactions: the resource to the lived element as an argument does not separate, evidently, the fact from the subjective grasp of the fact.

Its strength, rather, seems to reside precisely in such absence of separation provoked by the affective bond: this is the moment when subjective narrative of a situation

takes place, one that may be interpreted by the speaker in accordance with the discourses in which she inserts herself – or is inserted. The biographical and narrative element, in particular, becomes a place for forming ordinary interactions, insofar as such voices may be heard as protagonists: personal becomes political with the condition that such personal may take the lead of the discourse.

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