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Body and art as means of activism in Brazil

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List of Acronyms

ABGLT	Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lesbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis e Transexuais (Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Travestites and Transexuals)
CFP	Conselho Federal de Psicologia (Federal Council of Psychology)
GGB	Grupo Gay da Bahia (Gay Group from Bahia)
GTs	Grupos de Trabalho (work groups)
ENUDS	Encontro Nacional Universitário da Diversidade Sexual (National University Meeting of Sexual Diversity)
FESPSP	Fundação Escola de Sociologia e Política de São Paulo (Foundation School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo)
IBGE	Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics)
ICTs	Information, computer, and communications technologies
RDL	A Revolta da Lâmpada ("The Lamp's Revolt")
MAM	Museu de Arte Moderna de São Paulo (Museum of Modern Art of São Paulo)
MASP	Museu de Arte de São Paulo (Museum of Art of São Paulo)
MBL	Movimento Brasil Livre (Free Brazil Movement)
PT	Partido dos Trabalhadores (Workers' Party)
TGEU	Transgender Europe Organization
USP	Universidade de São Paulo (University of São Paulo)

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Abstract

New forms of organizing social movements are debating the intersection of different social markers or axis of oppression, as gender, sexuality, class and race, problematizing sexual and gender norms. In this context, the collective *A Revolta da Lâmpada* ('The Lamp's Revolt'), in São Paulo, Brazil, claims to be a platform with intersectional horizon, creating a common denominator – the *Corpo Livre* ('free body') – among different identity groups without the hierarchization of agendas and delegitimization of its exclusive spaces. Through the celebration of their bodies occupying public spaces, the collective uses diverse artistic expressions to do activism, what is being called artivism. This paper intended to investigate what this platform means to its activists, exploring different debates on social movements, using intersectionality as analytical sensitive lens to assess how the collective put identity politics and intersectionality together, using artivism, while negotiating its agenda and organizing its actions. The study highlights how the collective goes beyond the debate on identity politics and uses the intersectional inspiration together with the body – and its emotions – as site of resistance, celebration and means of exploring artistic forms to practice their activism.

Relevance to Development Studies

Coming from the notion of social movements as knowledge producers, the study contributes to the debates on strategic use of identity politics on movements with intersectional inspiration. Besides that, the experience of the collective *A Revolta da Lâmpada* engage with different areas intersectionality studies, as it has been used not only as analytical tool to understand personal embodied experiences, but as means of organizing the practice of social movements.

Keywords

Social movements, activism, identity, body, emotions, intersectionality, artivism.

Chapter 1

Introduction and Research Objective

The Brazilian LGBT movement, initially known as the homosexual movement, first made its appearance in the late 70s in association with the global ripples of the counter-culture, and developed an antiauthoritarian tendency (Benetti 2013: 31-34, Itaborahy 2012: 17). During the 80s, there was a significant reduction in the number of groups in this field due to the association between AIDS and homosexuality. This resulted in a more pragmatic approach of creating alliances with the State and aiming at guaranteeing civil rights and to protect homosexuals from discrimination and violence (Itaborahy 2012: 17-19, Green 2015: 291-292, Miskolci 2011: 40-41).

From the beginning of the 1990s, the movement once again begins to grow, and diversifies the institutional formats through which it is organized. Using an identitarian discourse and rights-based approach (Itaborahy 2012: 21), the movement focused the political struggle on law reforms, believing in a 'legal utopia', which lead to the unwanted consequences: the stratification of respectability/citizenship considering the sexual identity (Carraca 2012: 143, Colling 2010: 3-5). As it is known, this strategy might have increased tolerance and acceptance of the LGBT community within the heterosexual society – at least the white-middle-class-gay and lesbian community –, but it did not promote structural cultural changes in understanding and respecting the variety of embodied experiences marked by different layers of oppression.

In recent years, new forms of social movements have appeared interested in debating the intersection between different social markers, or axes of oppression, such as gender, sexuality, class, and race (Perez 2017:4), which together with an emergence of artists problematize sexual and gender norms (Trois and Colling: 2017: 127) constantly used by conservative sectors in Brazil (Brum 2017, Quinalha and Galeano 2017). Within this context, an activist collective called *A Revolta da Lâmpada* ('The Lamp's Revolt') was founded in São Paulo in 2014, choosing as common denominator the *Corpo Livre* ('Free Body') to gather activists from diverse identities and embodied experiences who suffer different

kind of oppressions for being how they are. With *Fervo tambem é luta* ('Party is also fight') as one of its mottoes, the collective proposes the celebration of these deviant bodies and uses diverse artistic expressions to create a different way of doing activism, called artivism.

Considering the perspectives of inquiry opened by feminist scholarship with the use of intersectionality – a term first used to explain the difference in experiences and struggles of women of colour considering the interaction between their gender and race (Davis 2008: 68) – this paper intends to use intersectionality as lens with analytic sensibility to investigate intersectional dynamics and social movements praxis (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013: 785-795) from the collective *A Revolta da Lâmpada*. In the context of identity politics and rights-based approach within the Brazilian LGBT movement, it is relevant to understand the mechanisms that social movements are creating to join forces against conservative tendencies, and work different issues in solidarity. To do so, this paper explores this process of experimenting new ways of resistance and fight on the Brazilian social movement. Investigating the personal meanings from the activists from the collective *A Revolta da Lâmpada* in relation to this platform.

1.1 Research question

The main question this research intends to answer is:

What does mean to the activists from *A Revolta da Lâmpada* to do activism using artivism as method, on a collective with intersectional inspiration that has the free body as common denominator of struggle?

1.1.1 Research Sub-questions

To answer this question, it is necessary to elaborate different sub-questions:

- 1) Thinking on the different identity boxes, how do the activists from *A Revolta da Lâmpada* identify themselves? What is their opinion about this kind of categorization?
- 2) What does the collective offer that its activists did not find in other movements?
- 3) *A Revolta da Lâmpada* claims to be an activist collective with intersectional inspiration. What does these perspectives mean to its activists and how is it put in practice?
- 4) How is the collective structured and its agenda negotiated?
- 5) Does the collective have established aims?

1.2 Structure of the paper

The Chapter 1 brings different yet convergent stories to place the collective on a historical background. Chapter 2 will explore different conceptual and analytical framework that will be used to analyse the work done during field work. The research methodology will be presented and Chapter 3, followed the research findings and its analysis. Chapter 5 aims to highlight the debates answering the five sub-questions proposed.

1.3 Background Information – the challenge of telling different yet convergent stories

One of the challenges of doing field research is reconciling one's preconceptions, assumptions and biases with the observations made. I got confronted with such a situation when considering how the collective *A Revolta*

da Lâmpada should be placed into a historical context. My first assumption was that the collective could be placed within the context of the Brazilian LGBT movement as it includes many LGBT persons within it and often attempts to deconstruct gender norms through their performances and protests. However, it quickly became evident that it would have been too simplistic to frame them as a LGBT collective, as evidenced by its intersectional inspiration, and uses the motto *Corpo Livre* as common denominator to address how issues related to oppressions mark different bodies.

By revisiting the experiences acquired during the research process, and through careful literature review, it became clear that the collective does share the history of the LGBT movement in Brazil, as this movement is the responsible for bringing the discussions on gender and sexualities to our society. However, it is equally important to consider that the LGBT movement had a broader agenda towards social justice, and an intersectional and somehow queer inspiration on its beginning. As such, narrating this context together with the trends of intersectional and or activist's collectives, as well as the political and cultural Brazilian context from which they emerged, may aid the reader to better contextualise this research.

1.3.1 Brief history of the Brazilian LGBT movement and some reflections on its politics throughout time

The second half of the XX century was marked by a new trend on social movements – especially the feminism, homosexual, black liberation, and environmentalist movements – that were interested in questioning modern disciplinary institutions and fighting for their own rights (Laraia 1986; Miskolci 2012 cited by Benetti 2013: 31). They largely emerged in the United States and Europe in a moment of cultural and political effervescence, with “the influence of the hippie movement, the Beatniks, May 1968, and a whole perspective of sexual liberation and rethinking political and social issues” (Benetti 2013:31). During that time, and unlike the countries of the global north, which were experiencing a moment of sexual and political liberation, Brazil's experience was characterised by exile, censorship, torture, and lack of civil rights.

According to historians like Green (2015: 273) the year of 1978 was a very important to Brazil. Along with a number of worker's movements, this marked the so called "First Wave of the Homosexual Movement" (Green 2015: 274; Facchini 2010: 86). This early activism emerged within a larger context of democratic opposition to the military regime, inspired by socialist and anarchist ideologies, characterised by a "strong antiauthoritarian language aimed at strengthening a 'homosexual identity'" (Itaborahy 2012: 17). MacRae (cited by Facchini and Lins Franca 2009: 60; Facchini 2010: 88-89) also pointed out in this context the emergence and the visibility of the feminist and black movements, as some of its' activists started to defend a strategy of social transformation that went through an alliance with other minorities, workers' movements and left-wing groups.

As such the homosexual movement was born in a much broader context of social justice through social and cultural change, establishing some dialogues with other minority groups, contesting gender norms and heteronormativity. Some researchers as Benneti (2013: 36-37), Colling (2010: 3-5) and Sant'Ana (2017: 20-21) also believe that some of these concerns of the movement reflect a 'queer Brazilian embryo'. An example was described by MacRae (cited by Colling 2013: 423-424), when activists from SOMOS participated in the celebrations of 'Zumbi's Day'¹, organized by the *Movimento Negro Unificado* ('Unified Black Movement'), carrying banners bearing the name of the group and repudiating racism. During the act the collective also distributed a pamphlet emphasizing the fact that both blacks and homosexuals were 'oppressed sectors'.

Analysing the group's ideology, MacRae (cited by Facchini 2010: 89-90) explains that it carried a great deal of counterculture and the anti-authoritarian spirit of the time, producing a discourse aimed to a broader transformation, including homosexuality as a strategy for cultural transformation, corroding the social structure from the margins. Parallel to this concern, there was the strategy

¹The date, also called 'Day of Black Consciousness' honors the Zumbi, a slave who was the leader of Quilombo of Palmares, who resisted the colonial government and was murdered on November 20, 1695. (Brasil 2012)

of giving positive value to socially negative terms, such as *bicha*² and *sapatão*³ – in a similar process that happened with the words gay and queer on the North American context (Benetti 2013: 37). Following political tendencies of the time, the group attempted to preserve horizontal relations, both with respect to its non-hierarchical political organization, as well as in combating the asymmetries between stereotypes of gender and sexuality.

In the early 80s, a drastic reduction on the number of groups took place. Many factors contributed for the movement's decay, ranging from a lack of financial resources and infrastructure, the 80s' financial crisis, the end of the newspaper *Lampião da Esquina* – that was used to circulate the ideas of the movement among them and outside. The groups that did endure displayed less concern with projects of social transformation in a broader sense, and a more pragmatic action by putting “the gay cause in the first place” (Facchini and Lins Franca 2009: 61) in an attempt to guarantee civil rights for homosexuals.

Dehesa, Green, Carrara and Facchini (cited by Itaborahy 2012: 19) also trace this decay to the appearance of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, when international and local media started to frame it as the ‘gay cancer’ or ‘gay plague’. Many activists died, and the movement suffered internal divisions, as some groups wanted to gather efforts to fight the epidemic while others wanted to avoid the identification of AIDS as a homosexual disease (Itaborahy 2012: 19). During this period, another factor was the increase in violence against gay men and *travestis*⁴ committed by civilians “convinced that AIDS was a direct result of gay lifestyles” (Gomez cited by Itaborahy 2012: 19).

The “Second Wave” followed in the mid-80s, with the process of re-democratization and fight against HIV/AIDS. The false idea of re-democratization, with the end of the dictatorship in 1985, brought the belief that ‘homosex-

² The term ‘*bicha*’ or ‘*viado*’ can be used as the correspondent of faggot or queer in English.

³ ‘*Sapatão*’ can be directly translated as ‘big shoes’, and would be the equivalent as ‘dyke’ in English.

⁴ For this paper, the term *travesti* is used meaning the embodied experience which belongs to the umbrella term transgender, designating the persons who were born with the biological male sex but do not identify with the male gender. *Travestis* normally express a female identity through clothing and some aesthetical interventions, however, not proceeding with a gender reassignment surgery.

ual rights' would expand without many difficulties (Green 2015: 283-284; Facchini 2010: 93-95). Groups focused on the epidemic learned how to get money from the government and international organizations, helping to develop the movement with these investments. Their headquarters were also used for activists' meetings (Green 2015: 291-292). Thus, the homosexual movement succeeded in dialogue with the State to assist in the creation of the Brazilian AIDS program. However, the epidemic had the effect of re-pathologizing homosexuality in new terms, creating the stigmatized 'bioidentity' of the AIDS patient by reconfiguring the pyramid of sexual (and social) respectability, and did not develop a more critical and 'denaturalizing' view of heterosexuality, which remained in a 'comfort zone' (Miskolci 2011: 40-41).

Different social movements and political parties, as the recent created Partido dos Trabalhadores ('Workers Party'), began to question how to democratize the participation of the civil society. During the 80s, PT was the only party to include gays and lesbians' rights on their political agenda. Homosexual movements started to grant full citizenship to gays, lesbians and *travestis* in the fight against homophobia, violence, and discrimination. Another change was the way people who have same-sex relations started to identify themselves, as the word 'gay' was rejected during the 80s for being a North-American term. Even though in the Brazilian context many people would think on terms of active and passive roles on sex, gay and lesbian identities similar to European and North American context started to be assimilated by the middle class on urban centres (Green 2015: 291-292).

After the numerical decay of groups during the 80's, the 90's saw a revival and inaugurated the 'Third Wave' of the movement. In 1995 was established the Associação Brasileira de Gays, Lesbicas, Bissexuais, Travestis e Transexuais – ABGLT (Brazilian Association of Gays, Lesbians, Bisexuals, Travestites and Transexuals), a national umbrella organization that helped to unify the movement and forced the dialogue with the state, approving a resolution defining same-sex civil unions as its top priority (Facchini cited by Itaborahy 2012: 23). After the withdrawal of PT's support for the issue during Lula's presidential elections campaign in 1994 – due their alliance with activists in ecclesiastical-base communities of the Catholic Church – a PT deputy at that time, Marta Suplicy, launched a national campaign to approve a bill legalizing same-

sex domestic partnerships. After a decade of unsuccessful attempts to pass the bill, the movement dropped the legalization of same-sex civil unions as its priority and adopted a different discourse which embraced all the segments of the LGBT movement: the discourse against homophobia (Itaborahy 2012: 23). Another important remark for this period was the idea of organizing streets events to celebrate the International Day of Gay Pride, which became the mark of the movement on the national and international level in the beginning of the XXI century (Facchini 2010: 110-111).

According to Miskolci (2011: 42), the relative success of the movement is a result of its privileged position with the State on the constitution of public policies. Due to the relative success of public policies focused on STD/AIDS, social demands gained more and more political/policy relev in the area of healthcare, education, culture and, finally, in the demands for recognition of rights. Carrara (2012: 143) analysed this process and pointed it out possible unwanted consequences of focusing the political struggle on the rights language, what he called of the 'judicialization of the Brazilian sexual politics'. He stresses that the political struggle in the language of rights has at least two hazardous consequences: differential access to justice and its application in an unequal country such as Brazil can cause. The 'legal achievements' can generate unequal results that can only be accessible by an elite. The struggle for rights also marks the definition of who is the subject of rights, which can result in a hierarchy of those who hold more rights than others and/or in a stratification of respectability/citizenship considering the sexual identity (Carrara 2012: 143; Colling 2010: 3-5; Miskolci 2011: 42). Bringing another view, Seffner says that:

"the more we claim rights, the more we strive to show ourselves 'right in the picture', 'tidy up', deserving of the rights we want to get. The more rights, the more we conform to a 'correct' and 'acceptable' model of being gay, lesbian, *travesti*, transsexual etc. (...) To marry may be leading to reify this form of relationship, in the sense of showing that it is the only or the best possible way to live affections and sex; adopting children and forming a family may lead one to think that these groupings are of a higher quality than living freely sex" (2011: 59-60).

1.3.2 Brazilian political and social contemporary context

For those who like to read stories about dystopic realities, Brazil's contemporary history can be an interesting plot to be followed. The year of 2013 was marked by numerous protests that took the streets of hundreds of Brazilian cities. The protests were called on the internet and triggered by an increase in the price of public transport, but ended up in bursting a bubble of discontent. This led to the discrediting of democratic institutions and the crisis of traditional political representation (Watts 2013; Cardoso and Fatima 2013: 144). It became very clear that original claims – or the variety of different claims – got coopted by right-wing movements trying to forbid the participation of left-wing parties and workers' unions, a sign of the polarization that divided the population between left and right. The party's supporters, who believed in an imminent coup, were opposed by those claiming to be against corruption, who believed in an impending impeachment – neither the grey areas in between these classifications (Keys 2016; Tatagiba 2014: 39-44).

Although Dilma Rousseff managed to win her second election in 2014, Brazil's congress voted for her impeachment in 2016. Distinct from the president, a good part of those who voted to oust her were/are under investigation for crimes ranging from corruption to the use of slave labour. The vice-president, Michel Temer, was declared president and promoted a complete change of government (from left-of-centre to right-wing), without any electoral process. Temer immediately formed a cabinet made up exclusively of white men – many of whom also facing charges of corruption (Brito and Paraguassu 2017) – and he himself had been saved by the Congress against two charges of corruption, obstruction of justice and organized crime filed by federal prosecutors (Boadle and Marcelo 2017).

Temer's government began by approving a constitutional amendment known as 'the end of the world' that imposed a 20-year cap on federal spending, including education and health care. He also approved a labour law reform that was pretty much celebrated by big companies, but not by the workers (Barbara 2017). On top of that, to please the powerful farm lobby that has two-fifths of the votes in the lower house, Temer agreed to lower fines for environmental

damage and attempted to relax the definition of slave labor, but was forced to backtrack after a judicial order (Boadle and Marcelo 2017; Brum 2017).

In an effort to distract the population from these scandals, and playing with its sense of morality and the need to protect the Brazilian traditional family (Herdt 2009), non-gender conformist groups are being demonised. During the field work in September, a museum exposition called 'Queermuseum: cartographies of difference on Brazilian art' was accused of paedophilia and zoophilia by the group who fuelled the protests for Dilma's impeachment called MBL ('Brazil Free Movement') – nowadays very much linked to traditional right-wing parties. Some days after, a federal judge decided that the Federal Council of Psychology (CFP) should reinterpret an internal standard, issued in 1999, to stop prohibiting psychologists from offering 'sexual reorientation' therapies, opening a rift for the notorious 'gay cure' (Langlois 2017). The last episode until now involves the figure of the philosopher Judith Butler, as she went to Sao Paulo to participate in a seminar about democracy, but is being accused by these groups of being the creator of the 'gender ideology' – a mashup of misunderstandings and misleading information that would be used to teach children in the school that they could change the gender God had gave to them. On the first day of the seminar, a group defending Christians and moral traditional values, burnt a big doll with Butler's face between shouts of "burn the witch!" and raised arms holding crosses (Aragao 2017). If the 'witch hunt' was already happening, now it is officially materialized.

All this is taking place in one of the most lethal countries for LGBT peoples. According to GGB, 347 murders were reported in 2016, 50% of this number being gay, 42% transgender, 4% transgender lovers, 3% lesbians and 1% bisexuals. This group highlight that these numbers are monitored through media research and that there are no official reports, which indicates that these numbers do not represent the reality (Ayer and Bottrel 2017). According to the TGEU's Trans Murder Monitoring Project, Brazil was the country with more killings of transgender people in the world due transphobia, counting with 40% of the total killings, 868 out of 2.190, from 1 January 2008 to 30 June 2016 (TtT research project 2016: 7-16). The IBGE's (Brazilian Institute of Geography and

Statistics) 2013 survey showed that the life expectancy of the transgender community is no more than 35 years, less than half of the national average of 74.9 years of the general population (Rede Trans Brasil 2017: 56).

All these recent events reveal a more complex process of advancing the interference of fundamentalist religious over the constituted powers of Brazil. Groups that were already dominating the agenda of the Legislative Power and influencing the Executive, now extended their arms also to the Judiciary, museums and theatrical stages in a true crusade against sexual and gender diversity (Brum 2017; Phillips 2017a; Quinalha and Galeano 2017). Coming from this context, it is easier to understand why different oppressed groups are trying to find different ways to organize their resistance against these various conservative and violent forces.

1.3.3 Scene of intersectional and/or activist collectives: presenting *A Revolta da Lâmpada*

Many examples can be found of groups that gather activists from the black and LGBT movements, as *Rede Afro LGBT* ('Afro LGBT Network'). This group emerged within the LGBT movement in 2005, created by black activists and it is presented as "a collective that agglutinates blacks men and black women and LGBT Afro-descendants' who work in LGBT groups or are independent activists" (Luz 2012: 3). Thus, the *Rede Afro LGBT* is a multi-identitarian organization, which also assumes the fight against machismo, sexism, among other human rights agendas (Ratts cited by Luz 2012: 3). Although it was created because of insufficiency of an identity representation, it opts for the strategy of reaffirming the identities, forcing an extension of the limits of both. This is the same political orientation followed by the black women's movement, with the difference that it prefers to be linked to the black movement, moving away from a feminine identity without rejecting feminism (Bairros cited by Luz 2012: 3).

In an attempt to explain the recent emergence of activist collectives, in Brazil, "especially those in sexual and gender dissent", Troi and Colling list the following reasons:

“the expansion of access to new technologies and the massification of social networks; the broadening of the LGBT theme in the media in general, especially in soap operas, films and television programs; the emergence of diverse trans identities and people who identify themselves as non-binary in our country, as well as the valuation of *fechacao*⁵, non-compliance with the norms (corporal and behavioral) of effeminate boys, masculine lesbian women and other several flexible identity expressions (...). But perhaps the most important of the reasons lies precisely in the self-declared or not need to react to the terrible picture in which we are inserted, marked by the return and growth of conservatism and religious fundamentalism” (2017: 127).

According to the authors, a profusion of diverse collectives, with an emphasis on performances, such as *O que voce queer?* (Belo Horizonte), *Cena Queer* (Salvador), *Anarvofunk* (Rio de Janeiro), *Revolta da Lampada* (São Paulo), *Selvática ações artísticas* (Curitiba), *Cabaret drag king* (Salvador), *Coletivo coioete* (nomadic) and *Seus putos* (Rio de Janeiro)” (Trois and Colling 2017: 127) is arising. Fundamentally “the artists, through these practices, question the body, the sex, and the desexualized model of the marriage contract, proposing new, more creative ways of being in the world and feeling the multiplicity and value of freedom for life” (Lessa cited by Colling in Francisco 2017: 56-57).

Among these groups we can find the collective *A Revolta da Lampada*. ‘The Lamp’s Revolt’. Its name is a reference to a homophobic attack that took place in Sao Paulo in 2010, when two gay men and their heterosexual friend – who was ‘read’ as gay – were violently attacked with long lamps, being the last one almost killed by the attack (G1 2010). Four years later a group of friends and activists from different movements organized a protest at the location of the attack. The collective’s name was not only inspired by that singular episode, but because the lamp had become a symbol of oppression, a homophobic reminder to LGBT and other deviant bodies should stay inside their closets. In the streets “Be careful of the lamp!” is a threat and insult hurled to those that did not conform to conservative gender stereotypes or women wearing clothes seen as provocative. In the event's description on Facebook, the activists said that “the fluorescent lamp has become a symbol of oppression not only to LGBTs, but to all bodies perceived as inadequate by the hegemonic model” (R7 2014).

⁵ “The *fechacao* (a word that does not even exist in the official dictionary) consists of a performance that is characterized by exaggeration, by the deliberate artificiality and, in this case, by a set of actions, gestures and postures that intentionally do not conform to what society generally expects from a male person” (Colling 2012).

The collective claims to use an intersectional framework, gathering activists from different movements fighting for the *Corpo Livre* (“Free Body”) of all those who suffer any kind of oppression. Using a language of resistance through protests which become parties, as one of their sayings is: *Fervo tambem é luta*. The collective organizes protests where its activists and the public are invited to express themselves freely, dressing up as they wish. The result are catwalks on top of politicians’ pictures or dolls, with a queue of wit and humorous figures expressing their freedom through their provocative clothes, make up, and performances. The images show a beautiful and colourful diversity of bodies: transmen, transwoman, drag-queens, men and women of any sexual orientation subverting gender roles or simply people being who they are or wish.

The agendas of these protests range from current political issues or scandals to the violence against different oppressed bodies, with speeches and gigs from different activists and artists, closing in a big celebration in the streets. The work done by the group is not limited to protests, but extends to promoting roundtables, seminars in universities, workshops about activism, and the production of videos for online campaigns to promote awareness about different issues,

As claimed by one of its’ activists, Gustavo Bonfiglioli (2017), the need to rethink the methods of resistance organisation in movements, resulting in the fragmentation of different identity groups, is necessary for the minorities’ human rights fight. However, it helped the crack on the leftist movements, while the enemy got stronger and now more openly promotes oppression – more lamps onto everybody’s faces. Hence, to re-exist as activist requires an alternative strategy that allows the coexistence of unification and specificity. Explaining *A Revolta da Lampada*, he says that it is

“a platform with intersectional horizon which wants to create a common denominator among different fights without the hierarchization of agendas and delegitimization of its exclusive spaces. On the idea of free body, march together in the streets women trans and cis, *travestis*, black men and women, poor people, *bichas*, *sapatonas*, transmen, immigrants, refugees, fat bodies, aged bodies, independent artists, workers, people on street situation, etc. Different realities, different levels of privilege, but with something in common – oppressed bodies for being how they are and operate as they wish. To occupy the streets for the free body has been an exercise of resistance and meeting, sharing, affection and celebration among these different bodies who march – and dance – together: because *Fervo tambem é luta* (...). And not to unify under the same flag, but to host all the flags at the same time, on the same space” (Bonfiglioli 2017).

Chapter 2

Conceptual and Analytical Framework

After bringing different stories to try to create a historical context and present the collective that had inspired many of my questionings and wish to learn, it is necessary to go into a journey on many concepts that had been said throughout Chapter 1, as intersectionality and activism – which will not be used as merely concepts, for being far more complex on the way they are practice – but also explain the theories that will serve as lenses to understand the findings that I gathered and will bring on the following chapters.

2.1 A shift in the politics?

As shown in the historical background, the mainstream Brazilian LGBT movement structured its claims on the recognition of different identities to demand rights and citizenship. Categories such as heterosexual, gay, transgender, *travesti* etc. not only provide an illusion of belonging, but also limit our understanding of gender and sexuality as variable behaviors, constantly changing throughout history (Ingraham 2006: 312-313). “Rights-based organizing strategies and development interventions around sexual orientation and gender expression need to shift away from common categories of identity toward a broader context of struggle” (Budhiraja et al. 2010: 131-132), as that approach masks the real diversity of sexual and gender expressions.

Butler, one of the exponents of this theory, believes that is necessary to make political claims using categories of identity and to have power to name yourself, but it is also necessary to remember the risks that these practices imply (cited by Colling 2010: 2). The queer political proposal does not point to any division, but rather it is a unifying appeal to various non-conformist gender/sex-

ual experiences: the experience of shame. Being cursed as a bicha/faggot, sapa-tao/dyke, transvesti, abnormal or degenerate is the founding experience of the discovery of homosexuality, or what our society still attributes to it, the space of humiliation and suffering. Turning this experience into a political force of resistance is the purpose of the original queer proposal (Miskolci cited by Colling 2010: 2). A similar idea is proposed by Seffner, using the injury as common denominator that constitutes LGBT, but also allows articulations with other social movements where injuries of race, class, religion, gender, sexuality, HIV positive status, disability, migrant or refugee status can be also articulated. An important strategy would be to emphasize the mechanisms that promote injury and abjection, rather than identities and personal behavior. Thinking on this mechanisms of injury and abjection it is possible to create alliances with other social movements who work with other social markers of difference (Seffner 2011: 75-76) even if the origin of these oppressions does not have a shared connection (cited by Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013: 803-804).

The discussions so far in this paper, as well as the history of the Brazilian LGBT movement, are necessary to explain how the collective that presented in this research places itself in terms of identity politics, but goes beyond that as it tries to acknowledge the intersections that are not visible on more traditional ways of doing activism. Some reflections about a broader context of struggle or the use of a common denominator as shame or injury as a strategy to create alliances between movements will also inform the way the collective RDL has been constructing itself with an intersectional inspiration to do politics. Furthermore, before deepening on the main topics of this research, it is necessary to bring some concepts and debates related to social movements theory in order to explain how the collective organizes itself.

2.2 Necessary debates on social movements theory

In general terms, there are two contemporary theories that try to explain the emergence and characteristics of social movements: the *new social movements' theory*, represented by Melucci and Touraine; and the *theory of political confrontation*,

from Tarrow, McAdam and Tilly. According to Melucci, social movements as an analytical category are a form of collective action based in solidarity and the reaffirmation of symbolic demands, different from movements connected to social classes struggle that marked the period before the 60s. Their motivations are of a post-material order and aimed at constructing or recognizing collective identities, not be to combat or conquer the state. The new social movements would have as characteristics the fluidity, horizontality, and non-partisanship.

The theory of political confrontation highlights the relation between movements and opportunities provided by the political system. Thus, according to Tilly, social movements are inclusive organizations composed of various interest groups, such as workers, women's groups, and students, articulated around a common dissatisfaction (as cited by Perez 2017: 5-6). To Tarrow, social movements are “collective challenges based on common goals and social solidarity in a sustained interaction with elites, opponents and authority” (as cited by Perez 2017: 6).

Despite the lack of consensus among scholars, the goal of changing cultural values seems to be transversal to various concepts. Castells understands social movements as “deliberate and collective actions designed to change the values and interests institutionalized in society, which is equivalent to changing the relations of power” (as cited by Cardoso and Fatima 2013: 148). It is important to point out that although the use of different medias to propagate ideas between movements it is not something new, but the use of the internet and social networks is a key characteristic of the new social movements, as they easily transit on the physical space (street, neighbourhood, city, country) and on the cyberspace (Cardoso and Fatima 2013: 148-150).

Manuel de Landa introduced useful distinctions between two general network types: hierarchies and meshworks. The first has a centralised control, is over planned, homogenised, with particular goals and rules of behaviour, operating with linear time and in tree-like structures, as the military, bureaucratic organisations and capitalist enterprises. The second, on the contrary, are flexible, based on de-centralised decision making (as ‘swarming effect’), self-organisation, heterogeneity, diversity, not having an overt single objective (cited by Escobar

2009: 397), non-hierarchical relations, direct democracy, and the striving for consensus (Juris 2008: 354). Deleuze and Guattari used the metaphor of ‘rhizomes’ to describe meshworks, suggesting that they are “networks of heterogeneous elements that grow in unplanned directions, following the real-life situations they encounter” (as cited by Escobar 2009: 397). These concepts will be used to make sense on how the collective RDL works out its structure, decision making, choice of agendas – as it is organized horizontally – but also its relationship with different movements.

Another important point on the social movements field that is necessary to the discussions that this paper intends to contribute is the centrality of knowledge-practices in movements and how these enactments weaken the boundary between activist and academic knowledges. In this context, ‘knowledges’ means “experiences, stories, ideologies, and claims to various forms of expertise that define how social actors come to know and inhabit the world”, that produces critical subjectivities and new ways of being (Casas-Cortes et. al. 2008: 26). The present paper aligns with the two-fold argument from Casas-Cortes et. al.: “First, movements generate knowledge and that knowledge is material – that is, concrete and embodied in practice. As such, it is situated. Second, knowledge-practices are politically crucial, both because of the inextricable relationship between knowledge and power and because of the uniquely situated locations of these practices” (2008: 45). Coming from these understandings, this paper will explain later how knowledge is shared among the activists from the collective and to their broader public, as its relationship with academia.

2.2.1 The role of emotions on doing activism

Emotions are present in every stage and every aspect of collective action through social movements, as they motivate individuals to join groups, are generated during the protests, hold the group together, are expressed in speeches, and form defined and undefined goals of social movements. They can help mobilization efforts (or not), shape strategies, and the success of the movement (Jasper 2011: 2).

Due to the enormous personal commitment that being an activist entail, the role of emotions and pleasure that are involved in collective action should not be underestimated. Therefore, the safe space created by some social movements plays an important role on why activists stick with their movement, by promoting a place where they can share painful experiences, know about each other, share knowledge, and work their reflexivity and positionality – what is called ‘affective politics’ or ‘politics of affections’. These forms of support are reflected on the importance of care among these activists (Brown and Pickerill 2009: 32-33).

Talking about the role of emotion during protests, activists can use different tactics that seek to change the emotional resonance of their political messages, as humour, street theatre and performances. These activities while can help the release of rage and frustration from activists, can provide enjoyable experiences for their audiences. The use of their body in performances “enables activists to intensely feel and express their protest, perhaps more powerfully than through instrumental mobilisations (such as the more formal street march with placards)” (Brown and Pickerill 2009: 28). This present paper is particularly interested in the role of emotions related to the relationship between the activists and the emotions stimulated in their protests, as the discovery of these emotions was one of the unexpected and grateful surprises of the fieldwork.

2.3 Intersectionality

Intersectionality “has been heralded as one of the most important contributions to feminist scholarship” (Davis 2008: 67). The term intersectionality was first coined in the 1980’s by Kimberle Crenshaw, a black North-American feminist. She first used it to explain the difference in experiences and struggles of women of colour, considering not only their gender, but also their race (Davis 2008: 68). The concept, however, originated in the 1970’s when different groups of feminists – black, lesbians, third-world, anti-colonial, etc. – started to challenge the category ‘woman’ as a united block. They claimed, instead, that different groups of women have different struggles, considering your variety of identities and

power relations involved, and that idea of ‘sisterhood’ were taking in consideration the experience of western, white, heterosexual, middle-class women (Denis 2008: 679). As such, they had different struggles that were not shared by white women. The concept of intersectionality evolved, and can be explained as an analytical tool to explore the interaction between different categories of identities, but also of oppression/subordination/privilege – as gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, caste, class, religion, age, body, etc.

Beyond the use of intersectionality to understand the process of marginalization of women of colour with the addition of different categories of inequality, intersectionality is also ideal “to the task of exploring how categories of race, class and gender are intertwined and mutually constitutive, giving centrality to questions like how race is ‘gendered’ and how gender is ‘racialized’, and how both are linked to the continuities and transformations of social class” (Davis 2008: 71). Following postmodern theoretical perspectives – as post-colonial and queer theory –, feminist theorists started to use intersectionality on their conceptualizations of multiple and shifting identities (Davis 2008: 71), approach that will be clear on the findings from this research regarding how the activists identify themselves.

Intersectionality is evolving towards a field of studies, that can be divided by fluid boundaries into three different areas of engagement: “the first consisting of applications of an intersectional framework or investigations of intersectional dynamics, the second consisting of discursive debates about the scope and content of intersectionality as a theoretical and methodological paradigm, and the third consisting of political interventions employing an intersectional lens” (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013: 785). This paper will particularly engage with fluidity between the first and third areas of engagement on intersectional analyses, as I want to use it not just as a concept, or a tool to map the different identities, but also as lens with “analytic sensibility” (Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013: 795).

The idea of intersectionality is one of the characteristics that had attracted many of the activists to the collective and play an important role on how they see themselves, the collective and their kind of activism. Thus, intersectionality plays different roles on my research, since it is practiced by the collective but also will be used as lens to understand how this praxis works, by answering

how a collective that aggregate different groups of oppressed ‘minorities’ or identities is working the construction of their intersectional identities, finding a common denominator of struggle and putting “intersectional politics” (Spade cited by Cho, Crenshaw and McCall 2013: 803) in practice through their activism.

2.4 The Body

Writing about RDL, one word calls for attention: body! Female bodies, transgender bodies, fat bodies, aged bodies, black bodies, poor bodies, disable bodies, non-heterosexual bodies. Bodies that matter or not, considering their different position of privileges and oppressions marked in their flesh. Bodies that occupy the public spaces and ask for their freedom, freedom to be and show how they are, not how they are expected to be.

As Grosz states, “we understand bodies as sites of cultural meaning, social experience and political resistance” (paraphrased by Harcourt et al. 2016: 149). Since Foucault’s exploration about resistance to systemic power situated on the body, feminist scholarship has tried to shake presumed concepts of gender and biological sex (Harcourt et al. 2016: 149). Queer theorists, such as Butler, allowed the theorization of heteronormativity as a set of legal, cultural and institutional practices which keep assumptions of gender as a binary system that reflects biological sex, believing the only natural sexual attraction is the one between the supposed ‘opposite’ genders (cited by Schilt and Westbrook 2009: 441). Spivak and Mohanty wrote about the experience of female embodiment being informed by sexism, racism, misogyny and heterosexism (cited by Harcourt et al. 2016: 149). However, this experience can be enlarged to all the bodies who express the feminine, as effeminate gays, transwomen and all other kind of embodied experiences which do not conform with the heterosexual norm. “These feminist writings show how the corporeal, fleshly, material existence of bodies is deeply embedded in political relations, from colonialism to population control policies to contemporary biopolitics of migration” (Harcourt et al. 2016: 150).

In the last decades, body politics places the body as site of resistance, being an important mobilizing force for gender equality, sexuality and human rights (Harcourt et al. 2016: 150). While our bodies are “produced and transformed by social relations embedded in the hegemony of colonial hetero-patriarchal capitalism” (Harcourt et al. 2016: 150), they are the place “where resistance and rebellions are expressed in the form of ethnic-racial, territorial, gender, transgender, disability movements. In this sense, our bodies are carriers of rights and citizenship” (Harcourt et al. 2016: 150). On an essay about ‘unworthy bodies’, Borghi explores the relationship between public space, body and performance, giving attention to the bodies that do not conform with the heterosexual-patriarchal sexist and capitalist norm, which considers these bodies as out of place, putting them aside, marginalized and excluded from the privileges. She departs from the point that the public space is not neutral, and it is ruled by the heterosexual norm. In this perspective, the body is in constant relationship with the space, not only the body inhabits the space, but it is also space. Hence, the body is a social space, relates with other spaces and participates on producing the space. In this way, bodies have enormous potential and bodies outside the norm have even more, as they have a strong subversion potential that can allow the transgression of the norms that regulate the public spaces. If we add artistical performances to the body, we perceive forms of activism and resistance in which we use our own body as support for action in the public space, what allow to make visible the relations of domination and social injustice, bringing a new way of doing activism (2016: 4-5).

These understandings on body politics very much align with the purpose of this research. First, the body as site of cultural meaning, social experience and political resistance turns in common denominator that unify people who suffer different kind of oppressions to resist together. And these bodies, as social spaces, occupy and reclaim public spaces that normatively push them to the margins.

2.5 Artivism

Distinct aspects traditionally characterize art and activism: art is situated in the symbolic, while activism operates symbolic actions that interfere in the real (Mourão 2015: 53). The historical value of authorship has led art to build itself from the individual, activism aims to incite a collective action; art reinterprets the world, while activism aims to transform it. However, a simple exercise of reflection is enough to dismantle these conceptual premises that dictate exact boundaries between what are no more than cultural constructions, that can always be overlapped, reinvented or, subverted (Mourão 2015: 53-54).

Artivism can be understood as a conceptual neologism that calls for links between art and politics, and stimulates the potential uses of art as an act of resistance and subversion. It can be found in social and political interventions, produced by people or collectives, through poetic and performative strategies. Its aesthetic and symbolic nature intensifies, sensitizes, reflects and questions themes and situations in a given historical and social context, aiming at change or resistance. Hence, artivism is merged as a cause and social claim and simultaneously as an artistic breakthrough - namely, by proposing scenarios, landscapes and alternative ecologies of enjoyment, participation and artistic creation (Raposo 2015: 5). As explained in section 1.3.3 this method is being used by sexual and gender dissidents' artists and collectives to question gender and sexuality. However, they go further, by marking social struggle against normalization and in opposition to the neoliberal state's biopolitics, emphasizing diverse proposals based on an anticolonial position.

From the different kinds of artist's expressions, the performance is the one which allows to bring together the constructions coming from what is historically understood as art and activism, since it uses the body as a means of expression, which is present in both these two historical traditions. And again, body we all have one, not mattering the sex, gender, race, language, origin, religion, class, ableism or sexual orientation. Because of that, the performance might be the most accessible and democratic from all artistic's media, as actions and

body movements are enough to communicate symbolically emotional expressions (Mourão 2015: 63-64). According to Mourão, there are four key factors needed for a successful performance:

- “1 - transmit a vibrant dissonant dimension, using forms of communication more emotive and symbolic than logical-rational;
- 2 - exerting itself unexpectedly, creating an impact by the element of surprise;
- 3 - in space and/or time with special meaning, playing with the artistic notions of site-specific and dramatic narrative (associated with dates and symbolic events);
- 4° - be registered and transmitted by the media and/or the internet, making the public sphere and public cyberspace the media stage that generates the public (note that without public there is no performance).” (Mourão 2015: 67)

Thus, the activism’s aim would be to touch, provoke and sensitize the other beyond the conventional. Through the emotional delivery, the activist uses your body as axis of artistic-political action that provokes an inner transformation on who practice it, which simultaneously leads to an external transformation on the other (Mourão 2015: 67). By using their bodies, they create a different kind of art, that is used politically to express a message, and that will only be acknowledge through the emotions that will be provoked.

Chapter 3

Research Methodology

3.1 Research Approach and role as researcher

Considering the objectives of my research, it aligns with the qualitative tradition due to the recognition of the need for alternative ways to produce or to recognize knowledge (O'Leary 2014: 130). In order to answer the research questions, different research methods were to gather primary data, such as interviews and observation. However, the main method used was informal, semi-structured, one to one interview, as it is the method that allows the development of rapport and trust between the researcher and the interviewee, providing rich and in-depth qualitative data (O'Leary: 2014, 217-218). The researcher has the opportunity to be face to face to the human being that is being interviewed, feel their breath, try to read their face and movements and, feel if they get emotional and passionate when telling their thoughts and experiences – and experience yourself getting emotional with what is being shared.

The questions around my positionality appeared mostly intuitively on the process of choosing my topic, but of course this intuition was built on the theories and knowledge that I acquired during my master degree and on my field work. For a long time, I saw myself as a sexual minority which suffers discrimination for being bicha. The fear of discrimination and violence shapes and forces the person to analyse yourself, to be aware of your difference in relation to the others. However, through experience, I realised that I did not suffer the same oppressions as other people suffered. Before starting my master, I had already acknowledged that and started to see my struggle on a different way, but I did not have the conceptual tools to name this feeling. This probably only came to light when I started to study intersectionality in its different ways of engagement. Now I understand my position of privilege for being cisgender, white, middle

class man and 'bicha'. As even being 'bicha', considering the sum of my other identities, I am on a privileged position within the imaginary LGBT community.

Now as a researcher I position myself as doing research *with*, and not *on* social movements. I listened my interviewees as someone curious to learn what the experts on that kind of activism had to tell me, always investigating what all the concepts that I am discussing on this paper means to them and trying to understand how they practice them. For this reason, it was hard to me to simple transform what they told me in analyses, summarizing all the knowledge shared on my findings. That is the reason why I chose to give voice to them as much as possible, to not lose the richness of the data that was shared.

3.2 Selection of the collective *A Revolta da Lâmpada*

The collective *A Revolta da Lampada* was selected since due to personal curiosity about their practices. This decision only became clear when I had an inspiring lecture on social movements and feminist research with Prof. Wendy Harcourt and Prof. Rosalba Icaza, which made me change my initial topic and investigate this different way of doing activism. To counterbalance this apparent bias I engaged on research to find out other collectives that could be practising intersectionality and activism as they do (Trois and Colling 2017). Maybe by its new form of organizing social movements (Perez 2017), I had the opportunity to find different collectives focusing on specific intersections, as race and sexuality (Luz 2012), but could not find a collective working with the intersectional perspective that I was interested, gathering different oppressed groups under the same common denominator.

3.3 Data generation methods

3.3.1 Interview and selection of the sample

The interview was used to get primary data from activists who are part of the RDL. They had an informal and flexible structure, following a guideline with questions elaborated previously, but on a way that enabled to explore specific points following the natural flow of the conversation. Using the help from Cadu Oliveira – one of the activists from the collective – I sent them an explanation about my project and asked the reaction of those who would like to contribute to my research. After getting those first names, I got in touch with them and started to schedule the interviews. As these first interviews were happening, different names started to appear. Using from *snowball sampling method*, I asked again Cadu's help on naming other activists that could reflect the diversity of the collective, thinking on gender identities, sexual orientations and different identities or struggles, as black, HIV positive and disability's activists. With these names on hands, I started the process of negotiation of dates, place and time. Most of the interviews took place on a friend's apartment in Paulista Avenue – in São Paulo's city centre, close to a metro station – where I could create a safe and inviting environment. Other interviews took place in their houses and in a park, attending my interviewees' preferences of place and time.

The interviews' process took around 4 weeks and it earned me 11 interviews from the 25 names that I had gathered before my fieldwork while researching their participation on the collective's Facebook open page and closed group. There were other 4 activists that I had believed I would be able to interview, but it did not happen for personal reasons or busy agenda on their part. During the interviews, I tried to discover the exact number of activists who are part of the collective. However, this number was not clear, and float around 30 persons. As they believe that to be an activist is a privilege, considering the different struggles that many of them have on their lives, they see the mandatory participation in all meetings and events as a kind of oppression. Maybe this is the reason their number is not exact. Nevertheless, the activists that I had the opportunity to interview – and the ones I tried to – seem to me to be the ones whose personal

lives are allowing a higher engagement on the daily life of the collective, at least during my fieldwork.

Before starting each interview, I asked the consent from the interviewees to record our conversations. Considering the topics that were touched during the interviews and their role as activists and public figures, I explained that anonymity is not recommended on this research, and I offered a 'term of free and informed consent' explaining the research and giving the option to them to be asked previously in case I decide to cite them on the paper. All of them signed the term and only one activist asked to be questioned about the use of his words expressly. It was assured the confidentiality in specific topics in case they find necessary, giving them "the right to decline to answer any particular questions, and the right to end the interview upon request" (O'Leary: 014, 226). All the activists interviewed gave their personal email to receive a digital copy of the research paper.

3.3.2 Observation

Another research method that was used to gather primary data was observation. I observed a meeting of two GTs (group work) about a party to fundraise their protest in November and a cinema event that is being organized by the collective. This observation was fully disclosed, non-participant and unstructured. Another episode that was observed was the collective's participation during the major protest that happened in São Paulo on the 23rd of September 2017 in response of the judicial decision that allowed the usage of 'sexual reversion therapy' by psychologists in Brazil, the commonly named 'gay cure' (Langlois 2017). This observation was, however, fully participant – as I could not fight against my bias and my positionality around the theme. I took various pictures during the protest, recorded some talks with the collective's activists and shouted command words with them and the crowd. The data collected during my observation helped me on forming my analyses about how the collective structures itself and work out its horizontality.

3.3.3 Secondary Data

Besides that, but not less important, secondary data was collected from scientific articles, reports from NGOs, international organizations, government, social movements, and mostly from the collective and some activists' production to inform the background on Chapter 2. Before the fieldwork I organized an Excel sheet and started to gather and analyse all the material found on Google, YouTube and Facebook under the key expression "Revolta da Lampada". A very rich amount of material about this collective is being produced by them, and are available in newspaper articles, videos and interviews on the internet. An internet research yielded 623 web-page results, as well as 221 results on YouTube, on the 20th October 2017.

3.4 Ethical considerations

My first ethical consideration while writing the paper was how to place the collective historically within or not the Brazilian LGBT, which was explained on Chapter 2.

Secondly, even getting their consent to use their name expressly, I decided to anonymize them on the topic the explores the differences from the collective to more traditional movements on Chapter 3, as I do not want to create a situation of discomfort to my interviewees. In other specific sensitive cases I also asked the permission of two interviewees to cite their names, offering the possibility of anonymizing or omitting their contribution if they wished. At the end, both agreed to using their names on these situations.

3.5 Limitations and scope

The present paper does not intend to create generalizations about how social movements are working with an intersectional inspiration and using activism as method in Brazil, as it focused exclusively on the collective A Revolta da Lâmpada. Even with this focus, the research does not aim to simplify the findings as a consensus of the collective, as the research questions were designed to investigate the activists' views and meanings about the activism that they practice.

Chapter 4

Analysis and Research Findings

4.1 RDL's inspiration and first steps to organize the collective

During the course of the research, I had the opportunity to listen the history of RDL from different perspectives: from those who started it, to the ones who joined along the way. In 2014, the LGBT Parade of Rio de Janeiro were cancelled by lack of funding and help by different government institutions. On that year, Dilma Roussef had won her second election on a very polarized environment that started to divide people between left and right wing. That parade gathered LGBT movements and activists, but also had a huge representation of feminist and black movements. The festive aspect was very strong with provocative artistic performances, but not without meaning and political claims. It was this joining of politics, statement of different claims, articulation of different groups, and celebrations of the different bodies in the public space started to interest Gustavo⁶ – he felt these had always been missing in more traditional activist movements. Back in São Paulo, a group of friends decided to post a call through his Facebook page (Bonfiglioli 2014) asking for a meeting with friends, activists or not, to think together a different way on doing activism and to prepare the first RDL protest. More than 50 people showed up on that meeting, and a manifest was collectively written with several claims towards the *Corpo Livre*. Their first protest took place on the same spot where the lamp episode happened on the Paulista Avenue⁷.

Some of the activists interviewed, as Luis and Cadu, had participated in this first meeting. Others had already a history of activism in different collectives and movements, while many others did not, but all of them got attracted to a

⁶ Interview with Gustavo Bonfiglioli, 17 August 2017.

⁷ See <<https://www.facebook.com/events/313202068879711/>>. Accessed 20 May 2017.

different proposal on doing activism, that will be explained on the following topics.

4.2 Self-Identification and what the activists think about categorization

In the beginning of the interviews the respondents were asked which identities/categories they felt they belonged to and were given them the option to explain if they do not believe in the categorization of identities. All the activists preferred to name their different identities and some of them explained the political importance or need of using those names. I interviewed 7 gay men with different social-economic backgrounds, races, and migrant status; a bisexual woman, a lesbian one, an older heterosexual black woman, and a trans man – as it can be seen on Appendix A. Most of the gay men preferred to identify themselves as *bicha* or *viado*, as these names better reflect their reality within the Brazilian context and are commonly used as insults.

Ariel⁸ explained that he feels belonging to all letters from the LGBT letter soup. He tells that never felt himself as a lesbian, but as a *sapatão*, and does not agree of how this term is seen nowadays, expressing only relationships between two women. He says that there is a whole ‘*sapatão* culture’ that englobes lesbians and trans men. For him, differently from discovering himself as *sapatão*, to identify himself as trans man was a thought political choice. As he allowed himself to experience being *sapatão*, he understood that his masculinity was very important to him, and to identify as a trans man would make people take his masculinity more seriously. However, Ariel also identifies as *bicha*, but this process happened because of the society’s opinion about him. He started to be read

⁸ Interview with Ariel Nobre, 1 September 2017.

as *bicha*, as he believes that this is the masculinity – more effeminate – he expresses on other people’s eyes, and also had suffered homophobic attacks because of this image.

Luana⁹ feels comfortable affirming herself as *sapatão* as she feels comfortable despite her privileges as white, middle class, with a university’s degree, although she knows that this is not the reality to many women in many places. She believes we are living in a period where it is necessary, and political, to name the identities but hopes that in the future, we will no longer need to use those boxes. Luis¹⁰ believes the identity boxes are necessary nowadays to fight politically, as trends like “we are all humans” do not help much. For him, it is necessary to distinguish how you identify yourself politically and how you see yourself personally. Hence, he identifies himself as gay publicly, but on a personal level, if he feels attraction towards a woman he will live the experience.

Vitor¹¹ told me how he explains to his students why he uses the word *viado* and not gay. He says that the words have important political meaning, and when he affirms himself as *viado*, he is claiming a place different from the hygienic one that the word gay gained throughout the years. He says that this conservative process was also promoted by the so called ‘Brazilian Homosexual Movement’ in order to separate the gay men who deserves respect from the more effeminate and peripheric (and mostly black) *viados* and *bichas*. For him, being white, middle class, with a PhD on USP (University of São Paulo), university’s teacher, he already has many marks that sanitizes his body. Hence, he feels the need to express his identity as an act of resistance against this sanitation.

Gustavo¹² agrees with Vitor and explains that it is a paradoxical relationship, as he believes on a hypothetical world where these categorizations should not matter. However, it does not matter if he agrees or not with that, as while the different bodies get different value considering the way they are perceived, it is necessary to embrace those categorizations in some levels to gather in com-

⁹ Interview with Luana Torres, 18 September 2017.

¹⁰ Interview with Luis Arruda, 22 August 2017.

¹¹ Interview with Vitor Grunvald, 4 September 2017.

¹² Interview with Gustavo Bonfiglioli, 17 August 2017.

munity and fight together for legitimacy. Talking about critics towards identitarian movements, which blame them for promoting the weakening of the human rights, workers, and leftist agendas, he believes that it was a necessary political phenomenon in order to understand their own specificities. Gustavo says that now is the time to think on new methodological paradigms to promote the co-existence of each identity and to create a platform where these identities get together.

I had assumed before my field work that the activists from RDL would have a different way of seeing the categorization of identities, which had characterized the Brazilian LGBT movement with its unwanted consequences. This assumption was based on the subjective and social experience of abjection as a privileged means for the construction of a collective ethic (Miskolci 2010: 58), where naming those identities would not be more necessary. However, my assumption stemmed from a mistaken premise about the Queer theory, as even Foucault (as cited by Miskolci 2010: 66) and later on Butler (cited by Colling 2010: 2) had defended a tactical use of identity, in specific contexts and short-term, but in the long term, defended the need for a non-identity strategy. The activists explained what they thought about the division of identities, giving political meaning to the different categories due to the political context that they are living in. But more than that, they recognize the importance of the identitarian movements to understand each one's specificities, going beyond the debate that I thought I would be able to present on my study, working the different perspectives strategically.

4.3 Difference among the collective and traditional movements

While investigating the reasons each activist had to start to do activism and what did attract them to the collective, it was possible to understand their view about more traditional movements in Brazil and why RDL's proposal was more appealing to them.

One of the interviewees said that the movements they¹³ were involved were very cisgendered and, even though comprised both men and women, the men's voices were dominant. According to them, at the collective everybody leaves their curriculum outside the door before a meeting, and share their experiences and knowledges as equals. They told me an interesting story of how other movements can perceive the collective negatively depending of the space they are occupying. During a 'women act' organized by feminists, they had the care of not mentioning the free body and the intersectional platform from RDL to avoid discussions about men's oppression towards women.

Two of the interviewees had participated in leftist groups and one of them found it very hermetic. The words and language that were used, the colleges and delegations, everything was bureaucratic rather than festive. They believe that this kind of activism is not inviting, and many people simple gave up because it can be boring. For them, the methodological possibility of doing activism by balancing between politics and being diverse and festive, started to interest them. Indeed, the festive aspect and use of artivism are, together with the intersectional perspective, the appealing characteristics of RDL for most of its activists.

Another activist pointed out the heteronormativity in some LGBT movements, displayed by struggles to get married, fighting for the right to adopt, etc. However, they asked: "Who are the *bichas* that get married? Who are the *bichas* that adopt? Do the *bichas* from the periphery adopt? Do the *bichas* from the periphery get married? I don't think so. Do the *bichas* from periphery do artificial insemination? Even less!" According to them, for many LGBTs this is enough, but not for them. They also question: "Why do I need to be *bicha*? Why do I need to be effeminate? Why do I need to wear dress and put lipstick on? It is not necessary, but if I want I will do it!" This position aligns with critical views towards some positions of the mainstream LGBT movement. These claim that focusing on a rights-based approach and the judicialization of its claims, helps

¹³ The interviewees did not request the use of gender neutral pronouns. However, to avoid their identification on this topic, I choose to use "they" in the singular, considering its historical usage (Singular 'they' and the many reasons why it's correct, 2009).

to create a sanitized image of the homosexual and a 'sexual stratification' within the imaginary LGBT community.

Some of them explained that it is very important to them to be on a space that acknowledge the complexity of their own intersectional identities, as some identity-based movements do not open the space to discuss the specificities of people who embody different intersections, as sexuality and race; sexuality with race and class, or all of those and HIV status. One activist told me about a conversation with another activist from the collective, and this person said that they believe that RDL should focus only on LGBT issues, because on their point of view is what the collective does better. This talk made my interviewee ask themselves if they want to be on a place which does not see them entirely, as it is what the society already offers to them. This conversation shows how the debates around their intersectional inspiration are not completely established among the activists. As coming from different traditional identity based movements, the intersectional perspective is something that needs to be constructed in their daily activism.

Most of the interviewees explained in different ways how it is necessary to have a better perspective of the society by an intersectional confluence of power relations, as many other movements are very closed and do not dialogue with other groups. Some gave the example of feminist groups that do not talk with trans women, or black movements that do not dialogue with LGBTs or if they do so, do not dialogue with white people; many LGBT movements were coopted only by white-middle class-gays, a criticism also made against the collective in its beginning. They agree that it happened for a reason, but what had attracted them is that the collective gives an overview, passing through different kind of oppressions, as it is impossible to live in society if you do not have a perspective of how this society is composed.

4.4 *Corpo Livre*: How the activists see this intersectional platform

“The free body... is a whole horizon, right? As you get closer to it, it walks further, then you start discovering other things. The body who ages, the body with HIV, the body who suicides, and also need to be respected, right?”¹⁴ (Oliveira 2017).

The intersectionality among different causes, oppressions and privileges is without doubt what attracted most of the collective’s activists to be part of RDL. The respect towards the importance of the identitarian movements is present, but it is also very strong the belief that it is necessary to fight together with different groups, acknowledging the intersections between those bodies.

In the brainstormings that happened during the collective’s first meeting, the conclusion was that they should articulate their actions around the body. This was based on the idea that different bodies have different values for the society. According to Gustavo¹⁵, when the black movements says, “the cheapest flesh on the market is the black flesh”, is because the black bodies are undervalued in comparison with the white body. When a LGBT person receive a lamp on their face is because this body deserves to be beaten, because is a body that has less values. All these bodies are different, have different privileges, but have something in common: they are oppressed for being how they are. So, from these discussions they found the common denominator, the free body. The idea that all the different bodies need to be free and live with dignity, with access to resources, to jobs, to affection, to sex, to whatever they wish.

Talking about this intersectional inspiration, Jose¹⁶ says that it is the best thing they have at RDL. To understand all these differences when you cross those different bodies. He gave the example about how diverse are the oppressions suffered by the different activists from the gay bubble inside the collective. The differences between a white middle class gay man from São Paulo as Luis, to him as a gay man from the countryside, coming from a more conservative

¹⁴ Interview with Cadu Oliveira, 21 and 24 September 2017.

¹⁵ Interview with Gustavo Bonfiglioli, 17 August 2017.

¹⁶ Interview with Jose Alberto, 29 August 2017.

family. The differences between Andre, gay man from the Northeast of the country, and Cadu, an effeminate black gay man, to Gustavo, a white middle class gay man, but who is also fat and extremely *fechativo*¹⁷. He tells that those people are read in many different ways, even all of them being gays. According to him, this intersectional inspiration is a ‘mess’ that helps them to understand that things are different to everybody regarding their own embodied experiences, considering the place they occupy, their social class, their race, etc.

Vitor¹⁸ elaborates that some people see intersectionality as practice, and some as perspective, and he believes that it needs to be both together. To have an intersectional perspective does not mean that there is an intersectional practice, because the simple intention of intertwining and articulating these differentiations does not mean that these articulations are being practiced. However, he sees that the collective has an intersectional practice, reached with more or less success, what will be analysed in a specific topic.

Different activists that were interviewed brought up, in different ways, their concern to join together different oppressed bodies to the collective, in order to see their intersectionality not only as a perspective, but also as real practice. They say that the collective started mostly with middle class gay men and for a long time they were the majority – a source of discomfort to them and one of their biggest challenges. In order to counter this situation, the collective has worked on gathering forces with different identitarian groups, asking for the help from black and transgender activists for specific events for example, and this relationship has helped them to bring those different embodied experiences to the collective.

As the example given in the previous topic, there are tensions around the use of the term intersectionality inside the collective. Luana¹⁹ told me that she felt uncomfortable many times during meetings and could not name this

¹⁷ *Fechativo* would be the adjective from the verb to close. This term is used to explain people who gain the attention where they go by the way they dress up and or express themselves. In this case, letting very clear that he is an effeminate gay. See footnote n. 10.

¹⁸ Interview with Vitor Grunvald, 4 September 2017.

¹⁹ Interview with Luana Torres, 18 September 2017.

feeling, until she read an article from Houria Bouteldja criticizing the use of intersectionality on the context of indigenous Islamic communities in France, defending a decolonial perspective. Luana says that she is still working on understand better these perspectives, as she is afraid that this intersectional inspiration can help in silencing more marginalized identity groups.

As explained in Chapter 1, the collective understands the body as sites of cultural meaning, social experience and political resistance (Harcourt et al. 2016: 149), and chose as common denominator the *corpo livre*, to gather different oppressed bodies.

4.5 *Fervo tambem é luta*

Fervo tambem é luta ('Party is also fight') has an overall meaning perceived by all the interviewees as celebrating the different oppressed bodies in the public spaces, the same spaces that do not allow their expression and their existence. It was thought as method of activism since the first meeting, before the first protest in 2014.

As shown before, the collective was inspired by the independent LGBT parade that happened in Rio de Janeiro in 2014. Not unlike the Brazilian Carnival in the streets, it is far from being just a party, but is also political on the sense of a democratic celebration that gathers people with different social markers on the public space. Interestingly enough, as the LGBT parades served as inspiration to this RDL's motto, according to Jose²⁰, the last two LGBT Parades of São Paulo began with an activist shouting *Fervo tambem é luta*, a sign that their message is starting to be assimilate by other movements.

Expressing an opinion shared by many activist, Cida²¹ said that only talking about theirs causes can be very tiring and who is listening is more likely to disperse. However, if you bring the *fervo*, people will come because of it but

²⁰ Interview with Jose Alberto, 29 August 2017.

²¹ Interview with Cida Baptista, 4 September 2017.

will end up listening and assimilate the messages that are being shared by the different speeches in between the gigs, or even by the political messages that are being shared on the songs and different art expressions that happen during the events. This view pretty much links this motto to the activism practiced by the collective, that will be explored on the following topic.

Navigating on the various answers, other meanings could be acknowledged, enlarging the meaning of public spaces, as the one shared by Ariel²². For him:

“I say that I question myself today regarding that motto because my activism went to a place for the right to life, for the right to the sun, for the right to the day, for the right to formal work spaces. Because both the trans male and female identities are still very connected, in the case of women at night and ours at night as well, but also the private jail. So, I think my discourse today, more than *ferver*, I also want health, education, and employment. My activism, let's say it overflowed... *Revolta* is part of this transition. But I want, the *ferro tambem é luta* also overflows. I want the daytime *ferro*. I want the *ferro* in the firm, I want the *ferro* in the formal working spaces. I want this political *ferro* in other spaces that do not come right from the start when you talk about *ferro tambem é luta*.” (Nobre 2017)

4.6 Activism

The first time I saw an activist performance from RDL was in 2015. At that time, inspired by Eduardo Cunha's declaration – President of the Congress Lower House – that the discussion about the legalization of abortion would only happen over his corpse. The collective organized the *Passaco de Cadaver do Eduardo Cunha* ('Catwalk over Eduardo Cunha's corpse') (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2015a), where different people walked over a doll with the congressman's face, indicating that the fight for women's rights over their bodies would not be silenced (Grunvald 2015: 37-38). In the same year, one of the biggest and powerful Evangelical churches from Brazil released a video showing a paramilitary army called 'The Altar's Gladiators Army' (Exercito Gladiadores do Altar 2015), showing a real threat to LGBT people and afro-religious groups. In response to that, RDL produced a video presenting *Amazonas do Ferro* (Party's Amazon) (A Revolta da

²² Interview with Ariel Nobre, 1 September 2017.

Lâmpada 2015b), where a group composed by many different bodies made fun of the military language, while dancing and shouting the *'Manifesto do Corpo Livre'* ('Free Body Manifesto').

Vitor²³, as an activist and academic, is involved in various discussions around activism. For him, activism is a practice that belongs to the political arena and to the art field. However, everybody does not easily identify it as belonging to those both fields. These practices subvert traditional political instruments, using different forms of artistic expressions. In some way, the activism is this grey area between art and politics. Talking about the activism proposed by the collective, he believes that it is built with a different language to try to connect people on a way that traditional political languages are not able to connect, in an attempt to create a different methodology on doing activism.

For someone as Rodrigo²⁴ - who is a trained artist who has always being involved with activism, and choose not to be a commercial actor by the need to communicate not only with a minority – the experience with RDL has made him think on the activism that happens through the art of affection. More than producing political artistic performances, it creates affective networks, therefore more revolutionary. Different activists told me about a performance made by Rodrigo in one of their protests called 'Contact Zone' (Abreu 2016). At that time epidemics of different sexual transmitted diseases, as syphilis, besides the hate epidemic promoted by the polarization lived in the Brazilian society. Thus, Rodrigo wanted to give a new meaning to these epidemics by creating a network of affection with the people that were following the protest. He walked asking the crowd to tell him experiences of love that had impressed them, giving a red bracelet to each one. The persons who were approached reacted with surprise and shared beautiful stories, and when they identified other people with the bracelets, they shared spontaneously their stories and thoughts about the performance.

From structured projects to improvised ones, the collective has different ways of practising activism. Through the discovery of their bodies' possibilities, political statements can be made with little resources, as said by Mourão (2015:

²³ Interview with Vitor Grunvald, 4 September 2017.

²⁴ Interview with Rodrigo Abreu, 24 August 2017.

63-64). The collective organized a workshop about *ativim* requested by MASP ('Museum of Art from São Paulo'), and an activist that collaborates with the collective, called *Leandrinha Du Art*²⁵. In this event, wheelchair trans women performed by lying on the floor, in front of the museum at Paulista avenue, with a poster: 'The men who desire me, kill me!' (*A Revolta da Lâmpada* 2017c), explicitly linking the contradiction between desire and oppression. Using the four key characteristics for a successful activist performance proposed by Mourão (2015: 67) as a framework to analyse the performances described above, it is clear that they attend all of them.

However, RDL also interprets other kinds of performances as activism. Two interviewees made the example of one table of discussions about the pathologization of trans identities where a trans woman from the collective was responsible for bringing the microphone to the public for questions. And different from what normally happens in this format of event, she did her role with fun, entertaining the public and engaging them to participate more, and not being only listeners. Another form of artistical expression that was recently used is photography. In response to the recent attacks to arts and culture, with the demonization of the nudity – as explained in Chapter 1 - the collective organized a photoshoot²⁶ celebrating the beauty of different naked bodies, gathering women, *bichas*, black bodies, trans bodies, etc (*A Revolta da Lâmpada* 2017g).

Thus, activism is a new concept that is not consensual yet, probably because is something that is still under construction. Seeing themselves as artists or activists has being a process for RDL as well. Many of them had this image of what is art and what is to be an artist as something that would require an institution behind to confirm it, as it happens to painters in relation to galleries and museums or to singers in relation to spaces that embrace them to show their art. It took some time for them – at least to the ones that do not do art as a living – to embrace the feeling that discovering their bodies' possibilities and creating/experiencing these performances, they are creating political art. They discover that anyone can also be an artist/activist and that they are delivering their

²⁵ See <<https://www.facebook.com/LeandrinhaDuArt/>>. Accessed 7 November 2017.

²⁶ See <<https://MeuKooPraCensura.tumblr.com/>>. Accessed 9 November 2017.

political message on a different way, a way that goes through emotions, as only art used to do.

4.7 Let's talk about praxis!

The collective has the purpose to be horizontal, which means to not have a chosen leadership or a structured hierarchy. According to them, this is a construction that they have to build every day, as it is easier to see in other collectives the verticality as a rule. The horizontality also means that they are autonomous representatives to talk about and by the collective in whatever space they are occupying. For Luis²⁷, a challenge to keep the horizontality is the size of the collective. According to him and others, it is very important to bring more and different bodies to be part of the collective. However, with more people, different methods will have to be elaborated to keep it horizontal and spontaneous, as he sees the spontaneity as one of the collective's main characteristics.

The collective is not always a space of consensus, there are many things they agree on, but it is also a space of dissent and dispute. Vitor²⁸ explains that before he became part of the collective, it already had a favourable position towards the law that criminalizes homophobia. He believes that this agenda could be legitimate if the laws in Brazil were not used concretely for the imprisonment of certain types of people, mostly black and poor. In that sense, he does not believe that justice and the police – which are institutions they fight against in their political practices – will ultimately save the society from something like prejudice or homophobia. Thus, he thinks that the criminalization of homophobia will become another device of the incarceration of the black population in Brazil, which is already undergoing a latent genocide. His position very much aligns with the critical view demonstrated by Carrara (2012: 143) about the 'legal utopia' in Brazil, which does not take into consideration how power functions

²⁷ Interview with Luis Arruda, 22 August 2017.

²⁸ Interview with Vitor Grunvald, 4 September 2017.

and can lead to law reform that actually expand the reach of violent and harmful systems.

Explaining how they organize themselves, the word chaos was mentioned many times on a funny mood. They have different online platforms with more or less delimited purposes. The WhatsApp group was originally created with the intention of sharing personal issues, invite each other for parties and have fun. However, because of its practicality, it became an important tool to share news that concerns the group's actions, points for the next meeting's agenda, ideas about events, interventions and mostly to brainstorm all of these. After realizing that it was being unproductive to try to decide about all ideas and events to be organized on their meetings, they got a software called Slack, where they divide the different themes, building different GTs (work groups). Since the beginning of this process, they have been trying to keep the WhatsApp group just for their personal affection relations. People join the different GTs considering their personal interest or connection with the theme, their knowledge about it and or their intention to help on the organization.

I was curious to know how they decide about the different themes and events, considering that the free body encapsulates so many different issues to be discussed. Many activists explained that they have three major events during the year: the *Revolta da Lâmpada* parade in the street²⁹, the 'CICLA das 5'³⁰ and the monthly events on MAM. The other events are organized mostly by invitations received by the collective from institutions, universities, museums, and other collectives/social movements. The themes are chosen mostly based on Brazilian social/cultural/political context, following important discussions that are currently happening within the Brazilian society. An example of how the collective works this out is their monthly talk with the youth in partnership with MAM. One of the museum's entrances is in a major park in São Paulo, *Parque do Ibirapuera*. Here, every weekend, hundreds of teenagers from different social

²⁹ The collective's major protest that happen every year in the end of November (near the date when happened the lamp's episode), starting on the Paulista avenue and finishing on Largo do Arouche (a square in the city center, place of resistance for the LGBT community in São Paulo).

³⁰ 'CICLA das 5' is an annual cycle of lectures and roundtable discussions promoted by FESPSP (Foundation School of Sociology and Politics of São Paulo) and *A Revolta da Lâmpada*.

classes gather to skate, listen to music, flirt, and have fun. Through events on their Facebook page they announce the theme of the next talk to everybody that would like to join. However, the teenagers that are already at that public space are the ones who are invited to participate using non-usual ways of persuasion, as little parties with music and artistic performances. Once they got their attention, they propose the talk.

On April 4th 2017 the new national school curriculum was announced by the Brazilian Government to journalists. Two days later, a new version of the document was published excluding all the references to ‘gender identity’ and ‘sexual orientation’, without any splurge or comment about it (Cancian 2017). On April 23rd the collective organized the talk: ‘Gender in Schools: past and future of LGBT youth’. Considering that black people, women, LGBT, fat people, people living with HIV are systematically expelled from the spaces of power, but are also expelled from the spaces of affection. As this will make it harder to talk about ‘gender identity’ and ‘sexual orientation’ in school, the collective proposed discussions around sadness, depression and bullying, bringing diverse activists’ bodies to tell their stories and discuss with the public (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2017a).

In May a theme that many of the group found important was addressed: ‘Masculinities: Are Men Educated to Be Violent?’. Apart from the obvious important reasons, the theme was also chosen considering that one of RDL’s activist, Ariel, who is a trans man, had experienced hostility for representing a different masculinity, as he does not take hormones and paint a fake moustache on his face. Bringing men with different races, social classes, gender identities and masculinities, they proposed discussions as: what is it to be a man? How did you find out you’re a man? Did someone have to tell you? Who? Considering that women are questioning what it is to be a woman and their place in the world and that they have organized and conquered rights over the years, they are still and strong in the struggle for gender equality. But when will men participate in the debate on gender inequality? Is changing the world for the better a task for women alone? The event ended with guests and activists sealing a pact of listening to the women. They publicly admitted that reinventing masculinity into a healthy culture is only possible in political and affective connection with women. The pact was sealed with a collective hug. Man with man, skin with skin, eyes on

eyes: affection and hug (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2017b). A similar process took place in July of that year, this time addressing the topic of HIV-based discrimination (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2017d).

Not all themes are chosen unanimously among them. According to Luana³¹, she and Gustavo were trying to bring ‘fatphobia’ to light many times over the collective’s meetings, but there was always a more “urgent” theme to be discussed. During the discussions about the talk in August both had to stay still, and the group agreed on bringing the theme ‘The Fat Body is Beautiful’. Activists from different generations, races and gender identities discussed models and stereotypes that marginalize the fat body in our daily lives (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2017e).

Another good example of how the intersectional inspiration is put in practice by the collective in their actions is the ‘CICLA das 5’. Working together and by the invitation of FESPSP, the collective and the foundation organize annual cycle seminars to discuss different issues within academy, activists, and the broader public. In the 2017’s edition, the umbrella theme was ‘Work’s Uncertainties’ (‘Seminário FESPSP 2017 discutirá as Incertezas do Trabalho’ 2017), and the collective participated discussing different aspects of ‘Labor and Vulnerable Bodies: The Company Imitates the Society’. The tables were mediated and made by activists from cut-outs that prioritize the diversity of race, ability, class, gender, sexuality, age, and HIV status (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2017f).

The invitation for 2017’s protest is an example of how the collective operates as meshworks with other social movements, to use the analogy by Escobar (2009: 393-404). On the text, RDL intersects its intersectional inspiration and praxis with activism and the idea of celebration of diverse bodies in the public space, bringing a strong message of resistance against the censorship promoted by conservative sectors with the theme: ‘*Corpo Livre É a Cura! Meu KOO para a Censura!*’ (‘Free body is the cure, my ass to the censorship’). “We want to give a response from the streets to the neo-fascist avalanche that censures, precarizes and criminalizes our bodies, our art, our expressions, rights and public policies to make a smoke curtains to divert attention from the largest slurry tsu-

³¹ Interview with Luana Torres, 18 September 2017.

nami ever experienced by politics in recent decades. The ass will have a fundamental role in our march. Look at the irony: the ass is one of the only things that all world has in common, but it is the most censored body part of all” (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2017h). Apart from their own activists, other collectives and activists were invited to perform and talk about the intersex body, the body in street situation, the LGBT peripheric body, the asexual body, the sex workers body, the body from Afro religions, the refugee body, and others.

4.8 How the activist share knowledge: Affection on doing activism

Since I got to know the collective, I always found interesting their very well-grounded discourses through posts on Facebook, videos or texts promoting their events. Many times, a very witty language is used, mixing up and creating new words – which makes translations sounds very boring. Before fieldwork, I did not know that the collective had people who came from academia, and identified some words only with their traditional use (i.e. intersectionality). The question arose as to know how the knowledge is shared among the activists, considering that they came from so many different backgrounds or bubbles. Do they study together? Do they bring readings to discuss on their meetings? How do they share their own embodied experiences? Do they feel a link with academia?

This link with academia was not denied, and it could not be different, as some activists from the collective pursue a master or PhD degree, and some of those are also researchers and university teachers. Vitor³², one of the academic activists from the collective says that a very complicated process of delegitimization of academic knowledge is taking place within activist’s circles in Brazil nowadays, mainly on the black, trans and LGBT activism. He agrees that the academia is a very masculine, white and cisgender space, and should be denounced for this. Nevertheless, the academia should not be left aside as a space of legitimate dispute, power and authority, nor the ideas, reflections and

³² Interview with Vitor Grunvald, 4 September 2017.

knowledge that are produced there. As one of the collective's mottos is the occupation of public spaces, as the streets, the academy should be occupied by the bodies who are historically excluded from it. Thus, he believes it is necessary to claim this space, and turn this space on a place that do not consider these voices only objects of study, but used also as an empowering tool.

Jose³³, another academic activist, explained that the very "academical language" is not well seen or at least avoided inside the collective. He believes that the collective is thinking like Boa Ventura, understanding the existence of different epistemologies, giving the right value to the knowledge acquired by each different embodied experience. Cadu³⁴ says that they must be in touch with the academia, have this exchange of knowledge, but need to "keep a foot outside, it's what keep us on the reality, it's the foot on the ground". For him, the collective's language cannot be too academic as it becomes less accessible. According to Amanda³⁵, "at *A Revolta da Lâmpada* your curriculum must stay at the door, outside, before you get on the meeting. You will leave your lattes there and will participate here like me as equals". She says that it is not a prerequisite to have formal knowledges about different issues, as they are shared day by day. Although, while participating in events, the person that talks about the issue that is being discussed is the person who has the embodied experience, who had suffered that form of oppression, and has the positionality to do so.

Hence, the knowledge is shared mostly orally, during their meetings, events, and their personal relationship within the group. Stories about endless and chaotic meetings were shared, describing their challenges to focus and discuss the practical issues, but always with the wish not to silence any voice. And during those meetings, in between practical discussions, the activists share personal problems, situations, and stories. They open up about things they would try to ignore and forget if they were not being part of the group. The collective became a safe space where they can speak, listen, be listened, learn without judgments, support, and help each other.

³³ Interview with Jose Alberto, 29 August 2017.

³⁴ Interview with Cadu Oliveira, 21 and 24 August 2017.

³⁵ Interview with Amanda Alencar, 18 August 2017.

The word affection came up naturally to explain different situations by most of the activists. Through their answers, it is highlighted how the combination of this intersectional platform with the affectionate relations they build among them is a conduit for learning. As each one of the activists belong to a different bubble, or to a different social cultural reality, these different embodied experiences teach them how is to live on a reality that they do not know. The affection on this regard comes by the respect and patience that they have on helping the other to understand the specific issues from the different bodies and causes, deconstructing their deep and rooted views, as something that are being discussed can bring prejudices they did not know they had. According to them, the activism scene can be tough. Without this affection, if they use inappropriate words on a Facebook's post, someone could get very upset and would not react like they do.

Ariel³⁶ told the story about his moving from Rio de Janeiro to São Paulo and his beginning with the collective. He felt that he was being expelled from Rio, as he could not find jobs and living there was too expensive. He was still questioning his gender identity, so he felt fragile and lost, without money and without work prospects. He arrived at RDL desperate for people to recognize him as a trans man, to treat him on the masculine, and needed a network that helped him to strengthen himself and understand what was happening with him and the world around him. He credits what he is now to the political consciousness and generosity of the collective's activists and explains that the idea of the body as their common denominator, as they use the body to feel their own oppressions but also to connect them with bodies who suffer different oppressions. The oppressions intersect with each other, as the privileges and the affections too. For him, this safe place of talking and listening the other showed him that his suffer is not the only one that exists. This sharing helps them to overcome their suffering and give them strength to fight. It is very clear how the collective believes in the 'politics of affection', as explained by Brown and Pickerill (2009: 32-33).

³⁶ Interview with Ariel Nobre, 1 September 2017.

Vitor³⁷ sees this affection as a kind of politics: not only the dispute on institutional places, for rights, for public recognition, but as the construction of affectionate relationships which do not result in disrespect and oppression – what would be micro politics by Foucault. Hence, their concern for not oppressing anybody. Nobody is obligated to participate in any activity they do not want or cannot participate.

4.9 Motivations to do activism: process to social change

The questions designed to investigate what drives their work as activists, which kind of change they would like to see through their work as activists and if RDL has short, medium and long term aims or challenges brought very interesting findings about the kind of activism that the collective does and their view about what they do not do.

As many other movements, the RDL started elaborating a very poetic – but also very pragmatic manifesto (A Revolta da Lâmpada 2014). Their claims included the implementation of different public policies and the approval of diverse law reforms that could influence different oppressed groups. Many activists mentioned the existence of the manifesto and that it still serves as a north for their fight. However, their activism is concerned with very practical issues, having to work on a reactive mood, considering the political crises and the conservative wave that is plaguing the arts, culture, and the most oppressed groups.

Some activists showed their deep appreciation on other movements that do a more “community based work”, helping oppressed groups in their basic needs. Sometimes this appreciation was shown as a critic about the work that the collective does, asking themselves, what is more important? Is that the right question?

A lot was said about their roundtables with LGBT and or peripheric youth, events at universities’ conferences, workshops, and the reaction from

³⁷ Interview with Vitor Grunvald, 4 September 2017.

common people who are walking in the street and start to follow their protests. They find pride and joy in seeing a little seed planted in someone's heart, hoping that their message had touched these hearts and it will be replicated in their house, in their daily relationships with different people. It is very strong the sense that nothing will change/happen if it is not promoted a cultural and social change in the society. Hence, there is this way of looking their activism as a process to promote social change.

Of course that the collective also tries to give attention to more pragmatic agendas, community based work and implementation of public policies and law reform, but it is impossible to embrace all areas in which a social movement can contribute. The idea of connecting and collaborating with other movements was point out by many of the interviewees as a short term aim from the collective, which again resonates with the idea of meshworks proposed by Escobar (2009: 393-404). Different independent and horizontal movements focusing on your own specificities but collaborating and given strength to each other ways of fighting.

Chapter 5

Conclusion

The present paper attempted to answer the question: *What does mean to the activists from A Revolta da Lâmpada to do activism using activism as method, on a collective with intersectional inspiration that has the free body as common denominator of struggle?*

I had assumed a very critical view from the collective in relation to identity politics and how a rights-based approach and essentialist discourse from the traditional and mainstream Brazilian LGBT movement. However, through the various answers the activist expressed their belief in the political need of:

- a) Embracing your own identities and creating safe spaces;
- b) Fighting for each identity specificities;
- c) The importance of working in solidarity with bodies who suffer different or intertwined kind of oppressions.

The collective go beyond the established debate in identity politics, using it strategically when necessary, but trying to find intersectional ways to collaborate with other movements and fight against the oppressions that are structural in our society. The different possibilities that intersectionality as inspiration entails to the collective's praxis is the common denominator found on the activist's responses.

There seems to be a need to understand the intersection of your own embodied identities integrally, what cannot be found even in movements who work with specific intersections of race and sexuality, for example. The safe space to learn about each other embodied experiences worked through their affectionate relationship is also fundamental by the overview that it gives from the diverse society they are embedded. The hermetic and bureaucratic way of organizing different social movements, which is also expressed on their communication with the public is another important factor, as they believe on the need of rethinking new methodologies on doing activism that embraces a festive aspect of celebration of their bodies, as well the use of their bodies to express a political message through art.

The common denominator of struggle found by the movement to work in solidarity is the free body, the claim that all the bodies who suffer different kind of oppressions and receive different values from the society need to resist together and celebrate its own specificities. The body is the centre of the collective's framework, as it is seen as site and mean of resistance and celebration. The discovery of your own bodies possibilities and need to occupy different spaces, as streets, academia, companies, etc., is used as means of personal empowerment to promote collective empowerment to other oppressed bodies. Not detached from the body lies the emotions, as affection within the collective, on creating a safe space of learning, understanding and reception but also on establishing an affection network with anyone who is open to listen their message. The celebration of those bodies is also embedded in pleasure, as they do not believe it is necessary to be serious all the time and avoid the fun on sharing experiences with others.

Activism joins it all together as a strong methodological tool to reach other hearts and minds, finding out different forms of communicating and informing, exploring the hidden possibilities of oppressed bodies, not denying its emotions while spreading political and practical messages, and using them to connect with people on the way only art could ever do.

The collective believes in a different way of organizing social movements, avoiding institutionalization and hierarchical models. The horizontality gives them freedom and a lot of challenges to deal with different views and senses of urgency. Consensus is not reached every time and there are conflictive opinions among the activists about different issues. However again, the creation of this safe and affectionate space helps them in understanding each one experiences and needs. The political crises and the creation on factoids around gender and sexuality issues put the collective on a very reactive agenda, demanding their urgency on creating responses to the different issues they would like to work on. But through and in between these reactions they manage to negotiate and give their message to various issues concerning different kind of oppressions.

From the field work, it is clear the way that they try to promote an intersectional view of the society through themes that matters to everybody. Working on themes like HIV, labour market and masculinities, they bring the

particularities and different perspectives about the theme depending of each body positionality. Black LGBT bodies, travesti bodies, trans men bodies, white middle class gay bodies have different experiences in relation to those themes and suffer different oppressions. In working those differences, they show the need of gathering forces and work in solidarity with each other.

The collective established a manifesto with all the claims that they find necessary to free the different bodies from its oppressions. This manifesto is still remembered and used in events when it is appropriate. It is a cardinal point that guides their work. However, as the collective and its activists evolve with every internal and external interaction, they must learn how to put intersectionality in practice and their body and artivism as means to do activism. This leads to their actions having to be at the same time very practical, reacting to the political crises and the conservative wave in the Brazilian society, but also very symbolic, trying to connect with people on an emotional level.

This way of acting, at the same time that can put some activists to think on which kind of activism is more urgent, gave the notion to the collective of the need to work on solidarity with different social movements, which have different focus and work on different causes, on a rich collaboration to give strength to the different actors.

To embrace their way of acting on a more symbolical level, talking through art, emotions and embodies experiences with the aim to promote deep social and cultural change is a path that they are walking and learning with their daily experiences. This experience has shown being very successful on the way they use this intersectional inspiration and put it in practice, working strategically with identity politics, view that need to be acknowledge by scholars on the development, social movements, and intersectionality fields. As stated on the methodological chapter, the situated knowledge from social movements has a lot to inform and contribute on these areas, finding ways of going beyond academical debates and showing that is possible to put identity, intersectionality, body and artivism in the daily practice of social movements.

Word Count (excluding references and bibliography): 17.414

Appendix A

NAME	AGE	OCCUPATION	SELF-IDENTIFICATION
Andre Bandim	33	Adman and bar's owner	Gay man from the Northeast
Gustavo Bonfiglioli	30	Diversity consultant and artist	<i>Bicha gorda</i> (fat faggot), gender disobedient
Amanda Alencar	28	Cultural producer and actress	Bisexual, white, middle class, full of privileges
Cadu Oliveira	39	Studied Marketing and People Management, give lectures, etc.	<i>Bicha</i> , black, effeminate, out of the standard
Luis Arruda	40	Lawyer and admin	Effeminate gay
Rodrigo Abreu	32	Actor, performer, director, art producer, cleaner...	Gay from the periphery
Cida Baptista	59	Handcrafts woman	Black heterosexual woman
Vi Grunvald	34	PhD, Anthropologist, university's teacher, cinema director, photographer	<i>Viado/Bicha</i>
Jose Alberto	35	PhD, Psychologist, university's teacher, SP City Hall mental health coordinator	Cis man, white, gay
Ariel Nobre	30	Visual artist	Trans man, <i>sapatao</i> , <i>bicha</i>
Luana Torres	36	Banker, student of Psychology	<i>Sapatao</i>

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