The technopolitical possibility. Contemporary activism and dispositives for action. The cases of the feminist networks and Rexiste

La posibilidad tecnopolítica. Activismos contemporáneos y dispositivos para la acción. Los casos de las redes feministas y Rexiste

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This article analyzes the political production of young activists, recognizable in contemporary and technopolitical codes. We approach to the activism that uses communicative technologies that make possible the hegemony dispute through which young activists project their codes and values around disputes and conflicts. The analysis draws from two youth experiences of political activism that took place after the YoSoy132 movement.

KEYWORDS: Political Activism; Collective Actions; Youth subjectivities; Technopolitics; Communicative Technologies.

En este artículo se analiza la producción política de jóvenes activistas que puede reconocerse en clave contemporánea y tecnopolítica. Se aproxima al activismo que emplea tecnologías comunicativas para disputar la hegemonía a través de la cual sus participantes proyectan sus códigos y valores en torno a un conflicto. Para el análisis se recurre a dos experiencias juveniles del activismo político posteriores al movimiento YoSoy132.

PALABRAS CLAVE: *Activismo político; Acciones colectivas; Subjetividades juveniles, Tecnopolítica; Tecnologías comunicativas.*

INTRODUCTION

As a result of the large number of authors and researchers focused on their understanding, there is a variety of studies on technology and digital culture. The dazzling significance of technology is no exception when analyzing social movements and activism. This has been evident in the sociopolitical experiences of recent years, from the Arab Spring to *Nuit Debout*, throughout Occupy Wall Street, *Indignados*, and *YoSoy132*, the role of technologies has been relevant and characteristic in new political production. In the words of activist and researcher Benson (2015) "since 2010, we have witnessed a remarkable wave of a global outbreak, led by young people, brought together by networks, incubated by renewed dissident tactics, rehearsed with new forms of participation and propagated by a torrent of creativity and imagination" (p. 122), where communication traveling through digital and interactive media lead to new forms of appropriation, organization and political participation.

Activists, the formation of collective actions originated by the use of technologies and the present context have merged as an object of study in a variety of academic fields; they have received a lot of attention, particularly since the eruption of the Internet. It is of particular interest to rescue the scales that the relationship between political and technological production has had. On the one hand, from the point of view of social movement studies, the recognition of technology has been linked to the idea that it is a tool that increases capacities in terms of information flows and connection (see della Porta & Diani, 2006; van de Donk, Loader, Nixon & Rucht, 2004). On the other hand, within the areas of new media and communication studies, the objectification of technology is anchored to the processes of organization and development of mobilizations, often with elements marked by the digital world, such as in the cases of digital citizenship (Mossberger, Tolbert & McNeil, 2008), cyber-activism (Bell, 2007; Khan & Kellner, 2007), digital activism (Joyce, 2010), or new alternative media (Downing, 2010; Guedes, Cammaerts & Carpentier, 2007). As analysts of the transformations that gave rise to precise forms of action within the mobilizations of recent times, these authors turned their attention

to a series of processes and characteristics that allowed them to sustain that in technology lies the change of participation and political actions.

What these authors neglected in their conceptualizations is the inseparable constitution of the political production of organized mobilizations that incorporates collective actions in physical spaces and in digital environments. In such a way that, the dichotomy formed by reality and virtual, and the unlimited conception of technology, caused the formation of an emancipatory aura per se of the groups of activists and citizens as a result of the use and possession of technologies. The problem also lies in the decontextualization of the processes that usually lead to a conception of technology anchored only in terms of virtual worlds, and which omits the methodological premise set out by Mosca (2014), which states that the path of activism practices happen in the Internet as much as in physical spaces.

In this work, I take the relationship between activism and communicative technologies as a starting point to analyze contemporary political production based on youth experiences after the YoSoy132 movement in Mexico, I explore specifically some characteristics of youth political culture that make possible a hegemony dispute linked to the empowerment of collective actions that is the result of the strategic use of technologies, digital and interactive platforms. Starting from the cases of feminist activism networks in Guadalajara and the Rexiste collective in Mexico City, I take as reference the experiences and senses of young people, in which activism finds technopolitics from the strategic communication technologies uses that arise from a communicational conceptualization, associated to the same political production that has a set of ideas, notions and orientations at its zero point that encourage the commitment to technology as a predisposition.

With the intent of exploring the uniqueness of current political activism, the first case is the experience of a young woman who has participated intensively in the feminist activism network in Guadalajara, which highlights the boundaries in understanding communication as it articulates repertoires of actions, resistances and mobilizations. The second case involves the group called Rexiste in Mexico City, from which I seek to identify the key elements of political performativity, and in general, of the strategies of activism and the aesthetics that

materialize it. My interest in these cases attempt to draw attention to the importance of gaging the factors that materialize technopolitical possibility in terms of activism practices and the symbolic dimension where their configuration is recreated.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND COLLECTIVE ACTIONS

Snow, della Porta, Klandermans and McAdam (2013) point out that social movements have played a key role in the development of social and political transformations through human history, or as Castells (2015) points out, they are actors of historical change, because "the changes that are produced are always changes impelled, imagined by social movements" (p. 52). For Melucci (1996) social movements are a social construction and a form of collective behavior that are constituted by a sense of solidarity among its members, a conflict and a transgression of the actions of those who mobilize against the political system. In Jaspers' terms (2014), the social movements and the collective actions that constitute them refer to individual attitudes, emotions in social contexts and processes of interaction between social actors. The previous statements are a fundamental framing, as Melucci (1996) points out, social movements have moved to cultural areas because social conflicts are linked to "crucial dimensions of everyday life" (p. 8).

While della Porta (2013) notices the transnational characteristic of contemporary mobilizations, where references of struggle from different geographically distant experiences stand out as well as the symbolic conception of the actions that integrate them. Castells (2012a) raises the importance of thinking about media projection of social movements because technologies represent a powerful resource for negotiating meanings in the public sphere. However, despite the emerging features of organized mobilizations, collective actions maintain a central value in their constitution. According to Melucci (1996), collective actions are a set of social practices that are the result of the conscious participation of people who act collectively and exhibit similar constitutive characteristics in contiguity with time and space within a social field of relationships. For this author, the collective action is related

to a mobilization potential, which allows people to negotiate their possibilities and limits, throughout the action with certain networks that enable the incorporation of more participating individuals, and with the motivation formed in their interactions with group members. However, these interrelationships can only be conceived if they are part of the collective identity configuration process, as Melucci (1996) mentions, which refers to the identification produced and shared by those who participate in collective actions and is the result of their interactions.

I take the interpretation of Nunes (2014) to identify and draft the processes defined so far around collective actions. According to this author, the organization and development of these actions articulate the network system and the network movement. The first concept refers to a system of different networks formed by people, groups (temporary or permanent, formal or informal), social network accounts, and spaces (physical and digital), which structure different layers of interactions. The second concept refers to the elements and actors of the system that sustain interactions based on recognition and a set of shared goals, actions and affections. This means that the network system is the broad scheme of interaction between actors and the network movement is the act of self-recognition and identification of theme related to a topic or cause. However, in my opinion, a key aspect translates into the existence of intermediate levels of relationships and interactions associated with the collective actions that give body to social movements, an aspect that glimpses the field of action and activism that takes place through ascription or in reference to collectives.

As a variable, technology is another fundamental element in political production of activism and social movements. In addition to the functions of collective actions guided by the aims of the mobilizations, in the words of Melucci (1996), these also represent messages for society through which it is possible to question the logic of social reproduction. Social movements announce the beginning of change –like the "now-time" of Benjamin (1989)–, a characteristic that Eyerman (2006) frames within the internal and external logic of political performativity of opposition of protests and expressions of dissidence, and that includes the interrelated spaces of collective action, the opponents and the public in general. Therefore, the communicative dimension of collective

actions is even more central today because of the media scenarios and the activists' dispositions to develop activism practices that are based on communication practices through appropriation of technologies and interactive digital media.

For Mattoni and Treré (2014) activism practices have a mediatic characteristic that is the result of social and communicative practices, both refer to processes of participation and organization of collective actions, as well as to information and interaction flows in the wider environment. For his part, Bustamante (2014, p. 66) highlights a process of digital activation that takes place within the mobilizations and resistances, which highlights the mediatic nature of the communicative practices that take place through global multimedia networks that "are articulated to the performative practices of protest and daily life, in function of the discomforts and the ends that mobilize their participants". I agree with these authors in the sense that political production takes place in highly mediated scenarios, however, from my perspective, this condition of collective action does not lie in a media imprint that practices have as something given in their constitution. On the contrary, my argument revolves around the idea that this condition manifests itself only if people within organized mobilizations, plan procedures and actions from notions and strategies that are articulated to digital knowledges.

della Porta and Diani (2006) pointed out that technologies expanded the capabilities of other media and, therefore, generated new options for mobilizations. Furthermore, Gerbaudo (2012) warns that the technologies have reconfigured communication repertoires available to those who participate in the protests, enabling new alternatives to promote the act of meeting people in the public space. The difference between these notions lies in the symbolic dimension of technology, which transcends the idea that technologies are only tools. I recover the notion of Agamben's "dispositive" to state that the uses of technologies in political production are not reduced to the use of tools. For this author "dispositives must always involve a process of subjectivation, that is, they must produce their subject" (2015, p. 21). In such a way that the relationship of people and technologies implies not only a perception of reality, as emphasized

by Benjamin (1989), but also models a form of action. This allows me to point out that within political production, communication technologies must be recognized as "dispositives for action", which together with the communication pact made possible through the link between social actors and technology interaction allows activists to develop organization strategies and communication processes, dispute meanings in the public space and specify interpellation dynamics.

Castells (2012a) warns of the existence of processes of power resistance, which have values, interests and projects outside the hegemonic networks. For this author, the possibility of producing autonomous messages is key because "citizens of the information age can invent new programs for their lives... subvert the habitual practice of communication occupying media space and creating the message" (2012b, p. 26). In this sense, subversion from communication glimpses the counterpower, because according to Castells (2012b) corresponds to the "deliberate attempt to change power relations" that "is activated by the reprogramming of networks around interests and alternative values or by means of the interruption of the dominant connections and the connection of networks of resistance and social change" (p. 26). Consequently, activism and political production become counterpoised and push the coordinates that structure the social and political imaginary to the limit, that is, the practices of activism dislocate and dispute meanings in relation to the conflicts and collective actions. Thus, this process can be understood as a dispute over the hegemonic terms that govern the understanding of reality and the events of conflicts. This process also refers to the unification between communication and action, from the conception of Jensen (2010), and along with the technopolitical concept that Toret defines as "the tactical and strategic use of digital tools for organization, communication and collective action" (2015, pp. 35-36).

STRATEGIES FOR ACTIVISM AND TECHNOPOLITICS

In another work I have defined contemporary youth political activism as the participation of young social actors in the organization, development and dissemination of collective actions, based on a set of socio-political

positions pointed to a cause or facing a social conflict and through the strategic use of communicative technologies to call to other social actors and dispute hegemony (Avalos, 2018). In this sense, two fundamental conditions of activism are: the relational condition of participation in a specific social context, and the technological element as an enhancer of organizational processes and activism strategies of interlocution and interpellation, as well as the dispute of codes and values.

The uses of communicative technologies by activists refer to the repeated use of repertoires of action. However, the differences lie in the ideas around the technological dispositives and the skills that have been acquired with experience. This diversity of uses refer, on the one hand, to activism practices that involve the management of cameras, computers, mobile phones and social networks to summon, organize and distribute collective actions, uses that I identify as derived from technical capabilities of technologies and platforms. On the other hand, the strategic sense of the practices in the course and development of protests, occupations and direct actions advise a differentiated use, a strategic use of communicative technologies. I refer to the registration and circulation of actions in real time to articulate the facts and experiences to other experiences in different cities, and to add meaning to mobilizations and resistances in a general sense.

Ongoing with what I pointed out in the previous section, the strategic uses of communicative technologies restore the conception of technology beyond the idea of a tool and place a meaning in dispositives for action that are intertwined with processes of subjectivity distinguished according to the contextual conditions of the activists, including their own trajectories within the social space.[2] Technology,

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[2]   The term "dispositives for action", in addition to referring to the general problematization of the relationship between technology and activism practices, as Treré and Barranquero (2018) point out when exploring my article about youth political subjects (Avalos, 2016), refers to the conceptualizations, capacities and agencies of those involved in the organization and development of mobilizations, and the multiple factors that affect the know-how together with communication technologies. To expand the review of this idea outside the literature on youth, I suggest

from its strategic meaning, and the processes of subjectivation, derive in an empowerment of collective action, just as Toret (2015) have pointed out in the definition of technopolitics that inscribes the tactical and strategic use of the digital tools for organization, communication and action. However, it is essential to point out that the use of the term technopolitics has been oriented towards the recognition of the interrelation between government, politics and technology, as Barry (2001) indicates as a form of government of a society technologized in spatial terms and of citizenship related to the individual's technical skills, capabilities and knowledge. A second use of the concept is directly related to the use of technologies by opposition groups and social movements that are different to the mainstream route, as Kellner (1999) specifies, where the argument of the users stands out linked to cyberculture. More recently, Treré and Barranquero (2018) identified that the term refers, on one side, to scientific innovation, technological transfer and its geopolitical distribution; that is, the conception of a broad sense of technology, and on the other side, it refers to the relationship between technology and the political sphere that affects the transformation of space, time and political processes that condition new forms of citizen participation but also of emerging forms of oppression and political control.

The conditioning factors of the activism mentioned above provoke different forms of organization and political production from the youth groups, which disables the accustoming of uses of technologies within the daily life scenarios of young people and provides a fertile space to analyze from the appropriation perspective process point of view, which according to Sierra and Gravante (2018), implies creative uses, an emotional dimension, a collective way of proceeding as well as a process of empowerment of the activists.

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consulting the work of Franco Migues (2019), who applies in a clear and solvent way the term, understood as "technologies of hope", in his analysis of the technological appropriations in the search for the disappeared carried out by the collective *Las Rastreadoras del Fuerte* in the state of Sinaloa, Mexico.

To emphasize the heterogeneous nature of political production that is reconstructed in participation and connective logics that forms todays digital culture, and based on the use of communicative technologies by young activists, I remark the analytical approach proposed by Reguillo (2107) of production of presence for the understanding of the strategies and tactics developed by the participants of social movements in the street and Internet environments to obtain visibility and favorable positions to materialize the dispute of codes and values around social conflicts.

The activism strategies developed by the young activists combined with the communicative technologies, takes us to develop processes of conceptualization about the protests, occupations or direct actions as they project the presence of conflict and at the same time invite people to participate and challenge the horizon of meaning that the understanding of the identified problem allows. In this process, communication grants centrality to the construction of counterhegemonic narratives. The activist's perspective is made to tell a story about the events that differ from the explanations given by governments and economic actors, that define a dynamic dialog in which different actors and groups participate and that is able to link digital media and communication technologies interactions.

Codes and values of activist organize communicative contents that weave the narrative of contact among people, groups and networks, influence the construction of a conversation about the conflict, a dynamic in which different interpretive communities participate and leads them to become communities of action. I recognize the counterhegemonic narratives as part of a hegemony dispute that integrates in a double dimension: A symbolic part, ideas and orientations and a material part, the practices and positions as well as the purposes of activists within collectivities, which together seek the construction of new social imaginaries and patterns of social transformation.[3]

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[3]   The process of hegemony dispute derived from the communicational dimension of collective actions, has a performative component that completes the articulation between communication and action purposed by Jensen (2010), which highlights the communicability of actions and

However, in the capacity of enunciation and generation of content by activists, there are some vicissitudes that imply media power, constituted by the mass media that is usually articulated to defend the status quo, capital and tension, as described by Reguillo (2008), between the power of representation and the interpretative space that enables communicational dynamics. The dispute of hegemony is usually determined or conditioned by what Suzina and Pleyers (2016) call asymmetry of representations, which refers to the disparity to generate visibility that remains in the current communication ecosystems, where the representations elaborated by the activists come before media power. Therefore, the opposition between counterhegemonic narratives and media power enables or constrains the capacity of activists to open interpretative spaces where their reading and narration of events can embody a device that subverts the dominant or hegemonic narrative.

METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

This work represents a part of my commitment to understand social movements and contemporary political activism where young people are central characters showing multiple uses of technologies and aesthetics in the realization of their actions. Since 2011, I have developed various approaches to the youth experiences of Guadalajara, Mexico City and Tijuana, through interviews, observation of protests and newspaper documentation. However, it was between 2014 and 2016, through the research project that led to the book *Activismos políticos contemporáneos. Juventudes, movilizaciones y comunicación en Guadalajara*, published in 2018 by the Instituto Mexicano de la Juventud,[4] in which I managed to consolidate a comprehensive methodological design to approach the process of the shaping of political activism where young people participate in collective actions. I analyzed the organization, development and dissemination of collective actions, through socio-political practices and the use of communicative

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reflexivity. To expand the reading on performativity, communication and interactivity see Jensen (2010, pp. 51-52).

[4]   The Mexican Institute of Youth.

technologies. In this project I used ethnography to generate appropriate data for the object of study. I worked with narratives and observation of activism practices combining the development of in-depth interviews and observation of protests, digital platforms and interactive sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

The empirical material analyzed for this paper was constructed from some interviews conducted for the referred project, as well as observation and follow-up of specific cases of the political production of activism and collective networks in Mexico. In order to condense the personal socio-political experiences and narrate the relevant life of some young people involved in collective actions and strategic uses of communicative technologies, I will present the analyzed data, in a form of a story.

In the first place, I narrate the experience of a young activist who began her career at the mobilizations organized in the YoSoy132 movement and who decided to turn to the feminist struggle as a result of a biographical political transition that grouped her discomforts in relation to gender asymmetries and her search for belonging to a community according to her interests. This story is not only significant because of the turning point in biographical terms, but because of the displacement of this young woman within the groups of women that embody feminist activism networks that exist in different cities of the country. The story is based on interviews I conducted with Mariana on August 5th and November 23rd, 2015, and June 28th, 2017, as well as personal communication on August 29th and 30th, 2018. In both interviews, I approached her experience of political participation and built her activism trajectory to recognize the convergences between her individual displacement and her collective encounters. In the third interview, conducted by videoconference, I spoke with her about the way she valued the role of mass media and interactive platforms within the feminist struggle. Finally, it is important to note that to refer to her story, I use a pseudonym to protect her identity.

Secondly, I present the case of an activist collective that arises from the transformation of the YoSoy132 movement, which manifests a sophisticated conceptualization of political production in communicational and technopolitical terms. The story I have built

with information from the site www.rexiste.org and the systematic observation of Facebook and Twitter during the main protests between 2014 and 2016, personal communications with the collective in May 9th, 2017, and with the data that emerged both in the interviews conducted with the activists of the Guadalajara ITESO collective, within the framework of the previously mentioned project, and in some personal communications with activists from Mexico City.

YOUTH POLITICAL PRODUCTION AND DISPOSITIVES FOR ACTION

The political activism recreated in the street and digital culture scenarios define differentiated processes of construction of experience and meaning, not only by the practices and strategies of activism that define the organization and current political production, –which go hand in hand with communicative technologies– but by the notions and predispositions to incorporate these dispositives to action and communication repertories.

In this section, I present two cases that lead to understand the experiences of production of presence and dispute of hegemony in two different time-space registers. As I pointed out in the previous section, the first one is a story about the activism exercised by Mariana, who has experienced a process of intensification within her experience of organization and political production that has been accompanied by a reflexivity about activism strategies and communication and, in particular, from the uses of communicative technologies in the organization, development and dissemination of collective actions. The second case refers to *Rexiste*, a collective that is the result of the transformation of the Yosoy132 movement, which uses intervention of political discourses through the use of technologies as a strategy of destabilization.

Notions of survival and struggle, networks of feminist activism
This story is geographically located in Guadalajara, a city that within the conjuncture of political participation, that I have referred to in another work (Avalos, 2018), has been able to articulated this participation to the socio-political expressions of Mexico City, through the close relations maintained with some groups. The story contained

in this experience is framed by events that took place between 2012 and 2017 and refers to the youth political production that arises from the demands and positions around gender and feminism issues. As of 2012 feminist activism networks were nourished by the YoSoy132 movement. An event that interrupted the biographical trajectories of many young women and that allowed a sequence of political transitions regarding the notions and positions within the resistances and mobilizations, but also action repertoires used in these experiences. Mariana, a young professional who participated in the YoSoy132 and who is currently part of feminist activism network in this city, collaborates with the Femi Bici project and in the #YoVoy8deMarzo and #CallesSinAcoso campaigns, scenarios that allow her to have intergenerational interactions between different organizational structures of institutionalized and non-formal politics.

Mariana's experience in political activism has had as a direct background from the student mobilizations and the fight for justice against some cases of feminicide in Mexico City. Her incorporation in to the Yosoy132 not only consolidated her participation in organization terms, but also led her to express gender inequalities within the mixed groups of activists and recover her conviction for justice and gender issues. Because of this, she decided to join networks of feminist activism, which are characterized by articulating themselves according to specific causes, a circumstance that defines the temporality of their connections and collaborations. In an intercalated manner, as she mentioned in our meetings, the agenda of activities in which she currently participates relies on meetings to study and exchange ideas, the construction of women's networks to attend and share affection with those that are victims of violence and the organization of protests and direct actions to sustain the survival and defense of life against misogyny, harassment and sexist violence.

As a result of her journey within the feminist struggle, Mariana has put into practice her knowledge to organize and develop protests and spaces for dialogue, as well as the uses of communicative technologies that are transversal to these activities and that are also oriented to convoke society to discuss the dispute of narratives around feminicide and gender violence. In 2017, after five years of her experience of

intense participation, Mariana had already learned and mastered the interactive language of the social-digital networks, particularly oriented towards the conceptualization of collective actions and the design and circulation of collective gatherings through Facebook and Twitter.

Recently, and to continue her experience of a young feminists regarding April 24th, 2016, when a proposal to allow abortion was placed in the public space, Mariana worked on the design of the "Aborto Legal Mexico" campaign. Launched in September 28th, 2018, which seeks to promote this proposal in the country once again. This collective action, which materialized in the streets and on the Internet, was organized between different cities in Mexico, a process in which Mariana participated as a poster and logo designer from a feminist perspective (see Figure 1).

When I say that the knowledge and practices developed by the campaign are linked to digital platforms and communication

FIGURE 1
THE DESIGN AND FEMINIST CONCEPTUALIZATION BY #ABORTOLEGAL
IN MEXICO
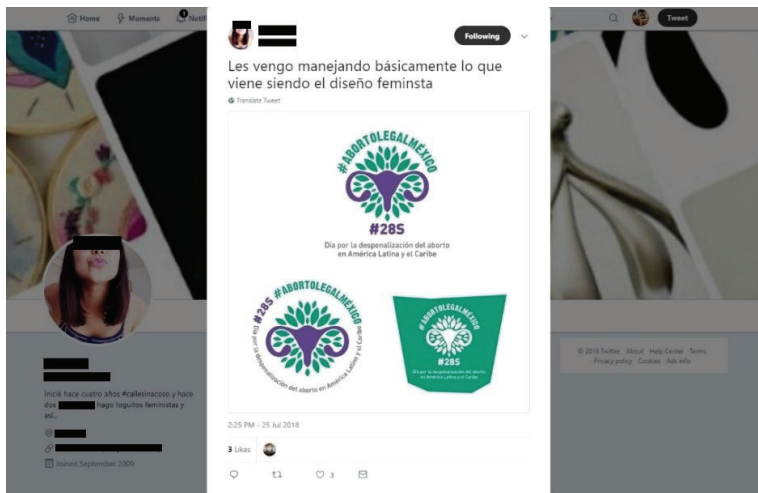
Source: Twitter screenshot, 2018.

technologies, I am referring to the actions that constitute a strategy to design and promote the gatherings for collective actions. This actions refers to the meetings that take place to discuss the main idea that defines the protest or direct action, along with the translation of this idea into a hashtag that summarizes its meaning, the design of the visual materials that will be incorporated into the publications of the social-digital networks of the collectives of the network, and the guidelines of the publications that correspond to the communication in real time and to the dissemination that projects the final recount of the activities carried out.

Mariana also understood the relevance of communication in activism and social movements. On the one hand, in relation to the key role of mass media in stigmatization and criminalization of protest actions, construction of visibility and the consequences of enunciation, discrediting and double victimization. And on the other hand, her learning implicated a reflection on the creation and diffusion of protests and direct actions through the hashtag, which allowed searching for people and drafted a perspective to understand the conflict.

Rexiste: *named from the streets and networks*
Derived from YoSoy132 in 2012, Rexiste appeared on the public scene of activism in Mexico to defend life and dignity in a context coded by multiple violence and relations of connivance between State institutions and organized crime. The particular objective of the project is the "reinvention of the forms of intervention of public debate",[5] and for their references and notions to make politics (humor, ridicule, art, party), they bet on their self-recognition as a fictional character.

Rexiste, collective formed after the YoSoy132, emerged with the hypothesis of hacking the political discourse through a graffiti drone, which implied a particular design process for its members. On the one hand, the determination by a innovative dispositive for contentious actions, and on the other hand, the commitment to the character Droncita and the construction of a narrative that enclosed their activities. In this way, both the destabilization and the intervention of the speeches had a narrative platform that were developed in an open

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[5]   Retrieved from www.rexiste.org, accessed May 9th, 2017.

and replicable code to produce counter-hegemonic narratives with the intention of contaminating and questioning the political agenda and its speeches.

Rexiste participated in citizen mobilizations for Ayotzinapa's justice between 2014 and 2015.[6] One of its most important initial actions was the monumental painting "Fue el Estado" ("It was the State") that they made in the Zócalo esplanade in Mexico City, on October 22nd, 2014 (see Figure 2). This piece is the result of the use of 30 liters of paint, a registry and a circulation strategy that generated a viral message. The collective recovered the slogan that imputed responsibility to the Mexican State for the forced disappearance of the 43 students of the Escuela Normal Isidro Burgos in Iguala, Guerrero.

FIGURE 2

MONUMENTAL PAINTING "FUE EL ESTADO" MADE BY REXISTE

Source: Twitter profile @Lalo777.

Almost a year after the resistance by Ayotzinapa, on September 24th, 2015, Rexiste published the video "Es hora de cambiarlo todo" ("It's time to change everything") on its YouTube channel. The main character is Droncita, who demands the resignation of the President Enrique Peña Nieto for the fabrication of the deception that the Mexican institutions sustained through the "official truth" through the Procuraduría General

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6   For more information on youth political activism in the case of Ayotzinapa see Avalos (2017).

de la República (PGR). The main sequence refers to the sentence that
Droncita says to the president: "you tried to lock the truth, you tried to
deceive us; it's time to change everything", at the same time that the
image of a few strokes of red paint erase the face from the figure of
Peña Nieto painted on a wall, with the slogan "¡Que se vaya!" ("Let
him leave!").

Another video that is part of the strategy of narrative subversion
around Ayotzinapa is titled "The Hunger Games Mexico" and was
published on YouTube on October 4th, 2015. The first part of the video
begins with a shot of the Zócalo esplanade of Mexico City, which
is occupied by hundreds of protesters who gathered on October 2nd,
2015 to attend a rally organized by Committee 68 and the families
of Ayotzinapa. The audio refers to the message that the government
began to transmit from the speakers of the Palacio Nacional, where
they warned about the constitutional rights of people and the actions
of the authorities in accordance with the law to maintain security and
public order. However, the second part of the video is developed with
the eruption of some detonations and the evacuation of people from
the esplanade, which refers to the beginning of a disproportionate
security operation executed by the police authorities. This segment
is accompanied by a voice that points out that the violence is hiding
something, and a sequence of images of various protests and the
audio of the count of the number 43, referring to the 43 disappeared
students. The video finally closes with the sentence: "It's time to change
everything".[7]

Another participation of Rexiste within this conjuncture of
political participation refers to the mobilizations for the murder of
Ricardo Cadena, a young skater and graffiti artist from San Pedro
Cholula, Puebla, who was assassinated on May 3rd, 2015 by the deputy
director of Public Security. Based on the information provided by the

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[7] The publication of the video on YouTube is complemented by a brief chron-
     icle of the events, placed in the description of the content, which states that
     while the police operation dismantled the activities in the Zócalo esplanade,
     in the networks thousands of bots replicated false information about violent
     acts in Palacio Nacional in charge of the protesters.

Procuraduría General of Puebla, it was known that the execution was intentional when he was immobilized and subjected to the ground, that is, he referred to an act of qualified homicide and abuse of authority (see Redacción *Animal Político*, 2015).

The case became known nationally and Rexiste, along with the support of other groups, promoted the call "Ricardo Cadena, las calles te nombran" ("Ricardo Cadena, the streets name you"). This call was part of other resources generated by these activists, among whom untie the documentation of the case and the construction of the profile for this young man. The call outlined the organization of a collective action simultaneously in Mexico City, Guadalajara, Puebla and New York on May 9th, 2015. However, one month after the murder, the call was extended to the recovery of various expressions and interventions in public spaces such as photographic and visual records that would be exhibited in San Pedro Cholula to keep the memory of Ricardo Cadena and his intervention spaces alive.

Finally, on June 21st, on the international day of street skating, the collective, the family and friends of Ricardo Cadena called to an event to remember one of his passions, but also to promote the creation of a skating park in his memory. After 2015, Rexiste continued to broaden the reflection and circulation of contents on this case; contributing to the construction of collective memory and building a different and distant perspective of the stigmatization and criminalization of youth (see Figure 3).[8]

It should be noted that Rexiste, in addition to its participation around the issues of the forced disappearance of the students of Ayotzinapa and the murder of Ricardo Cadena protest, has also added its strategy in the Narvarte neighborhood, in Mexico City case, where on July 31st, 2015, Nadia Vera, Rubén Espinosa, Mile Martin, Yesenia Quiroz and Olivia Negrete were murdered, and the war against women was materialized by the feminicidal violence of the exacerbated machismo that takes place in this country among other experiences.

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[8] To consult the work of Rexiste on Ricardo Cadena go to the following link: http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:http://rexiste.org/ricardocadena.

Source: Rexiste, 2017.

THE TECHNOPOLITICAL POSSIBILITY

If we review the text that Tufekci (2018) published in the *Technology Review* journal of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, one faces a severe analysis that tempers the euphoric and celebratory tone of the diverse uses of technologies linked to recent social movements, and an accurate reflection on the network of digital culture issues that are associated with media concentration, surveillance and data stealing, polarization and precision marketing, the use of bots and the cooptation of technological tools by authoritarian regimes, which together should be recognized as the recomposition of power together with the Internet environments. However, what is striking is the judgment that technology may not be so positive.

The drawing cannot be only figurative of the dark narrative – in *Black Mirror* style– that covers the technological element of the informational distortion generated by false news, the Internet culture that emanates from the expressions of hatred, or the strategies that the governments police develop to impose their dominant narratives

(information control, techno-censorship, among others). On the other hand, the representation of these experiences cannot be conceived from the spectacularization of activist and therefore, of youths actions.

The experiences presented in the previous section, the exploration of its elements and the connections between these allows to know the scenarios where appropriation and technological empowerment take place, that is, provide a perspective to understand the possibilities and limits of technopolitics in located contexts. While Mariana's experience refers to the sedimentation of communicational thought and to the consolidation of a reflection on the uses of communicative technologies in a strategic sense as well as the digital knowledge involved, the case of Rexiste refers to the strategies of a political performativity that, through counterhegemonic narratives, opens the perspective to another framework of intelligibility of reality, where the transmedia logic stands out –the crossing of the narrative of operative police with the references of control and survival game stated in the movie *The Hunger Games*–, the creative elements and an aesthetic that seeks to narrate in a different way the struggle as a parallel accompaniment of the dispute for power.

I recover from Rancière (1996) his though of the logic of litigation, dispute and contention that allows the understanding of the social order tensions that political activism energizes. The approach of this author on the disagreement between "police" and "politics" is a framework of pertinent reflection to approach the game of continuity and the change-rupture of social reproduction in which organized mobilizations intervene. For Rancière, the term "police" refer to the establishment of order through which institutions define the relationships of bodies, ideas and boundaries between them within a civilizing project. Instead, "politics" refers to the breakdown of that order from the opening of an item of dispute to question social regulations, that is, the search of the distortion of the established. Although, the distortion of the established proposed by Rancière implies an equal contingent restitution of the parties that breaks the state of domination and incorporates the part of those without part –marginal subjects excluded from the word, a name and power that produce their visibility–, also works in an important way to build the process of the establishment of power and the structuring of the orders instituted, as well as the possibilities of rupture of the

continuity of the social system that are also possible to produce and generate.

In this sense, from the cases worked and recognizing the logic of litigation implicit in the organized mobilizations –configured communicationally–, what I propose refers to a "technopolitical possibility" that not only depends on the performatic condition of the communication but on the guidelines that structure the connective condition of the mobilizations and resistances. This technopolitical possibility –anchored to the idea of aptitude or ability to do something– is directly related to the capacity that young activists possess and enable in their process of empowerment, to dissent, interrupt the dominant narrative and configure different imaginaries.

Reguillo (2017), in her analysis of insurrectional subjectivities articulates the production of presence in the expanded public space, where young activists make use of social-digital networks to manifest their discomforts and imagine different worlds. For this author, who recovers Appadurai (2001), technopolitics is possible because of the work of the imagination that defines scenarios for action in which social-digital networks enable connective actions by establishing mechanisms of organization and resources to elaborate response narratives.

A characteristic of contemporary political activism, as Rovira (2015) states, is the ability of its participants to say things with the force of images, that is, the power of enunciation that is exerted through their own language found in the generation of audiovisual content is an important power. Hence, Reguillo (2017) refers to video transmission in real time, memes, the human microphone and hashtags as the repertoires of connective action that allow the construction of the narratives that embody the litigation.

The political performativity that is organized through digital knowledge, which is part of the strategies of activism and communication, acquires its capacity for interpellation by the elements that it recovers from the visualities that go through political production. For Sánchez (2015), the images constitute an interactive modality that is exploited by the activists through the contents that they project within the social-digital networks, because the images are not only part of a contemplative act, but they also favor possibilities of grouping,

interaction and socialization. Therefore, says this author, given that the images are operators of the political, the activists are interpreters and executors of a policy of images that allows them to deconstruct politics.

The visuality from where Mariana and Rexiste conceptualize and develop collective actions and, therefore, the narratives that they publish in social-digital networks and their circulation schemes to develop dynamics of dialogue and interpretation are evidence of the traits and emerging elements of political production and contemporary social movements. Above all, the distinction with respect to previous social movements lies in the potential of audiovisual languages that produce representations about reality that do not pass through the mediation of media corporations neither the institutionalized political sphere or economic capitals (Avalos, 2018).

CONCLUSIONS

Technology is an essential element of young people's daily life and it is also an important dispositive in their social and political participation experiences. The relationship between political production within activism and communicative technologies not only enables organizational dynamics but also the generation of content, where audiovisual language stands out and places them in a scenario where they contend codes, values and stories about social conflicts. Mariana's experience places the dispute of the patriarchal gender narrative that is stimulated by the media and by those who add to the reproduction of stereotyped representations within the digital culture. For feminist activism networks what is at stake is the existence of a set of representations that narrate in a different way the drama of feminicide and harassment, and in general, the presence of women in public spaces.

The case of Rexiste sees with greater clarity the picture of the dispute in political speeches that the governments build. Around Ayotzinapa, the challenge implied the rejection of the official thesis prepared by the federal government, and the contribution to an alternative story about the forced disappearance of the students. Regarding the murder of Ricardo Cadena, the dispute manifests itself in a narrative that criminalizes young people because of how they dress or because of

their actions in the streets. However, regardless of the parties that are in dispute, my argument is that it is in the same process of political production that activists learn to dispute an idea of politics and power.

The dispute for hegemony that I have referred to is linked to technopolitics that imply the sum not only of skills and competencies for the use of technologies, but also the strategic communication that gives relevance to this process within activism. The strategic sense is articulated to technopolitical possibility, which refers to the improvement repertoires and empowerment of collective actions in which the objectives of young activists are determined by the specific situation where dispute or conflict develops in the broader social space.

From the youth experiences of political production where the technopolitical possibility is manifested, from the strategic uses of technologies and towards the expansion of organization, communication and collective action, I highlight two significant varieties of contemporary political activism. The first refers to the emergence of a youth political subject that is managed strategically in the street and digital culture scenarios to build its position and proceed with the elaboration of narratives and the dispute of hegemony. This means that young activists manage to translate their experiences and knowledge of the playful and socializing environments that are technologically mediated in positions and resources to gain visibility and dispute hegemony through narratives.

The second significant mark refers to the possibility of technopolitical meanings. I refer to the accumulation of practice and the reflexivity of experience, in such a way that the youth political subject is also constituted as an organic intellectual, in the Gramscian sense, who has the capacity to carry out contentious actions to use the repertoires of collective action and communication, and register their experiences. To a great extent, the experience of an organic intellectuality is defined by a certain intensity of social time in which the biographical trajectory of young activists converges with the community and with an event.

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