Volume 11 (2016)

Table of Contents

"And the Word Became Network":

An Analysis of the Circulation of the "Catholic" in Online Communicational Networks

Moisés Sbardelotto

Abstract

Within the process of mediatization, the Catholic Church and society in general produce new modes of communication on the internet, in which there is a widespread network of relationships between symbols, beliefs, and practices linked to Catholicism, i.e., the "Catholic." From this context, this paper analyzes the organization of the mediatic circulation of the "Catholic" in socio-digital platforms as Facebook. The theoretical reflection articulates studies on mediatization of religion, especially from the Latin-American perspective, and online communicational networks. The empirical analysis involves a multiple case study on Facebook, with focused semi-structured interviews with professionals of the Catholic communication in the Vatican and in Brazil, in three different levels: a Vatican institutionality (page *Rádio Vaticano – Programa Brasileiro*, the first presence of an office of the Holy See on Facebook); a socio-institutionality (page *Jovens Conectados*, a youth project promoted by the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil); and a peripheral minority (page *Diversidade Católica*, a Brazilian Catholic gay network). In conclusion, it identifies a social process of reconstruction of Catholic meanings, that emerges from a socially shared symbolic-religious know-how and power-of-doing, going beyond the action of the institutional Church or media corporations.

Keywords

1   Introduction

The social practices in the online environment, permeated by media logic, complexify the religious phenomenon today. New modalities of perception and expression of the "sacred" are formed in new social environments. Increasingly, the religious phenomenon shifts to media public spaces, such as socio-digital platforms, as Facebook, Twitter, Instagram. The "sacred" begins to circulate, flow, move in the intricacies of the internet by means of an action not only of the ecclesial or the industrial-media "production" pole, but also by a communicational action of numerous connected inter-agents, understood as an agent that interacts with another agent, be it a person, a technology, a discourse, a symbol etc.

Today, while the "mainstream media" is losing the monopoly of the agency of social symbolic meanings in general, religious institutions go through a similar process in relation to the religious meanings on the "sacred." This occurs thanks to the emergence of new media agents – individuals, groups, and other institutions – which now begin to promote more complex modalities of signification of the *socius* and of the *sacrus* on the web, in a public, heterogeneous, and connected manner.

In this paper, this process is specifically analyzed from the communicational interface of the networked Brazilian Catholicism. Such interest is due, firstly, to the socio-historical and cultural relevance of the Catholic Church in Brazil. In quantitative terms, the most recent data available indicate a historic reduction in the number of Catholics in Brazil: in 1872, 99.7% of the population was Catholic; by comparison, in 2000, they were 73.6%. However, today, the Catholic Church has a religious majority of the Brazilian population (64.6%)[1].

Beyond the statistics, it is important to "distinguish the evidence of the Catholic numbers and the tradition and the presence of Catholicism as a *cultural reference in Brazil*," because, despite the decline of the Catholic population, "one cannot say that Catholicism ceased to appear as *one of the structuring religious references of [Brazilian] nationality and national culture*" (Steil & Toniol 2013, p. 224, emphasis added). In this context, assuming the communicational processes of religion in societies in mediatization as the research axis of this paper, I am interested here in some media logic and dynamics that trigger such a referral of this religious expression in the Brazilian national culture, especially in a time of digital networks.

In societies increasing in mediatization, the communicational flow of meanings, particularly on the Internet, cannot be stopped or delimited by any structures. On the Internet, the ecclesiastical institution and society in general *talk about Catholicism*, reworking, re-signifying, and updating it

---

1   More recent data accordingly to the Census 2010 of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE): <http://migre.me/ddYsQ>, viewed 11 September 2016.

to new social inter-agents and to an even greater public, in a complex web of meanings. Society talks about and does something with Catholicism, apart from the religious offer by the Church or the mainstream media. In their interrelations, such actions trigger a process of communicational circulation.

Although the Catholic Church seek to make a "good and holy" use of the internet – for example, with the entry of Pope Benedict XVI on Twitter or of Francis on Instagram (see Sbardelotto 2013; 2016b) – the flow of meanings on what is "to be Catholic," and the Catholic knowledge and practices find gaps and leaks in the process of communicational circulation, going far beyond (or below) the ecclesiastical interests. Through various communicational actions, society mediatically reconstructs the meanings on Catholicism.

In this context, it is possible to talk about the emergence and circulation of the "Catholic," i.e., a diverse and diffuse network of relationships between symbols, beliefs, and practices linked to the Catholic religious experience, the historical tradition of Catholicism and/or the Catholic Church institution, mediatically constructed by society, making possible the communication on such beliefs and practices among social inter-agents. That is, the "Catholic" would be, at the same time, a product of interaction and communication between networked social agents, and, on the other hand, without it, would not be possible this process of interaction and communication.

Thus, if we can understand the "Catholic" as a symbolic "network" related to Catholicism, we can glimpse a triple connection that deserves analysis: a network (internet) of networks (socio-digital platforms like Facebook) in which circulate a network of constructs on Catholicism (the "Catholic"). All these processes feed and embody the communicational circulation on the Internet, through a process that I call here as *reconnection*.

In this article, firstly, I theoretically deepen the horizon of the mediatization of religion in contemporary societies, in a context of practices of reconnection, understood as a socio-symbolic process of networked interaction. Then, I articulate some significant cases of this religious communicational process in three different levels of the circulation of the "Catholic" on Facebook: a Vatican institutional level (the page *Rádio Vaticano – Programa Brasileiro*); a Brazilian socio-institutional level (the page *Jovens Conectados*); and also a non-institutional dispersion level of circulation of the "Catholic," composed of the communicational actions of a minority and peripheral group of Brazilian Catholicism (the page *Diversidade Católica*). I present their relevance in the Brazilian socio-religious context and also describe and analyze the reconnections operated by different inter-agents in their posts on Facebook[2]. To confront my inferences with the opinion of the

---

2   This paper is a small part of my doctoral thesis (Sbardelotto, 2016a). The analysis involved a multiple case study, combined with gestures of lurking and semi-structured interviews done with responsible of the Catholic communication on the Vatican and Brazil, in four different levels of analysis: 1) a Catholic supra-institutional level (the @*Pontifex_pt* account on Twitter); 2) a Vatican institutional level (*Rádio Vaticano – Programa Brasileiro* page

inter-agents involved in these processes, I also made semi-structured interviews with those responsible for each of these pages, in the Vatican and in Brazil.

Finally, I conclude that, in the process of mediatization of religion, new modalities of perception and expression of religious beliefs and practices begin to arise in the digital environment, thanks to the publicization of religious elements and the accessibility to such elements by numerous inter-agents, everywhere and at any time. Based on its own systems of meaning, local communicational religious practices on the web can reinvent religion itself, through a circulatory processes.

2   Mediatization of religion, a metamediatic process

With the emergence of a new social *ambience*, driven by digital technologies, the Catholic Church is being compelled to modify its own communicational structures and internal or external systems of construction of meaning. Religion has been historically linked to social communicational processes – from the discourse in a public square, books, electronic media, and so on. With technological advancements and the emergence of new social practices of symbolization of the world, religious institutions feel the necessity to reshape their symbolic structures to new mediatic processualities, rebuilding and re-signifying traditional religious practices in accordance with the protocols of each new mediation.

The concept of mediatization points to this process, being conceived as the "hermeneutic key to the comprehension and interpretation of reality," since "society perceives and is perceived from the media phenomenon, now extended beyond the traditional technological devices" (Gomes 2008, p. 21, author's trans.). As a broad social phenomenon, religion is permeated by these protocols. According to Verón (2012), mediatization is a historical process, the materialization and exteriorization of cognitive processes, which involves several historical configurations in the production of signs. It is therefore "one of the fundamental dimensions of the (…) evolution of human societies" (ibid., p. 9-11, author's trans.).

If however mediatization can be understood as a historically emergent phenomenon, it should be noted that this long process encounters "saturation points," bifurcations in which the historical curve suffers significant shifts, especially in the last years of the 20th century, in modern and highly

---

on Facebook); 3) a Brazilian socio-institutional level (*Jovens Conectados* page on Facebook); and 4) a Brazilian peripheral minority level (*Diversidade Católica* page on Facebook). The focus of exam was the networked circulation of the "Catholic," to investigate the emergence of what I call *connectial dispositif*, i.e., a complex of interrelationships between techno-symbolic processes (interfaces), socio-technical processes (protocols), and socio-symbolic processes (reconnections) present in networked religious practices.

industrialized societies. In the contemporary context, there are numerous connected social agents that communicatively manifest their skills on various areas of the social, including the religious. With technological advancements, the social appropriation of technology, and the new correlated socio-symbolic processes, it is possible to see more and more "an *acceleration* and *diversification* of ways by which society interacts with society" (Braga 2012, p. 35. author's trans.). Verón (2012) also indicates a contemporary "mutation in the conditions of the access of individual actors in the mediatic discursivity, producing unprecedented transformations in the conditions of circulation" (p. 14, author's trans.).

This mutation is not just a result of the mediatic institutionalization in terms of "culture industry," nor the development of large "media corporations." It is a jump or even a social break with an "institutionalizing" model of media, emerging from new social uses, practices and appropriations, demanding the revision, on the one hand, of the idea that the "professionalism" is located only in the ambit of media corporations and, on the other, the revision of the idea that social practices are restricted to actions of "audiences," "users" or "consumption."

It is in this context that the word "media" and the concept of "mediatization" acquire their meanings. We are living today a "media turn," marked by a "'historically unique degree' of integration of the technological and the socio-cultural" (Friesen & Hug 2009, p. 65). In this process, the conditions of the possibility of human interaction, social communication, and societal organization become conditioned (but not necessarily *determined*) by mediatic logic, dynamic and practices. That is why mediatization can be understood as socio-techno-symbolic actions, interactions and retroactions that lead to a "reconfiguration of a communicational ecology (or a mediatic *bios*)" (Gomes 2008, p. 30, author's trans.). Mediatization involves the communicational mediations of culture, including the religious phenomenon, beyond the mere social or technological mediations of the business media organizations.

Mediatization, as in the case of the ecclesial appropriation of new media and the new religious practices emerging from this process, points to the complexity of flows and meaning circuits in a socio-communicational phenomenon that must be understood "as miscegenation [*mestiçagem*] rather than overcoming – continuities in discontinuity, conciliations between rhythms that exclude themselves" (Martín-Barbero 2008, p. 262, author's trans.). Through the synergy of the contemporary communicational processes and the digital technologies, we can see a new social configuration: "If mediatic communication (its rationale, devices, and processes) is in constant evolution, then by appropriating it, religion also follows this trend and is compelled to become something different than it traditionally was" (Sbardelotto 2014, p. 83).

Mediatization, in short, is the genesis of a *social medium* (experiences, uses, practices), that generate and are generated by a *mediatic medium* (symbols, discourses, technologies), in an

increasing complexity. Therefore, it is relevant to understand what happens when a historical institution as the Catholic Church, its practices and symbols begin to permeate and be permeated by different circuits of meaning, as the socio-digital networks, unleashing an emergent process of circulation of the "Catholic" through the contemporary *socius*.

Thinking on mediatization, however, is not just realize how religions today are "mediated" by contemporary media. The process of mediatization of religion is much more complex than the religious mediation of media, or the media mediation of religion. In the new context of social interaction, there is the arising of renewed religiosities and emerging meanings of "sacred" and "sacredness" in which the media "can at the same time be a *source* of religion and spirituality, an *indicator* of religious and spiritual change, and *articulated into* religious and spiritual trends – *changing religion* through those interactions and also *being changed* by that relationship" (Hoover 2008, p.4).

In this shift, the mediatization of religion extends the cultural semantics of religion, decentralizing religious institutions and mining their proposals of theological-doctrinal control, opening the "religious" to the multiple constructions of social meaning in media processes, which, in turn, do not exist beforehand, but are constituted from local religious practices. Mediatization, in short, catalyzes the publicization of religion, which cannot be understood anymore only as a fixed institution or doctrine. It also has to do with socially embodied practices and experiences of individuals, collectives, and institutions in public, open places, in constant interaction and connection.

3   Reconnections: "connecting connections" in societies in mediatization

In socio-digital platforms like Facebook, there are numerous institutional Catholic accounts and pages, both in the Vatican and the Brazilian level. This process is not neutral, nor automatic: for its occurrence, the Church in general needs to rethink and update its internal and external communication processes to the digital environment, in a process of digital mediatization of religion.

On the other hand, it is possible to note the existence of numerous cases of environments created by lay-amateurs, referring to Catholic issues, i.e. unofficial, not institutional, alternative presences dealing with the "Catholic." Non-institutional Catholic groups and individuals reinforce such processes through their public presences on such platforms, articulated around Catholicism (as numerous pages identified as Catholic: "*Catholic Music," "Catholic Church Catechism," "I am Catholic and I am happy"* etc.). In them, from a specific point of view of the Catholic world, the

users appropriate media-religious elements, publicly reconstructing and redefining the meaning of Catholicism.

Today, virtually all aspects of religious life – historically marked by initiatory rituals reserved for the chosen few – are exposed to the experience of any individual. Especially with the internet, "it is the common man, without any corporate visibility, who gives to the ambience of communication and general information the status of a new existential sphere" (Sodré 2014, p. 116). Digital mediatization, thus, allows us to put ourselves "immediately in a situation of creation" (Flichy 2010, p. 21, author's trans.), thanks to a greater access and ease of use of digital technologies, "marked by the behavior of individual autonomy and 'conectivization' [*mise en connection*]" (ibid., p. 15, author's trans.), which enable the development of new communicational religious practices.

From this contemporary processes of mediatization of religion, an autonomous figure emerges today, a hybridization between the "layperson" and the "expert authority," generating social meanings from its discursive and digital symbolic practice, what I call the "lay-amateur," one who "stands midway between the ordinary man and the professional, between the profane and the virtuous, between the ignorant and the wise, between the citizen and the politician" (Flichy 2010, p.11, author's trans.). The lay-amateurs would find themselves today "in the heart of the communication dispositive" (ibid., p. 7, author's trans.).

While not having the media or ecclesiastical institutionality in their defense and precisely for not having (or not wanting to have) a know-how recognized by authority, being able to act "on his/her own," the amateur's "word" becomes ubiquitous. In the religious case, it is not only an "amateur," but also often a "layperson," i.e. someone not invested by religious officialdom nor by the media-corporate institutionality – or, if invested with such powers, someone who acts in the web purposefully devoid of such qualifications, without the need to publicly display his/her know-how recognized by the authority: a "lay-amateur." If we take the literal meaning of amateur (one who practices an activity for pleasure and not by profession, who "loves" something too much), leaving aside the bias of the "lack" of experience or knowledge, and articulate it with the ecclesial definition of "lay" – that is, "all the faithful except those in holy orders and those in the state of religious life specially approved by the Church" that "carry out for their own part the mission of the whole Christian people in the Church and in the world"[3] – the concept of "lay-amateur" helps us to understand the emerging actions in online communicational networks.

Therefore, the digital mediatization of religion brings out precisely the "microbial" actions of these agents, which are not historically new, but socially emerge thanks to the Internet. It involves

---

3   Dogmatic Constitution on the Church *Lumen gentium*, n. 31.

networked, diverse, and heterogeneous communicational actions by lay-amateurs (individuals or groups), carried out within the Brazilian Catholicism spectrum.

In communicational environments without any explicit link with religious expressions, such as Facebook, the various inter-agents find ways to publicly and autonomously symbolize the "sacred," reconciling their inner depth with the world around them, through texts, images, and videos. On the Internet, there is the occurrence of a religious experimentation via communication, which is characterized by public social manifestations on the "religious," outlining a specific religious practice of societies in mediatization.

In this sense, I believe that it is necessary to focus in a specific observation of the *communicational process* in the religious networked phenomena, recognizing that a "careful analysis of communicative networks is a necessary precondition for the understanding of social networks" (Hepp 2013, p. 92). Otherwise, the risk would be reifying the concept of "network," as if it were something "out there," observable to the naked eye. However, I do not want to analyze here the "networks that I see," but "see in network" the communication phenomena of the circulation of the "Catholic" on the Internet. It is not an effort to circumscribe already existing (social or digital) "networks," but to perceive the (communicational) "networking" between the various inter-agents.

So here, I propose to work with the concept of *online communicational networks*, precisely understood as *matrices of communicability in socio-digital interconnections*, i.e. the cross communication processes that are established from digital connections, through which the circulation of the "Catholic" is possible. The focus, therefore, is in the eminently communicational gestures in platforms opened to the socio-digital action, visible and accessible on Facebook, more than the matrices of sociality of a network ("social" networks) or their matrices of technicality or informationality ("digital" networks).

In this sense, on the interface with the traditional religiosities and religious practices, the circulation of the "Catholic" in online communicational networks expresses a socio-symbolic construction, that is, the communicational action on symbols and discourses mediated by technological and social protocols. Here we find the explicitation of what Morin (1999) calls computing. It is an "organizer/producer complex of cognitive character" (p. 51, author's trans.), which can be conceived more simply as the "treatment of symbols" (p. 50, author's trans.). It is not only the operations of an "artificial machine" (which are also present in socio-digital platforms), but mostly the "intelligent activities of the human spirit" (ibid., p. 51, , author's trans.). In the communication actions here in analysis, however, I argue that the construction of meaning about the "Catholic" is given as a *third-order computation*, following the Morinian concept, i.e., the computation (the construction of meaning by the agent) of a computation (the recognition of other

social meanings) of a computation (the construction of meaning by other various social agents in connection).

The "Catholic" as a social macro-construct, therefore, involves numerous local actions of *reconnection*, which allow the perception and also the expression of meanings, and the interaction between inter-agents: i.e. *socio-symbolic processes of networked interaction*. Reconnection, thus, involves communicational actions of construction of meaning in socio-digital platforms, that depend on the "connection" and on the "computation" *stricto sensu* of a computer and a human computant.

In the religious context, reconnections reveal the social experimentation on the "Catholic" in the processes of communicational circulation, in which it is possible to act upon something already given (by the Catholic tradition, doctrine, institution etc.) and *invent* something new (*in + venire*) through networked communicational practices, that are articulated and complexify the traditional practices of social construction of Catholicism. Thus, social interactions in online communicational networks operate mainly by reconnections: with the socio-religious knowledge, with the networks, with the others, in which there is the manifestation of the experimentation and socio-symbolic invention of the "Catholic" in communicational circulatory processes.

Reconnection, nevertheless, also go beyond those actions, by means of a "connection of connections" and a "computation of computations", generating a much more complex "connection" and "computation" than something merely human and/or technological: precisely, the *social and symbolic processes* in online communicational networks, not only its informational/computational elements. Reconnections, hence, are "ultra-connections," "new connections", because they emerge in a complex way in the conjuncture of a unique interaction in a specific context, beyond what is already given in social, technological, and symbolic terms.

Through reconnections, therefore, online communicational networks emerge as not mere *digital* networks, because they also involve complex socio-symbolic actions; nor as mere *social* networks, because they also involved complex techno-symbolic actions. The communicational "movement" emerges from the logic of relationship between such networks, i.e. in the interaction between platforms, circuits, and inter-agents, dynamizing the circulatory flow (Fig. 1).
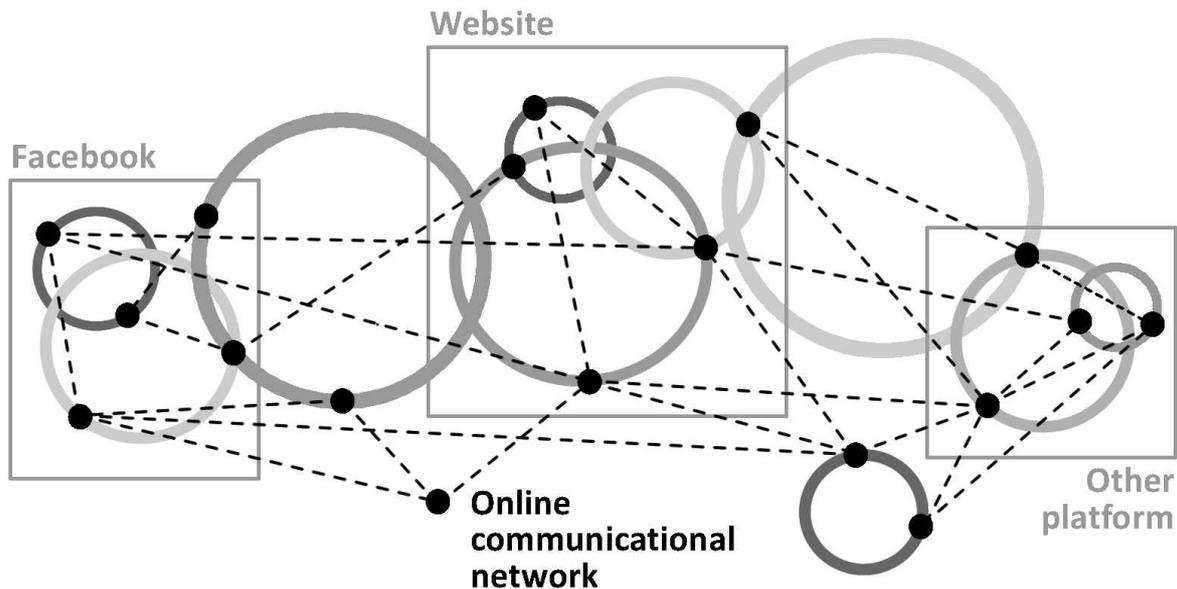
Figure 1 – Diagram of the online communicational networks. Source: Sbardelotto 2016.

As the image above shows, the socio-digital platforms are more clearly defined as interaction environments (squares) marked by their interfaces and specific protocols. The circuits (circles) identify and define specific spaces of circulation, as the comment field on Facebook, or the plugins that connect the platform with a website. The inter-agents (dots) in an online communicational network, on the other hand, are plural and heterogeneous, contextually identifiable from interactions (pages as a whole, specific users, groups within the platform, a technology, or even a specific post as a communication "product" that "interacts" with others etc). Its "position" is also momentary, changeable and unstable, depending on very specific local contexts of interaction, whose movement is constant. Such network of inter-agents is communicatively emergent, beginning before any identifiable "point", and also continuing later, being one of the key processes of the organization of the circulatory flow in the online environment, among specific circuits and platforms.

From this context, I can now describe and analyze the reconnections operated in the pages that compose the cases of this article.

4   Vatican institutional level: the "Rádio Vaticano – Programa Brasileiro" case

Considering the Catholic institutional level from its central point of view, that is, the Holy See, the page *Rádio Vaticano – Programa Brasileiro* (RVPB)[4] on Facebook emerges both in historical terms and in terms of communicational self-analysis of the Catholic Church. The Vatican Radio is the radio station of the Holy See, with its headquarters in Vatican City, being one of the leading communication agencies of the Catholic Church. In 1958, the Brazilian Program was born, bringing together many media professionals to "take to the Brazilian people and the Portuguese-speaking listeners around the world the voice and the teachings of the Holy Father, the Magisterium of the Church and the news of the Church in the world."[5]

Regarding the Internet, the Vatican Radio, in its Brazilian Portuguese version, is officially present in an institutional website[6]. In it, they constantly publish various news and information about Catholicism. However, within the site, there is no possibility of participation by the user (a space for comments, for example). It is an official institutional environment in which only approved content is available to the reader.

On the other hand, however, the Brazilian program is also present on Facebook[7], where the interaction with users becomes much more explicit and evident. Here it is possible to find the relevance of this presence. In my interview with former secretary of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications (PCSC), archbishop Paul Tighe says that the Brazilian program is promoting "a *truly significant* presence of the Vatican on Facebook:"

> If I were to say what is probably the most successful social media initiative among the various ones [the Holy See, would be] the Portuguese Facebook page [of the Vatican Radio], because they are very quick, they take the material and immediately put it up there. […] And it's a constant learning. (pers. comm., 5 June 2015)

In his turn, Thaddeus Jones, coordinator of the *News.va* project of the Holy See and English language official of the PCSC, recognizes that the Brazilian program "did a great job, really, using Facebook. *They were the pioneers*, in my view, of the Vatican media, in the level to develop Facebook" (pers. comm., 3 July 2015, author's trans., emphasis added) in the Catholic Church context.

---

4   <https://www.facebook.com/radiovaticanobrasil/>.
5   <http://br.radiovaticana.va/>, viewed 11 September 2016.
6   Idem.
7   <https://www.facebook.com/radiovaticanobrasil>, viewed 11 September 2016.

This pioneerism dates back to March 6, 2012, when the first post on the RVPB Facebook page was published, several months before the launch of all @Pontifex accounts. In an interview for this research, Rafael Belincanta, journalist responsible for updating the social media of the Brazilian program of the Vatican Radio, said the first post took place shortly after the 80th birthday of the radio: "We were the pioneers on Facebook [between the organisms of the Holy See], when Brazilians were already arriving in droves on Facebook." At that time, according to Belincanta, the Brazilian staff of the radio asked, "Why do we not do our own page on Facebook?":

> Then, we put [the issue] here for everyone [of the newsroom]. Everyone thought it was a good idea. We proposed it to the program directors. They wanted to stop it at first, but finally authorized it. They had an entire concern with the content, what we would speak about and, if people negatively commented on, how we would react to negative comments etc. That is, at the beginning, there was some resistance from the program directors, but then they saw that everything was going well. And then new programs [of the international Vatican Radio] started opening their Facebook pages". (pers. comm., 9 June 2015, author's trans.)

It is possible to realize, therefore, the internal concern and difficulties of the organization to deal with an environment in which there is no control over the public construction of meanings, which caused "some resistance" of the superiors of the radio. However, the actual construction of the page on Facebook becomes a circulatory element inside the Vatican, leading other organisms to establish their presence on the platform and also outside of it, with an increased access by society in general.

Until September 2016, the Facebook page had over 520,000 "likes" and an average of more than 2 million global visits per week, surpassing the number of views of the institutional website of the radio. It is the Facebook page, in a way, that gives "communicational life" to the institutional website, creating a much more relevant circulatory flow to its content. The main element of its interface is the cover photo of the page (Fig. 2).

Figure 2 – Cover photo of the RVPB's Facebook page. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/radiovaticanobrasil>

The image depicts Pope Francis with his arm extended in a gesture of blessing and greeting, with the flag of Brazil and the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in the background. This image indicates a construction of meaning on one of the main elements of global Catholicism, i.e. the pope's own figure. For the inter-agents, the cover photo clearly demarcates a communicational environment related to the Catholic Church. In turn, the Pope's gesture, at the same time of blessing and greeting, with a slight smile on his face, set up a kind of "welcoming" to the reader, a construction of a "personalized," affective, sacred contact with the Pope and Catholicism. However, this is a pope with some particular characteristics, which reveals certain nuances of a creative appropriation by those responsible for the page. This becomes more evident with the use of Brazil's flag in the background. With it, the image delineates a specificity of the RVPB page: its link with Brazilian culture. The page promises not an approach on Catholicism from a general point of view, but from a Brazilian one, with the cultural marks and the communicational matrices of this socio-historical specificity. In front of the flag, the dome of St. Peter's Basilica in the Vatican stands out. Thus, the page points to another important element, its connection with the headquarters of the Catholic Church, "mixed" with the Brazilianness displayed with the flag. The Vatican symbol seems to indicate its "interdependence" with the Brazilian symbol in the communicative actions of the page: Brazil becomes the axis of reading and interpretation of Vatican life. All these elements and its overall composition seek to indicate to the reader the communicational specificities of the page, putting into circulation, in a symbolic manner, in a single element (the cover photo), everything the page wants to be and to do in its communicational proposal.

On the other hand, the RVPB page on Facebook allows to glimpse that the meaning is constructed in relations between the inter-agents and the technological and symbolic mediations, that is, through what I call reconnection. In this process, the construction of meaning by the inter-agents have a subjective source which is constructed through inter-subjective actions, enabled and organized by a system of social and symbolic connections on (an beyond) Facebook technicalities.

A post that illustrates this idea was published on 19 October 2015 and dealt with the case of a religious Brazilian Catholic woman that, in a meeting in the Vatican, stood out for being the only one who did not was wearing the nun's habit[8]. In the interview, she argues that, without the habit, "is easier to approach young people in the concrete reality where they are."[9] In the comments field on Facebook, many readers praised the religious woman and the post of the radio. However, several other inter-agents exposed their annoyance in relation to the post, questioning the own catholicity of the RVPB page, as in the dialogues below:

---

8   <https://www.facebook.com/radiovaticanobrasil/posts/846638692110846>, viewed 11 September 2016.
9   <http://goo.gl/RPCvJ0>, viewed 11 September 2016.

Francisco F. – I totally disagree! How can we explain the young, men, women and children who flock to the Pope? He uses cassock! The official vestment does not deviate people!!! [19 October 2015 12:53, author's trans.]

Rian M. – Ridiculous argument. The habit never deviates the religious person from the people; on the contrary, it approaches! [...] [19 October 2015 at 13:19, author's trans.]

Instituto Bento XVI – I do not believe that this is a Catholic page. [19 October 2015 at 14:51, author's trans.]

| **José S. –** It is unfortunate! [19 October 2015 at 16:04, author's trans.]

| **Caroliny A. –** This type of argument is increasingly common! What a pity! [19 October 2015 at 18:41, author's trans.]

The "unbelief" of some inter-agents was emphasized by others, through "likes" and responses to other comments, calling into question not only the communicational action, but the very Catholic officialdom of the page due to the questioning of the importance of the habit. From this, other inter-agents began to oppose the posting, generating reconnections through a kind of subversion of the communicational process, requiring a "re-action" on the part of the page: the very removal of the post:

Paulo A. B. – I AM TOTALLY AGAINST [the page] AND BELIEVE THAT THE VATICAN RADIO SHOULD DELETE THIS POST. RIDICULOUS. [19 October 2015 at 17:38, author's trans.]

Mário R. – Remove this post, on behalf of the Church! [20 October 2015 at 0:22, author's trans.]

Finally, in no time the page responded to the criticism or removed the post. It is interesting, however, that ordinary users grant themselves the public right to criticize a communicational action of a Vatican organism, standing above this hierarchy, speaking "on behalf of the Church." Thus, a social power assumption arises around Catholic sayings and doings, made possible by an emerging autonomization in communicational processes in the digital environment: the agent feels able to confront the Vatican organism, taking a position contrary to it, which, by the way, requires a public symbolic involvement of the subject to face the institution.

Thus, publicly, by means of reconnections, the agents – lay people – put into debate and in circulation a central issue to Catholicism, as the limits and possibilities of the Catholic clergy. It begins to raise a theo-political practice of ordinary users, who acquire a public space to expose his/her voice and his/her own theology, although conditioned by the interface and the protocols of

Facebook and the Vatican page. This found a possible different theological field and new practices of meaning about Catholicism.

5   Brazilian socio-institutional level: the "Jovens Conectados" case

In Brazil, one of the main projects of the Catholic Church developed especially for the digital environment is called *Jovens Conectados* ("Connected Young")[10], launched in December 2010, as an official communication organism of the Episcopal Pastoral Commission for Youth (CEPJ), of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops of Brazil (CNBB).

The history of the development of this project and its current goals permit to observe, respectively, the interrelationship between the challenges of the mission of the Catholic Church in contemporary Brazilian society; the autonomization of young Catholics (the "socio-institutionality" of the project); and the limits and possibilities posed by the process of digital mediatization.

According to Felipe Rodrigues, current general coordinator of *Jovens Conectados*, interviewed for this research, the project

> was born within the Church and then was incorporated [by the ecclesiastical institution], if we can say so. [...] So, today, within the CNBB, when they say, "Well, we need to talk with the youth," [the staff involved is] the Commission for Youth and, naturally, the website, the 'portal' and all the social networks [of the Jovens Conectados project]". (pers. comm., 20 December 2015, author's trans., emphasis added)

Therefore, the birth of the project involves, at the same time, a "bottom-up" process, which emerges from the role of young Catholics and their communicational empowerment, and, on the other hand, a "top-down" process, in which the institution "incorporates" the project in its official institutionality, linking it to the main body of the Catholic Church in Brazil (the CNBB).

Over the time, in addition to the website, *Jovens Conectados* was extending its presence to the main socio-digital platforms, always marked by the idea that young Catholics, from the most different ecclesial expressions (ministries, movements, congregations, new communities, organizations etc.), could publicize their activities, "creating thus – as stated by their website – a large *network of collaboration*, where news and information can reach many other realities."[11] Thus, the already existing ecclesial networks could find, in the digital environment, other forms of

---

10 <https://www.facebook.com/jovensconectados/>.
11 <http://goo.gl/LSfyf5>, viewed 11 September 2016.

collaboration with a new possibility of range ("reach many other realities") made possible by socio-digital processes.

Out of all the various platforms where they are present, the *Jovens Conectados* Facebook page[12] emerges as the most relevant one, in communicational terms (not only in comparison with the other presences of the project), having more than 470,000 "likes" until September 2016. Founded in January 2012, the Facebook page is one of the first official Brazilian Catholic presences on that platform, created a few months even before the creation of the RVPB Facebook page.

In the *Jovens Conectados* Facebook page, it is possible to see that the Catholic Church in Brazil found a way to interact with the youth, in a process in which the construction of meanings is not controlled by the institution, but in which the Catholic "sacred" is re-signified by all the agents, through texts, images, videos, and comments on Catholicism that circulate on the page. In this public symbolic experimentation, it is possible to glimpse a specific religious practice of societies in mediatization. While connecting the inter-agents, Facebook also provides them the ability to construct online communicational networks in which their interactions on the religious phenomenon occur, through reconnections.

On October 6, 2015[13], a post brought excerpts of the homily of Pope Francis on the Mass celebrated that Sunday in St. Peter's Basilica. The papal speech referred to the "union of love between man and woman", an "indissoluble" union, whose goal "is not just live together forever, but love each other forever." A picture accompanied the post, showing the Pope blessing a newlywed couple. The comment section on Facebook was converted by the inter-agents into an environment for declarations of love between several persons, as in the case of "Vanessa", one of the first ones to leave a comment. She wrote: "I will love you forevermore Alex B.,"[14] marking her companion, following the protocol of the platform.

However, some users have shifted the direction of the initial post and also this emerging interactional modality in the comment section, operating a re-signification of the post. The user "Luiza," for example, wrote: "I am divorced and I am happy,"[15] publicly deconstructing, thus, whatever the page and the inter-agents were doing in terms of construction of meaning on the papal homily. Her marital love was not "forever," but, even so, she claimed to be happy.

Her comment, in the interactional context created around that post, involved, therefore, the public recognition of an almost "sin" in the Catholic environment (the divorce), which manifested itself in the opposite and subversive direction in relation to the emerging declarations of "eternal love" among other users. This manifestation, therefore, shows an emerging power-of-saying, which

---

12 <https://www.facebook.com/jovensconectados>, viewed 11 September 2016.
13 <https://goo.gl/HUzUkB>, viewed 11 September 2016.
14 <https://goo.gl/aufRzh>, viewed 11 September 2016.
15 <https://goo.gl/FRGuWi>, viewed 11 September 2016.

reveals socio-symbolic skills around Catholicism, that arise with the autonomization favored by digital mediatization. This process even surpasses the fear of possible recrimination by those responsible for the page, by the Church institution or by other Catholic users.

6   Brazilian Catholic peripheral minority: "Diversidade Católica" case

Beyond the institutional aspects of Catholicism – which, as I could present until here, is reconstructed in the reconnections of various inter-agents – the digital mediatization coverage also involves a process of communicational autonomization. In the case of religion, this leads to new religious configurations, in which common subjects "take the word," in a social and public manner, re-signifying religious meanings in general. That is, the Internet, for its ease of access and of use, and for the expansion of the reach and the scope of social interactions, gives the power of a "public word" to those who had no access to the traditional media and ecclesiastical apparatus.

Given the current socio-cultural and especially the ecclesial context, it is possible to highlight cases in which such actions publicly explicit the conflicts within Catholicism. One of the most controversial issues in contemporary Catholicism is precisely the gay issue and gender identity. In the global Catholic context, a new "ecclesial subject" is emerging, one that requires his/her space and recognition in the Church: the homosexual person. This subject gained even more strength with the election of Pope Francis, whom, at the beginning of his pontificate, at an in-flight press conference returning from Brazil in 2013, said the famous phrase: "If a person is gay and seeks God and has good will, who am I to judge?,"[16] the first time in history that the word "gay" was pronounced by a pontiff.

In the Brazilian ecclesial context, this reality also becomes even stronger, although between tensions and mistrusts. One of the main journals of Catholic theological and pastoral reflection in Brazil, *Vida Pastoral*, raised the issue of homoaffectivity and the Christian faith in its edition of December 2014, causing a great debate. In it, Luis Correa Lima, a Catholic priest and theologian, said:

> An important sign of the times is the visualization of the homosexual population. [...] The gays are part of society and, while visualizing themselves, they aspire to full citizenship, with the same rights and duties of others. [...] There are many gays in the church. [...] There is no doubt that this reality is part of the existential peripheries appointed by the Pope. (Lima 2014, p. 29-30, author's trans., emphasis added)

---

16   <http://goo.gl/O65hEH>, viewed 11 September 2016.

In this reflection, the limits, needs, and possibilities of working on this issue in the Catholic context become clear. It is "an important sign of the times," as Lima says, i.e. an emerging socio-cultural reality that provokes and invites the Church to see that fact from a transcendent perspective, from its own mission as a Christian ecclesial community. This "sign" must be "visualized" in the culture, *communicated* – with all that that implies.

The communicational action of the *Diversidade Católica* group is part of this context of affirmation and search of recognition from the Catholic gay people. The group was born in 2006, in Rio de Janeiro, presenting itself as "a group of lay Catholics who understands it is possible to live two seemingly antagonistic identities: being Catholic and being gay, in a wide sense of the term, including all sexual diversity (LGBT)."[17] The group also reiterates its fidelity to the Church ("We are inalienable members of the Roman Catholic Apostolic Church").[18] It is therefore a case of autonomization and publicization of a specific "socio-ecclesial subject" (the openly gay Catholic), who manifests his/her communicational skills as a "lay-amateur."

In an interview for this research, psychologist Cristiana Serra, member of the group since 2008, offers more details about the group's origin:

> Diversidade was born on the Internet. In 2006, a group of people, some gay, some not [...], all closely linked to Catholicism, began to talk about how to reconcile these two identities [gay and Catholic]. And they decided to organize a material, and so a website was created. [...] And it's funny because, from the site [...] people began to ask for help, ask questions and ask for guidance. So the demand for in-person meetings arose from the divulgation of the site [...] So a little network began to emerge there, creating the website". (pers. comm., 16 October 2015, author's trans., emphasis added)

Thus, the reconciliation of the two identities, Catholic and gay, by the group, is permeated by the possibilities of the socio-digital culture, through the creation of a website,[19] which favored a "demand" in terms of help, orientation, and meetings. The "little [offline] network" generated the online network, with a greater range. What subsisted in a latent mode within the Catholic Church found a communicational "escape point," an opening in the "ecclesial closet," thanks to a symbolic action in the digital environment.

It is, therefore, an emergent "peripheral minority" in the contemporary ecclesial context. Its "minority," however, goes beyond the quantitative inferiority of its members (whether in digital terms, with its 4,700 "likes" on the Facebook page[20], for example, whether in socio-ecclesial terms,

---

17 <http://www.diversidadecatolica.com.br/quem_somos.php>, viewed 11 September 2016.
18 <https://www.facebook.com/diversidadecatolica/info/?tab=page_info>, viewed 11 September 2016.
19 <http://www.diversidadecatolica.com.br>, viewed 11 September 2016.
20 <https://www.facebook.com/diversidadecatolica/>.

compared with a Catholic "majority"), and involves the struggle to have an active voice in the ecclesial context, to "be heard" by the Church as a whole, as gay people in the Catholic context who still have no access to a "full voice" in the main spaces of the life of the Church. Gay people can be seen as a minority, in this sense, because they constitute "a place where the flow of transformation an [Catholic] identity or a [ecclesial] power relationship is encouraged," promoting "a group positioning within a conflictual dynamics" (Sodré 2005, p. 12) around gender issues.

By proposing a dissident discourse, according to certain social readings, or even heretical, according to some Catholic readings, the group is located in both the ecclesial border, and in the social frontier. It points to what Pope Francis himself calls "existential peripheries." For the pontiff,

> Usually we move ourselves into spaces that somehow we control. This is the center. But, as we leave the center, we discover more things. And when we look at the center from these new things we discovered, from these new positions, from that periphery, we see that the reality is different. [...] We see reality better from the periphery than from the center. (Francis 2015, author's trans.)

In the Church context, homosexual people, as in the case of *Diversidade Católica*, are not in the "center," because, in the Catholic culture in general, they are still seen as "sinful," "anomalous," "pathologically deviant," despite all the progress of ecclesial reflection, far from an supposed Christian ideal. As periphery, *Diversidade Católica* is part of a set of "cultural systems that are characterized by being less regulated (less described) by the dominant 'nucleus'" of the ecclesiastical institution (Ibrus 2015, p. 236, author's trans.). Therefore, the group operates in a relatively autonomously manner within the Church, as a Catholic vanguard or subculture, with a certain independence of the ecclesiastical structures of power.

The communicational scope and range of the group, despite its "peripheral minority," gained a catalyzation and an exponentiation with the creation of the Facebook page, according to Serra: "Facebook certainly became a huge channel of contact. Very big, very big. There are many messages per day. [...] A lot of people came to the group via Facebook. [...] In fact, I would venture to say that Facebook today is our main channel of communication" (pers. comm., 16 October 2015, author's trans., emphasis added).

This communicational process found its climax in the process of divulgation, organization and evaluation of the 1st National LGBT Catholics Meeting, held in Rio de Janeiro on 26 July 2014. The meeting was sponsored by *Diversidade Católica*, along with several other Brazilian Catholic gay groups, as a time of sharing and exchange of experiences between Brazilian LGBT Catholics about "who they are, how they live their religious identity, how they feel the community to which

they belong, and how their action occur on the various organized lay groups."[21] According to Serra, "a lot of people arrived at the Meeting by the Internet, by the event page on Facebook. As a platform, the level of interaction is impressive. […] Without Facebook, the National Meeting would not have happened (pers. comm., 16 October 2015, author's trans.).

During the period of the National Meeting, the page created a specific "event" on Facebook, placing as its cover photo a detail of the poster of the event (Fig. 3).

Figure 3 – Cover photo of the page of the 1st National LGBT Catholics Meeting on Facebook. Source: <https://www.facebook.com/events/733498820049932/>.

Noteworthy is the title of the meeting ("Your faith has saved you"), which refers to a phrase of the Gospel, spoken by Jesus to a woman cured of a hemorrhage (Mark 5, 25-34; Luke 8, 43-48) which serves as the theme of the meeting. The central element of the image – linked to this phrase – is the pink sheep, a strong symbolism both in Catholicism, as in the culture in general. In the New Testament, Jesus identifies himself as the "good shepherd" and the "gate for the sheep" (John 10, 7-18). As for common sense, the symbol of the "black sheep" is used to negatively identify a person who is different from the others, that is outside of the "normal" standards set by society. Here, however, the sheep is pink, a color traditionally used as a social critique of the gender standard**s**. This symbolic construction links various symbolic meanings of the sheep: as the person who follows Jesus, as a "different" person, as a social criticism related to the gender issue.

In these cases, the graphic-visual skills of the group emerges as a visible knowledge of the languages involved in such symbolic constructions, which allow to realize that the action of the lay-amateur does not presuppose communicational ignorance or "amateurism," in a pejorative sense, but rather a non-institutional identification with some media corporations or the ecclesiastical

---

21 <https://goo.gl/gLB3Nf>, viewed 11 September 2016.

institution, allowing them such autonomy and freedom for re-signifying religious practices and symbols.

As a result of the National Meeting, beyond the publication of a manifesto[22], a National Network of Catholic LGBT groups was also articulated, composed LGBT Catholic groups present at the Meeting, bringing together various groups of Brazilian LGBT Catholics. Such a network, in its very articulation, defined an official Facebook page as its "headquarters".[23]

The National Meeting and the social and ecclesial tension that it caused,[24] therefore, point to the process of circulation of the "Catholic" on the web, involving numerous inter-relations between the group and the other inter-agents: an offline network of people and Catholic gay groups that activate online communicational networks on Facebook around the event, that, as the main result, gives rise to the "institutionalization" of a national network of gay Catholics and the establishment of an online communicational network on Facebook. We thus have a triple network that pervades the online communicational networks in which *Diversidade Católica* is present: homoaffectivity, Catholicism and digital culture.

The users in general also begin to recognize the competence and experience of the administrators of the *Diversidade Católica* page on Facebook as "experts" (or even as "authorities") in its proposal, not only by visiting the page, but also by "likening" it, and, especially, by entering into dialogue with those responsible in the comments of each post.

Diversidade Católica page on Facebook, thus, points to the transformational processes of Catholicism in the contemporary cultural melting pot, and demands a shift of the point of view of the observer to perceive the circulation of the "Catholic" and the construction of Catholicism itself also from alternative, peripheral, minority communicational actions, and not only from the central point of view of the institution on the homosexual issue. That is, in the context of digital mediatization of Catholicism, the *Diversidade Católica* page is a "symbolic dispositive with an ethical-political intentionality within the counter-hegemonic struggle" (Sodré 2005, p. 12) of the Catholic symbolic universe.

---

22 <https://goo.gl/FO6kO4>.
23 <https://www.facebook.com/redenacionalcatolicoslgbt>, viewed 11 September 2016.
24 The event had a considerable media impact in the Brazilian media, for example in some of the most important newspapers from Brazil: *O Estado de S. Paulo* (<http://goo.gl/eZq4jW>), *O Globo* (<http://goo.gl/dJUInM>) e *O Povo* (<http://goo.gl/CxpaFe>), among others; viewed 11 September 2016

7   Conclusions

In the circulatory flow in online communicational networks, it is possible to see that the poles of production and reception do not disappear, but it is no longer possible to settle them in a specific social subject, whether the media corporations or the Church itself. In societies in mediatization, the communicational processes have equipped potentially all the persons with the consciousness and the reflective resources with which they can construct meaning on the world and give sense to the broader culture.

Thus, in the process of mediatization of religion, new modalities of perception and expression of religious beliefs and practices begin to arise in the digital environment, thanks to the publicization of religious elements and the accessibility to such elements by numerous inter-agents, everywhere and at any time. Based on its own systems of meaning, local communicational practices of Catholicism on the web can reinvent Catholicism itself, through circulatory processes.

The inter-agents in general now have a "direct" access to the most different levels of the ecclesiastical institution, via socio-digital platforms. In these interactions, though strongly mediated by the interfaces and the protocols of the platforms, there is a recontextualisation of what is published by the institution to other media or social environments. In the deployment of online communicational networks, ordinary users can feed a broad theological and ecclesial debate. The process of circulation, thus, is catalyzed, by means of approximations and tensions regarding to the meanings constructed on Catholicism. Acting in a collective cosmos of meanings about the "Catholic" and internalizing it, networked individuals subjectively appropriate this reservoir and this historical matrix of meanings, and reconstruct them in a collective and public manner. The ecclesial institution itself, while entering the networked flow of meanings, is re-signified and "re-institutionalized" by the communicational actions of society.

In this complex articulation between networked socialization, digital technicisation and socio-religious symbolization, a context of reinvention of religious practices emerges. Religious experience is transformed by the networked interaction among users, revealing not only a plurality of religious meanings about Catholicism, but also the possibility of its public reconstruction, in a break of scale, scope and speed in relation to the socio-historical processes of constitution of Catholicism.

If social action on religion modifies its existence, such a process is therefore exponentiated when permeated by the media scope and speed. The circulation of the "Catholic" on the web leads to its own *reconstruction*, as an invention/production of something "new" (construction) or as an experimentation/transformation of something already existing (deconstruction). The "Catholic" is continuously instated and re-signified in the online interactions, either by the institution itself, as by

individuals. The networked communicational processes on Catholicism establish not only the "Catholic" as a discourse, but also new systems of religious perception and expression.

In these cases, a know-how traditionally reserved to clerics about Catholicism is now "decentralized," in a process in which community ties are constituted and supported through the networked communicational action. Then, there is the disappearance of an *a priori* control by the clergy and by the institution in theological-doctrinal Catholic terms, which further reinforces the *social selection* of the elements that compose the "Catholic." Thus, it is possible to see a political-ecclesial practice of those who I call lay-amateur, who develop critical observation circuits of Catholicism itself and of constitution of another Catholic point of view, from where they can expose their voice and their own theology, which, without such a circuit, could continue invisibilized.

In networked media processes, the "faithful," the "laypersons" are not just mere "hearers of the Word," but also possible "producers of a word" about faith, which is communicated on the web, ceasing to be a "personal word" to become a "social word", while entering the flow of communicational circulation. Hence, there is the emergence of a communicational democratization of religious expertise and a multiplication of the contact zones between the Church and society. Faithful, not faithful or unfaithful inter-agents build the recognition of their credibility within the religious sphere, seeking to deepen or reverse the actual practices of the ecclesiastical institution, and to transform what is negatively perceived as a "fact" in the Catholic space. Society re-signifies the socio-digital platforms as an alternative space for religious active, creative and inventive agents such as minorities and peripheral groups in the Catholic Church.

What it is possible to perceive in online communicational networks is precisely the erasing of the boundaries between religious experts and lay-amateurs on the internet, that is, forms of participation and contribution of users in the digital world. In such cases, there is the manifestation of a communicational power of the inter-agents, through a lay empowerment. This "mediatically emancipated lay" reaches an "ordinary expertise" through daily experience and practice. The networked "Catholic" passes thus by a bottom-up reinvention – a process operated not by the church hierarchy, nor by the media corporations, but by connected social bases, which propagate their religious inventions to wider networks by gestures of communicational cooperation.

Thus, the "Word becomes network," and the sacred circulates and flows through the intricacies of the internet, by an endless actions of construction of meaning by numerous networked inter-agents. Such social discourses about the "Catholic" embody a democratic and secularizing action of society on Catholic beliefs and practices. As a result, it is possible to say that, in the religious practices on the web, the possibility of the lay-amateurs to publicly say the "Catholic" is also a properly *theo-political action* of publicization, visibilization, recognition and legitimation of ecclesial minorities or of peripheral Catholic beliefs and practices. And it is a theo-political action

on two levels: firstly, by inscribing the social perception of the "Catholic" in a broader and more public media space than the traditional religious practice or formal theological reflection, involving society in general; secondly, by enabling the construction of processes that are not yet fully established in the relations between society and religion, nor are they fully, institutionally recognize.

In this Catholic polysemy, between contradictions and complementarities, the inter-agent encounters the possibility of nurturing and constructing a communicational-religious system from its religious construction. Among the alleged homogeneity of Brazilian Catholicism, there is the emergence of its pluralism in the communicational metamorphosis of practices and beliefs that are reinvented in relation to what is dominant, traditional and conventional in the Catholic socio-cultural context.

Bibliography

Braga, JL 2012, 'Circuitos versus Campos Sociais', in M Mattos, J Janotti Junior & N Jacks (eds), *Mediação e Midiatização*, Edufba, Salvador.

Flichy, P 2010, *Le sacre de l'amateur: Sociologie des passions ordinaires à l'ère numérique*, Éditions du Seuil, Paris.

Francis 2015, 'Dos años con Francisco, por los villeros de Baires', *La Cárcova News*, viewed 11 September 2016, <http://goo.gl/hWsZkr>.

Friesen N & Hug T 2009, 'The Mediatic Turn: Exploring Concepts for Media Pedagogy', in K Lundby (ed), *Mediatization: Concept, Changes, Consequences*, Peter Lang Publishing, New York.

Gomes PG 2008, 'O processo de midiatização da sociedade e sua incidência em determinadas práticas sociossimbólicas na contemporaneidade: a relação mídia e religião', in A Fausto Neto et al. (eds), *Midiatização e processos sociais na América Latina*, Paulus, São Paulo.

Hepp A 2012, *Cultures of Mediatization*, Polity, Cambridge.

Hoover SM 2008, *Media and Religion: White Paper from The Center for Media, Religion, and Culture*, University of Colorado, Boulder, viewed 11 September 2016, <http://migre.me/8UUZT>.

Ibrus I 2015, 'Una alternativa: la evolución de los medios abordada desde la semiótica de la cultura', in CA Scolari (ed), *Ecología de los medios: entornos, evoluciones e interpretaciones*, Gedisa, Barcelona.

Lima LC 2014, 'Homoafetividade e evangelização: abrir caminhos', *Vida Pastoral*, vol. 55, nº. 297, July-August, pp. 29-36, viewed 11 September 2016, <http://goo.gl/zLV7ro>.

Martín-Barbero J 2008, *Dos meios às mediações*, UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro.

Morin E 1999, *O método 3: o conhecimento do conhecimento*, 2nd edn, Sulina, Porto Alegre.

Sbardelotto M 2013, 'O caso @Pontifex e a reconstrução do religioso em dispositivos conexiais', *Logos*, v. 2, pp. 57-72, viewed 11 September 2016, <http://goo.gl/uXIkt4>.

Sbardelotto M 2014, 'The Sacred in Bits and Pixels: An Analysis of the Interactional Interface in Brazilian Catholic Online Rituals', *Journal of Religion, Media and Digital Culture*, v. 3, n. 2, August, pp. 82-115, viewed 11 September 2016, <https://goo.gl/WWnCZc>.

Sbardelotto M 2016a, '*E o Verbo se fez rede: uma análise da circulação do "católico" em redes comunicacionais online*', PhD thesis, Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos, São Leopoldo, viewed 11 September 2016, <https://goo.gl/QZ4kNm>.

Sbardelotto M 2016b, '@Franciscus, o papa no Instagram. Uma breve análise comunicacional', *IHU On-Line*, v. 1, pp. 17-19, viewed 11 September 2016, <http://goo.gl/OG4fIe>.

Sodré, M 2005, 'Por um conceito de minoria', in R Paiva & A Barbalho (eds), *Comunicação e cultura das minorias*, Paulus, São Paulo.

Sodré, M 2014, *A ciência do comum: notas para o método comunicacional*, Vozes, Petrópolis.

Steil CA & Toniol R 2013, 'O catolicismo e a Igreja Católica bo Brasil à luz dos dados sobre religião no Censo de 2010', *Debates do NER*, vol. 14, n. 24, July-December, pp. 223-243, viewed 11 September 2016, <http://goo.gl/MRGaoc>.

Verón E 1997, 'Esquema para el análisis de la mediatización', *Diálogos de la Comunicación*, n. 48, pp. 9-17.

Verón E 2012, 'Prólogo: La mediatización, ayer y hoy', M Carlón & A Fausto Neto (eds), *Las políticas de los internautas: nuevas formas de participación*, La Crujía, Buenos Aires.

Biography

MOISÉS SBARDELOTTO has a PhD in Communication Sciences at Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos (Unisinos), Brazil, with a doctoral internship at Università di Roma "La Sapienza". He is a former member of the Special Commission for the Directory of Communication of the Church in Brazil, of the National Conference of Bishops of Brazil (CNBB) (2013-2014) and former coordinator of the Global Ethic Foundation Office in Brazil (2008-2012).

msbardelotto@yahoo.com.br