

The public imaginal – prolegomena to a communicational approach of imaginary

O imaginal público – prolegómenos a uma abordagem comunicacional do imaginário

El imaginal público – prolegómenos a un enfoque comunicacional del imaginario

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Abstract *In this paper we seek to outline some aspects evidencing imaginary's communicational dimension. This means we need to pay attention to the way collective imagining shapes social reality and how publicity contributes to this process. Suggesting a close link between imaginary, society and publicity, we name "public imaginal" to the dynamic, symbolic and complex set of diverse and heterogeneous imaginaries that permeate societies.*

Keywords: *Imaginary; Imaginal; Publicity; Communication; Mediatization*

Resumo *Neste trabalho procuramos delinear alguns aspectos que evidenciam a dimensão comunicacional do imaginário. Isso significa que precisamos de prestar atenção ao modo como o imaginar colectivo modela a realidade social e como a publicidade colabora nesse processo. Sugerindo uma ligação estreita entre o imaginário, a sociedade e a publicidade, nomeamos "imaginal público" ao conjunto dinâmico, simbólico e complexo de imaginários diversos e heterogêneos que permeiam as sociedades.*

Palavras-chave: *Imaginário; Imaginal; Princípio de Publicidade; Comunicação; Mediatização*

Resumen *En este trabajo pretendemos esbozar algunos aspectos que comprueben la dimensión comunicacional del imaginario. Esto significa que tenemos de prestar atención a la manera como el imaginar colectivo modela la realidad*

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social y cómo la publicidad contribuye a ese proceso. Sugiriendo una estrecha relación entre el imaginario, la sociedad y la publicidad, apellidamos “imaginal público” al conjunto dinámico, simbólico y complejo de distintos y heterogéneos imaginarios que permean las sociedades.

Palabras-clave: *Imaginario; Imaginal, Principio de la Publicidad; Comunicación; Mediación*

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Introduction

We live in societies full of images especially after the advent of modernity's visual technologies such as photography, cinema or television. However, this is nothing new since the value of the image conveys the millennial relation that man has with imageries. Indeed, the recognition of the power of iconic symbols is intrinsic to the human kind, not something that emerged with modernity. Like words images enable thought and representation. And since the visible is always a matter of revelation, to make something seen is also to make something believable. The image has been used to grasp domains where the spoken word simply cannot reach (MONDZAIN, 2003: 19).

Thus, we easily imagine our world: depicting it, representing it, expressing it. The imaginary covers the polymorphic sphere of the visible. The humanity of *homo sapiens* was undoubtedly conquered by an adaptive intelligence that resorts to the creation of abstract ideas through projective images, which mimic the real and at the same time recreate it (ARAÚJO AND BAPTISTA, 2003: 37). Our world soon became a world where imaginaries dwell, the imaginary being another way of interpreting reality and producing meaning.

One of the major properties of imaginary lies in its ability to convert singular gazes into social, communal contemplations. To have an imaginary is to imagine together, is a common perspective turned visible and expressed in an eidetic mode. So, to share an imaginary is also to exchange perceptions, to distribute the same collection of visual representations of the world, to build a common way of seeing ourselves and others. Therefore the imaginary is an important aspect of any society because it summons a collective spectator: each person intervenes in the social imaginary but at the same time, each individual watches others working upon that imaginary. Each individual imagination functions within the boundaries of one or more imaginaries. As long as they convene a collective acting upon the visibility and imagining of the world, they put individuals in relation to one another. So, imaginaries are also ways of stimulating and enhancing our relations to others.

In this paper we will deepen this link between imaginary and society by emphasising the concept of advertising. We argue that we can better understand that connection if we consider how advertising intervenes in the structuring and enlargement of the social imaginary. One of the aspects less discussed on this subject is the public formation of the imaginary. We will be referring to the “imaginary” as the set of world images, that is, conceptual representations symbolically expressed in plastic and visual forms of imagetic dimensions which function as public units of social meaning. We distinguish it from “imagery” since the “imaginary” corresponds to a leakage of denotation and presumes emancipation from the literal content of an image. The imaginary is a dynamic and symbolic concept beyond its strict affinities with images seen as a referential representation. All societies are based on systems of thought that fall back on symbolic images or plastic ideas. In order to appraise this process we address the imaginary as part of a public process that communicates and spreads social representations and systems of symbolic thought all through society. This requires the recognition of the full potentialities of the imaginary and recommends that we turn down all the propositions that consider the concept as a delusion.

We begin to describe how modernity, portraying the imaginary as a productive force, has favoured the identification of the imaginary with a fantasy or unreality. However, this is not the unique perspective on the topic. So, we will stress the communicational (poetic) capacity of imaginary. By accentuating its capabilities and its importance on society and stimulated by Henry Corbin’s “Imaginal” (CORBIN, 1964), we will discuss, the possibility of a “public imaginal”, an open, complex, plural and eclectic collective imaginary. Before discussing how media and mediatised advertising interfere in the social imaginary today, we try to characterise this dynamic multiplicity of imaginaries which the concept of “public imaginal” covers, and measure how it can be recognised in contemporary societies.

Imaginary and modernity – the productive perspective and its affinities with fantasy and unreality

The imaginary as a fundamental order had historically been related to an overestimation of the cognitive proprieties of the subject. Hence, the imaginary has been assimilated with imagination assuming a strong psychological dimension. The blending of the two concepts brought major consequences to the way modernity sees the imaginary. Thus, the condemnation of imagination had been accompanied by the denigration of the imaginary itself. This posed serious difficulties to a positive evaluation of the function of the imaginary since it has been easily associated with illusoriness. In order to appraise and reconsider the imaginary in contemporary societies, we first need to briefly address how imaginary and imagination became related to something hollow and illusory.

According to the pre-modern thought, and especially according to Aristotle, imagination (*phantasia*) is a representative faculty which replicates mental images (*phantasmas*) on a pre-existent reality (ARISTOTLE, 1987). Imagination mediates senses and reason and can be divided into a sensitive imagination (present in all animals) and a deliberative imagination (unique to human beings). According to Aristotle, humans think through images; these representations provide the contents for the various activities of the intellectual faculty.

Building up this understanding, Enlightenment will consider imagination as a creative faculty, producer of its own images. The imagining subject is the one and only source of meaning and therefore imagination gains autonomy. In contrast with the mimetic paradigm, the productive paradigm does not posit imagination as an intermediary agency – imitating some truth beyond man – between reality and subject (KEARNEY, 2009: 155); instead of being a reproduction of reality, in modern times imagination is deemed capable of inventing a world out of its human resources. “The imagination ceases to function as a mirror reflecting some external reality and becomes a lamp which projects its own internally generated light into things” (KEARNEY, 2009: 155). As a conse-

quence, meaning is no longer considered as a transcendent property of god. It is then greeted as a transcendental product of the subject. Kant, for example, rescued imagination from its role as an intermediate faculty between the sensible and the intelligible experience. Imagination (*Einbildungskraft*) is bestowed with a synthetic power in which everything known is first pre-formed and transformed by imagination. He declared it as the primary precondition of all knowledge (KANT, 2001: 183). Kant's schematism is the formal and pure condition through which a non-empirical concept is associated with a mental image created by imagination through the pure form of time.

In short, modernity achieved a conception where imagination was not merely a reproduction of some reality (an imitation) but a true production of a human consciousness. What is more, images were not a static thing dropped into memory but a dynamic and creative act (KEARNEY, 2009: 156). So, we are dealing here with a creative and productive imagination, a subject's imaginative activity. The modern understanding of imagination makes human mind a projective agency. Meaning no longer requires the established mediation of reality to prove itself. It becomes its own guarantee because meaning is now imagination's immediate invention.

Consequently, in the productive paradigm, imagination is an autonomous faculty, an agency all humans possess, which enables them to create their own images. It is not devoted to a prolific capacity of making images – the ability to imagine – but it is also an autonomous faculty – the ability to imagine out of itself and not some external reality. This double function entails an important paradox: the qualities which distinguish modern imagination are the same which put it in peril. Since the greatest danger to imagination is precisely the power of being able to produce its own images. Pascal (1963), for example, tells us that imagination's creation of self-referential images puts reason in jeopardy. He conceives imagination as a faculty which can alienate man by anesthetizing his rational capabilities. It can give rise to a disorder where foolishness arises. According to Pascal, imagination is

that deceitful part in man, that mistress of error and falsity, (...); being most generally false, she gives no sign of her nature, impressing the same character on the true and the false. (...). Reason protests in vain; it cannot set a true value on things” (PASCAL, 1963: 504).

Therefore the central place conferred on a transcendental and creative imagination means man’s serious risk of losing track of what is reality and what is “merely” imagination. Since imagination impairs reason, man may no longer be capable of differentiating real images from imagined images. The possible result is to give priority to imaginary over reality making the world a simple stage for the seductive power of imagination. So, Pascal warns the possibility of imagination to endorse a short-circuiting between reality and representation as it does not refer to an external world but to an inward world.

This criticism of modern imagination which relates imaginary to a sheer fantasy is pursued by Sartre and developed in its phenomenological psychology of the imagination. By studying the functioning of the imaginary he describes the unreal, made-up world created by consciousness and imagination. To put it simply, he examines the negating or unrealizing activity of imagination. While perception considers the object as an existent, the imagination, says Sartre, puts it as necessarily something absent, therefore, something non-existent to consciousness. Consequently, the imaginary is rooted in the conscience of nothingness (*néant*). Imaginary is concomitant with irreality, something that exists only in the mind that imagines. It is an annihilating activity (*néantisation*) which denies reality.

For the rest, the object as imaged is an irreality. Without doubt it is present but, at the same time, it is out of reach. I cannot touch it, change its place: or rather I can indeed do so, but on the condition that I do it in an irreal way, renouncing to be served by my own hands, resorting to phantom hands that will deliver irreal blows to this face: to act on these irreal objects, I must duplicate myself, irrealize myself. But, besides this, none of these objects claim an action, a conduct of me. They are neither heavy, nor pressing, nor demanding: they are pure passivity, they wait” (SARTRE, 2004: 125).

In short, the imaginary is defined by a vacuous world, a world of absences, or nothingness. It inverts the natural order where imageries are subordinated to reality, and in its place put reality under the dominion of images. It imagines and produces images but adds zero to the existent reality. So, according to Sartre, the imaginary means a double annihilation: on the one hand, by postulating nothingness; on the other hand, by nullifying reality interrupting its flow.

We observe in Pascal and Sartre the same attitude of distrust of the imaginary. Imagination and imaginary become close concepts and the suspicion of the capacity of imagination to freely create their own images and replace reality with fantasy or illusion falls upon the imaginary itself. In this sense, it is not surprising that today the imaginary is seen with mistrust as something chimeric and fanciful, something opposed to reality that binds individuals to an imaginary world. Moreover, in English, like in other languages, such as Portuguese or French, the word “imaginary” is a synonym of the word “fantasy”. The annihilation of the imaginary as it has been historically understood comprises not only a temporal unreality (the reverie, the dreaminess, fictional time) but also in a spatial irreality (KEARNEY, 2009: 228) where imaginary types or forms can take surreal (Chagall), oneiric (Dali) or illogical (Kandinsky) appearances, for example.

This negative and annihilating understanding seems to be the main meaning conferred upon the imaginary. Many contemporary (post-modern) essays in philosophy, social theory or communication theory approach the imaginary from this deceptive perspective and reduce the imaginary to a somewhat delirious and desiring attitude (DELEUZE AND GUATTARI, 1980), a false-consciousness (ALTHUSSER, 1970) or a fabricated, distorted, deceitful and simulacral image (Baudrillard, 1981). Even works which debate the advertising and consumption imaginaries (LIPOWETSKY, 2006; BAUMAN, 2007), or the television or cinema imaginaries (METZ, 1982) tend to be sympathetic to this tradition and adopt a mistrustful position on the concept of “imaginary”.

Nonetheless, this is a reductive appreciation and it raises several difficulties to discuss how the imaginary and society reciprocally influence

each other beyond this dominant perspective. More than this, it raises serious complications to think about communication and its role in today's societies. The "culture industry" concept coined by Adorno and Horkheimer (2002), shows a tendency to see mass communication and mass society as an inauthentic culture which to some extent contributed to the construction of an alienated and reified imaginary. How can we then critically appraise today's cinema imaginary or press imaginary? The idea that the imaginary is only a fragile set of falsified or untruthful images would lead us to observe that all the activities related to the communication field were fabricated, and would have no meaning and no scientific value. Communication Sciences would be dispensable then.

We maintain that neither the imaginary is not simply a chimerical or unreal world having only marginal effects on society, nor the communication studies are expendable. That is why we present some topics and try to give a positive re-appraisal of the imaginary and hopefully we will underscore how communication and advertising are important aspects of the imaginary.

The symbolic and communicational approach of the imaginary

Regardless of the association between imaginary and imagination, regardless of the historical reduction of the imaginary to a set of virtual or hollow images we can discern a nexus between the visual and the symbolic in the concept's core. In fact, the image is an image of something. And it is this intentionality that opens the symbolic to the images. Unlike Pascal or Sartre to whom imagining corresponds to a depleted and phantom reality, it is possible to see the imaginary not just as a presentification (one realizes an absence) but especially as something which triggers the potentiality of the image and where the seduction instincts (*eidolon*) are replaced by poetical and metamorphic instincts (*eikon*). We must, thus, consider the symbolic feature of the imaginary (cf. DURAND, 1995).

There are two main evaluations: one – present in Pascal and Sartre – that cuts the symbolic value out from the images in the name of

an abstract rationality; and another where, in the name of a symbolic overcharge, images take man into other realms. In this case, reality is enriched through the formation, *trans*-formation and *de*-formation of images. “We always think of imagination as the faculty that *forms* images. On the contrary, it *deforms* what we perceive; it is, above all, the faculty that frees us from immediate images and *changes* them” (BACHELARD, 2011: 1). The imagining action of the imaginary may then be an open and poetic ability humans have, which enables them to see beyond immediate reality. The imaginary is an oblique feature of all reality that via the symbolic builds a realm of rational but also emotional and ambivalent representations. It may assume chimerical contours but that is not always necessarily the case. The imaginary, Bachelard (2011) tells us, is also a form of revelation. We cannot condemn the imaginary from the start. Instead we must separate between what is used as a closed and accomplished imagery and what is used as an open, developing and never-ending imaginary. This is to say that we need to differentiate between what is a static, indexical imagination from a dynamic, open and symbolic imagination. The imaginary is precisely composed of this complex and intricate imaginations; one can form images and at the same time one deforms it as a new way to understand experience.

What is lacking in negative views on imaginary is the acknowledgement of the communicational aspect of the imaginary. Symbols, images and ideas are created, transformed and re-evaluated through communicative processes that are in constant motion in every society. Communication empowers imaginary with that constant reformulation of images. The imaginary is never a constricted depository of unpretentious images but a dynamic social process where images are inferred but also construed through communicating selves constantly refashioning the uses and functions of the imaginary. Seen from this symbolic and communicational viewpoint, we need to address the imaginary under its intrinsic plurality and complexity. We need, then, to address it as a social imagining.

We are now moving away from an imaginary full-dependent on a subjective mind, an imaginary seen as a set of fictional images or an

unidimensional representation which contributes to reason's hypostatisation. The imaginary is more than a great warehouse of images: infra-images as in the unconscious and psychiatry, or supra-images as in the surrealist tradition. It is mainly a poetic relation to reality in which by means of a communicational process, plural images of the world are disseminated. The imaginary, thus, becomes apprehended as a collective notion: not a hallucinatory, fantastic and eccentric imagery but as a pragmatic, poetic and boundless communicational concept only dependent on its social uses.

The imaginal

Inspired by a communicational perspective we propose to call this openness of the imaginary, this constitutive indeterminacy, this socially formed and transformed set of plural images, an *Imaginal*.

This is not a new idea since it was coined by the philosopher and theologian Henry Courbin (1964) just like "origin" turned up "original". According to him, the imaginal denotes a meta-psychological imagination in which we experience a world of images which is characterised by a sensible exposition to an intellectual realm. Courbin describes the imaginal or *Imaginalia* (COURBIN, 1964) as an intermediate domain between body and spirit, between a sensual and corporeal world, between an intellectual and a spiritualised world. The imaginal "is neither the empirical world of sensory perception nor a world of pure intuition of intellects. It is an in-between world, interceding sphere" (COURBIN *apud* WUNENBURGER AND ARAÚJO 2003: 33).

In the context of communication, the imaginal labels a special type of the social performativity. We put aside the noetic and hermeneutical functions ascribed by Courbin and instead we emphasise the positive ambiguity of the imaginary in that notion, its communicational fluidity, its constructive dimension of a world of images in constant motion, formation and transformation. The imaginal invites us to discern images as visual figurations of thoughts and concepts while underscoring how the symbolic comprehends a figurational and a conceptual aspect. The

imaginal allows us to understand how the symbolic organisation of the world is co-determined by representations which are simultaneously visual - concrete and plastic - while being also conceptual - intangible and intellectual. Parallel to the critical rationality we encounter an aesthetic rationality, an iconophilic disposition to think our world and form supple imaginaries that accommodate the potential to imagine and represent reality. The world is made of this imaginal movement: words are not the only way to term reality; there are also imagetive and figurational processes that help to shape it.

Thus we must considerer how the social imaginary is always in transit, moving around; like an open sea, it is formed by successive waves of images, each one adding symbolic value to its predecessor. The imaginal is also an evasion of socially shared images, a passage between different imaginaries, a group of imaginations working together to defuse new meanings, add new connotations, to renovate the actual imaginaries in favor of its potentialities. Hence, the imaginal terms a dynamic symbolic potency of images. Each intermittent passage between imaginaries leads to an imagined world – not an imaginary world –, to a social imagination pointing, not to a closed imagination but to an imaginal function, an indeterminate symbolic imaginary formed by a plurality of images in constant motion and permanent formation, deformation and mutation (DURAND, 1995).

The public imaginal

The imaginal is composed of those complex imaginaries which have a dense symbolic charge. It is subject to constant transformation and re-adaptation by means of a variety of imaginative activities that strive in society. Considering this imagetive potential and its capacity to make iconic figurations from abstract concepts, the imaginal may be seen as a communicational and plural interpretation of the imaginary.

Perceived from this perspective, the relation between imaginary and communication also relates to another important concept: advertising. Since the imaginal describes an imaginary inhabited by successive social

imaginations, a plural and creative symbolically driven imaginary, we need to consider how the imaginal is structured in society and organised in communicative processes. We argue that imaginal is composed of a variety of different imaginaries, so we must just think about how those dissimilar imaginaries are juxtaposed together in society, via its advertising. This is to say that we need to prize the public dimension of social imaginaries in the “imaginal”.

The “public imaginal” respects the symbolic relations different imaginaries establish between each other and how they interpenetrate, influence and change each imaginary. It has the advantage of considering the possibility of an iconic ecology as well as the role that the social and individual imagination plays in the definition and evolution of imaginaries. The imaginal concerns a public imagining, how a plurality of individuals we call society (ELIAS, 1991) simultaneously affects their own (collective) imagining activity and is affected by it, that is to say, by the imaginaries that pervade social life.

Bringing advertising to the discussion on imaginary, society and communication means that we can see an order among very different social imaginaries. It enables us to think about the public process of the social constitution of imaginaries, not just in a historical manner (the medieval imaginary, the baroque imaginary) but also in a synchronic manner, i.e. on the confluence of unlike imaginaries at the same time. They all are visible and circulate through society; this is why it is useful to consider a notion such as “public imaginal”. Nowadays, we observe, with strong acuity, a resilient public imaginal, i.e. a panoply of rich imaginaries permeating societies and striving for public recognition. To name a few, we can number the literary imaginary, or the scientific imaginary but also a Christian or a Jewish imaginary. Concerning contemporary life-styles and fads, we can also give the example of the increasingly popular lolita, lindy-hop, gothic, bear or queer imaginary. Some of these imaginaries even include a social dress social and behavioural etiquette as well as special (physical and virtual) places where individuals who adhere to these sub-cultures meet and develop their public affirmation. Many websites, for instance, explore and propagate the gothic/lollita imagi-

nary, a young women's subculture which started in Japan (cf. GAGNÉ, 2008). It goes without mentioning some established imaginaries such as those of cinema, fashion, or celebrity imaginaries. What is more, in each kind of imaginary we encounter a symbolic figurative representation of its own conceptual understanding of the world: for instance, in the environmentalism imaginary green is the colour of the political belief in an ecologically sustainable society; and in the steampunk imaginary, the cog-wheel is the social figuration of the idea of retro-futurism.

These are all cases of some of the countless imaginaries dwelling today's societies and circulating publicly as a big, public, communicational, encompassing imaginal. Each of them starts from other imaginaries and, at the same time (and to various extents), it feeds on them and influences them. Taken together they form a public imaginal or to put it in another way, they form a complex set of interrelated imaginaries which are publicly disseminated. This hypothesis rests on the assumption of a symbolic representation via iconic symbols and figurations of world-views, through which a public integration of different imaginaries via communication is developed. The public imaginal is available to the entire society and it can penetrate its innumerable strata and heterogeneities. As society members, the security agent, the maid or the business manager are all eligible to acknowledge the public existence of those imaginaries, even if they, eventually, do not identify with them.

All social imaginaries are suitable to be communicated and to be made available to others since they are incorporated in a public process. Imaginaries are imagetive activities which try to imagine, i. e. to establish relations through images in a public context. As long as they circulate (and be communicated) through society and as long as they are recognised and appropriated by individual behaviours, imaginaries are communicative instances which benefit from their insertion in advertising.

The public imaginal and mediatisation

Due to the fact that the set of prevailing imaginaries forms what we call a "public imaginal" we can recognise an aptitude to precede the col-

lective structuration of meaning in them. In the public imaginal, representations are not simple contents exchangeable by two individual or collective actors; the imaginal are publicly constructed imaginaries, a ceaseless collective, always in structuration and erection. So an imaginary is not a fixed and inert set of figurational representation of social concepts; it is also something that is always changing and making itself. Because of this motive it comprehends a relational dimension which is heightened in public contexts of social life. Imaginaries imply relations between individuals and the development of those relations requires a public process.

The images produced by processes of collective imagining emerge in specific moments of interaction; they cannot be ascertained in advance. Thus collective imagining retains the relational quality of the imagination which Sartre explains, but its relation shifts. Rather than describing a relationship between objects and consciousness, collective imagining refers to those images that emerge in inter-subjective relations. In this way, collective imagining indicates a public process: interlocutors engage in processes of imagining about people they regard as similar to and different from themselves, and the processes and products of the collective imagination are accessible to others (ASEN, 2002: 349).

The public imaginal configures a special type of collective imagining. Hence, it refers to this public process of accommodating the imaginaries transfigurations while making it communicable and accessible, open to and exposed to all society members. It is an active and collective process of social figurations and value constellations made socially available to public recognition through figurational representations of conceptual systems of ideas and world-views.

The public imaginal is becoming a vital aspect of contemporary societies as mediatisation is taking more and more relevance. Visual technologies and digital media are not only pervasive in today's world they also fiercely contribute to the public constitution of social imaginaries which will ultimately form an imaginal. One may, for example, take the cinema industry's celebrity imaginary based on glamour, elegance and style. Every year the star imaginary is updated with new trends, new

fashions designs, hair-cuts or modish garments. And every year the transmission of the Oscar ceremony fosters this particular imaginary mixing it with other imaginaries, such as the fictional imaginary.

The media contribute to the establishment of an imaginal when they use their public legitimacy to fulfil the role of broadcasting the existing diversity of imaginaries. In fact, we can say that there is a strong relation between iconophilia, media and advertising starting with the fascination exerted by digital media and social networks by means of pictures, images, logos and photographs (indeed, Facebook or Orkut are based on an unmistakable emphasis on images in order to differentiate each user's profile and identity). In the context of the actual hypermediatised context, Deluca and Peebles (2002: 127) mention a "public screen" to express the visual potential of images in the public sphere; they argue that the centrality of the dialogue is now being replaced by the dissemination (of images). It is this (mediatised) dissipation of imaginaries which we propose to call a public imaginal where representations are at once exposed to the general gaze and socially shared. Images in constant motion through media mean a public propagation of imaginaries, that is to say one step on the communicational constitution of the imaginal.

Yet, it is not just the movie or the computer screen that nurtures a public imaginal. We have to take into consideration another, much older, type of screen: the television screen. The television medium is one of the media which most contributes to a public imaginal: not only because it repeats visibility (making reality seen), but also because it intensifies reality in the proliferation of social imaginaries. Displaying and exhibition become the way the public imaginal integrates different gazes. At the same time it promotes a collective imagining since television enjoys a remarkable public status. It is by showing and at the same time by focusing society's public attention that the television screen consubstantiates one of the most accomplished mediatisation agents on the dissemination of dense collective imaginaries.

Conclusion

Trying to depart from the negative perspectives on the imaginary that see it as a pretended daydream, or nihilist activity, we underscored imaginaries' symbolic dimension to suggest a communicational approach which considers how imaginaries are always socially participated and constructed. We did not only attempt to emphasise how collective imagining is greatly intensified by mediatisation, but also how it functions as figurational activity of more conceptual and complex systems of representation by articulating both the sensible and the intellectual. We advocated that the confluence of imaginaries that mixe in society configures a public imaginal. By this we mean the plurality of different imaginaries subject to a collective and public imagining, each one contributing to a generalised picturing of the world. It contains a socially shared set of expectations of how the plurality of individuals – such as a society – should interpret and use those imaginaries according to a specific world's (or sub-culture's) understanding.

As Fleury (2006: 15) says, the creation of imaginal joint forms is inseparable from human history. It takes History to manufacture a mutual imaginal background skilled to offer a mode of partaking of a sensory and an intellectual understanding of reality, from the individual as well as from the social view-point. In the imaginal consciousness nothing is more intimate, nevertheless nothing is more universal. The importance of advertising to think about the imaginal lies in here: the figurative-conceptual assets are only active because a principle of advertising heads to the management of what concerns the individual and what respects collectivity. Due to public influence, the varieties of imaginaries are, at the same time, able not only to take a social and collective recognition but also to reach and work upon individual and collective consciousness.

The public imaginal is in constant transformation and signifies a representative dynamics (in both its visual and intellectual dimensions) that contributes to an active shaping of the social world. Since it is subject to a public negotiation, the imaginal background (made of heterogeneous imaginaries) is reverberating different meanings. But since the public

imaginal is an open and integrating social ground, it can settle different significations to a common denominator.

Therefore we can deduce that the public process has an imaginal function of assemblage, decomposition and recovery of conceptual and figurational representations. Advertising inscribes itself in the economy of the visible and, at the same time, the imaginal possesses a public dimension as long as it works as a set of heterogeneous imaginaries with competing meanings that struggles to be socially acknowledged.

The imaginal designates the dynamic assortment of the imaginary. However, it is not just another multiplicity of imaginaries: it is a multiplicity of imaginings occurring in society, in publicity, in a public context.

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