From Inclusion to Sustainability.
A Political Journey beyond Identity Rights

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Abstract

This article discusses two political approaches to marginalization, the one based on inclusion (identification paradigm) and the other based on a politics of diffraction and fragmentation (dis-identification paradigm). By drawing on the experience of everyday utopias, explored by Davina Cooper, and the concept of figuration, elaborated on by Donna Haraway, the article makes the claim that a politics of diffraction is far more effective than the implementation of top-down, exclusively state-based inclusive policies.

Keywords: legal rights, looping effect, queer theory, feminism

1. Introduction

In this article, I will discuss two political approaches to marginalization, one based on the concept of inclusion, with a strong centripetal tendency, and the other focused on the development of an eccentric politics, that praises differences and pursue the goal of sustainability. I refer to the former approach as an 'identification paradigm' (1.). In this political strategy, inclusion is implemented through a process of legal ratification of social identities. The link between inclusion and identity constitutes an approach that places recognition and legitimation at the heart of any valuable political strategy against marginalization. As I will discuss, the particular way the law works in today's societies of the global North converts forms of lego-political inclusion into broader mechanisms of naturalization operating through narrow and reified categories. It is my contention that this form of inclusion sets in motion a basic movement whereby subjects and groups are, whether overtly or covertly, prompted to adapt themselves to a categorical platform. This, in turn, eventuates in the promotion of a system in which difference – to be socially accountable – must always be articulated in conformity with a limited number of ready-made social identities. At odds with this perspective, is the 'dis-identification paradigm' (2.). Here inclusion is rejected to make room to a diffracted politics grounded on the proliferation of social experiences. This approach is structured along the concept of 'figuration' and focuses on the re-habilitation of social interactions as valuable political spaces. By building on an idea of politics as the conflation of micro-political experiences, I will argue for the rise of minor-stream contexts where alternatives are not simply fantasized about but concretely actualized. The conclusion (3.) will disclose the potentialities of the dis-identification approach, showing that a flair for diffraction does not result in the sterile opposition of institutional measures and legal struggles, but rather leads to a re-articulation of the political domain beyond legal rights.

2. Identification paradigm

In this section, I will explore the link between what I call 'identification paradigm' and the idea of inclusion as the main political means to deal with marginalization. The search for an effective solution to contrast marginalization is central for state governments and institutions, which have to face the extreme fragmentation of the social fabric typical of nowadays democracies in the global North. In such a context, a politics based on the implementation of inclusive rights obtains a predominant position. As far as its goals are concerned, this politics is mainly focused on fighting marginalization through the conferral of rights to identity categories. As far as its methods are concerned, it relies on a process of 'juridification.' With this term, I indicate the transposition of political matters in strictly legal terms. Namely, I indicate the reframing of political strategies under the guise of *legal rights*. As many critics pointed out (see in particular Moyn 2010 and West 2011), the recourse to the legal tool of rights – above all of *identity rights* – relieves state governments from the far more difficult task of governing an elusive and morphing social domain (Marzocchi 2004), whose boundaries and elements become day by day more blurred.[1] Juridification can thus be seen as a response to the high degree of precariousness to which local institutions are exposed. In fact, the 'immediacy' of legal rights allows governments to respond to supra and intra-national (class actions, pressure groups…) demands through the incorporation of 'ready-made legal components' into the legal body. These components mainly consist of legal figures, that is, juridified social identities. From women to disabled persons, from migrants to LGBT people, the legal sphere teems with social identities that come to be (re)presented (in)to the social domain as members of ratified, visible, bounded categories. In the first part of this section, I want to analyse the outcomes of the creation and use of such legal types. To do so, I build on Ian Hacking's notions of «human kinds» and «looping effect», applying its theory to the legal domain. The idea, supported by Hacking (1986; 1995), of a mutual, constant exchange of the

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[1] This is true both at a political level (with the increased power of supra-national institutions and the proliferation of pluralistic sources of powers) and at a more 'physical' one (with the growing impact of migration fluxes or the offshoring of companies). See Goldoni 2014, Spanò 2013.

social and the legal domain[2] provides the grounds for assessing the path to the type of inclusion that state policies privilege. In the last part of this section, I highlight the role of 'juridification' in the rising fortune of the identification paradigm, so as to show how and why the tie between inclusion and identity is doomed to hamper the construction of a fairer society.

The notion of identity, as we know it, is a very recent product. Hacking (1986, 161; 1995, 352) traces its fortune back to a classificatory trend that emerged in the course of the 20th century. Social taxonomies were originally meant to produce a body of knowledge on *problematic* social kinds, as to provide patterns of explanation and forge domesticating techniques. Experts in a variety of disciplines started to conceive labels by drawing on traits typical of specific conducts. This classificatory process, as Hacking (1995a) describes it, is based on the production of discrete identities through the collection of data and parameters that allows forging an object of knowledge. Once a new category (a new «human kind») is created, it becomes the platform to organize a generalization of the main tendencies ('the deeds') of the members of the category (the 'doers') and, consequently, to provide an explanation of their habits in accordance with a causal paradigm. At a broader level this production of (continually updated) human kinds offers stable standards and establishes norms of conducts. While, at a narrower (individual) one, it marks the perimeter of available identities and patterns of social interactions as well as the spectrum of recognized conducts. Human kinds end up operating reflexively on subjects by exerting effects at the level of self-perception/narration through the ratification of a finite number of available/cognizable identities. In this sense, the doer herself benefits from an identification that generates a coherent self, with a disposable set of possible social connections at hand. The subject finds her unity along the line of a feature, which becomes decisive in the determination of who she is and on what is her social location. At the same time, it is worth emphasizing that the doer is not a simple receiver/exploiter of an external knowledge. For individual performances of categories' members are likely to broaden, amend or alter the knowledge about the kind to which they are associated, in such a way that they

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[2] Hacking's (1995a, 1999) research is focused on the link between social, non-structured conducts and their regulation from the part of "experts." While his research is mainly concerned with medical and scientific knowledge, I will apply its insights mainly to the legal field.

will affect the features of the category itself. Human kinds are the only case in which the object classified is shaped by and, in its turn, shapes the classifier. The incorporation of «socially available classification into [people's] intentional agency and sense of self» entails «the meaning of those classification [to evolve] with them. This forms a "feedback loop" […] between what we might think of as objective and subjective stances with respect to the classification» (Haslanger 2012, 124). Importantly, the impact of classification and its effectiveness is mostly guaranteed by people's inclination to conform spontaneously to categories and to use classifications both for narrating their experience and for describing other people. In delineating the boundaries of intelligibility, categories allow the creation of predictable pattern of interactions, facilitating social exchanges. This justifies the tendency to consciously embrace and deliberately employ identity categories: these are not 'imposed' labels used for 'disciplinary' purposes. Rather, categories turn into sites of collective recognition and become the first step to gain social visibility and acquire a political agency that derives from a specific way of accounting of one's social self. Nevertheless, when categories turn out to determine one's social relevance, belonging to a human kind crosses the boundaries of a 'mere' classification for scientific purposes and acquires a political profile. In this sense, the act of *self-ascription* stands out as a new political tool in the hands of social actors: by claiming one's own belonging to a recognized human kind, the subject not only becomes relevant for the development of the category to which she belongs, but begins to act politically as the bearer of a definite identity. Marginalized individuals, who were classified by experts interested in dealing with their disturbing presence, are now endowed with a ratified label that puts together single subjects and constitutes them *as a group*. Needless to say, a group of well-recognizable marginalized individuals is far more powerful than a single not-so-intelligible ('queer,' as it were) subject.

Thus, the raising of identities (that Hacking's theory of human kinds aptly describes) paves the way for the formation of new social entities. The shift from 'the deed' to 'the doer' mobilizes a kind of politics based on the acceptance of identity labels or – more radically – on an act of appropriation, realized through *self-ascription*. The political relevance of identity groups is renewed: from the Black Panthers to the Gay Liberation

Front, the second part of the 20th century has witnessed the successful rise of people that were able to find empowerment struggling from their peripheral positions (hooks 1991). The disruptive force of these struggles was gradually channelled into juridified paths. Institutions and governments started to see the conferral of rights as the most suitable answer to the demands these groups raised.[3] However, while marginalized groups asked for a political recognition of their differences, mainstream institutions replied with the legal sanctioning of their inherent uniformity. If marginalization was to be seen as a product of juridico-political structures, then, extending traditional rights and ratifying their equivalence was *the* solution. Their difference made no difference at all. As the story goes, the possibility of entering the political system as it was (of being *included*) did not solve the problem of marginalization. Rather, the extension of rights eventuated in an expansion of the 'centre,' and further reduced the visibility of 'peripheral' subjects that do not fit recognized standards. Paradoxically, increased visibility of certain groups pushes further back other forms of living, which could not be articulated in a traditional matrix. At this point, the link between identity, inclusion and rights become manifest: identity is a tool to make oneself politically visible, while inclusion appears the most convenient option to overcome discrimination and the extension of legal rights the swifter way to implement it. On the one hand, it is easy to spot the main flaw of this solution (inclusion can only exist in a system that presupposes exclusion). However, it is important to take into account the broader impact of juridification. As Hacking's reflection on feedback loops shows, the creation of human kinds triggers a circular dynamic in which social meaning are constantly (re)crafted in accordance with experts' objectification of social conducts and individual performances. In Hacking's analysis, this dynamic is nestled in the fluidity of social interactions. On the contrary, juridification relocates it in a new context (the legal one) and endows categories with a new status (Croce e Goldoni 2015), altering the feedback loop. First, jurified identity categories are crafted on the basis of the legal purpose they serve for. This means that certain features of a category will find space in the legal text with a view to implementing specific policies and achieving specific aims. Under this view,

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[3] For the shift from a politics of rupture to a politics of compliance see Warner 2000, McRuer 2006, Croce 2015.

juridification is at the same time the product of, and the drive for, the construction of a somehow 'oriented' delineation of social identities. Second, such human kinds are vested with a special authority, which modifies the way they interact with social instances. The formal act of ratification represents a threshold between the exposure of social categories to the dynamism of social practices and their isolated position as stable, well-determined, highly-recognizable elements of the legal body. Categories become less permeable to processes of renegotiation and evolution, which forestalls the looping circle of human kinds. Here, the quintessence of juridification: an extra-legal element morphs into a legal one by establishing a connection with other elements of the legal system. This connection locates the category in a new web of signifiers – rights, benefits, obligations and responsibilities – that ratifies its legal value. The novel set of connections gets the category to lose its character of mere social recognizable identity that a subject can embrace, and transforms the belonging to a category into a means to an end.

In this light, the act of self-ascription changes its status from a way to make oneself visible and offer a coherent social image, to a tool of 'guided' empowerment. Self-ascription is no longer an act of acceptance or – as it was at the beginning – an act of appropriation,[4] with a strong interactive core. Rather, it becomes a strategic form of derivative self-representation aimed at obtaining benefits through the implementation of assimilatory patterns.

While the immediate repercussion of an inclusive tendency is the creation of 'peripheral selves,' whose marginalization derives from their noncompliance with institutionalized categories, its impact goes deeper and touches the very possibility of creating alternatives, of abandoning the mainstream way in which identities are articulated. In fact, through an assimilating drive, juridified legal categories not only provide benefits to all those who claim their belonging to the newly recognized category, but also create an authoritative description of identities which comes to

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[4] As in the case of social movements that claimed for themselves the label of LGBT, see Swennen and Croce 2015.

permeate the social world.[5] By using the category that the law offers, by accepting the benefits it extends to include marginalized identities, social actors inadvertently end up taking on themselves all the assumptions implicated in it.[6] Juridification entails the recognition of a finite number of reified social abstractions, setting the basis for a system in which the achievement of inclusion is contingent on the acceptance of ratified social standards. Under the surface of an empowerment achieved by the deployment of legal means lies the imposition of a «colonizing intelligibility» (Croce 2015a, 162), that is, an intelligibility modelled on a pre-given and imposed model. In this sense, understanding inclusion as inherently linked with one's own identity (or, to put it differently, understanding identity as the primary element that has to be sanctioned in order to be politically visible) leads to the production of a stagnant dyadic system. One that reproduces various instances of the same model, letting no leeway for alternatives to pop out. In this framework, a twofold tendency invests differences. First, as I already noticed, they become hardly articulable out of pre-given ratified identities. The convergence of social narrations over a restricted lexicon useful to portray few accepted identities limits the push for finding an appropriate articulation for one's own situation. Consequently, the attitude towards non-conforming realities reflects this lack, prompting a precise response to emerging differences, which are either sanctioned as unreasonably non-conforming or sanctified as eccentric forms of sameness (Kafer 2006). In what follows, I explore a paradigm at odd with the saturating, assimilatory aftermath of an inclusive tendency.

3. Dis-identification paradigm

The link between identity, inclusion and rights turned out to affect not only the political framework, but also to forge the spectrum of articulable identities. The lexicon of identity curbs the possibility of articulating differences, while its legal ratification (under the form of inclusive rights) promotes a closed political system, based on a

[5] This mechanism is thoroughly explored by Butler (2005, 4) in her explanation of how categories impose «a model of coherent gendered lives». Categories might imply «a pathologization» which is nonetheless «crucial for many individuals» who seek «a legal change in status». See also footnote 6.
[6] See again the case of transsexual people who decide to strategically portray themselves as suffering from GID to be eligible for surgery in Butler 2005, 75-101.

binary structure which presupposes the existence of an 'outside' and an 'inside'.[7] Such a sharp division becomes problematic when inclusion – with its corollaries – comes to be linked to identity and to the spectrum of eligible/accepted social positions. The legitimation (both social and legal) of certain roles produces a lexicon suitable for describing only a limited number of experiences. A sort of reverse displacement comes about: while the centripetal force of recognition incorporates accommodating identities into its domains, non-conforming subjects are left in a magmatic marginal space, deprived of expressive means for accounting for their differences.[8] This section presents a paradigm that moves away from the conventional way to understand marginalization and offers a deflationary approach, based on the re-habilitation of social networks rather than on the implementation of institutional measures. In what I call 'dis-identification paradigm,' the construction of a fairer society proceeds from *assemblages* (Delanda 2006) rather than inclusion, as it promotes the coexistence of different, non-integrated, temporary realities. This paradigm eventuates in a shift from a politics of inclusion to a *politics of sustainability* (Braidotti 2005, 29). That is, from a politics that aims at reaching a phantasmal state of equality to one that operates at multiple levels, with multiple strategies and with the sole purpose of creating spaces of *livability* (Butler 2005). Thinking in terms of sustainability, instead of inclusion, means to forge a decentered politics focused on the actualization of alternatives and on a conscious act of re-appropriation of the margins as productive sites. The politics of sustainability is grounded in the awareness of the incommensurability of forms of livings (with their desires, needs and possibilities). On this premise, such a politics takes the form of a dynamic experimental process, whose goal is to make lives more livable. It unfolds at the level of relationships, bodies and communities and takes the form of a constant juggling between costs and benefits of the actualization of non-ordinary experiences. Sustainability is a radical concept. One that has to do with the notion of limit, that incites to experiment, to actualize desires and imaginings which are (at least in the

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[7] See Jagose 2015.

[8] About the marginalizing potential of identity politics see e.g. the issues raised by black women (hooks 1991) and transsexual women (Serrano 2013) concerning the recognition of minorities within the feminist movement and the polyamory's demand for legal recognition in response to same-sex marriage (Emens 2004).

present) forcluded, that is, placed *outside*, maybe beyond, the boundaries of intelligibility. Echoing Davina Cooper (2013), sustainability can be seen as a kind of 'edgework'. This term usually indicates situations where precision and concentration meet the vertigo of being exposed to high risks (as in extreme sports). Like in edgework, the abandonment of a politics of identity (secured by rights, protected by institutions) entails a «complex sensory and affective encounter with danger […] an escape from normal bodily experience and normal perceptions of the world» (Cooper 2013, 211). Engaging in a non-recognizable/ed practice, exposing one's own dissatisfactions and frustrations to unpredictable relations, actualizing or imagining desires that are different from the ratified ones and acting without any guarantee of success is somehow an exposure to a great risk, one that parallels death – or, at least, social death. Yet, the continuous search for a limit that the politics of sustainability enacts is at odds with the search for death. Rosi Braidotti (2006; 2011) makes this point when she observes that a subject engaged in the actualization of a transformative process (what she – and me with her – calls a politics, or an ethic, of sustainability) is naturally exposed to hardship and pain, to risk and disturbance, *because of* her yearning for a livable, 'joyful,'[9] life.[10] A politics of sustainability promotes the active search for livability as a responsible act (Braidotti 2006), carried on by *single* individuals *together*. To make the case for a politics of sustainability, I will proceed as follows: I will firstly explore Cooper's notion of 'everyday utopias,' and then frame it as a part of what Braidotti, following a feminist *topos*, calls 'figurations.' The focus on everyday utopias provides a concrete example of what form figurations might take and thus facilitates the exam of such an abstract, but effective political device. Both these concepts will concur in the delineation of a dis-identification paradigm.

Cooper's locution 'everyday utopias' indicates sites where usual routines (relating to all aspects of human's practical life, from education and finance to sex and political engagement) are performed in unusual ways. In these practical spaces, people perform

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[9] This term does not have to be intended in the sense of optimistic, let alone in a 'new-age' way, see Braidotti 2006, 9-11.

[10] The push for actualizing a more sustainable way of living is in itself a rejection of any 'dead-bound' behavior. In affirming its difference through actualization, a politics of sustainability is at odds both with an identification paradigm based on compliance and assimilation, as well as with movements based on rupture and annihilation, as the 'No Future' one, see Halley and Parker 2007.

things like trading without money, being trained in accordance with non-conventional school programs, meeting sexual partners in one-night events (see Cooper 2006, 1-24).[11] Cooper explains that these places constitute «networks and spaces [in which to] perform regular daily life, in the global North, in a radically different fashion».[12] She adds:

> Everyday utopias don't focus on campaigning or advocacy. They don't place their energy on pressuring mainstream institutions to change, on winning votes, or on taking over dominant social structures. Rather they work by creating the change they wish to encounter, building and forging new ways of experiencing social and political life. (Cooper 2013, 2)

Everyday utopias can be understood as elements of a political assemblage – meaningful junctions in which differences interweave and thus actualize alternative ways of living. They are porous spaces where people gather together to find something that mainstream interactions and structure are unable to offer. To use Braidotti's (2011, 100) terminology, everyday utopias are sites where difference comes to be affirmed «in terms of a multiplicity of possible differences; difference as the positivity of differences», encouraging the multiplication of «layers of experiences». In this way, what is marginal, interstitial, contingent can aspire to become the site of political renovation. Since they appear as tangible spaces where people do things, but also as abstract domains from which to challenge the traditional representation of the political, it is possible to understand them as 'figurations.' In other words, they are examples of practices in which new «politically informed accounts of an alternative» (Braidotti 2011, 1) are forged. Figurations include a wide variety of social signifiers ranging from narrations and experiences to concepts and practices. Non-conventional political figurations challenge established canons not by overtly opposing them, but simply by offering themselves as *existing alternatives*. In the dis-identification paradigm I advocate,

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[11] The detailed explanation of these sites goes beyond the purposes of this article. Cooper explores in depth the practices and the sites I am referring to in her work.
[12] For the reasons exposed in footnote 10, dead-bound and/or self-destructive practices cannot be considered everyday utopias or figuration.

figurations are social objects that exert a centrifugal force and thus produce a fragmented political horizon. As opposed to the application of centripetal, end-to-end, stable, institutionalized set of policies, figurations disseminate critical imaginings, publicize alternative actualizations[13] and create a multiplicity of contexts (or sub-contexts) for people to join, inhabit, enjoy as they see fit.[14] Figurations are fluid political entities that operate through the mobilization of individuals' needs and the reorganization of their desires. Everyday utopias somehow parallel the main functions of identity groups and yet do not have a homologating impact. Firstly, like identity groups, they provide spaces for constituting political subjectivities and social bonds based on similarities: they become sites of belonging. However, unlike identity groups, they produce contingent and disseminated collectives, whose marginality and liminality (as I will explain below) cannot offer participants any saturating, univocal social attachment. Second, like identity groups, they interact with social meanings by operating through and on them. However, their outcomes are at odds with the ones produced by identity politics. Juridification produces crystallized meanings that form a bounded and scarcely flexible lexicon whose parameters and implications stick to a well-defined normative frame. Everyday utopias, instead, play with traditional signifiers and manipulate them along their adaptation to non-conventional needs. Like an oily substance, narrations and meanings crafted by temporary, alternative communities (as everyday utopias are) have the potentiality to expand in unexpected, disruptive ways.

As I noted above, everyday utopias, like identity groups, are 'junctions' where people gather together around an interest. Despite the extreme ordinariness of the practices performed, these sites offer new modalities to execute them and thus realize a dimension that does not yet exist. Here, members are scarcely concerned with gaining public visibility or institutional recognition. Rather, they focus on constructing a variety of more livable spaces based on shared needs, passions and interests. In these contexts, organization unfolds along a horizontal line. As opposed to the vertical direction that characterizes identity groups' strategies – in which goals are placed at a higher level

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[13] On imaginings and actualizations see Cooper 2013, II. I take figuration as a notion that embraces them both.

[14] However alternative, these contexts are highly regulated. On the importance of complying with existing rules and forging new ones, see e.g. Cooper 2013, 79.

(the law) and in a differed time (the future) –, everyday utopias set in motion immanent transformative processes, based on performances that take place in the here and now. While the fulfillment of inclusive policies relies on future achievement, everyday utopias represent an end in themselves, as they achieve their purposes by contingently creating an alternative. Not only, then, do everyday utopias generate unforeseeable effects, but they also bear a distinctive relation to failure. Contrary to inclusive policies that implement strategies *in order to* achieve *pre-determined* results, everyday utopias set out to provide a space in which subject feel welcome/safe/appropriate through the articulation of new narrations, the opening of unexpected perspectives, the production of new desires and the reformulation of old ones. While unsuccessful policies lead to the collapse of identity-based politics, in the diffracted perspective of everyday utopias failure can be reframed as a part of a transformative process of dissemination. Even when figurations (whether under the form of everyday utopias or other instantiations) prove unsuccessful, such 'social laboratories' produce signifiers, whose effects might be as disruptive as those produced by successful experiences (Cooper 2013, 4). The alternative social semantics shaped by these performances/narrations relies on their persistence, but is not *contingent on* it. Rather, what proves key in the social materialization of non-conventional meanings is the fleeting moment of their actualization. In figurations, the manipulation of conventional meanings and symbols results *always and already* in the creation of probable, unpredictable transformation (Braidotti 2006, 16-17).

Along with the temporalities and the modalities of figurative processes, also their 'capacity' (the range of people that can be touched by them) is completely released to social flows. The case of everyday utopias shows how figurations affect differently, and yet consistently, both those who actively take part in them and those who accidentally enter in contact with these systems.[15] For what concerns participants, I have already underlined that, everyday utopias being highly connoted spaces, they offer a structure in which people can find a dimension of belonging. However, in these sites the sense of belonging originates from performing practices, as it does not presuppose the

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[15] Cooper generally focuses on the visitor, the passer-by, the one-time participant. However, the role of (social) media has amplified the echo of not-so-widespread realities.

recognition of a common identity. Here, the deed *is* what creates a bond among members of the collective, whose identity is never saturated by/in the practice. This is due to the fact that what is performed in these sites is either very specific or extremely liminal. The practice is very specific when it concerns only little segments of one's life (being educated in an unconventional school, having sex in a bathhouse for lesbians and transgender people). Still, even when it can be stretched so far as to cover every domain of life, it appears to be liminal since it cannot *actually* take place in everyday reality (as is the case of nudism or a masquerade).[16] The specificity and liminality of practices is what kindles the publicization of alternative signifiers produced in the actualization of alternative ways of living. The mobility of participants, their coming in and out of alternative spaces, allows them to actualize the skills acquired both inside and outside them. In much the same way, those who desire to live in a non-conventional way 24/7, might find ways to 'contaminate' normality.[17] In both cases, people not engaged in the practices themselves have the chance of being exposed to alternative signifiers or, even more impressively, to alternative forms of actualization. Unlike the juridified lexicon, which owes its capillarity to its capacity to make things (statuses, identities…) intelligible and recognizable, the outcomes of figurations stand out for their defamiliarizing potential. From figurations an unlimited, unrestrained, uncoherent cluster of voices emerges. The fragmentation that results from it challenges the idea of a centre that *has to welcome* differences, to embrace the political strategy of letting alternative focal points grow at the margins. This incessant diffraction does not refuse the notion of centre, nor refuse mainstream signifiers. It simply stands there, as a repository of differences.

Such a colorful approach might seem controversial if compared to the bolder stances of identity groups. True, figurations are excitingly disruptive; but can they provide tangible/effective solutions? Can they offer a fully-fledged political agency? What kind of progress do they promote? Are all alternatives inherently good? Can the fragmented creation of not-so-accessible interstitial spaces really offer an alternative to integration?

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[16] Some everyday utopias are both specific and liminal, see e.g. Cooper 2004, 155-ss.
[17] On contamination of the ordinary see Kafer 2013.

4. Conclusion

The questions posed in the conclusion of the former section are challenging. However, the politics envisioned through the mobilization of a dis-identification paradigm displays features that do not match the standards of a centered politics based on institutionalization. To put it another way, the dis-identification paradigm moves politics to another level or rather, reinstantiates it into a social web of interactions. The political rationality typical of a dis-identification paradigm gives currency to micro relations and interactions that acquire political relevance by virtue of their porosity and capillarity. The dis-identification paradigm refuses the notion of inclusion to indorse a politics of sustainability, in which the proliferation of practices aimed at diffracting standard ways of living creates a 'political gentrification.' That is, a centrifugal movement that operates on mainstream realities through the dislocation of non-conforming performances along the coherent line of recognized identities. Such a dislocation consists in making available sites – either physical or symbolical – in which people (naturally labeled with their social identity) can take part in alternative ways of performing their everyday acts. The interaction among social actors and social entities is the trigger of a constant process of negotiation of social meanings. At odds with the crystallization of meanings typical of the incorporation of categories in the legal body, such a negotiating process is released to the contingency of fluid interactions. This kind of politics is *sustainable* because it privileges the articulation of micro-relations between components of single sections of the social realm, instead of focusing on the plain socioeconomic administration of difficult realities. It is *sustainable* because it creates spaces in which to re-articulate relations or forge new ones, promoting a continuous stirring of social hierarchies and traditional social roles.

In its former sense, sustainability takes the form of an overcoming of the dualistic scheme presupposed by a centre-oriented politics. The dismissal of this scheme entails the rejection of a perverse system grounded on a constitutive 'outside' (the place of marginalization, where physical or symbolical differences are relegated), that cannot be re-absorbed, since it is the condition of possibility of the centre. The necessary creation of an unintelligible difference is surpassed in a paradigm in which the social world is

depicted as an uneven and multileveled site in which social actors and social objects enter into significant political relationships. From this perspective, concepts, practices, spaces and subjects concur to give form to diffused political subjectivities. Social relations become *vectors*[18]: agents carry and conveys politically relevant relations, which can be issued between people or among people and sites, practices, things, concepts. In this scheme, new assemblages make alternative social products available.[19] These, in turn, can be taken up (become part of other assemblages), as well as wane, in relation with available connections and newly made ones. In this scenario, intelligibility is constantly reworked by scattered practices: these do not converge toward a center, nor seek to be coherently embedded in agent's choices. Political assemblages as figurations just emerge, gain visibility through operationality.

It is important to notice that a politics of sustainability is not a smooth process toward a fairer society. While the surpassing of the centripetal drive (and thus the renunciation of 'constitutive outsiders'[20]) is a remarkable advantage of this approach, its difficulties has to be taken into exam. A politics of sustainability does away with the notion of linear progress, as well as with any moral assessment of alternatives. It is inherently instable, precarious. Paradoxically, it is inequitable and ineffable. Moreover, we cannot think of alternatives as good *in se*.[21] Rather, they can be as conservative as (or even more reactionary/discriminatory than) 'mainstream' realities. At the same time, they cannot offer any guarantee of success, let alone the promise of a durable progress (Braidotti 2005, 36). While inclusive policies are presented as steps toward the best future, alternative figurations offer themselves as mere actualizations of possible better presents.

Despite all that – and here is another aspect of sustainability –, alternatives are good *per se*, since they create *immediately accessible* sites where figurations can be actualized and imaginative processes stimulated. The proliferation of forms of living diffracts standards and torques models, so as not only to allow the overcoming of a

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[18] See Deleuze and Guattari 1973.

[19] See the concept of relation of exteriority in Delanda 2006.

[20] For the notion of a "constitutive outsider" see Butler 1997, Foucault 1975; 1994.

[21] See e.g. in Cooper (2013:84) the contiguity of nudism with Nazism or, more bluntly, with normo-normative ideals.

binary scheme, but also to set in motion a continuous mechanism of re-articulation of social meanings. What can be seen as a sort of 'gentrification' of marginalities allows to relocate and dislocate social canons. The production of a fairer society cannot rely on the institutional evaluation of *who* has the *right* and the *need* to be included. The very notion of 'identity' secludes experiences (as it were, subjects) to compartments, unwillingly reproducing divisions along conventional lines of class, race, gender, civil status and so on. In our everyday global-northern lives we have got acquainted with the 'transparent' lexicon of the legal field. The popularization of 'human kinds' and the diffusion of a language of rights, both in and outside courts, rigidly structure the social domain while stimulating a process of simplification both at a social level and at a political one. Such a simplified, highly structured lexicon creates and reinforces social standards, by ratifying only a limited amount of available identities. On the contrary, growing amounts of alternatives give momentum not only to a further proliferation of figurations, but also to the articulation of a diverse and differentiated lexicon. Alternatives are valuable because they diffract the source of the language.

Off course, the price to pay is the dismissal of any ideal of linear progress, which means the withdrawal of any security on one's own social position, the conscious embracement of an irredeemable precariousness. We are left with mechanism of trial and error. No longer embarked in vertical journey toward progress, we walk around in a circular trip (Braidotti 2006; 2001), in which changes take form in the present moment, regardless of what their future status might be. The contingency and instability to which people are exposed, thought, cannot be conceived as an alarming form of precariousness. In fact, the fluctuation to which social actors/groups are subjected are, in such a system, always anchored to a specific or liminal segment of their lives. In understanding one's own existence as embroidered with several (non-coherent, indefinite, temporary) lines of experience, the subject is never relegated to *an* identity, *a* fate, *a* social position. In living one's own life as sewed together with other's lives, the subject does not need a closed and stable community of belongings, she *belongs* to her unpredictable web of rizhomatic connections (Braidotti 2001).

To conclude, a little remark. A politics of sustainability is the plea for a new political course. It can take place in a framework, as our global North, in which some basic rights

are secured and it runs alongside institutional changes. I am not advocating neither the withdrawal of institutional bodies, not the active promotion of non-conventional figurations at an institutional level. Rather, I am making the case for a reinstatement of politics in the flow of everyday life (Venditti 2017). Figurations are powerful tools because they wax and wane in the ordinariness and volubility of social dynamics, producing a high variety of social meanings which are always exposed to alteration. In this framework, institutions play their role in being attentive and responsive. The achievement of an 'institutional visibility' must not be perceived as superfluous: legal rights *are* – in nowadays global North – a way to answer problems of marginalization. However, to counteract the assimilatory tendency inherent in the implementation of inclusive policies (with their promotion of a lexicon and their embracement of normative standards), we need to take politics back in our everyday experience, making differences great for once.

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