

Images experimenting climate change: art, science and communication

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Abstract

Our research is focused on the study of climate change images that appear frequently on media and educational materials. After an extensive research in magazines, newspapers and websites, we have noticed many repetitive image patterns throughout these materials. These images often invest on representational politics that aim to show more than scenes of a particular event, but also try to engender predetermined feelings, like fear and astonishment – images that are stuck in clichés and settled meanings. In our research we want to problematize these climate change images repetitions, trying to think them beyond the clichés and the fixation of meanings. We propose to consider these images as sensational blocks, as suggested by the theoretical research line followed on our interdisciplinary research group *multiTÃO: prolifer-artes subvertendo ciências e educações* (CNPq), in University of Campinas (Brazil). Based on this proposal, the

group have been developing artistic creations that seek to provoke distinct experiences with the climate change images so that the current representations and clichés observed on them could be put under tension. In this way, we created videos, photos and an itinerant art installation called “hurricane” to try to promote proliferations of different thoughts and sensations throughout the images and the contact of the public with that. We aim to find ways to generate knowledge from sensory and artistic experiences in order to create new possibilities for exploring issues widely discussed in the media, such as climate change, thereby contributing to the development of new bets in artistic creations and interdisciplinary research in science communication and outreach. This research integrates the activities of the subnet "Scientific Communication and Culture" from Brazilian Research Network on Global Climate Change (Rede CLIMA) and the project “Generation of Alcohol Production Scenarios as Support for the Formulation of Public Policies Applied to the Adaptation of the National Sugar and Alcohol Industry to the Climate Changes (AlcScens) (2008/58160-5)”.

In this research we propose to consider the creation of images *with* climate change. Creations that aim at experimentations among arts, sciences and communications involving the problematization of the “short-circuiting” commonly given *through* and *in* climate change images in the media. Since our investigations upon some of these images, we found bets investing in a reiteration of certain meanings and forms of expression in newspapers, magazines, homepages, blogs, textbooks and documentaries. Reiterations that show how the images are stuck in clichés, placed as *marked cards* of a game in which the claims with weather, time and life are besieged by oppositions and equivalences, surrounded by chronological time. Images, words and sounds exposing representational patterns, which aim to capture past and future in reconstructions and predictions closed in one direction: the disaster and the end of time.

How to promote other thoughts and sensations before such fixities of meanings, significations and functioning? What are climate change images able to do, when opposition, equivalence and linearity are suspended? When images, words and sounds are disconnected from chronological time and opened to the experimentation of aberrant times? What are scientific and cultural communication/dissemination able to do when

the images themselves, their producing processes and their ways of affecting us become objects of research and creation?

In our research group *multiTÃO - prolifer-arts subverting sciences, educations and communications*¹ (from National Counsel of Technological and Scientific Development, CNPq, in Portuguese), we venture for other possibilities to say about the weather and the changes. Inspired by some Deleuze (2007) and Rancière (2012) concepts, we invest in searching and experiencing the relations and intensities that images can move and proliferate through experimentations *with* them, between art, science and philosophy.

The concept of cliché as proposed by the philosopher Gilles Deleuze (2007) was our first interest. An initial diagnosis of how images have been circulating in various space-times led us to question the expression climate change in science communication/dissemination as a way to evoke a certain set of images: photographs and videos of a lot of disasters (floods, landslides, earthquakes, factories, dumps, polluted rivers, uninhabitable cities, population displacement etc.), of "preserved" and / or "untouched" environments (forests, rivers, seas, deserts etc.), of animals, plants and endangered peoples (the bear on an ice block has become one of the biggest icons, as well as images of indigenous peoples and traditional populations), elements of nature (clouds, ice, water, fire, earth, wind, etc.), of scientific practices (portraits of scientists, equipment, supercomputers, meetings, laboratories, plantations etc.); besides graphs and maps (with data arranged in many different ways, elements and phenomena). Not only such images were insistently convened, but certain relationships with words and sounds were also called up, reiterating certain types of images functioning: as faithful records or real traitors, as legitimate or illegitimate evidence of facts, as documents of the past, as true or false representations, as real or hyped, as right or wrong, as good or bad for

¹ The group *multiTÃO* (<http://multitaocorrespondan.wix.com/multitao>) that believes in the connection between various areas of knowledge to experience, through images, words and sounds, and possibilities of poetic and political actions through various spaces and publics. A (dis)continuous experiment through problematizations and interactions with the public, with art and philosophy as intense personages who invite us to divagate, proliferate, suspend, subvert, seeking to generate escapes from stabilizations, fixities and establishments in knowledge, cultures and values. One of the aims of the multiTÃO group is to create materials (images, facilities, books, objects, games, bodies, exhibitions, events, workshops, texts, sounds...) which potentialize possibilities of affects and politics of emptying the significations already given, fixations of identity and ideas of the general functioning of science, education and communication. Transformations that resonate in possibilities of expression, sensation, understanding, teaching and learning and mobilize different ways of thinking and inhabiting the world. The group is led for Prof. Dr. Susana Oliveira Dias (Lajor-Unicamp) and Prof. Dr. Elenise Andrade (Uefs).

science journalism.

Images, words and sounds whose syntax and logics function as visual agreements and political consensus, affecting the public broadcasting messages of order, giving models, or offering counter-models that wish to teach us how to see the truth behind refused appearances, which want to make us aware. Images, words and sounds full of wishing which, however, tell us about a failure and a impotence of climate change communication.

If at the beginning we realized clichés *in* images, being *cliché-images* themselves, the experimentations with the extension project "Life and time: proliferation experiments with images of climate change" (Unicamp/Faepex)² and the studies with Deleuze made us realize that clichés were not *in* the images, but in the meanings, significations and functioning which are dominant with images, words and sounds. If the images are not clichés, but rather their ways of functioning, operating, intervening, affecting, the output do not seem to be the removal of these images or their replacement by others, but instead to make their functioning visible/audible, opening them to other possibilities and logics, searching for tensions/imbances so that other potentialities can emerge from *within* the thoughts *with* the clichés. To escape clichés, we instead needed to stay *with them*; not to fight *against them*, but *with them*, inventing various ways *of* assembling and disassembling games already given.

Thus we wanted to call these images to other meetings that could be established outside those territories delimited by subtitles and guided by given textual descriptions. Would the images have enough strength to escape from the texts that guide their meanings and set their senses? What life and time can pulse from these images? Questions that all the time led us to experiment and think with the weather images; we did not seek precise answers, but open spaces of thoughts, ellipses, suspensions, slips... Intensities "that let themselves be exhausted by life instead of wishing to exhaust them" (Pestana; Luccas; Dias 2013, p.6).

²This research integrates the activities of the project "Generation of Alcohol Production Scenarios as Support for the Formulation of Public Policies Applied to the Adaptation of the National Sugar and Alcohol Industry to the Climate Changes (AlcScens) (2008/58160-5)". Also integrate the actions of subnet "Scientific Communication and Culture" from Brazilian Research Network on Global Climate Change (Rede CLIMA) and the project multidisciplinar e interinstitucional "Climate change in interactive experiments: communication and scientific culture" (CNPq No. 458257/2013-3), coordinated by Prof. Dr. Carlos Vogt, Profa. Dra. Susana Dias e Profa. Dra. Carolina Cantarino Rodrigues, of the Laboratory of Advanced Studies in Journalism (Lajor), which is part of and the Nucleus of Creativity Development (Nudecri), of the University of Campinas (Unicamp).

First we bet on the creation of a card game with images that were taken from scientific journalism material about climate changes, where we displaced those photos from their original territories (newspapers, magazines, internet etc.), to free them from captions and texts that directed and explained their meanings in climate change news and reports.

Playing with these marked cards to give evidence to what can pulse inside it – what life and time? – from the card game we created an itinerant art installation called “Hurricane: life and time in proliferation”. From the “hurricane” we aimed to extract the potency of a force able to move and destabilize the oppositions, the equivalences, the certainties, submerging into a whirlwind of ideas and sensations, into a creative chaos which could destabilize images, words and sounds territorializations and throw them to unexpected encounters: "A time when the words do not capture the images, when the images do not catch the words, which are subjected to a devastating windstorm. A time emptied of narratives, illustrations, explanations. What life pulses of this storm of words-images? " (Dias, 2011).

We tried an invention of environment that is open to multiple sensory connections, allowing the immersion of the public into distinct logics and games, proposed in videos, soundtracks and interactive projections. Our intention was to tension the functioning apparatus of images, words and sounds, and invite the public to participate in these experimentations, composing other possibilities of writing. Such written assemblies composed the next installations, incorporating other forces, throwing us into other experiments.

Secondly, after the circulation of the installation for several areas and the contact with various audiences, we worked on workshops that produced images with teachers, researchers, students and artists of the research group multiTÃO. We searched for other possibilities with the clichés, intensities able to escape *through* and *between* them, throwing them to other movements. Strengths that play with given senses and significations to experience meetings which are in processes to come. Dissent forces (Rancière, 2012), in a world of consensual images.

For the workshops, we have chosen some of the images we consider stuck to clichés and given meanings/significations, in particular those in which the disaster notion seems to produce an effect of sensitization of the public, sensitization thought as

awareness. We also choose pictures about agricultural productions in which we can observe lines in plantations that lead to a single point of convergence, giving a notion of a progress to be achieved by science and technology development. Graphs and maps images – which serve both as the registration of the current state of the research in the area and as a kind of drawing of the future scenarios that live up to expectations of the agricultural production – were also selected to compose the study.

The images were experimented in the most diverse processes. From image prints and reproductions, sometimes re-photographed or scanned, we found in some actions, such as tearing, cutting, pasting, assembling and disassembling, potentialities to cause these images, from *within* clichés, to escape the logic of correspondence and representation with the given predictions concerning the future, man, science and technology.



"Figure 1. Image created in workshop of the group of the research multiTÃO"

The image of the flood (Figure 1) is cut as if the flood itself leaked not only upon cities and bodies, but upon the gaps that can throw us into other understandings

and feelings. From awareness to another possibility that does not blame us or expect us as victims, it just opens another path that may or may not be covered. This flood image is also crumpled, and what seemed rigid and built dissolves itself through the folds of the drawing, the paper flows mixed with the water. "Behold, here comes the flood, behold, here comes the liquids, liquids in large amounts that threaten the solid state, which seemed eternal" (Tavares, 2010). Streams are opened in the images, which are not given in the photographs, but in the action of folding, re-folding, unfolding (crumpling) the images. And re-shooting, setting the volume of the fold on the flat surface, creating a new witness, between the doing and the fact.



"Figure 2. Image created in workshops of the group of the research multiTÃO"

Another procedure that contaminates us is ripping the images (Figure 2). Rips of deserts and clouds. An open sky for a time to come (bluish or cloudy): the rips create passages on the narrative linearity found in the images. The tearing can make pieces of the images in a heterogeneous composition between shots. Crossings are drawn between the fragments stuck in the composition whereby a climate and time mixture can happen. Inaccurate records where the estimates are shifted into the realm of doubt and

uncertainty. The time and communication crossed in the desert. The interrupted correspondence, lost through the arid sands and clouds, form a time mixture between present, past and future.



"Figure 3. Image created in workshops of the group of the research multiTÃO"

A will to rip also the convergence, unfold the reaching point aimed into something unexpected, something that cracks the linearity offered in the image (Figure 3). Another image is placed in a composition in which the color is outstanding: green and red living in the same area, leaving traces of map, chart, agriculture and perspective in the movement between the colors and the tear. Untying convergence, perhaps for a tangle to be lost, shuffling the plantations isles that wish to fall into a progressive future sustained by economy, science and technology.

Images and thoughts in suspension. This is the aim of the present study. Images submitted to the exhaustion and fury; exposed to cuts, erasures, folds, seams; deprived of their common sensitive territories, stolen from the meanings given by the logics of

the dominant subtitles. Exposed images, procedures that propose, from the concepts of consensus and dissent suggested by Jacques Rancière (2012), lead them to disagreement. Suffered, interfered, displaced, smudged, bruised, manipulated, delegated to the solitude of the text, the images are forced to escape from revealing or explanatory logics of truth. They no longer serve to capture the reality or translate it. They are unsettled. They now dance without marked steps. A dance of scrambled which opens to the destabilization of given territories. A writing-thought that invents impossible territories.

Images intentionally put into traffic in an attempt to: refuse distances and separations engendered by a representational politics which proposes to increase the proximity to the real or to abolish such separation and distance; it proposes an intense interlacement between aesthetics and politics in which the rules and defined positions of real and fiction, artwork and viewer, science and art are shuffled; it undermines the consensus, dissolving the agreement of correspondence between meaning and sense: their own sense and the sensitive sense, of the feeling that proposes to convene. A bet on another regime, aesthetic, of discontinuities: a politics of dissent.

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