From media to mediations: Jesús Martín-Barbero in the Unisinos Communication Theory

Dos meios às mediações: Jesús Martín-Barbero na Teoria da Comunicação da Unisinos

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ABSTRACT

This text, a mixture of essay and memoir, aims to situate Jesús Martín-Barbero and his influence on the teaching of communication theory in social communication courses in Brazil, based on the work developed at the Center of Communication Sciences in the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos. Martín-Barbero's thoughts are considered along with works from other seminal thinkers of the area in Latin America: Beltran, Kaplún, and Pasquali. Reflecting on the course taken before the book *De las medios a las mediaciones* was published, we emphasize Martín-Barbero's fundamental contribution to communication teaching and research.

Keywords: Mediation, Jesús Martín-Barbero, media, mediatization, communication theory

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RESUMO

Este texto, misto de ensaio e memória, procura situar Jesús Martín-Barbero e sua influência no ensino da teoria da comunicação nos cursos de comunicação social no Brasil, tendo como base o trabalho desenvolvido no então Centro de Ciências da Comunicação da Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos. O pensamento de Martín-Barbero é colocado junto ao de outros pensadores seminais da área na América Latina, Beltrán, Kaplún e Pasquali. Espelha o percurso realizado antes do livro *De los medios a las mediaciones*, enfatizando a contribuição fundamental de Martín-Barbero para o ensino e a pesquisa de comunicação.

Palavras-chave: Mediação, Jesús Martín-Barbero, meios de comunicação, midiatização, teoria da comunicação

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I FIRSTLY DISCOVERED THE thought of Jesús Martin-Barbero, a Spanish-born and Colombian-naturalized scholar, in 1985, just two years before his seminal work "From Media to Mediations" (1987b) was published, during a Master's degree course at the School of Communications and Arts of the University of Sao Paulo, ministered by Dr. Anamaria Fadul[1]. Three articles by Barbero (1982, 1983, 1984c) were then studied and discussed.

The Latin American reality was coming through the front door of the Brazilian academy, which discussed and reflected on communication. At that moment, the thought of Martín-Barbero became a third element in the polarization happening in Brazil. On the one side, with all its historical burden, there was the American functionalism. Debtor of the postulates of historical functionalism, this thought was strongly established. On the other side, the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. In opposition, theoretical views defended by Merton and Lazarsfield, from the American side, and by Adorno, Horkheimer, and Marcuse, from the German side[2].

Amidst this theoretical confrontation was Jesús Martín-Barbero, with a view fueled by postulates of the Liberation Theology and the Liberating Education, by Gustavo Gutierrez and Paulo Freire, respectively.

Along this trajectory, Luiz Ramiro Beltrán (1981), Antônio Pasquali (1973), and Mario Kaplún (1985) constituted with him the quartet that marked the communication thinking in Latin America[3]. The first of them, with his concern for participatory communication, proposed to bid farewell to Aristotle because the scheme expressed in his Rhetoric, which was appropriated and refined by the North American functionalists, was still an authoritarian and non-participatory view. The second one also directed severe criticism to functionalist positions and advocated a biunivocal concept of communication. Thus, he distinguished communication and information processes. The third of them, when comparing the communication with the educational process, proposed that communication should emphasize the process, instead of content and effects.

Prior to the ideas of Jesús Martín-Barbero, these three Latin American thinkers became part of the curriculum of the Social Communication course in the Center of Communication Sciences of the University of Vale do Rio dos Sinos at that time, within the academic subjects Theory of Communication I and II, in 1989. As it can be seen, only two years after the publication of the greatest work of Martín-Barbero (1987b)[4], students at Unisinos already had contact with his thought.

JESÚS MARTÍN-BARBERO

Including Martín-Barbero into the subject of Communication Theory provided to the students of Social Communication a change of perspective

[1] Within the academic subject: *Sociedade, Cultura e Comunicação no Brasil (1979-1985)*. ECA/USP: Collection of texts, 1985

[2] See: Lima (1976).

[3] The Argentinean Eliseo Verón is a different case, because he is at the base of the whole modern thinking on communication in the continent. Being a thinker of two worlds – Argentina and France, he has moved around the domain of semiotics. Also, he was the first among us to talk of mediatization. However, for our purposes here (Jesús Martín-Barbero), to record on Kaplún, Beltrán, and Pasquali is more important.

[4] It was translated into Brazilian Portuguese in 1997 by the Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro Publishing Company.

regarding the subject: whereas criticizing American functionalism, it also encouraged a Latin American thinking and represented an alternative to positions of the Frankfurt School's Critical Theory.

The curricular content of Communication Theory that included Jesús Martín-Barbero was recorded in an academic manual and later published (Gomes, 2004). Even though thinkers like Luiz Ramiro Beltrán (1981), Antonio Pasquali (1973), and Mario Kaplún (1985) were part of the curriculum, what was really socialized to the students of Martín-Barbero's thinking[5] should be emphasized.

To better understand the changes of perspective in the study of Communication Theory from Martín-Barbero's reflections, the thought he expressed in texts prior to the work *Dos meios a mediações* must be deepened.

The position of the Colombian thinker implies in rethinking the whole methodology for studying communication, with reflexes in the receiver perspective and the social domination processes, which imply in a form and a way of communication.

According to Fadul, from the urbanization of the continent, the massive started to be studied from another perspective, emphasizing that "for long stigmatized from the pure and authentic popular, which was identified with rural-origin cultures, the massive began to be studied from another reality: that of the urban masses"[6] (1989: 74).

From this position, a proposal of slowly overcoming the opposition between massive and popular arose. For her, those who supported this dichotomy did not know that

> there has never been a rupture between different forms of culture, not even in the past, because culture is not static – it has always embodied elements from different cultures, that is, from manifestations of erudite, popular, massive culture, mixed with those of local, national, and international culture[7]. (Ibid.)

Thus, when a popular status is denied to radio and television, it becomes clear that a conception of culture where the classical culture it the fundamental criterion for the critique of the massive.

> Still following this line of thought, one could say that the popular and the national are mixed even on Latin American television. In many countries, there is an increase of domestic production to the detriment of US imports. The challenge for communication researchers is not to deny the popular character of these programs, but to understand the reasons for their success[8]. (Ibid.: 76)

[5] These specifics of Martín-Barbero's theory were published in the work referenced above.

[6] In the original: "durante muito tempo estigmatizado do popular puro e autêntico, identificados com uma cultura de origem rural, o massivo começou a ser estudado a partir de outra realidade: a das massas urbanas".

[7] In the original: "nunca houve uma ruptura entre as diferentes formas de cultura, nem mesmo no passado, pois a cultura não é uma coisa estática, ela sempre incorporou elementos das diferentes culturas, isto é, das manifestações da cultura erudita, popular, massiva cruzada com aquelas da cultura local, nacional e internacional".

[8] In the original: "Ainda nessa linha de pensamento, poder-se-ia dizer que o popular e o nacional se cruzam até mesmo na televisão latino-americana. Em muitos países, se nota o aumento da produção nacional em detrimento da produção importada norte-americana. O desafio para os pesquisadores da comunicação não é negar o caráter popular desses programas, mas sim compreender as razões do seu êxito".

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To handle this phenomenon, the Cultural Market of Melodrama in Latin America becomes a research object for communication researchers (Mattelart; Mattelart, 1989). Soap operas are in line with the reuse of melodrama, a historical tradition of the continent; hence, they are analyzed as forms of resistance to the North American cultural industry. Moreover, at the massive level, the Latin American cultural integration happens through soap operas. Even First World countries are concerned about this phenomenon, studying it exhaustively. Here, too, its study is required: "among the various forms sought for its understanding, the need for knowledge of its genres and subgenres is clear"[9] (Fadul, 1989: 80).

In this regard, the position of Jesús Martín-Barbero is defined as one of the authors who most contributed to a reflection on genres and the mass media. Anamaria Fadul says he took on "the proposal of a group of Italian researchers, according to which a genre is above all a communicability strategy and only becomes present and analyzable in a text as marks of such communicability"[10](Ibid.: 81).

According to Martín-Barbero (1987b: 241),

the consideration of genres as a purely "literary" fact – or non-cultural – and, on the other side, its reduction to a manufacturing recipe or classification label, has prevented us from understanding its true function in the process and its methodological importance: key aspects to the analysis of the massive texts and, in particular, of the television ones[11].

Genre analysis is mainly imposed in the case of soap operas because, otherwise, it would be impossible to understand its meaning in the culture of the continent. as the study of genres is also important for the radio reality. Summing up, one can say that

the study of many of the mass media is not exhausted in the study of the economic, political, ideological, discursive structures of the message, nor in studies about reception. Thus, the genres gain a centrality in communication studies since they concatenate the two moments of the communication process: emission and reception[12]. (Fadul, 1989: 82)

Given this perspective, the study of communication must also be extended beyond the media. It is important to go to daily life and study how people communicate. Jesús Martín-Barbero says that "the communication processes that take place in the marketplace, in the cemetery, in the parties, in the religious

[9] In the original: "entre as várias formas buscadas para sua compreensão se delineia com nitidez a necessidade do conhecimento de seus gêneros e subgêneros".

[10] In the original: "a proposta de um grupo de pesquisadores italianos, segundo o qual um gênero é antes de tudo uma estratégia de comunicabilidade, e é como marcas dessa comunicabilidade que um gênero se faz presente e analisável no texto".

[11] In the original: "La consideración de los géneros como hecho puramente 'literario' – no cultural – y, desde el otro lado, su reducción a receta para la fabricación o etiqueta para la clasificación, nos han estado impidiendo comprender su verdadera función en el proceso y su pertinencia metodológica: clave para el análisis de los textos masivos y, en especial, de los televisivos".

[12] In the original: "o estudo de muitos dos meios massivos não se esgota no estudo da estrutura econômica, política, ideológica, discursiva da mensagem e muito menos nos estudos sobre a recepção. Os gêneros ganham assim uma centralidade nos estudos sobre a comunicação, pois articulam os dois momentos do processo de comunicação, emissão e a recepção".

rites..."[13] (Martín-Barbero; Mier Vega, 1993: 70) must be studied. From such study, a methodology that allows " connecting the study on the constitution and production of meaning with the senses"[14] (Ibid.: 70) can be developed. To do so, one must learn to look, smell, listen, touch the different ways in which people communicate at a popular market or supermarket, for example.

According to Martín-Barbero, the performance of such study allows us to see the need for a theory that is not restricted to the information problem since information became capital, commodity in the society. Moreover, for most people, communication is not exhausted in the media. If this was (and is) true, then, to understand what is happening in the streets, homes, squares, or parties, we must go beyond an information theory. (Cf. Ibid.: 71). He says "the problem was not that lacked logic or coherence to a theory based on concepts such as emitter, message, receiver, codes, source... The problem was that types of communicative processes were devised from it"[15] (Ibid.: 71).

When analyzing the communicative processes at a party, a ball, a religious sacrament, it is very difficult to descry the sender, the receiver, the message. In these practices, communication goes far beyond the explanations of the information theory. Communication at a religious practice, e.g. as mass, concerns other dimensions of life, other experiences, beyond mere information theory. Therefore, talking about communication is talking of social practices and the desire of answering all questions requires rethinking communication from these practices (Ibid.: 71).

This statement of Martin-Barbero is of major importance today, as the academy is concerned with the mediatization phenomenon. Just as he questioned the communicative processes devised from the way people used to communicate in the streets, squares, and markets, currently the questioning is about the type of society emerging from the mediatization processes.

At this point, a reference should be made to a form of communication: the popular stories, understood by Jesús Martín-Barbero (1983)[16] as a way of accessing another culture. According to him, the study of popular stories is not within literature but within culture, as they are much closer to life than to art. The story is a speech that articulates the group memory and in which the practices of this group are expressed. This way of telling something does not only talk of something but materializes some ways of being[17].

The purpose in this case is studying some key aspects of narrative practices of the non-literate culture, identified as a culture whose stories do not rest on or from the book but in the song and in the chorus, in stories passed on by word of mouth, in tales and jokes, and in proverbs. These forms, even when recorded in books, never reach the social status of the book, and both their mode of printing

[13] In the original: "los procesos de comunicación que se daban en la plaza, en el mercado, en el cementerio, en las fiestas, en los ritos religiosos…"

[14] In the original: "relacionar el estudio de la constitución del sentido, de la producción del sentido, con los sentidos".

[15] In the original: "el problema no era que le faltaba lógica o coherencia a una teoría pensada en términos de emisor, mensaje, código, fuente… El problema era qué tipos de procesos comunicativos eran pensables desde ahí".

[16] This whole reflection on popular stories is based on this article.

[17] Later, the problem was thematized as a new way of being in the world. See the work of Faxina and Gomes (2016).

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as of circulation and consumption materialize another world of existence of the popular report. Even when popular classes buy the book, states Martín-Barbero, they do not do it in bookstores but in street or neighborhood stands. The mode of acquisition has a lot to do with the ways of use. Many people can read but cannot write. They know how to tell their lives in rich details but they have a great difficulty, not to say impossibility, of writing what they feel and live. Thus, the oral culture devices persist as enunciation instruments of the popular, both in the ways of telling and of reading. In the popular tales, one can find both another way of telling as of reading.

For Martín-Barbero, to analyze stories is the same as studying communication processes that are not exhausted in technological devices, because from them we are referred to the economy of the collective imaginary. The popular story is characterized by some oppositions. The first of them is that, face the soap opera and its intransitive textuality, the popular narrative is always a *telling to*. Whatever its ways are, the narrative is always the common ground of a memory that merges experience and ways of telling it – dealing not only with a memory of deeds but also of gestures. The second fundamental opposition is the one between *genre* and *author's* stories. This is a fundamental category for researching the popular and what remains of in in the massive. Genre here is not understood literarily, but as "a device the popular by excellence of since it comprises not only the modes of writing but also of reading: a "place" from which one reads, looks at, and deciphers oneself, in addition to understanding the meaning of a story"[18] (Ibid.: 64).

The cultured story, in turn, destroys the genres that, in the massive-popular, continue to live and to fulfill their role: articulating the everyday life with archetypes.

Similarly, along with the new ways of telling, there are several modes of reading in the popular world that completely re-discuss the reception theories, both functionalist and critic-negative. Both extend a long tradition of the educational process, according to which something is transmitted from an *active pole*, which possesses knowledge, to a *passive* and ignorant *pole*. While the first one is the elite, the intellectuals, the second one is the mass, the people, creating the irrevocable division between the sphere of production (where creativity and activity are situated) and the sphere of consumption (where total passivity and conformism reside). Even changes from the modern media did not question at all the postulate of passivity. Breaking with this logic implies moving away from the theoretical-political space in which it was originated. This shift allows us to glimpse, at least, three differential aspects of popular reading.

[18] In the original: "un dispositivo por excelencia de lo popular ya que no son solo modos de escritura sino también de lectura: un "lugar" desde el que se lee y se mira, se descifra y comprende el sentido de un relato".

First, this is *a collective reading*. Those who can read, read to others. The text is not a point of arrival but of departure, recognition, and merge for the collective remembrance that ends up rewriting the text, reinventing it by using it to talk and celebrate different things than the text subject, or even the same things but with deeply different meanings[19].

Secondly, this is an *expressive reading*, which means that readers, as subjects, are not ashamed of showing and expressing the emotions aroused by reading. For the inhabitants of the oral culture, reading is listening, but this is a *sound listening*. In turn, the cultural elite has modesty in expressing its emotions.

In third place, this is an *oblique, deflected reading*. Its grammar is often different from the productive grammar. The autonomy of the text is illusory, both from the point of view of production conditions as from reading conditions. This is a performative reading, through which popular codes appropriate of what they read. Both reading of the nineteenth-century serials and of what is now presented by radio or television give rise to a multitude of resistance and re-appropriation forms.

These aspects of the story are fundamental in the terms of a liberating communication because even when there are materials written in the popular movement, they adapt to the dynamical narrative and reading of popular classes. In the acceptance of this form of reporting as a memory-resistance resides the conditions for constructing citizenship.

At the same time, when the popular culture is accepted, the playful presence and gratuity in people's lives are also accepted. However, in the current society, the playful tone was coopted by the capital that transformed into a motive of profit, destroying the dimension of gratuity that is essential to any liberating project in terms of *resistance* communication. In addition, gratuity shows a great contradiction: working with the media in capitalist society, where the fundamental law is that of the market and the logic is that of capital, of profit. Given this, thinking of another communication, which must overcome a series of limitations in an unfair society, is of paramount importance. How is it possible, in an unfair society, to fight for another communication? That is why it is imperative to think of the possible forms of action within the unfair context in which we live, within a society that denies to most of the population the minimum fundamental rights, especially the one of communication.

Without contemplating this contradiction, thinking of a possible action in the field of communication is impossible. Otherwise, there is a risk of merely complaining, and no viable alternatives for communication will be proposed. When related to the popular culture, the communication rethinks the contradiction in capitalist society and proposes alternatives for a possible action.

[19] The *Lamparina* Newspaper, from Santarém, is read in community, according to Regina Festa's testimony (1984).

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The positions of Jesús Martín-Barbero bring a new perspective to the study of communication theory in social communication courses. It postulates an approach that overcomes the theoretical Manichaeism and considers the dynamicity of the process, advocating a protagonism of the receiver. This is what later has been themed as *active reception, critical reception*[20].

The contribution of Martín-Barbero (1984d) was also significant in the field of communication research. For him, it was necessary to critically review the theoretical models used in the field of communication. Some points addressed to handle these challenges are marked by the theory denial by the right wing, fueling a certain schizophrenia: tendency to theoricism, on one hand, and to the lack of production and creativity in contrast to the large number of reproduction, on the other (Ibid.: 25).

In this sense, Martín-Barbero proposes some necessary ruptures. One of them is that which opposes the fascination of power by part of a certain left wing. The other one occurs in the awareness of the activity of those who are dominated (Ibid.: 28-29). Here there is the embryo of the mediation, developed in depth in the book *Dos meios* às *Mediações*.

Martín-Barbero emphasizes some approaches that must be observed by the research in communication: the transnational structure of information (Ibid.: 30ss); new communication technologies; the reality of participative, alternative, and popular communication. In the latter, the issue of the massive-popular relation gains strength.

In the wake of this relationship, there is the relation between popular culture and mass communication (Martín-Barbero, 1984b). According to him, its considerations lie between the reflection required by the crisis of theoretical and political models and the specificity of the Latin American reflection on mass communication processes (Ibid.: 3).

On the other hand, culture, technology, people, and mass communication have always been in Martín-Barbero's concerns. With articles and conferences, he enriched teaching and research and helped to provide color, face, and specificity to the reflection developed in the continent since the 1980s (Martín-Barbero, 1984a; 1985; 1986; 1987a; Martín-Barbero; Gonzaga Motta, 1983).

In line with these concerns, there is a focus on the communication teaching (1988). Martín-Barbero asks (and wonders) about the existence of a specificity for communication studies, beyond the technique. To answer such question, he emphasizes the necessary epistemological mediations and underlines the plurality of ways and uses of the media. He ends his presentation by postulating, in the studies of communication, an integrative space for research and production.

CONCLUSIVE REFLECTIONS

In Latin America, this trajectory before the book *De los medios a las mediaciones* shows how the contribution of Jesús Martín-Barbero is fundamental for communication teaching and researching. In addition, the subsequent reflection that led to the establishment of a mediatization concept is a debtor of Martín-Barbero. Its role in communicational construction from the Latin American reality created conditions for the communication to be thought beyond the concept of mediation.

The work with the reception, from Martín-Barbero to Orozco Gómez (1993), explores the possibilities of dissension and disagreement in the relationship of the receivers with the media. There is, as he says, no imagination curtailment in everyday life. On the contrary, the fundamental raw material of modern television productions is complicity with the imagination.

On the other hand, more and more people are closing in on themselves, not giving access to others. They live, in the words of Martín-Barbero (1993; 1998), *between means and fears*. Isolation from the other causes the consciousness of a common destiny to be replaced by the hedonistic concern with one's own well-being and individual project of achievement. The other ceases to be a travel partner, a companion in the social construction, to become an adversary and a competitor in the enjoyment of the riches of the world. Predatory voracity takes the place of fraternal sharing.

As the streets and cities have become dangerous, there is a backflow into the homes. There is a lack of interpersonal communication and an increased consumption of media, which is more and more adapted to the people's needs. Those who have greater purchasing power consume products made by orders, via internet, cable TV, computer, multimedia; the poor are satisfied with the traditional mass media. As the consumption of information and data increases, the personal intercommunication decreases. One can even affirm that a new environment is being created: a society in mediatization, although this concept is not yet explicitly present in Martín-Barbero's thought.

Jesús Martín-Barbero helps to overcome this problem with his concept of mediation, expressed in his book *Dos meios* às *mediações*, although it has only been translated into Brazilian Portuguese ten years after its publication in Spanish.

Regarding this concept of mediatization, Eliseo Verón (2014), taking a very important step already in 1997, presents a scheme for the mediatization analysis (Verón, 1997). It presupposes a relation between media and institutions, between individuals and with each other, with the media in the center. There is a medium/society relationship, as well as individual/society and intuitions,

media/individuals, individuals/institutions, and media with institutions and individuals.

This was one of the first steps taken to understand the process of mediatization, what was possibly missing is what is advancing now. All this scheme, this mediatization semiosis, placed by Eliseo Verón (2013), becomes a creation of a new systemically thought-out ambience rather than a relationship between fields. Hence the need to seek and theoretically problematize mediatization. This is done, for example, by José Luiz Braga (2006), when he speaks of mediatization as an interational process of reference. More than an interaction, it becomes a reference paradigm for establishing and interrelating people and the consequent production of meanings.

The concern with the mediatization that currently arises in all sectors must be carefully analyzed to see and consolidate mediatization as a key concept for current reality thinking. In the intellectual work, in the development of research, it is necessary to make sure that the concept of mediatization does not become a meaningless mark, an empty concept, with no greater content to explain society. This is the concern and criticism of David Deacon and James Stanyer (2014) in the article "Mediatization: key concept or conceptual bandwagon?".

When Fausto Neto (2013) relates the concept of circulation to the idea of mediatization, he is saying that in this circulation process in the society, this issue of interrelation messages, one must go beyond the common sense, beyond the concept superficiality. In this process of circulation, both the sender and receiver, and even more, the society in which we live and these media happens, suffer and are modified in the circuit.

In the social process within a society in mediatization, a society that processes this inter-relation and circulation through social networks and mass media, digital technologies become almost a *second skin* of the people and society or, as stated by Kerckhove (2009), "*in the skin of culture*". When such a statement is posed, the creation of a new atmosphere, of new relations it is advocated from the circulation in these means. Here we must seek what is emerging; what is a new environment; what is new in this 21st Century society.

Thus, in this new environment, human beings arrive within a society that is there, where they necessarily need to reestablish their meanings. They must discover the reference points that convey meaning to the existence.

Nowadays, these points of reference are given and explained by a society in mediatization. The relationship between mediatization, society, and meaning is made in this perspective. In a more procedural view, it is noted that an issue of mediatization is a moment in a process, since it did not always exist but comes as a natural consequence from the reflection of the media society, that is, a society

that posed itself with the media within a system, converging, relating, becoming present to other fields and other systems. The social, political, and religious fields, as they were established; such as this relationship found by authors such as Fausto Neto (2005), who, from his article on "Mediatization, social practice, and practice of meaning", shows that we are overcoming this media society to enter a society that is being structured in the verge of mediatization.

Mediatization is not understood as appearing in the media, but as a broader society. This is the fundament of a society as an ambience system. Obviously, the term is related to and develops a process of evolution of a media society, but structuring it in a special way. All this realization, including the society mediatization and those on the verge of mediatization, in its overcoming of a mere consideration of the media, for example, it all appears very clearly in the book of the Danish Stig Hjarvard (2013), *The mediatization of culture and society*[21]. At first, he deals precisely with the question of what mediatization is beyond a simple relationship with the media. In a certain sense, he makes almost a sociology of mediatization to, later, relate to some specific fields such as culture, games, politics, and religion.

Gomes (2016), for example, poses an important questioning when analyzing the concept of mediatization and says that this is a unique concept, but with multiple voices. That is, mediatization not a misleading concept but one that admits that several people look and state it in different ways, there are multiple voices behind it. However, such concept is not polysemous, perhaps it can even be termed as multivalent. Thus, the concept must be systemically articulated, contributing and signifying a new atmosphere in the society.

Along this line, but perhaps not getting there, Hjarvard's article in *MATRIZes* magazine, in 2012[22], theorizes media as an agent of social and cultural change. What is the problem then? When Hjarvard affirms that mediatization is media theorization as an agent of social change, he is somehow still in a society of media, a society in which the technological devices of communication and the communication systems are agents of cultural and social changes.

More than being an agent of cultural and social changes, they are the expression of an atmosphere that brings within a new understanding of the culture society, beyond the mere technological device. It creates this environment, it works this ambience, but it is broader than that. The mediatization within the social system is precisely that cultural broth or crucible in which the various fields and social sectors interact. Mediatization is something broader.

The phenomenon of mediatization has an extremely strong semantic load and is a challenge for the hermeneutics of a contemporary society. To deal with this challenge, an individual consideration of each media or device

[21] Translated and published by Unisinos Publishing Company.

[22] Modified version published in Hjarvard (2014).

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technology demonstrates its insufficiency. Thus, instead of singling out the analysis, as customarily made, one must consider its unity and examine it as a single and coherent corpus, as an integrated and competitive holistic proposal for understanding the present moment.

Therefore, in affirming the concept of mediation in its different levels (individual, situational, social, and video-technological), Martín-Barbero helps to lay the foundations for the reflection to evolve until, in the late the 1990s, it focus in the mediatic processes and leads to the concept of mediatization.

This trajectory places Jesus Martín-Barbero as a seminal thinker, to whom all further research on communication must refer. It can be said that the study of communication theory is no longer the same after his work. Research goes on. It does not go backwards. Ⓜ

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