

The biography through a communicational perspective

A biografia do ponto de vista comunicacional

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ABSTRACT

This paper develops the notion of *communicational biography* as a possible methodology for the analysis of individual trajectories. This approach considers communication as a set of processes that link the *self* and the *other*. I assume that the epistemological problem of communication lies in the fact that to be means to be for another, through another, to himself or herself.

Keywords: Communication, biography, epistemology

RESUMO

Neste artigo, desenvolvo a noção de *biografia comunicacional* como metodologia possível para a análise das trajetórias individuais. Esta abordagem considera a comunicação como um conjunto de processos de vinculação entre o *eu* e o *outro*. Parto do pressuposto de que a problemática comunicacional está no fato de que ser significa ser para outro, por meio de outro, para si mesmo.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação, biografia, epistemologia

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INTRODUCTION

DURING THE COURSE of my PhD, it seemed essential to me to establish connections between Communication and History Theories, in order to analyze the artistic and intellectual trajectory of Dias Gomes. The main objective of the study was to analyze the relations between the communist cultures and the fields of the Brazilian cultural industry (theater, movies, radio and television) in the artistic and intellectual trajectory of Dias Gomes, from 1939 to 1999 (Sacramento, 2012). Searching for a new key that would explain the relations between the leftwing and the media, other than the insistent dichotomy between *cooptation* and *infiltration*, the thesis defends the idea that Dias Gomes acted as a cultural mediator, with a trajectory marked by several hybridizations and interlocutions between the fields of politics and media. In this direction, attests that Dias Gomes' cultural mediations occurred especially in two ways: as circularity (alliances, associations and intermediations) and as tensions (conflicts, accusations and oppositions), present in relations with certain agents and certain ideological and structural settings of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB) and the media. For this analysis, the concept-method of *communicational biography* was created, developed and applied. Instead of centering the narrative on the actions or work of one protagonist, the focus is on the practices and the sociocultural mediations involved in processes of production, circulation and consumption of texts, which, by associating to an individual, constitute the life to which they relate and why they exist. Within this perspective, the thesis considers the social circuit of Dias Gomes' experience with the media industries and the PCB, having as objects the narratives of *self* (autobiographical narratives), his productions, and the narratives of others that have valued his activities, works and placements, contributing to the creation of different public images. The thesis analyzes all the signed works by Dias Gomes (essays, articles, plays, films, soap operas) that have been published, transmitted or displayed between 1939 and 1999, as well as the ways they were recognized and evaluated (by critics and peers) within those social fields and transits between them.

During the thesis preparation process, I did not consider the links between Communication and History Theories merely as an application of historiographical assumptions to my object of analysis. My basic question was how to analyze an individual trajectory from a communication point of view? What is a communication point of view, then? Certainly, the concept of communication depends on the theoretical perspectives adopted by researchers.

Even without a theoretical consensus on the specific object of communication, it is impossible to deny that the field of communication has been

established within a number of discussions on the social life, centered on the *connection between the self and the other*. That is, centered on the apprehension of the individual or collective being-in-common, in the form of social struggle for hegemony, of the ethical commitment to the rebalancing of community tensions, of the sociability processes engendered by communication devices, and in the transfiguration of the sociocultural reality by links with the media realities in the form of products and media processes. In any case, as explained Muniz Sodré, the communication problem is not merely to establish the “mere sharing of a common fund, resulting from a metaphor that sees communication as a receptacle of things to be ‘divided’ between the members of a social group” (2002: 223). Much more than that, it is a set of seizure processes of identity dynamics, in which the self and the other are not ready and finished social instances to be brought into connection by an attractive connection whatsoever. The heart of the communication problem to Sodré is in the links between the *general self* and the *singular self*, mediated by the transcendence of the other. This makes believe that it is extremely reductionist to associate this problematic exclusively to the media sphere:

Linking, however, is much more than a simple interactive process, because it assumes the social inclusion of the subject from the imaginary dimension (latent and manifest images) to the release before conduct guidelines, that is, the values. Here the ethical-political sense of the common good is necessarily present. This makes the communication issue political and scientifically greater than that which constitutes it exclusively from the media sphere (Ibid.: 223-224).

Finally, considering communication as the constitution of the link between the *self* and the *other*, I try in this article to lay the foundations of a theoretical and methodological model of biographical analysis in a communicational perspective.

THE COMMUNICATIONAL BIOGRAPHY

Criticism of traditional biographies developed by Pierre Bourdieu in *The Biographical Illusion* has been an essential reference for similar studies. The French sociologist was accurate to question the production of an *illusion* in the chronological narrative of most biographies, giving life a meaning, coherence and purpose. The production of an illusion of consistency does not approach the real subject, fragmented and multiple, but reinforces the *modern subject*, one, unspeakable and oriented. For him, the biggest problem was the biographical report be based on the set of events that are part of an individual existence conceived as a story. For Bourdieu (2006: 190), on the contrary, the biographical

events should be construed as placements and displacements in space. In this sense, he understands the individual trajectory by the metaphor of the subway, exceeding the linearity traditionally sought and opting for the network. For him, life should be explained by the matrix of the objective relations that exist between stations, or even better, among the different points of existence.

Some authors criticize Bourdieu on this point for producing an objectivist illusion, another biographical illusion in which the trajectory of the individual is pre-determined by a specific matrix of the objective relations. That is, for these authors, human life cannot be seen as produced straight and neither as a network of predetermined objective lines, but only in a disorganized and decentralized way (Clot, 1989). In addition to the determination, some criticize the predictability that Bourdieu attributes to trajectory. As in the subway, several tracks already exist and individuals would only need to decide which one to follow. That is, the network is already mounted, before being covered, before the choice and its construction. The individual would not participate in its construction. He or she would just walk through it. Instead of tracing the objective matrices, analyzing the make up of historical characters throughout their lives has been preferred, taking into account the different social spaces in which worked, but also their subjective perceptions, oscillations, hesitations and even chance (Schmidt, 2009: 80).

However, it was precisely Bourdieu's critique of the linearity in the biographical narrative the aspect most explored in new approaches. The French sociologist argued that, generally, the biographical studies have ended in own name a *since always* to describe the trajectory of the individual with a single or a set of stable and harmonic characteristics. Faced with this criticism, the researcher's option was to build biographies that explored the multiple *facets* of the biographed individual, those known, but mainly those unknown that could undo the *biographical illusion* (Dosse, 2009: 47). This option did not intend to recover the totality of the subject, setting forth consistency. The aim was to show the diversity and fragmentation that are human constitutive.

By analyzing this multiplicity of becomings of the biographed character, biographical studies have yet focused on the individual and the search for a truth of the subject in the world, understanding it not as a totality, but as fragmentation and multiplicity. This however did not exempt biographical studies of other dilemmas: the exemplary, the uniqueness, representativeness and publicity. The exemplary relates to the fact that the choice to be guided by moral, religious, artistic or heroic conduct of the biographed individual. The *uniqueness* of the biographed's life has also become a criterion. The biographer must value what the individual would have of unique in his or her time, society

and generation. However, at the same time, one should consider the *representativeness* of individual trajectory, how much it constitutes itself as a legitimate representative of a social process. In addition to these dilemmas, there is the *notoriety*. Biographies are usually produced about public figures (kings, military, politicians, religious, thinkers, artists). That is, they have as protagonists the *great men*, the *great characters of history* (Dosse, 2009; Madélenat, 1984).

In Brazil, Bourdieu's provocations have also resonated. In dialogue with them, some authors have proposed new biographical study models that worked with the "subjects in fractals" as they exist in reality (Damasceno, 1999; Gomes and Ferreira, 2007; Pena, 2004). Most, however, just ended up trying to create ways to apply the teachings of the French sociologist, starting from the notion of trajectory to undo the *biographical illusion* (Aguiar, 2000; Ratts, 2007; Sarmiento, 1999; Simili, 2008) or to realize how it was prepared in time (Facina, 2004; Roberts, 2007; Souza, 2008).

In the case of my thesis on the artistic and intellectual trajectory of Dias Gomes, I analyzed his achievements and the representations associated with him during his career, from 1939 to 1999. In 1939, he published his first play, *The Comedy of Moralists*. Between 1940 and 1960, he was divided between the theater, the radio and the communist militancy, as well as incursions as a television author and as a film scriptwriter. Between 1970 and 1990, he devoted himself more to television than to the theater, but also had new plays performed and other adapted for the cinema. Even though this is a common form of periodization of the trajectory of Dias Gomes, I do not intend to force more disruptions between the playwright and the teledramaturgo and neither to push an inherent centered continuity on his subversive *perpetuity*¹. I intend to specify the variety of communication expressions of every moment during the trajectory and show the strong links established between the predecessors and successors times.

For this, I proposed the construction of a *communicational biography*, in which the focus is not on the individual activity, but on the communicative circuit of the discursive production imbricated in an individual. This perspective seeks to break with the dominant trend in biographical studies. Focused more on the individual than on social and more on textual than contextual, they end up dehistoricizing actions and celebrating the immutable characteristics of personality. This option produces a teleological coherence, if not reinforces expectations of common sense. Thus, the biographical narration ends up prioritizing unity, stability, continuity and similarity.

In the communicational point of view, the goal of a biographical study should be centered in the analysis process of the construction of an individual as

a social recognized figure. The *communicational biography* seeks to analyze how the singularity, representativeness, exemplary and the reputation of a particular individual were formed, within a specific set of socio-cultural mediations. Thus, the individual trajectory can be understood in its *unfinished and indefinite happen*, in its own *make-up*, which is not devoid of rational logic or structural pressures (Thompson 1981: 97). The biographical study is not conducted to demonstrate the over-determination of the individual on the history (as the protagonist of events) neither as an over-determination of the history on the individual (as a mere result of the social structure). The goal becomes to show the multiple connections between the individual and the social that occurred in the construction of a public figure. In this sense, not only individual *text* matters and neither exclusively the *text* on the individual, but who wrote it, how he or she was represented, to whom it was addressed and who read it.

Thus, one can observe how, in different places and times, certain practices, social representations and appropriations are being built and given to read (Chartier, 1990: 17). That is, the forms of recognition are taken into account during the traverse of the trajectory, which produced several speeches about the consecration, the stagnation and the decline of a particular individual in his or her acting fields. Considering the texts produced by the individual, the texts about him or her and those on his or her texts, you can start analyzing an individual trajectory from a communicational perspective.

The archaic meaning of text is as fabric. And thus, the text is composed of yarns (with more or less diversity of origins, colors and textures) that when joined to other texts form *communicational wefts*. In this sense, an individual trajectory is a set of interwoven texts in specific tessitura, which constitute the practices and representations of a lifetime. In other words, life is also a set of texts uttered along its length, and the utterances do not exist in isolation. They fully exist in the discursive communication chain in which each utterance is an inseparable link (Bakhtin, 2003: 306). That is, each isolated utterance must be analyzed in its dialogical relations with other utterances to be understood as a *discourse*: the language in all its concrete and live integrity and not as a monologic abstraction (Bakhtin, 2005: 181-185). After all, the meaning is not within the text, but in the dialogical relations. It is necessary, therefore, to give socio-historical consistency to the studied text.

In the theoretical model of *communicational biography* that I formulate, the study of individual trajectory concentrates on mobility of social and discursive practices in which the biographed subject was involved in the different moments of a lifetime. Thus, both the placements and the public images of the biographed in the social fabric constitute communication processes that need

to be historicized. Therefore, it is possible to write the trajectory of an artist, for example, in addition to the textual analysis of his or her works, but emphasizing *communication*: the specific socio-cultural practices of production, circulation and recognition of the proposed meanings on certain utterances.

My notion of communication is linked to Mikhail Bakhtin's work. In one of his texts, he was accurate in stating that "studying the speech itself, ignoring its external orientation, is so absurd as to study the psychological distress outside the reality to which it is directed and for which it is determined" (Bakhtin, 1998 : 99). Of course, here is the notion of communication – how every enunciation is constituted as a *living work of intention*, always toward the externality and otherness and, therefore, fully social. Thus, this work is not about an *expression* of the individual consciousness, but about a *declarative brands* – the construction of intentionality by the context of enunciation within the social whole (Ribeiro and Sacramento, 2010: 14).

Well, for Bakhtin, every communicative act is contextual – situated by subjects, institutions, times and defined spaces. In this sense, to communicate is a dialogic process. It is not just about saying something to someone, but to someone and with others. That is, the otherness, the interlocutor, the ways and circumstances are constitutive of every communicative act. It does not exist in isolation, as an abstract system of normative forms, since the speech is populated – or overpopulated – with a set of views and concrete intentions of others about the world. In addition, the speech always evokes the contexts in which such act lived its *socially tense life*: it is a socio-ideological living concretion while pluringue opinion that arises within the limits of the territory of the *self* and in the limits of the territory of the *other* (Bakhtin, 1998: 100). Every speech is therefore a half another's speech, strange and known at the same time, and the language is not a neutral medium, but is full of placements and contexts of others who populate it in the context of a new communicative act, with reviews, tones and their own accents, but always in a constitutive relation to otherness.

Bakhtin understands the communication in three crossed dimensions: the ontological, the axiological and the epistemological. In the first case, he notes that the constitution of the being and its relations with others are the communicational process itself, which allows the human existence:

No Nirvana is possible for an individual consciousness. An individual consciousness is a contradiction in terms. Consciousness is essentially multiple. I am aware of myself and become myself only when I reveal myself to another, through another and with the help of another (...). Separation, dissociation and closing the self as the main reason for the loss of self. Not what happens inside, but what

happens *on the border*, between myself and the consciousness of another, on the *threshold* (...). Thus Dostoevsky confronts all the decadent and idealistic culture (individualistic), the culture of essential and inescapable loneliness. He states the impossibility of solitude, the illusory nature of loneliness. The very being of man (both external and internal) *is the deepest communion*. To be means to communicate (...). *To be means being to another, through another, for yourself* (Bakhtin, 2003, 199-201, emphasis added).

This passage is partly the product of deep meditation on Christianity that occupied Bakhtin throughout his life. It is also part of his philosophy of language. The dialogism introduces the otherness or difference in the *self*. It makes the personal identity problematic and poses the question of the constitutions of the discourse subject with regard to the word of others.

In the epistemological dimension, Bakhtin argued that the text (in a broad sense, every significant matter) is the object of Human Sciences, which, unlike Natural Sciences, has the specificity of not having just a spoken object, but also an expressive and speaker object. Taking the utterances as an object of Human Sciences, which includes Communication, one cannot ignore that

the utterance is never only a reflection, an expression of something given and finished existing outside of it. It always creates something that did not exist before it, absolutely new and unique, and that moreover relates to a value (with truth, kindness, beauty etc.) (Bakhtin, 2003: 326).

Thereby, what matters to Bakhtin axiology are the key moments in the architectural real world of the done act or action – the world really experienced, not the merely thinkable world. All evaluative activity must be understood as an act actually accomplished both from within its product and from the point of view of the author as a participant in the creation of the utterance (or of the utterances set that was a text or a work) and of a given social system.

Guided by these questions, the communicational biography moves away radically from a *substantialistic biography*, in which the individual biographed has its actions linked to a personal essence. In this case, the utterances made by individuals within a romantic imagination are designed as reflections of a creative interiority (Williams, 1969). I propose a *dialogic biography*, in which individual actions are viscerally related to social contexts. In other words, I try to think *together* the individual and social expressions in certain historical periods.

As we know, the relationship between *individual* and *society* is one of the recurring problems in Social Sciences. In contemporary biographical studies, this problem is presented in a very particular way, because another biography

that merely consecrates the memory of a famous individual (*of the great men with great deeds*) is not wanted. Biographies more concerned with ordinary individuals started to be produced, with people who lived the story in the oppressed position. In this biography recovery movement, there was also the rescue of intellectual biography as a possibility to analyze the mediations between author, work and public (Dosse, 2009).

The biographical image in a communicational biography should not end in a *biographical illusion*. What matters instead is the long process of finishing, motivated both by the positions taken by the biographed as by the ways in which he or she was positioned and recognized. Throughout his or her career, many images about him or her and his or her works were produced and circulated. The construction process, circulation and recognition of these *public images*, the proposed links between them and the specificity of each of them, are what should be taken into consideration in a *communicational biography*. In this sense, the analysis of individuation allows us to place in a single time and relation individual and society, without any fallacious separation. The relation of plurality of persons (*society*) with the singular person (the *individual*), as noted by Norbert Elias (1994), has been placed in an antagonistic way. While the singular human being is taken to be an entity existing in complete isolation, society is understood both as an unstructured sum of individuals and as an entity that exists beyond the individuals. On the contrary, one can consider how individuals relate to each other in a plurality, that is, in a society. The recognition of others as members of the same society is of the order of culture, of the “acting document” (Geertz, 1989), is constantly renewed in social relations. This demonstrates the fact that the *self* is irrevocably inserted in an *we*, in a relationship larded by acts, plans and purposes of many *selves*, that is, the multitude of individual aims and aspirations within the totality of a human network of meanings (Elias, 1994: 57).

The notion of individuation first emphasizes the individual (even if this is not about a Promethean individual neither about one who’s smashed by the structures), it also includes a more general analysis applicable to social fields in which individuals act and seize forms of conduct (Henry, 2001: 162). Finally, the notion of individuation questions the process of social construction of individuality. In this type of analysis, individuality is understood *relationally* to the extent that the individual always composes with the others, the *self*, and the *we*. The individual is faced with this tension of the duty to be like others while he or she distinguishes (Henry, 2001: 158). However, his or her individuality cannot be reduced to the external signs neither to the interior, but to the intense dialogue that make the existence and their configuration

be interdependent. It's as if the *self* lived *two lives*, one for itself (acting, speaking and thinking as individuality), but also *another life* for the others, in discourses about the *self* and which the *self* invariably deal with, accepting, rejecting or trading.

In other words, identity is a communicational process, consisting of the images of self, for the self and for others, that is,

the image that a person acquires over life referring to himself or herself, the image he or she builds and presents to others and himself or herself, to believe in his or her own representation, but also to be noticed the way he/she wants to be noticed by others (Pollak, 1992: 204).

That is, the identity is not related to what is, but with what becomes and how the representations of the *self* by others affects it. It is precisely why identities are constructed within and not outside the speeches. They are produced in specific historical and institutional sites, within certain formations and discursive practices and with their own strategies and initiatives. They are also built within specific modalities of power and marking of difference and exclusion (Hall, 2005: 109). Thus, the social markers of individuality are given in the dialogue between the *self* and the *we*, between the *individual* and *society*.

Abandon the individual in *itself* and take the social construction of individual trajectory in public spaces is one of the features of the *communicational biography* that I am proposing. This does not mean doing a study focused on the narration of the actions of the biographed character, but taking them as the *guiding thread* of the plot, showing how other wires thicken the fabric of a life (the spaces and sociability networks, the readings of reality, personal redesigning, representations of self by others, public images, codes of conduct, work, social class, ethnicity, political positioning, acting field and cultural formation) and constitute the *communicational wefts* that unite, distinguish and mediate relations between individuals in society.

Based on the notion that communication is operationalized in a system in which different actors and practices are involved (Barbosa, 2010: 26), I believe that we can develop a communicational perspective of the biographical study. In this sense, the “social movement in communication, the communication in process” (Martín-Barbero, 2003: 290) is recovered, considering therefore the mediations in the discourses on a life trajectory. That is, to study the communication from the culture is to seek to undo the fallacious separation of communication circuit between production and reception, or between causes and effects of the communicative practices. In this way, we could recover all of the communication phenomenon in its plurality and *cultural density*: the

specificity and the materiality of conflicts, of contradictions and struggles present in communicative processes.

From this perspective, mediation is not understood as a way of social adjustment: accommodation, harmony, agreement or the mere building *bridges* between the different. Mediations are dense and secret existing socio-cultural links between communication processes and the cultural dynamics and social movements. That's why communication as culture must be understood as *process*, that is, for its "complex elastic, dynamic and active nature, not purely mechanical and residual" (Wolf, 2005: 105). In these terms, the goal becomes to study both the specificity of the different communication practices and their joints with the cultural system forms to which these practices give life in a given period. The communication approach by Cultural Studies, therefore, goes back to an idea of history as process, understanding it as an *unfinished and indefinite happen*, that yet is not devoid of rational logic or determinants pressures (Thompson 1981: 97).

Furthermore, the culture is designed as a space of conflicts. The interaction between different worldviews engenders a political struggle that expresses and makes sense in social practices and cultural forms that they acquire. Culture is therefore a tangle, which includes various activities, values and attributes. Observing culture as an arena is understand it as a field of asymmetric forces, in which we should try to reveal the variety of ideological gradations between agents, identifying the different positions of these, their conflicts, different polarizations, but also negotiations, mutual inflows and circularity values and practices (Thompson, 1998: 18). Thereby, the study of culture has become *the study of the general organization in the particular case*, that is, of the cultural presence in isolated human activities and how their inter-relationships are lived and experienced as a whole in a given period: in a *radical interactionism* that complexifies the notion of determination towards mutual and multiple determination (Hall, 2003: 136). Therefore, it became necessary to study the social relations of all kinds (commercial, political, familiar, school, aesthetics, mediatic) as active and activated by the human experience.

Accordingly, this perspective does not only reconstruct the *communication circuit* in its *entire way*, but also emphasizes the human experience as present throughout the process. This does not mean the centrality of the individual to the detriment of social, but that the individual is a constituent of socio-cultural and communication changes. In this conception, the *experience* became a key concept to overcome the conflicts between *determination* and *will*. In individual or collective experience, these tensions find a particular form of existence. To a communicational biography, the important thing is to work these tensions in process, in motion and not as fixed and finished images.

In Brazil, there are some biographical works concerned with the *reception* of the works of certain authors and how such activity allows the construction of certain public images, expectations, frustrations and valuations in specific modes of recognition and of making connections between life, career and work (cf., for example, Abreu, 2011; Guimarães, 2004; Werneck, 1996). Relations between authors, critics and public, although quite recurrent in studies on the history of reading, are contained in the model of communicational biography. However, this new model is more comprehensive. It parts of the understanding that the analysis of individual trajectory starts from the set of communicative circuits that link production, circulation, recognition, mediations, practices, appropriations, classifications, disputes, hierarchizations, representations, identities and identifications.

My proposal for a communicational biography does not understand individuality as something internal or natural to someone, but allows the biographer study to incorporate meaning and sociability production networks, present in communicative circuits of cultural production as constituents of the researched individual's *relation* with others, in specific historical contexts and social structures. For this reason, the understanding of individual trajectory as a communication is not just a metaphor, but is part of a principle: the *self* has been only constituted as being in relation to a *we*. Taking that as a principle implies observing the trajectory as a set of communication processes, populated by a variety of speeches, positions and intentions existing in a specific context while evoking others. Because of this, the consideration of an individual trajectory is only one entry for considering how they built their social figure in transit between different social spheres.

Norbert Elias noted the binding phenomenon between the *self* and the *other* as follows:

Time after time, the acts and works of isolated people, woven into the social fabric, take a look that was not premeditated. Over and over, therefore, people put themselves before the effect of their own actions like the sorcerer's apprentice before the spirits invoked which, once released, no longer remain under their control. They stare in amazement the twists and formations of the historical flow that they themselves constitute, but do not control (Elias, 1994: 58).

In the study of individual trajectory, this lack of control or premeditation on individual ways of acting and of being recognized can be considered a problem for its study. In dialogical communicational perspective, as we have seen, it is understood by the competitions, associations and disputes for the senses which constitute the very life as a *half another's life*, populated by purpose and

actions of others. Certainly, analyzing the interlacing of all these practices and discursive representations in their contexts is the main goal of *communicational biography*. Thus, it is possible to show that the individuation of a particular subject as a unique social figure is part of many communication processes.

METHODOLOGICAL STEPS FOR CONSTRUCTION OF COMMUNICATIONAL BIOGRAPHIES

The notion of communicational biography, developed in this paper can be used by other researches that tries to analyze, beyond the individual actions of the biographed, the circuit of production of social meanings present in a particular artistic and intellectual career. It is necessarily a multifaceted study, as I tried to show. We must consider that: 1) the *self* was only constituted as such in relation to an *other*, a process that makes the individual trajectory be always *half another*, because it parts of a dialogic world of meaning production; 2) the social relations of production, circulation and consumption of *texts* (in a broad sense that includes the multiplicity of languages, works and materiality) associated with a particular individual constitute a *dialogic discursive practice*, that is, that set of signs which, while dialoguing with one another form the object – a life, in this case – to which it refers (Foucault, 1986); 3) the forms modulations and milestones of social meanings that make up the trajectory of a particular individual should be seen as possible by the set of rules, negotiations, disputes and existing actions, within a certain social field in a specific communicative situation, but also in the continuity and *habitus* updates of a certain social field or of that produced in transit between several (Bourdieu, 1989); 4) the individual trajectory is a *live event*, precisely because it is about *setting in motion* discourses, interests and motivations that have different social and historical locations that in this performative complexity, form an organic and multiple whole; and 5) the forms of sociability and relations with other individuals are mediated by situations and existing and active structures within a certain field and in a given situation, which makes it not possible to disregard the structural or systemic analysis of that of the individual trajectory.

The possibilities of considering a life as a set of communication circuits are numerous. The public senses about a life are triggered within the enunciation regularity of a specific set of speech genres. The essay published in a periodical is certainly different from an exchange of letters with a friend. Establishing and analyzing the circulation modes of these senses can also make part of a communicational biography. The *intimate* is not, to the Bakhtin's perspective that I adopt, merely an authentic connection with the *true self*, but also a communicational modality of discourse production. It is also the production of

another like me to be presented to others. It is therefore fundamentally articulated to others, to the ways in which others see us, as we strive to be seen by others and to how we can give meaning to our existence so as to be recognized by others, convincing them *discursively* that we are *ourselves*. As a result, the *intimate* needs to be connected to the *public*: to the social constraints, to the power structures, to the most celebrated works, to public images and the most common forms of production and recognition of the *self*.

The first dimension of the communicational biography is to **identify the uniqueness of an individual trajectory**. This uniqueness should not necessarily be identified with one of the *great man with great deeds*. By relations of cause and effect between the greatness of the man and his achievements, the historical biographies looked, traditionally, to give scientificity and truthfulness to the reconstitution process of the past by means of documents. Telling the life story of kings, nobles, artists and famous politicians certainly can be an activity made easier by the profusion of documents about their achievements, public, private and even intimate life. However, this cannot justify forgetting private life stories, minors, as being also places for production of an interpretation of the past that complexifies the *general stories*, or, at the precise term of Walter Benjamin the “history of winners” (1985).

In biographies, it is common the necessity to use the individual for the uniqueness of the possible representation of a time. The genre ended up focusing on *great men*, notable figures, political elite representatives, military and intellectuals. Ordinary individuals, the subaltern, the dominated, the excluded, the minorities and the poor were relegated to historiography oblivion. This criticism has become common.

The main justification of the Annales school historians to keep the study of *great men* was that there was a *shortage of sources* and documents on individuals who were not politicians or had no connection with politics – to the *official history*. This justification, besides referring to precepts of positivist historiography, based on official documents, was also criticized for failing to include in history those “from below” (Dosse, 2009). This criticism ended up consolidating a new historiographical current, the micro-history, which developed a set of studies such as *The cheeses and the worms: the daily life and ideas of a miller persecuted by the Inquisition* (1976), from Carlo Ginzburg, and *The intangible heritage: the story of an exorcist in seventeenth century Piedmont* (1985) by Giovanni Levi. They sought, by reducing the scale of analysis to the average individual plan, to establish new connections between the particular and the general. Instead of the great characters held responsible for the great events, subaltern subject, common and forgotten became part

of history. As a result, the historical microanalysis was structured in the game of the detailed description of which is focused on the relation with the broader social context and that happens to be complexified by analyzing the micro-social.

Whether writing the life story of a remarkable, or someone with little notoriety or having it restricted to certain circuits, the identification of a unique trajectory in the communicational biography model is, on the one hand, related to the fact that a individual trajectory is a unique way of communication, through a certain common universe of symbols, determined and mediated by political, social economic, cultural, aesthetic, institutional and even situational instances. On the other hand, in this model, the definition of the biographed individual goes through his involvement with certain structures, processes, professions or formats of the communication field.

The second dimension of research in a communicational biography is to **define the nature and the set of documents and sources used**. At this time, we first seek, considering the inclusion of the biographed in the world (his or her activities, practices and relationship network, for example), to specify the nature of the sources (printed, audiovisual, oral, digital). After that, their location must be identified, that is, where such documents can be found (libraries, manuals, catalogs, collections, sites).

Furthermore, it should be considered if there would be a need to produce documents from oral sources. Although the communicational biography is not an exclusive work of Oral History, it takes into account that the mnemonic act is a narrative drawn up in the present, thus constituting a field of struggles and negotiations that the subjects fight on concrete and specific social situations upon the meanings of the past. Thinking about it, one should deal with the ways in which the interviewees forge their memories and summon them to rebuild the moment they took place.

Basically, the use of oral testimony as a source can be made in two paths: 1) a retelling of events and processes from the news of informations and interpretations and 2) thematization of individual or collective representations built in the past by the protagonists or witnesses, made explicit in the testimonies. It is in this latter case that issues such as identity and memory emerge. Of course, this will require a synchronic cut of certain events that occurred in the decade, so we can do, based on the telling of certain episodes, a map of the placements and power relations contained therein. Therefore, it is necessary to identify the agents, the social position they occupied, the type of belonging relationship they had, their sociability patterns, the sharing of imaginaries and beliefs and, especially, the relationship they had with the biographed individual.

The third dimension of communicational biography is **mapping the networks of social meanings present in an individual trajectory**. Production processes, circulation, consumption and redefinition of certain social meanings must be demonstrated. In a continuous process of transformation, the social meanings articulate themselves to certain discursive communities in which they settle dialogue spaces between subjects. The discursive formation of the biographed individual can be thought at the same time as an articulated set between texts and forms of meaning with the modes of organization and relation of social groups in a specific utterance circulation network. It is also sought to identify the position and the relative importance of each speech, individual actor or discourse community (those who produce, circulate and are recognized in certain discourse).

It is understood that the conditions of *production* of social meanings cannot be analyzed without being considered in the materiality of the resulting *texts* in a given cultural product. Consequently, every cultural product is interpreted by different people, both by professional analysts and ordinary consumers. This *reading* also depends on certain socio-cultural conditions. Instances of production and recognition exist in asymmetrical power relations, whether material or symbolic. Disagreements, mismatches, conflicts between production and reception, on *lived cultures* within specific social relations (Johnson, 1996).

Thus, for each product in which the biographed subject participated, the communication circuit of that cultural production must be rebuilt. Consequently, it is not considered only what he or she accomplished, but the way it was produced, imagined, consumed, recognized, regulated and represented.

In this sense, it is not enough to investigate the materiality of the cultural production (the *what* of the question), but mostly consider the actors involved in the production, circulation and reception of articulated social meanings in an individual trajectory (the *who*, therefore). Finally, it is about identifying the various texts networks – whether formatted in newspapers, magazines, movies, television programs, letters, photographs, comments on websites, blogs, diaries, testimonies – that take place in a system of practices and experiences.

The fourth dimension is **to observe the biographed interactions with certain fields or social groups**. At this point, the different processes that make up a life as communication should be shown: as a set of material and symbolic relations with others, both with those whom the biographed lived personally and professionally and with those who read him or her at distance, in criticism or as public. Articulate all these processes is the goal of this kind of biographical study. Instead of favoring a single individual – as the absolute production process of the self – showing how the individual and his or her achievements

gain meaning in social life is tried. For this, one should reassemble the *communication circuits* in which he or she lived.

The last dimension is **to analyze the processes of construction of the public image of the biographed**. This moment allows one to study the life of the biographed as a relational process of communication and not as the search of the *real* intentions over time and in every text that he or she produced. After all, the *intention* of an author is a complex text that can be debated, translated and interpreted in different ways like any other, since the author exists both as text and inside the text (Bakhtin, 2003: 312). In this sense, the process of meaning of authorship and of the individual trajectory consists of several individuals (beyond the biographed itself) involved in the field of struggles for meaning, authority and prestige in which each text is possible.

The aim is to demonstrate that there are different systems of recognition and image production along a trajectory. The question is to analyze how the work and its recognition (its judgment), as well as the creativity of the author, are actions undertaken within a framework of possibilities and social perceptions lived at a time. This does not mean that the person has died in the name of the structure or of the reading, but instead that he or she is also being built by the structure and by the reading, because all these elements are articulated parts of the same socio-cultural process of the action formation and contemplation.

It is within this relations network that the production of the public image of the author is given. Such relations therefore compose part of a process of legitimation which interferes in all intellectual activity. It is in this complex system of social relations (that the writer establishes with all the other agents of the intellectual field), that the progressive objectification of creation is done and that the public sense of the author's work is formed, for which he/she is defined and in relation to which he/she must define himself/herself. What should be asked is who has the power to judge and who consecrates, how the selection is made and why certain authors and works are worthy of being loved and admired over others (Bourdieu 1968: 120). Wanting the author or not, he is constantly being placed in a qualification system and ranking of his/her behavior. Wanting the author or not, he participates in a communication system.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

In communicational biography, individuality is not considered something eminently interior and given by the *self*, but the fact that the individual biography, in addition to being social and historically located, has specific processes and circumstances of production, circulation and recognition of utterances. It is the understanding of this dynamic of utterances which allows us to take the

individual as socially formatted by the dialogue with others. This does not mean merely that the establishment of the truth about the *self* is measured by others, but that the very self is simultaneously own and another. Life is, after all, half another, it is at the boundary between the *self* and the others. This is its communicational dimension emphasized by the perspective developed herein. Every word begins to exist when one subject becomes aware of the word of the other in oneself, accepting it, incorporating it, reconfiguring it or rejecting it. Since life is a set of complex utterances, from this perspective it only really exists in the interaction with the world, with others, with the difference.

The acts of interpretation and communication of experience involve symbolic transmutation of elements that, before being textualities, are properly texts. It is precisely about it that Richard Holmes refers, “the biographer has always to build or orchestrate a factual pattern from materials that already have a fictional or reinvented element” (1995: 17). In other words, the records of a person’s life are always reconstructions of events. These reconstructions occur within the sphere of communication, that is, languages and discursive communities provide the kind of description and understanding of the biographed life.

Therefore, the biographical analysis in a communicational perspective presented here considers the formation of life as part of dialogism, which identifies and distinguishes individuals. This is a socio-historical immersion focused on ways in which utterances set out the human experience as communication processes. In other words, the real meaning of a work, as well as of any text, is given by its social reception, because the recognition of this reality – and its truth – is contained in a project that is always a project to be recognized. ■

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