Theoretical-methodological proposal for researching objects in journalism

Proposta teórico-metodológica para a pesquisa de objetos no jornalismo

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ABSTRACT

Our main objective is to propose a theoretical-methodological discussion for the contemporary journalism academic research. We've used objects materiality related to ANT, Systems Theory and Peter Sloterdjk's ideas to propose a more open minded, interdisciplinary and resilient approach for Communication and Journalism research. At the end we propose some reflection items regarding the contemporary storytelling journalistic content.

Keywords: Contemporary Journalism, epistemology, objects

RESUMO

Objetivamos aqui discutir uma proposta teórico-metodológica para fundamentar a pesquisa e observação de objetos no jornalismo contemporâneo. Recorremos aos conceitos de materialidade na comunicação, associada à teoria ator-rede (TAR), aos estudos vinculados a sistemas, espumas e objetos, todos eles reunidos sob a proposta de um campo mais aberto, interdisciplinar e resiliente para a comunicação contemporânea. Por fim, propomos alguns pontos de reflexão para a construção de conteúdos informativos nesse ambiente.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo contemporâneo, epistemologia, pesquisa de objetos

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INTRODUCTION

THE CONNECTION BETWEEN the Studies of Journalism and the changes arising from the growing digitization in recent decades has produced a succession of research, debates and experiments in the process of producing of information. We aim here to discuss a theoretical-methodological proposal to support the research and observation of objects in contemporary journalism.

The journalistic field, similarly to the context in which we find ourselves nowadays, is directly associated with the use of digital technical devices that alter its instances of production, distribution and consumption. We believe that addressing this scenario from a modern theoretical-methodological perspective, or one which cannot handle its multiplicities and diversity, can generate dissonance between research development in the area, the praxis and the evolution of the production and consumption of information. We seek to present in this text a perspective that is more aligned with the constant changing of research objects and also with the ubiquity of digital technology in contemporary life.

We shall use the concepts of materiality in Communication, associated with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT), studies bound to systems, foams and objects, all of them gathered under the proposal of a field that is more open, interdisciplinary and resilient for Contemporary Communication. Finally, we propose some points worthy of consideration for the construction of informational content in this environment.

Following the example of similar discussions derived from the extended field of Communication, which the Studies of Journalism are a part of, we believe the separation of the digital and non-digital is no longer adequate as digital condition is embedded – for better or worse – in sociability, culture, consumption, institutions and collective values.

Thus, discussions pertaining to the Studies of Journalism need to seek the theoretical-methodological foundations that sustain an evolving field, and based on them, develop an understanding of the information process from a flexible, resilient and traversal perspective.

This article's problematization is inspired by the following question:

Q1: How to absorb disruptions and adapt to changes within the Studies of Journalism that involve the investigation of digital objects?

The observation made of the recent scenario concerning informational activities indicates three hypotheses that we assume in this text:

H1: There is a need to modernize the provisions related to Modernity and Traditional Sociology, to the extent that, in contemporary times, objects assume postures and arrangements that do not fit these approaches;

H2: From a renovated perspective, journalistic companies should look at themselves while systems and, from there, operate taking into consideration their surroundings and, consequently, the other systems with which they come into interaction;

H3: We can no longer distinguish in Communication and Journalism a separate space for the study of the digital; the rooting of Digital Information and Communication Technologies traverses all the communicative and informational activities of the contemporary world, making a position of centrality, transversality and resilience in researches in these areas necessary.

One of the features that involve research in Communication Sciences associated with themes labeled as *new media, Digital Information and Communication Technologies, digital communication, digital media, cyberculture, social media*, among many terminologies in use, is the facing of the issue of the extreme mutability of research objects and, especially, their respective placement in the traditional and consolidated theoretical and methodological scenario.

In 2008, at the height of the process of integration and consolidation of digital technologies in contemporary sociability, we discussed this very topic in an article focused on the understanding of an epistemology for digital communication (Saad Corrêa, 2008). At the time, we had concerns relating to the diversity and mutability of objects, of the need to expand the boundaries of the authorial-theoretical field and of the almost compulsory anticipatory monitoring of the praxis for the posterior construction of the research process.

At the same time, we base ourselves on the proposals from researchers like José Luiz Braga (2007) who presents the field of Communication as a circumstantial science which would support researches with theoretical-methodological proposals more suited to the mutability and diversity of the objects of digitalization; and Muniz Sodré (2007), who proposed a revision of the field of Communication based on the global mutation of the collective itself.

It is important to say that we have no intention of proposing models, creating theories or establishing positions concerning the Studies of Journalism, but of raising a collective discussion on the theme instead.

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A THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL

The evolutionary scenario here punctuated for contemporary journalism also requires a modern academic research that contributes to the praxis and to the observation of its empirical objects. Thus, we assume that contemporary journalistic production is based on a network of mediators – human and non-human – of the communicational process, while agents that are able to interfere on the characteristics of an information consumption experience. We also assume that, currently, the digital network – through where news, info and data travel, is present and unnoticeable in all places and spaces. It is ubiquitous.

With this, for the development of studies and research and the respective dissemination to the praxis in this configuration of ubiquity, which houses networks of mediators, we propose the use of a theoretical framework that combines the concepts of materiality of the communicational objects and the Actor-Network Theory[1] as pillars to the mediators of the process, elements that are more than a mere technical tool; the Systems Theory and the metaphor of the foam proposed in the philosophical theory of Peter Sloterdijk, which are brought together to offer an integrated view of the actors participating in the communicational process; and the epistemological conditions of centrality, transversality and resilience that we attribute to the field of Communication. We develop the conceptual aspects of this proposal in the items that follow.

Materiality and the Actor-Network Theory

There are several authors who indicate communication objects as a concept (characterized by its concreteness) that is being increasingly incorporated into the field, especially to the extent that technological developments resulting from digitalization turn devices (originally passive and devoid of intelligent interaction) into transmitters, to expand and incorporate the transmission of culture and the structuring of social relations and human environments.

One of the representatives of this thought in the Brazilian scenario is researcher Erick Felinto who, since the beof digitalization, has been discussing the topic:

> First and foremost, discussing "materialities of communication" means keeping in mind that every act of communication requires the presence of a material support for coming into effect. That communicational acts necessarily involve the intervention of materialities, signifiers or mediums may seem to us an idea so consolidated and natural that it is unworthy of mention. But it is precisely this naturalness that ends up hiding various aspects and important consequences of the materialities of

[1] We use here the actor-network theory designation to address the theoretical proposal presented by Latour and other theorists, however, we clarify that the term has no unanimity in the academic world. According to Holanda (2014), other terms used to refer to the debate proposed by the ANT are Sociology of Translation, Sociology of the Social or Sociology of Associations. In this article, we chose the term Actor-Network Theory to refer to the discussions proposed by all these terminologies.

communication – such as the idea that the materiality of the medium influences and to some extent determines the structuring of the communicational message. (Felinto, 2001:3)

Felinto, when emphasizing the materiality of communication, does not suggest a completely new epistemology for the field, but rather bases himself on a new point of view within the traditional notion. We associate his vision to those of Gumbrecht (2010) and Hanke (2006) that contribute with a semiotic perspective, according to which the materiality of communicational objects is a central part in the characterization and forms of expression of signifiers, since an object can offer different affordances[2] that are adaptable (and often convenient) to the communicational format.

By assuming communicational objects (here understood also as devices, according to the conceptualization of Giorgio Agamben [2009]) to be active components and influencers in the communicative process, and taking into account that the journalistic narratives constitute an integral part of this process, it is possible to establish a direct connection with the Actor-Network Theory (ANT), advocated by Bruno Latour (2012) and other authors, for whom the social and the symbolic in communication are not dissociated from the material, and materiality is not simply a technical intermediary, but a non-human actor who acts at the same level as the other components of the process.

Geographer Milton Santos (2006) reinforces Latour's perspective (2012). For him, the object, its context, the interaction between the operating systems and the system of objects contained in a transformation space are inseparable. For the researcher, it is not possible to think of a philosophical reality for objects because they cannot be thought of outside the system in which they operate, which also does not exist separately from the object itself. Therefore, according to Latour (2012), it is important to define the agent based on what they do, which explains the use of the word actant, in order to include both humans and non-humans in the process. According to the Actor-Network Theory, proposed by him, the static definition of social fails to encompass all the instabilities and controversies that may occur during the association of agents.

Thus, the path of associations is created by the actants themselves, through the progress of possible instabilities. For the author, the order is resulted from the unfolding of the processes and one cannot impose a given, fixed meaning to actions, but accompany them, with the understanding that humans create and act with non-human artifacts, but the latter also react over the former and interfere in the final forms of association. Man creates the artifact, but this same artifact also recreates man when they both come into interaction. For example,

[2] Gibson (1986) conceptualizes affordance as what the environment/object offers, provides, allows to anyone who interacts with it. For the author, objects have certain affordances assumed from their creation or inherent to their nature, and these do not change according to the need of the interactor or according to their perception. In the context of ICTs, affordance can be understood as the mutual relationship between the actions of an actor and the technological capabilities and potential available for carrying out such action.

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> You are different with a gun in your hand; the gun is different with you holding it. You are a different subject because you are holding a gun; the gun is a different object because it entered into a relationship with you. The gun is no longer the gun in the armory or the gun in the drawer or the gun in the pocket, but the gun in your hand, pointed at someone who is screaming. What is true about the subject, about the shooter, is also true about the object, the gun that is being pointed. […] The double mistake of the materialists and of the sociologists is to begin with the essences of the subjects and objects. This starting point makes the measuring of the mediation role of the technique impossible. Neither subject nor object (nor their intentions) are fixed. (Latour, 1994b: 33)

We are interested, in this article, in emphasizing the aspect of the agency of objects. This agency, obviously, does not imply the object determines the action, but rather that it is a fundamental part of it, as well as the other actors which participate in it. This article would be completely different if it were being written by hand or on a typewriter, or yet, if it was being written on a computer without internet access. These objects do not determine the writing or not of the article, but *influence, authorize, allow, concede, stimulate, lead, suggest, influence, interrupt, allow* or *prohibit* it, using the verbs proposed by Latour.

Going back to one of the founding characteristics of journalism – which is a mediator between facts and the collective –, and to the fact that, nowadays, it reflects a form of consumption of news and information based on digital mobile devices connected in networks, we problematize, once more: How would we be able to explain the current media scenario if not giving due attention to the agency of digital mobile devices? How would it be possible to understand the context of communication in the current era without taking into account, while actors, the technological devices, the internet, smartphones and ubiquitous connectivity? André Lamothe corroborates: "How, in a field such as that of communication, in which everything is mediated by sophisticated technological artifacts, would one not give attention to hybrids? That is the Actor-Network Theory (ANT)" (2013: 23).

To produce journalistic content various elements are needed: journalists, paper, tablet, networks, internet, computers, telephones, advertising, advertisers, distributors, schools of communication, satellites, competitors etc. According to Lemos (2011), the action of journalism is the result of a set of associations between human and non-human actants, so it is not possible to dissociate content production from the importance of digital mobile devices and their technical specificity. For the journalism-mobile artifact-reader relationship to be effectively established, all the elements involved need to be considered,

because it is founded on co-dependence and connection. It is an association between multiple agents.

Lemos (2011) proposes that non-human agents are seen in a different way from traditional perspective: as behaving like passive entities. For the author, a computer, laws, a phone, a hammer, online social networks, are not on the one hand intermediaries and on the other, actors, but can assume both roles according to the associations that are created during their use. Actant refers to everything that generates an action, thus, if there is an action, one can use the term to denote the object, otherwise there is no actant. Non-human agents perform actions when coupled with human agents and vice versa; thus, becoming an actant is a process of interaction. Lemos explains that, for Latour, the social is the result of associations and not their explanation. Tools are just tools when not producing action.

> Remove the internet from "journalism," along with newspaper companies, journalism universities and professors, journeymen, distributors, computers, mobile phones, regulatory agencies, newsprint paper, the web… and see if there still remains a "subject" that is free of bindings. […] The brilliance and originality of an action does not come from the independence of other actants, but precisely the contrary: from good established associations. (Read, 2011: 18-19)

This notion that objects (and humans) are only actors when deployed or when their traces can be detected leads us to the idea of mediation in Latour and, therefore, to the inherent role of mediation in journalism. For the author, an object can be a mediator or an intermediator, the former being the one that transforms, changes, moves itself with the action in which they are involved, and the latter is the object that does not interfere in the process, only acts as a support. The mediator is complex, multiple; the intermediator is singular, unique.

Santaella and Cardoso (2015) reinforce that mediation must be understood as the result of an association, of the man-object, object-man influence. According to them, within the context of digital technology this aspect becomes even more evident, because the sensors that we carry with us every day are able to warn us about something, to validate a specific action or prevent something from being executed. "The idea of action grounds not only the technical condition, but also the human condition" (Ibid.: 175.)

This does not mean, of course, that a non-human actor cannot ever be an intermediator or that a mobile digital device cannot ever behave as an intermediator. Considering our focus on the action of consumption of journalistic content via mobile digital devices, we consider that the artifact serves as a mediator; however, precisely because our perspective is founded on the ANT, we cannot characterize

this function as final and immutable. Everything depends on the association, on the network that is formed between actors, be them humans or non-humans. Similarly, with no hierarchy, a human being could also perform the role of intermediator.

Westlund and Lewis (2014) argue that, at the present time, it is necessary to conceptualize the changes in the nature of human and non-human actors also within journalism. For the authors, the technological changes of recent years have made the border between production and consumption obscure, assigning human and non-human actors, audiences and the routines of production of journalistic activity with new modes of operation. However, for them, studies in journalism tend to be human-centered, investigating the professional roles or editorial restrictions in organizations, without sufficiently recognizing the relevance of technology in interactions.

To try and fill this gap, the authors propose the development of a socio-technical emphasis in studies in journalism. The proposal is neither deterministic about the influence of technology, nor deterministic about the role of subjects; the idea is to offer a perspective that can reveal nuances in the relationships between all actors that continuously form networks involving journalism. Westlund and Lewis (2014) present a matrix for research in journalism that involves multi-platform production. For this, they define the 4 As that are part of this matrix: actors, actants, audiences and activities.

In what concerns actors, the researchers propose a perspective from within and also beyond journalistic organization, which encompasses sources, advertisers, contractors, developers, designers, sellers and the administrative staff. The authors locate all the material elements essential to the development of journalistic activity in the actants, including computers and printers, as well as the content publishing system and algorithms programmed in it. As for the audience, it encompasses all subjects that may consume the journalistic content produced and distributed and, finally, activities include all kinds of routines and practices of the journalistic company – editorial or not – that reveal as result the product destined to consumers. The aim of this sectioning is to place the four elements within the framework of journalistic production and show that, in many instances, all the elements involved interfere with and modify the stages of production of journalistic content, in a similar manner, with no predominance of the subject "journalist," which commonly happens in the traditional studies on journalism.

Systems, foams and objects

If, on the one hand, we assume the materiality supported by the ANT as the base of support to the idea that journalism incorporates in its mediating praxis

the action and the influence of devices-objects, on the other, we have to consider how journalistic mediation occurs in a scenario involving a systemic and procedural productive chain that goes beyond the limits of an essay, for example.

In this sense, we rely on the Systems Theory to support our propositions. For Bertocchi (2014), the systems theory offers a perspective that helps to observe and understand complex modern phenomena. This researcher uses the Systems Theory as a basis for holistically analyzing the digital narrative; in this case, the narrative presents itself as the visible result of the system, making it possible to see, from it, the complex system which it is part of. For her, the narrative is a system "in which different human and non-human actors participate and that produces a whole greater than its parts. The digital journalistic narrative becomes, therefore, necessarily, a collective act. As a complex system, it encompasses subsystems with unique rules" (Ibid.: 14).

In the Systems Theory, every part of the whole performs an essential function that individualizes this element. Its function, according to Lima (2014), influences the behavior of the system as a whole and also of its subsystems. The journalistic company can be considered a system that includes and depends on several other internal and external systems, all with roles that are associated with each other, encompassing journalists, editors, journeymen, computers, consumers, consumer devices, among others, all interconnected and interdependent.

> To respond satisfactorily to the stimuli of the environment, a contextually-driven operation is needed. It matters not if *Gazeta*'s editors produce a great work of systemic coverage of reality, if the sales department has trouble performing its role due to the lack of harmony with the editorial proposal, seeking advertising support where there is no thematic affinity with the line of the medium (Lima, 2014: 453).

Similarly, as stated above by the author, who advocates the need for a system to be contextually oriented, a journalistic company's system should operate while taking into consideration its surroundings and consequently, the other systems that come into interaction. Regarding the specific issue of mobile digital devices, the purpose of this research is to present the need for agents to take into account the importance of others and their specific features. When the institution of journalism takes into account the relevance of the role exercised by the non-human actant, it may be able to produce while taking advantage of the full potential offered by devices, which shall work in its favor in the constitution of this association between agents.

Just like the ANT, the Systems Theory seeks to distance itself from the idea of cause and effect to explain a phenomenon, turning instead to the relationships,

interactions and influences that occur within the network formed by the actors. According to Lima (2014), a system consists of subsystems that are made up of other parts, and all are integrated, with dynamics of exchanges between them and the external environment.

> Communication, the essential process responsible for tying together these notice-
> ably challenging interactions, is still mostly seen as operating under parameters
> designed in the less complex world of the 19th century and first half of the 20th
> century. A qualitative leap in the assimilation of the systemic universe is relevant
> at this point (Ibid.: 449).

If we assume that: any system consists of several subsystems; the journalistic process itself has systemic features; and the engenderment of subsystems internal to an informative company includes its relationship with other systems external to it, it is possible to affirm that the entire ensemble that operates the production, access and consumption of journalistic information is the result of the combining of systems *ad infinitum*.

Gumbrecht (2010) takes into account the concepts by Maturana and Varela, according to whom the idea of combining assumes the existence of two systems and its occurrence can happen on the first or second level. In the first level, one system conditions the other's state and vice versa, but in a finite manner, always within a sequence of possibilities. An example given by the author is samba. Its rhythm is an example of finite combining.

Here, we concern ourselves with, more specifically, the second level. In it, the combining of systems is able to engender different states in an infinite manner. In other words, in this case, combining is producing, for it generates new and unknown states. When observing, using and analyzing a journalistic digital application for smartphones, for example, we generate a specific state for this process of combining; however, this state is only so for being part of this process and, in this sense, we are, at the same time, independent, because we are also able to observe it from the outside. To an observer, a system is only a system if through its own operations it turns to itself as a system.

> It is in fact part of the process of combining, however, it intends to observe it as if
> it were not. And, as second-level combining produces the illusion, impression of
> reality, that is, when the state of self-observation emerges, there already is a level of
> observation or representation: a semantic level. […] When describing the combining
> of Nietzsche's body to his typewriter, one should consider that this device's mate-
> rial form plays a decisive role in the creation of meaning. The device, while form,

contributes to the process of combining. Therefore, we would add the possibility of including the issue of the materiality of the medium (Gumbrecht, 2010: 402).

It is important to seek a proposition of meaning from the Systems Theory that applies to the field of communication, and to do so we invoke the works of Niklas Luhmann (1996) and Peter Sloterdijk (2006), although the discussion based on these two authors requires extensive detailing that surpasses the limits of this article. Thus, we address below their main ideas and correlations with our problematizations and hypotheses only.

For Luhmann (1996), communication should be the starting point of a reflection on the social since, for being the most comprehensive basal structure, it includes action, but also goes beyond it. The author explains the formation of systems from the difference with the surroundings, thus, communication in its most abstract and general sense is observing while making a difference. Therefore, the highest level of abstraction one can put communication at is observation. When observing, we use difference to designate something and someone else. "The operation of observation is able to accomplish – as result of its paradoxical dynamic – an observation of itself, so that it can carry out an observation of an observation: an observation of second order" (Ibid.:17).

Peter Sloterdijk (2006) further develops the ontological issue. He also criticizes ontology, like Luhmann does, and offers the notion of foams for understanding contemporary times from the point of view that life develops itself progressively, in a multi-perspectivistic and heterarchic manner. The idea of heterarchy is brought by him in order to refute the model of hierarchy of an actor over another, or of one system over another. In it, there is no unidirectional power, but an independent and interdependent set of beings, operating bi-directional and horizontal relations. Foam is heterarchic, it is an anthropotechnic network.

> Peter Sloterdijk has a well-formed opinion regarding the digital world of foams. For him, life is divided into simultaneous scenarios, interwoven with others, it produces and consumes itself in interconnected networks. But what is decisive for us: it always produces the space on what is and what is in it (Bairon, 2015: 362).

Like Latour (2012), Sloterdijk (2006) also discards the classic notion of society and even the word itself. Foams embody the idea of exchanging of a single sphere for multiple spheres, or polyspheres. The world today, which Bauman describes as liquid, is even more fluid in Sloterdijk and it does no longer seem suitable to observe it from the traditional perspective of classical sociology. As stated by Santaella (2007: 23),

spheres are, after all, indicators of the author's critique of traditional ontology and logic in their traditional dichotomous divisions between body and soul, spirit and matter, subject and object, freedom and mechanisms, the self and the world and, beyond that, between nature and culture.

Centrality, transversality and resilience

It should be reasserted that the theoretical bases proposed here require the expanding of frontiers for Studies in Journalism, since they are tied to the mutant scenario of Communication. We base this item on the set of propositions by Saad Corrêa (2016).

In what concerns the praxis, we here address an exercise of communication from where the figure of the *communicator* emerges, multi-faceted and with skills and abilities that aggregate knowledge and practices derived from journalism, public relations, propaganda and advertising; in addition to the exposition (often personally and directly) to knowledge and skills derived from fields that emerge from digitalization, such as the fields of design, computer sciences, information sciences, among others. We fully believe that professional journalism, despite all of its complexities, fits this profile.

In epistemological terms, we can no longer distinguish in Communication and Journalism a separate space for the study of the digital; the rooting of the Digital Information and Communication Technologies traverses all the communicative and informational activities of the contemporary world (include those nowadays categorized as *analogical* and/or *off-line*). Thus, we point out three conditions, or yet, three perspectives with which to look at the understanding and developing of communicative activities in contemporary times, dominated by the ubiquity of the digital: centrality, transversality and resilience.

We have the understanding that centrality is the immediate reflection of the role that communicative action has been assuming in social relations and in organizational and financial activities, especially considering digital platforms are configured in the so-called *2.0 mode*, enabling the active participation, dialogy and expressiveness of users in a network, going against the classical linear logic of the communicative process (sender-message-receiver).

What results from this centrality, affecting market practices as well, is the increase in the complexity of studies in Communication and Journalism, along with the narrowing of their relationship with Digital Information and Communication Technologies (and their respective innovation process); a theoretical and authorial fluidity associated with the fluidity and changing of media processes, devices, and platforms themselves; the need for

acceptance of the reinterpretation and new understanding of deep-rooted concepts, such as audience, mediation, media, legitimacy, among others; the need for acceptance of the introduction of an *interfering* set of concepts still being developed in the field, such as interactivity, mediatization, virtuality, temporality-spatiality, mobility, curatorship, measuring, participation and collaboration, content, among others; the expansion of the methodological rigor resulting from this centrality in relation to other scientific fields, despite the extreme diversity of models, methodologies and research techniques of the current scenario.

When referring to transversality, we focus on the ubiquity of the network itself, acting simultaneously in the processes that operate communicative activities, in the systems that integrate previously fragmented processes, in devices that become increasingly convergent due to affordances that incorporate mobility functions, geolocation and interactivity into classic communicative media, and into media products themselves.

As a result of transversality, the separation between online and offline studies and researches becomes debatable; if the digitalization vector traverses the entire field of Communication (taking into account the logic of multi-territoriality and miscegenation) the current structure of specialties and of professional designations themselves must be rethought; the reconfiguration of the notions of time/speed and space/place derived from digital technologies favors the logic of transversality in the construction of facts and representations.

And, finally, when referring to resilience, we indicate a condition of adaptability of the whole structure of the field of Communication and Journalism, its theories and practices, to this scenario characterized as fluid in its knowledge and ever-changing in its technical bases. The notion of resilience seems feasible enough to encompass this sort of *seizure* we experience. Resilience results in the aggregation of the necessary diversity without, however, changing the essence of the role of Communication in the construction of knowledge and of its increasingly central position.

If the condition of centrality is resulted from the ascertaining of digitalized practices, and transversality would summarize a set of structural changes in the way to understand and transmit knowledge in the communicative field, a posture of resilience requires the behavioral and intellectual involvement of those who discuss the epistemology of the field and, especially, of those who routinely engage in communication.

These three conditions propose for professionals in the field, be them scholars or not, precisely a significant reduction of dichotomies. The ubiquitous medium implies a communicative *modus operandi* that is more creative and

innovative and less influenced by traditional and conservative practices, which are little suited to the environment.

The set of authors and conceptual focuses covered in this item supports our initial problematization, according to which studies in journalism in contemporary times need to absorb the disruption that time imprints in us. It also presents a praxis environment that is highly associated with the transforming and ubiquitous fluidity of the relationship that is established in the field of Communication and of collectivity as a whole.

The next and last item raises the discussion on the possibility of new perspectives for the development of studies and research in the field of Communication, specifically for Journalism.

THE OBSERVING AND ANALYZING OF CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISTIC PRAXIS, AS FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

We have presented an unorthodox panorama that indicates strong conceptual changes related to journalism: the materiality of objects and their elevation to the category of active and influencing elements – the *actants*; the idea that there are flexible, resilient and transversal connections between all the components of the process of production, dissemination and consumption of information – the ANT; the framing of such connections in a systemic theory that places the self-reflexivity of journalistic praxis in a context of endless intersystemic connections that are formed, deformed and re-conformed like foams floating in the air.

On the other hand, the methodological procedures of the academy expect that, at the very least, studies and researches are conducted in a consistent manner, following a very formal and structured logic and protocols for research and analysis.

It may be noted that all authors used in this article follow the same line of thought, each in their own way and using their own theoretical proposal, with the evolution of the precepts of traditional Sociology and also, why not say, of the tradition of research in Communication. Placing this proposal in the context of discussions involving the concepts presented so far implies the acceptance of the constant movement of transformation of empirical and, consequently, theoretical research objects. That is not to say the research becomes less substantiated or solid in its theoretical bases. It means instead that understanding it is necessary to deal with the hybridism in the field of Communication, and that it is also necessary to resort to several other fields in order to achieve the best possible epistemological perspective on the object, and also with the mutability of objects which forces the researcher to be constantly aware of theories and their empirical applications.

As early as 2015, we would highlight this aspect and have the certainty of the need to understand that technology is rooted in nearly every communicative and informational activity of contemporary times. We argue that, given this context, it is necessary to include a posture of resilience in the theoretical-methodological approaches of researches carried out in the field of Communication. In addition, it is also necessary to understand that the field's current condition will require from researchers a few reinterpretations and new understandings of concepts consolidated in it such as, for example, mediation, media, consumer, interaction and the social.

> the moment now experienced by the field focuses on the opening, the dissolution of boundaries and on the experimentation with theoretical-methodological combinations, a disciplinarity of research protocols, but a non-disciplinarity of paradigms and theories (Saad Corrêa, 2015: 12).

Here, a resilient and hybrid perspective on the field of Communication is sought for, bringing to the discussion the rooting of technology in contemporary communication and, with it, the resulting, necessary up-to-date perspective on the empirical and theoretical objects of this context. This implies a necessary overcoming of perspectives based on a social and technological determinism, on a causal logic that is overbearingly apocalyptic or optimistic.

In addition, it implies the rupture with the standardization of research protocols of journalistic products in ubiquity, since such mutation is associated with the mutation of the set of systems which they are inserted in itself, along with the technological devices they use.

For Felinto (2001), the materiality of communication does not have a specific study object, but can have its principles applied to various and countless objects. In this regard, Felinto criticizes the relentless search of many theorists and researchers for what would be the object of research in the field of Communication. Turning away from the idea of epistemology as pure, isolated and untouched by other fields of knowledge, materiality is transdisciplinary and applicable to numerous objects. "What matters here is not essentially the nature, the ontological status of the object, but the search for a new way of looking at the cultural objects" (Ibid.: 11).

Thus, Felinto, as do Latour and Luhmann and also Gumbrecht, focus their researches on a perspective that turns away from the paradigm of Modernity. Latour (1994a) advocates for, in *Jamais fomos modernos,* a distancing from the epistemological purism supported within the context of Modernity. The condition of heteronomy between fields and knowledge, human and non-human, is

also criticized by Sloterdijk (2006). Latour, as well as Luhmann and Sloterdijk, stand for the proposition that the social cannot be studied separately from the observer. The social is not an instance that can be applied to specific phenomena to explain them without science, the observer and the phenomenon itself being inserted into the context. The social and the natural are together in the context, much like humans and non-humans.

When using these proposals in this article we are, consequently, steering the research towards a distant point of social determinism that defends the superiority of the human actor in relation to the technique in the communication processes. When dialoguing with these authors and also with those who distance themselves from the idea of a division between the real and the virtual, this article means to say that there is no superiority in any of the points, human and non-human agents are interdependent and evolve mutually and continuously. "human biological development is inseparable from technological development, it being impossible to explain the former without the latter, as has been shown by authors who defend the co-evolution between humans and machines" (Mazlich, 1994[4] apud Santaella, 2010: 51)

Lievrouw (2014) proposes a "mutual modeling approach" when it comes to research involving technology and communication. To the author, we should see contemporary communication as the articulation of artifacts, practices and arrangements, as these three elements are mutually determinant. In what concerns artefacts, Lievrouw states that materiality is the physical character of artifacts that makes them useful for certain purposes, when used in specific conditions.

> This definition highlights the materiality of artifacts, not to deny the materiality of practices, of the social or of institutions, but to question how communication technology studies can also engage more deeply with the materiality of devices themselves without necessarily being subjected to the standards of simplistic technological determinism. A more impartial approach, or one that is more congruent with the materiality of objects, as well as of practices, social arrangements and institutions, can, for example, make way for re-conceptualizations of essential communication phenomena, such as medium, interaction, message, organization and communication in groups or effects (Ibid.: 25).

Once all considerations and points of tension (which are natural, in this case) have been exposed, some aspects that can contribute so that the Studies in Journalism gradually approach the scenario presented here need to be discussed. Some of them that may serve as vectors for the construction of future research protocols have been listed below:

[4] MAZLICH, B. *The fourth disconinuity:* the co-evolution of humans and machines. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1994.

a. We cannot become fixated on the uniformity of the behavior and dynamics of systems and users who make up the journalistic praxis. Every situation, editorial department, range of devices and offers for them, information consumption behaviors, among others, are different and specific in their correlations. We firmly believe this represents an obstacle in the performing of comparative studies.

b. In the same line of non-uniformity, the literature and praxis point to the non-exhaustion of models. Becoming fixated, for example, on a given business model for a contemporary informational company, or on a given operational and editorial structure, is a complex issue, since we assume the fluidity of ambiances. We firmly believe this non--exhaustion represents an obstacle for the generalization of research results.

c. Each communication object, due to its materiality, is interwoven with a very specific process of mediation, which in turn, transforms itself based on each type of user behavior, and so on. We firmly believe the question that emerges relates to the proper configuration of the same journalistic content for different processes of mediation. The existence of a "journalism for tablets" or "journalism for apps" is questioned.

d. If the idea of combining of systems, previously described, is accepted, a journalistic process external to the informational brand needs to be constituted. Acting in a multi-systems environment in a coordinated manner requires changes in the very concept of the editorial product and the de-hierarchization of the sender-message-receiver relationship, or better yet, of the journalistic brand-readers-connected world relationship.

We have developed here conceptual bases to support our hypotheses, and we believe that these four propositions can be the embryo for a broader discussion among scholars of Journalism, enabling a collective answer to the question raised by the research presented. ◼

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