

Media in Martín-Barbero: before and after mediations

Os meios em Martín-Barbero: antes e depois das mediações

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ABSTRACT

The text discusses the role of the media in Jesús Martín-Barbero's thought. It is argued that the notion of mediation does not obscure its cultural, social, and political agency, nor does it overlook the economic implications that govern and circumscribe its action. In his theoretical trajectory, in refuting the idea of mediocentrism, the author, while expanding, also balances his gaze on this important configurative instance of contemporary societies.

Keywords: Jesús Martín-Barbero, media, mediations, technicality

RESUMO

O texto discute o papel dos meios de comunicação no pensamento de Jesús Martín-Barbero. Defende-se que a noção de mediação não obscurece a agência cultural, social e política destes, nem desconsidera as implicações econômicas que regem e circunscrevem sua ação. Em sua trajetória teórica, ao refutar a ideia do midiacentrismo, o autor, ao mesmo tempo que expande, também equilibra o seu olhar sobre esta importante instância configuradora das sociedades contemporâneas.

Palavras-chave: Jesús Martín-Barbero, meios de comunicação, mediações, tecnicidade

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Nothing more erroneous than thinking that massive media and information technologies are not important in the work of Martín-Barbero, quite on the contrary¹.

Guillermo Orozco Gómez

¹ In the original: "Nada más erróneo pensar que los medios masivos y tecnologías de información no son importantes en la obra de Martín-Barbero, todo lo contrario". This, and other translations, by the authors.

INTRODUCTION

ALTHOUGH THE CONCEPT of mediation has gained centrality and notoriety since the publication of *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1987)², the media have not, as many critics mistakenly pointed out, disappeared from Jesús Martín-Barbero's (JMB) theory because it always was and continue to be part of his concerns³. Throughout this article, we put forth such position, discussing with greater emphasis mediations that have a more direct relationship with the media – institutionality and technicality. This is the main purpose of the reflection here undertaken.

On the relationship between culture and communication (and politics, included later) – scenario of his interest –, media won the role of a cultural agent without ceasing to consider its commercial or State character. The struggle against media-centrism, embodied in the mediations model, concerns the denial of understanding social communication only from the media, only centered on it. Not knowing the communicational process nor from media neither from the audience but from the mediations permeating this relationship minimizes the centrality of media, but not the importance of this central institution for the creation of contemporary society. In other words, even though it is not the starting point of his thought, the media is embodied in his reflections. It acquires centrality according to how it configures and deals with social practices, with emphasis on how these practices happen in the use of media.

Thus, what JMB does is to look at these means of communication evenly (Orozco Gómez, 1998), to analyze them in their performances and contradictions, without condemning or exalting them *a priori*. Breaking away from such perspectives of media analysis, which are more centered on its functions or effects, he faced both the structural-Marxism as the functionalism, both sharing a deterministic vision of it.

It is in the realm of popular culture, which JMB takes as a mote to think communication and the Latin American culture, that the media acquire the status of a cultural agent. Given this role, he conceives the media as devices that revitalize communication, culture, and knowledge as far as it is seen in meaning relations with the audiences, from their social and cultural references. To Orozco Gómez (Ibid.: 98), it is when massive and popular media are distinguished by

² According to the author, the book is the fruit of a 10-year work (Huergo; Morawicki, 2016) and was, in the first version, handwritten (Martín-Barbero, 2010).

³ For the sake of text fluidity, citations and works by Jesús Martín-Barbero will only be referenced with the year and the related page, when needed.

JMB that is evidenced the communication means did not exterminate the popular culture and communication, neither mix with them. These are spaces that can be overlapped, interrelated, or not, depending on the use given by the receptors. It is by inserting them into the social and cultural world that the author proposes to think on media, not as apparatus but as social institutions that constitute and are constituted by society through its meaning-producing practices.

Besides the constitutive dimension, JMB considers the media would also have a substitutive dimension (Ibid.); in this case, of non-media agents and institutions, which should exert their social, cultural, and political roles but do not do it. JMB (2014) cites as an example the social and minorities movements that, in the 21st century, operate with new ways of exercising their political rights from the mediation of images and video-culture – new visibility schemes installed by the media, especially the digital one. Therefore, if before they claimed representation, now what matters is recognition, i.e., to become socially visible in their difference, which is facilitated by the *presence* of these movements in the media. They are also present in his reflections on the communication-education interface since he passes off the condemnation to media discourses or market manipulations, although he admits their existence. He discusses the legitimacy of the “knowledge-mosaics” - scattered and fragmented - associated with the learning which is constructed on a plot involving formal teaching spaces, everyday life, and media consumption, especially in the popular strata.

Is through the temporal, diachronic axis, that these changes can be seen, as highlights García Canclini (1998: 4) on the view of JMB regarding the emergence of mass media as a process of “continuing what the school and the church, the popular literature and the melodrama did to massify the culture before the advent of electronic media”⁴. As already said elsewhere (Jacks, 1999: 30), JMB searches the history for a reconstruction of the massification process, showing it predates the cultural industry and that this “perspective subtracts the absolute weight the means of communication had in the contemporary cultural massification process, thus assigning proportionality to urbanization, industrialization, education, religion etc.”

⁴ In the original: “continuación de lo que la escuela y la iglesia, la literatura popular y el melodrama realizaron para masificar la cultura antes que irrumpieran los medios electrónicos”.

DE LOS MEDIOS A LAS MEDIACIONES, BUT NOT SO MUCH

The notion of mediation brought a breath of fresh air to the discussion, resulting in almost a decade of empirical research concerned with giving voice to the receptors, in their various segments, although in smaller quantity than it seemed to occur (Jacks et al., 2011). Working with communication cultural mediations casted new light on the communication process, and opened a

prospect of audience studies, which focused on the world of everyday life and gave empirical evidence to the receptor's activity. The impact of such focus shift reverberated in the main research centers of Latin America; however, the initial effort and euphoria of researchers from several latitudes have not always considered the role of media on the process in its exact proportions, generating much criticism on the emptying of its social, political, and economic power.

JMB, on the contrary, had never indicated the suppression of media for thinking communication processes. To arrive at such conclusion, he deeply analyzed the genesis of mass culture, which does not start but gains power with the media, forging the cultural industry. Just revisit the second part (*Matrices históricas de la massmediación*) of the book under discussion, and specially item 4 (*Los medios masivos en la formación de las culturas nacionales*) of Topic I, in the third part, to reconfirm his proposal.

In the first case, he historically resumes the Nation-State formation and the national market configuration, presenting the strategies that promoted cultural integration to the detriment of popular cultures. During this process were forged the foundation for the emergence of mass culture, a phenomenon in which the media was the fruit and not the cause of all cultural transformation. In the second case, he analyzes the scope of modernity in Latin America, discussing the processes of industrialization and modernization of economic structures as part of national development projects. Such projects were linked to the State and to the bourgeoisie of the main countries of the continent, from where it begins to emerge the notion of national culture, the result of a new nationalism. The main consequences are in the political scope and in the masses' outburst in cities, creating, respectively, populism and processes of urbanization, incorporating the rural populations which were leaving the countryside.

Concerning means of communication, they are fundamental agents in the formation of national cultures, and their history is told not only from economic structures or ideological content but also from the analysis of the mediations that institutionally materialized them and gave them cultural importance. From afar, they can only be seen as responsible for social changes or reduced to mere passive instruments in the hands of a class with autonomy to impose them, supposedly. Political and cultural mediations are, therefore, essential for understanding the media history in Latin America. In other words, this story is closely linked to cultural processes that related the communication practices, both hegemonic as subaltern, with social movements. It is about knowing how technical instruments became, historically, means of communication. He indicates two steps in this analysis. The first goes from the late 1930s to the late 1950s, paying attention to appropriation and recognition modes that the

popular strata did of the media (and of themselves) in the search for its social efficiency and sense. Thus, he identifies the role they played in this period, their capacity to mediate the populism interpellation that aimed to transform the mass into people, and the people into Nation (which includes other ways to address the hegemony crisis, the birth of nationality, and the arrival at modernity). Cinema and radio, in addition to popular music and press, were the agents of such interpellation, which transmuted the political idea of nation into experience, feeling, and daily life.

The second step begins in the 1960s, when development strategies take effect, appealing to technocratic solutions and consumption stimulation. There was a shift of the media's political function to an economic one, being it appropriated by the private enterprise, which assumes another ideology: of "making the poor dream the same dream of the rich" (2003: 179), through the consumerist desire. During this period, due to the creation of simulation and deactivation spaces of old relations, the media should be understood as more than a mediator between State and the masses but as a mediator between rural and urban, tradition and modernity. JMB contends that this happened in a schizophrenic way since the media growth was disconnected from social demands because, as if a synonym for development, the media arrived where other basic needs did not. Here begins the television hegemony and radio pluralization: the first tending to unify differences and demands, constructing of a national imagination; the second ensuring diversity and exploring its popularity - through the connection with oral culture, strongly valued in popular classes and rural areas -, the only way to cope with the crisis caused by the television. Audience sectoring deflagrates a bond with the changes in previous social identities, in which the category of citizen was fragmented into supporter, women, youth, fan etc.

The next step, in the early 1980s - when the trans-nationalization process emerges as a result of the capitalism crisis and the new Latin American modernization phase - has been already outlined by JMB (1993) to register the changes at the end of the decade due to the emergence of the so-called modern technologies. These are often discussed throughout his work, and receive more attention as they acquire cultural, social, and technical weight by intertwining with the social life. Still in 1982, contrary to the main arguments then advocated - at the first major International Congress of the *Federación Latinoamericana de Facultades de Comunicación Social* (Felafacs) - on the power of communication based on the recent technologies' possibilities, his view on the phenomenon was constructed from a different place, being faithful to the "epistemological shiver"⁵ that propel the principle of his culture studies and guide his look on the communicational processes. He stated: "I have focused my remarks on the

⁵ This term refers to the epistemological rupture that guided him in the origin of the mediation discussion when he sees the need for changing the place from where issues and problems about communication are elaborated.

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non-contemporaneity between communication technologies and its uses in Latin America. Also, including the *asymmetry* between the media discourses' syntax and *the grammar of mediations*, from which we read them, hear them, and see them" (2004: 23, emphasis added by the author).

In this period, the technologies represented the new stage of modernity acceleration - the electronic revolution, which in Latin America follows the same schizophrenia identified in other steps, i.e., a compulsion for acquiring them even, in many cases, without having what to do with them. Hence, for JMB, we must unravel two aspects of the Latin American social identities that were touched by the recent technologies: the delay and the lack. Studying these modern technologies is not knowing their effects over cultures but searching in the differences, in the cultural plurality, for what he calls "*destiempos*", this attrition that debunks the non-contemporaneity between objects and practices, between technologies and uses, what hinders the understanding of the historical senses of its appropriation, especially in popular culture.

It is possible, therefore, to realize that he is attentive to both the technocentric perspective - weighing some of the traps in the view on innovative technologies - as the sociocentric one, basing its foundations for understanding the phenomenon in this latter, more cultural and less deterministic. According to Reguillo (1998: 86), the author

placed the in-between shades that were urgent to pass from denunciation or conformity to a more active position regarding the impressive technological development that changed sociability in a planetary scale, especially in the continent⁶.

To the author, JMB managed to break away from the determinism of both sides, leading him to a sort of understanding that resulted in a socio-anthropology of communication technologies (Ibid.).

It is in this perspective that, in 1980, the author outlines his first "Nocturnal map"⁷, a peculiar investigative exercise that is repeated in several other moments, in an attempt to configure the connections putting together communication and culture. In the preamble to the sixth edition of *De los medios a las mediaciones* (2010), JMB comments on the first drawing, which was built on two axes, with diachronic perspective. On one side, an epistemological and political framework of the communicational production until the late 1970s and, on the other side, the incipient research line connecting cultural studies and communication, with three strands or "strategic fields": "the transnational structure of information, new communication technologies, and the alternative or popular communication"⁸ (2010: XI).

⁶ In the original: "colocó las tonalidades intermedias que resultaban urgentes para transitar del denuncismo o del conformismo a una posición más activa con relación al impresionante desarrollo tecnológico que trastocó las formas de socialidad a escala planetaria y de manera particular en el continente"

⁷ It is he himself who tells (2010) that he gets the map idea from the work *Nocturnal Flight*, Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, whose main character relives the author's own experiences when he worked for the French Airmail in uncertain and mysterious nocturnal trips.

⁸ In the original: "la estructura transnacional de la información, las nuevas tecnologías de comunicación y la comunicación alternativa o popular"

The media were discussed in this initial model, on both sides. In the first axis, they are discussed in the epistemic framework (under the instrumental perspective that conducted the information technology analysis as an ideological device). They also appear in the epistemic/political crossing, to understand the technologies “as an array of a new social model and a new political-cultural plot”⁹ (Ibid.: X). On the other hand, in the second axis the media are stressed on the first two above-mentioned strategic fields. In the first, the analysis was dedicated to the productive structures and routines, conditioned by economic processes and national power structures (political and social)¹⁰. In the following, recent technologies were approached, discussing the “*destiempos*” that mark acquisition and usage. Thus, he launched the first clues on the need for looking to technologies as a singular and to cultures, as plural.

⁹ In the original: “como matriz de un nuevo modelo social, y de un nuevo entramado político-cultural”.

¹⁰ He distances himself from the *Frankfurt* view on the relationship between culture and industry, more grounded in the media content social and ideological determination, following the line already proposed by Williams, Hall and Murdock.

DE LOS MEDIOS A LAS MEDIACIONES: A DECADE LATER

Although his teachings have never disregarded the means, as outlined above, not even the analysis of reception processes, in the preface to the 10-years publication commemorative edition of *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1998b) he shows that unequivocally.

For such, he says it is necessary to consider the means that have, today, a different and even largely opposite role to those they had at the time of national identities' formation as a political strategy of newly born Nation-States, especially in Latin America. Currently, the means of communication and information technologies minimize the national context at the same time they configure international hermeneutic communities, therefore resizing identities since they simultaneously globalize and fragment, in addition to paradoxically dislocate and revitalize the location.

He explains that understanding the strategic role of communication in configuring new society models is a way to bypass the hegemonic notion that it is governed only by the market. Though he admits that in this context resides the essential part of its performance, what he calls “market’s communicational hegemony” (2010: XXIII), he points that the way to face it is through a “political battle”, made possible by culture and communication.

Historical changes - which we might call mediation outside the communication - and the introduction of modern technologies - interiors to the field - move the theories and, in this case, JMB is attentive both to the means the perform punctually as to those that do it crosswise, such as the internet. In the political sphere, for example, the media have gone from mere intermediate to protagonist in configuring of discourse and actions senses, monitoring governments and

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State institutions, and in facilitating the dialogue between State and civil society, even though disguising some interests.

According to him, to deal with these new roles, the media open to the dialogue with national and local organizations such as civic and ecologic ones, in addition to promoting another kind of relationship with the audience, going from a mass culture to a segmented culture. Contrary to certain theoretical trends, the media understood that the audience or public are not undifferentiated or passive but have a strong diversity of tastes and modes of consuming. This forces the search to review the optics on the immediate identification of the media culture with the process of cultural homogenization and put the communication as “movement which crosses and displaces culture. Because the place of culture in the society changes when the technological mediations ceases to be merely instrumental to become structural”¹¹ (2002: 225).

¹¹ In the original: “movimiento que atraviesa y desloca a la cultura. Pues el lugar de la cultura en la sociedad cambia cuando la mediación tecnológica de la comunicación deja de ser meramente instrumental para convertirse en estructural”.

¹² In the original: “pues los medios han pasado a constituir un espacio clave de condensación e intersección de la producción y el consumo cultural, al mismo tiempo que catalizan hoy algunas de las más intensas redes de poder”.

¹³ See diagram in Martín-Barbero (2003: XVI).

Given this scenario, JMB proposes a new map, the third one, to account for the complexity in the constitutive relations of communication in culture, “because the media became a key condensation and intersection space of the cultural production and consumption, at the same time it catalyzes today some of the most intense power networks”¹² (Ibid.: 226). And it is in this tension between the inescapable logic of the market, and of the communication/information technologies, and the historical-cultural mediations, that the critical thinking glimpses a possibility to reflect the culture’s relationship with the media. They configure this tension and compose the *communicative mediations* of culture, the *sociability*, the *spirituality*, the *technicality*, and the *institutionality* between two axes: a diachronic, long-ranged one, compressing the Cultural and Industrial Formats Matrices; and a synchronic one, constituted between the Production Logic and Consumption Reception Competences¹³.

The first three mediations were already present in previous reflections of JMB, that is, in the second map, and were soon pointed out by Orozco Gómez (1996: 93) as an offshoot of the reflection presented in the first edition of *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1987). On the other hand, the *institutionality*, a mediation absent until then, arises for dealing more concretely and specifically with the media scope, i.e., with public discourses, full of conflicting interests and powers, but with a tendency to homogeneity.

There are different regimes of *institutionality*, which does the mediation between Production Logic and Cultural Matrices, being then the scenario that builds a closer relationship between production and reception, between media and audiences. This mediation is, obviously, transformed by both contexts – the synchronic, of the Production Logic; and the diachronic, of Cultural Matrices, – through the historical and cultural process.

It is through *institutionality* that two contrasting orders may be devised: The State regime, which conceives the media as a public service, and the market regime, which converts the freedom of expression into commerce. Both work simultaneously on the configuration of the contemporary public space, as from the prioritization of values that are almost always antagonistic. In the words of JMB (2002: 230), “when mediating audience constitution and cultural recognition, the institutional web of the communications is part of the citizen bonding”¹⁴. For the author, the *institutionality* affects the discourses regulation both of State as of the citizens. In the first case, this occurs in the name of stability for the constituted order and, in the second, to defend their own interests and to be recognized, permanently reconstructing the social sphere.

From the *institutionality* point of view, communication is a matter of resources, of public discourses production, whose hegemony is paradoxically on the side of the private interests. From the point of view of *sociability*, it is a matter of purpose, of sense elaboration, of doing and undoing of the society.

On the other hand, when addressing again the *technicality* mediation, it is considered to be strategic in the globalization scenario, and to be part of the tension between Production Logic and Industrial Formats, a position where it relates more directly to the means of communication. Thus, the technology, in this specific binding, concerns the technological competition operating in the Productive Logic, and innovation possibilities within the Industrial Formats, i.e., the production works with new practices, languages, and experiments, as well as promotes a transformation of technique into “universal connector” in the globalization process. However, he emphasizes that communication is not subsumed to technique, to media, and is a mistake to “think they are exterior and accessories to the (truth of) communication” (2003: 18).

And so, once again, JMB sees the media (and here especially the technique) crossing the communication process in the society: they are essential to condense and intersect power and cultural production networks but do not assume the role of the main mediator between the people and the world. At this point, he already bases the foundation to think technicality mediation as a new social status of the technique, an understanding that deepens as he proposes the fourth map.

FROM MEDIA TO TECHNOLOGY: INVESTIGATING CULTURAL MUTATIONS

At the end of the first decade of 2000, JMB redraws again his “nocturnal map”, following the proposal of turning back to the communicative cultural

¹⁴ In the original: “al mediar en la constitución de lo público y en el reconocimiento cultural, la trama institucional de la comunicación hace parte del lazo ciudadano”.

matrices (2003). In his view, this new proposal brings together and interlinks the prior conformations (2010). Mediations, then, start to relate to time and space transformations, associated with two other areas: population movements and image flows (Moura, 2009). In this map, mediations are identified as *identity*, which relates migration and times; *cognitivity*, between migrations and spaces; *rituality*, a connection between flows and spaces; and *technicality*, which connects times and flows.

There are two important movements concerning the previous map, according to JMB (Ibid.): the most “traditional” mediations, the *institutionality* and the *sociability*, give space to the “transformation”, which is incorporated by the rapprochement between these two new mediations that are fundamental in contemporary times.

In this view, he assigns to *technicality* a leading role in the processes of cultural change, a position that had already been outlining since the third map. JMB (Ibid.) adopts this term *technicality* in detriment of *technique* for both a phonetic issue (correspondence to spirituality and identity) and because it acquires a status of a system rather than only of a tool, as preached by some perspectives.

Media, which never disappeared from his investigative horizon - as argued throughout this article, earn even more relevance in his enunciations, especially because technicality is part of the discussion on: population movements, which re(configure) bonds among loved ones on the internet surfers’ activities; virtual communication flows that focus both in school as family universes, challenging authorities and hierarchies and offering new identification modes; time compression, in the amnesia caused by the media’s (and market’s) inflection on the present time; action on the space, allowing that the increasingly isolated subjects at big cities create a minimum bond, given the extension, disarticulation, and violence in urban centers (2010).

Digital media, with their potential convergence to other media, contaminate and destabilize already recognized speeches and statuses, creating what is called “the mixed forms of communication” (Moura, 2009: 10). The cross-sectional character that permeates the daily life operates a real revolution, in which the author questions the ways to assume such social and perceptive complexity that incorporate the means, without falling into technological fascination.

This other perspective puts the communication (and not only the media) in a strategic place in the socio-political landscape, creating a new ecosystem that he names of techno-communicative, referring to the notion of “third surrounding” discussed by Javier Echeverría and the “media bios” of Muniz Sodré. On the first notion, says JMB:

The first surrounding was related to environment and zoology; the second was urban, of social and political institutions; and the third is the technological surrounding, the communicative surrounding. It is a surrounding since things are not punctual anymore. It is not a sum of means, no, we are in a different surrounding, in a communicative ecosystem¹⁵. (Huergo; Morawicki, 2016: 182)

In this new view, there is also an epistemological decision-making to cope with what occurs in social life, in which communication and its technologies include new languages, scriptures, and grammars that change it from a punctual instrument to a cultural ecosystem. And this notion had been outlining since the third map, when he already admitted that technology is a strategic mediation because “is less a matter of the apparatus than of *perceptive operators* and discursive skills” (2003: 18, emphasis added by the author). So, it starts to operate as a “perceptive organizer” (2004: 235).

However, the way JMB refers to the technicality importance does not match with how it is portrayed in any of his maps. In the scheme of the fourth version (Moura, 2009), it is restricted to a mediation between time axis and flows¹⁶. However, if the notion of techno-communicative surrounding is incorporated into the discussion, and the technology is regarded as a “powerful framework that includes languages and actions, social, political, and cultural dynamics” (2009: 148), a central character is given to technicality, not graphically pictured in the model. It certainly would not be the case to insert the media or means in the center of the map, as, to JMB, technique is much more than what makes media possible, and communication is much more than the media itself; it is an “interaction that enables the interface of all senses” (Ibid.: 153). Here, it is not just the idea of connecting means and languages among themselves, but to include the interpenetration and contamination of each other in the already discussed processes of convergence. The author analyzes communication from the community realm, from the daily life, not strictly connected to the media, i.e., not always the notion of techno-communication is part of his discussion. Therefore, he sees communication as interaction and as intermediation, using the notion of “inter-mediality” as a concept for understanding the hybridization of languages and media (Ibid.: 153).

Thus, it can be said that the technicality comprises the entire dynamics of the proposed map, assuming the notion of surroundings/outline. We agree with Ronsini (2012: 62), who, when trying to merge the last two maps of JMB, sees technicality “traversing the entire circuit, modeling the rituality, sociability, and institutionality, i.e., modeling all relations because is defined as the technique social status”. Finally, techno-communication would bypass all other instances, becoming a protagonist of the subjects’ social and cultural life.

¹⁵ In the original: “El primer entorno tuvo que ver con el verde y los zoológicos; el segundo entorno fue el urbano, el de las instituciones sociales y políticas; y el tercero es el entorno tecnológico, el entorno comunicativo. Es este un entorno porque ya no son cosas puntuales. No es una sumatoria de medios, no, estamos en otro entorno, ante un ecosistema comunicativo”.

¹⁶ In the previous map, at the preface to the fifth edition of *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1998b), it was inserted between the industrial production and formats axes.

Associated with technicality mediation, and somehow interconnected, there are two themes the author (Moura, 2009) uses to illustrate his hope – in his own words – on the modern times. The first concerns the technological changes that help to bring together cultures and to legitimize distinct species of knowledge, a discussion undertaken especially in the communication and education interface (2014). It discusses the destabilization caused by the technological revolution from a very positive perspective, as it changes the modes of circulation and knowledge production, one of the deepest changes a society can experiment.

In his view, the logic that governs hyper-textuality principles unsettles five centuries of book hegemony and linear reading sequence: a new model of organization and learning is born. And communication technologies are at the base of this revolution, contributing to a new form of knowledge production that brings together legitimized cultures as the literate one but also the media and communications that merge visual, orality, sonority, and gestures.

Thus, the construction of consequential knowledge-mosaics of this configuration comes from a plurality of minds within a multicultural society. Which includes diversities in ethnicity, race, and gender but also the heterogeneity that configures “the natives, whether from literate, oral, audiovisual, or digital cultures” (Ibid.: 91). Through his argumentation, he admits that the market logic crosses the media establishment and maintenance, but he still understands it as “a crucial space of *visibility* and *social recognition*” (Ibid.: 106, emphasis added by the author), within the new social order of the visual that the media themselves help to establish and configure.

An important character in this first theme connects to the second one, which raises his hope: youth’s new sensibility. They appear as the most active subjects in learning processes, challenging the sacred circuits and social figures who held and administered the knowledge. Also, in addition to the school benches, the protagonism of youth extends to the whole contemporary scene, especially regarding media convergence processes.

As stated earlier (Jacks; Schmitz, 2017), JMB considers the youth empathy to the technological culture pervades both the relationship with television, music, and video, as well as the ease they manage complex computer networks. To such an extent that the skill, dexterity, expressiveness, and sensitivity they face new cultural experiences in media uses are intertwined in the very setting of this youth.

In the use that young people do of online social networks, the spatiality becomes territory: they are together without being in the same room, also reconfiguring the sociability. Through technology they put together their own

interests: work and leisure, information and consumption, research, and games. Through networks, they also make politics, decide, have fun, play, explore the aesthetic and the playful. They also allow that this multiplicity of screens to cross and to configure street experiences, as they are no longer necessarily gathered but interconnected.

If at the school the technologies, especially the digital ones, destroy the idea that the teacher is the sole holder of all knowledge, at home they cause a more intense disorder than that attributed to the television (2008) since they give to children and young access to the veiled world of adults, defying parents' filter and authority, by transforming the way information circulates also within the house.

JMB does not see these young people as from the apocalyptic statements which preach that overuse of technology leads to isolation and the loss of link with reality. He admits there is a reason for such fears, but argues that young people are "intimately and structurally mediated by interactions through and with technology" (Ibid.: 22). Though optimistic and hopeful, he does not to over-value the technology when discussing juvenile behavior. He recognizes the universe that youth conceives is, as a whole, independent of technologies as they just reconfigure their way of living.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The horizon of this text was the discussion about the place of the media in JMB's investigative course. However, as his perspective on communication is not subsumed to them, understanding it as a social process (1995), various other issues were discussed here. We attempted to demonstrate how much they were discussed and incorporated in the path that leads him to build the concept of social and cultural mediation, and how much it survives in subsequent discussions.

In his theoretical trajectory, by refuting the idea of media-centrism at the same time he expands it, he also balances his look over this important instance of contemporary society configuration: "the *media* is not limited to serving or translating existent representations, nor to replacing them, but started to *constitute a fundamental scene in the public life*" (2003: 14, emphasis added by the author). Therefore, it is understood that, in the displacement of the sub-textual notion of mediation, the cultural, social, and political performance of media is not overshadowed. Similarly, the author does not disregard the economic implications that govern and limit the media action.

By proposing a reflection that follows the order of the four already mentioned "nocturnal maps", it was (re)constructed the panorama in which the media

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¹⁷ Omar Rincón presented, at the opening of the IAMCR Congress (2017), a fifth version of the map, which is still under development.

have always been a part, embodied in some of the mediations he works at each step. It stands out, in particular, the investment received by the communication technologies in all maps, especially in the last one¹⁷.

It is noteworthy, when following the discussion on communication technologies, that his discourse gets increasingly optimistic as the digital technology offers individual and group possibilities in the 21st century. Sweeping performed in part of his works also showed JMB anticipated some of the movements that were accented after the internet popularization, but that already marked the action of more traditional media in the late 1980s. The dissolution of a shared cultural horizon in the society lead, in his view, to the *fragmentation* of audiences, the consumption *segmentation*, and the *individualization* of demands (2004). A scenario that currently settles the bases of media and digital consumption.

Another interesting point of his discussion on this cultural fragmentation movement, which was, somehow, captained by the television logic of the 1980s and 1990s is that, three decades later, something even more intense is experienced in the algorithmic logic governing consumption in online social networks. Says the author:

It would be worthy, perhaps, to rethink some of the criticism of the “old” mass communication models, which are about to disappear. Because, if that model tended to homogenize the tastes, at the same time it obliged us to face the bad taste of others, to know it existed, to rely on it. For all those who abhor soap operas or wrestling on television, the fact of having to *face* this other cultural universe means, at least, the impossibility to be closed on itself. (Ibid.: 205, emphasis added by the author)

Also, to conclude, his greatest optimism is on the subjects’ actions, particularly in media use by minorities and marginalized communities, in addition to the juvenile appropriations. It is from the technology that such groups interfere in the networks and distortions of the global speech (2006), i.e., the media panorama goes from television homogenization to the plurality of voices on the internet. Ultimately, the true sense of technology is in its uses. ■

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