

What Latin American communication research owes to Brazil: Personal account of an intercultural experience¹

O que a pesquisa latino-americana de comunicação deve ao Brasil: Relato pessoal de uma experiência intercultural

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ABSTRACT

In this text, Jesús Martín-Barbero describes points that brought Brazil closer to his thought, besides contributions to Latin American communication research. Some of the dimensions discussed are the following: the reflective contribution to understanding the communication *political-cultural* scenario, which allowed thinking about how the cultural industry promoted a new idea of nation; a more complex understanding, which overcomes dualistic reason, of the relations between the popular and the massive, expressed in the country in two lines of investigation, one related to communicative counterhegemony and the other to the competence of the receiver, and also the contribution of Brazilian authors' reflection to the discussion about contemporary globalization processes.

Keywords: Communication research, communication theory, Brazil, Latin America, Jesús Martín-Barbero

RESUMO

Neste texto, Jesús Martín-Barbero descreve pontos que aproximaram o Brasil de seu pensamento e contribuições brasileiras à pesquisa de comunicação latino-americana. Algumas das dimensões discutidas são: o aporte reflexivo para a compreensão do cenário *político-cultural* da comunicação, que permitiu pensar como a indústria cultural promoveu uma nova ideia de nação; um entendimento mais complexo, superando a razão dualista, das relações entre o popular e o massivo, que se expressou no país em duas linhas de investigação, a da contra-hegemonia comunicativa e a da competência do sujeito receptor, e também a contribuição das reflexões de autores brasileiros para a discussão dos processos de globalização contemporâneos.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa de comunicação, teoria da comunicação, Brasil, América Latina, Jesús Martín-Barbero

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Anyone who writes about society without wanting to lose sight of social relations and their paradoxes cannot build bunkers, but huts, shacks and hovels instead. Houses made of large open spaces, destined for good food and noble beer with friends, within those conversations where you love what you say and excuse all the vehemence that accompanies an eventual discovery of some aspect of the society and culture where you live in. . . . And we already know that in the case of Brazil we have a complicated house, where apparently unique and even mutually exclusive styles seem to coexist in an intimate relationship.

–Roberto DaMatta, *A Casa e a Rua*

INTRODUCTION

I MUST START MY presentation by telling a fact that is both at the origin of my approach to the study of communication and at the beginning of the seduction that Brazil has exerted on my thought. It is, therefore, the experience of my dialogue with that country with regard to communication research that I will expose here.

As Paul Ricoeur's student in an *action semantics* course in 1970, my final work was a small essay on how Paulo Freire's pedagogy managed to transform the phenomenological perspective into a pragmatic one that, converging on the *performative* capacity of language, in the sense understood by Austin (1970), incorporated the analysis of the *language action* into an *action program* in which adult literacy, language learning, was converted to a process of liberating the word itself.

My incipient notes interested Ricoeur – who has not read Freire yet – and formed the basis of my doctoral thesis, as the title, *La Palabra y la Acción* (Martin-Barbero, 1972), clearly attests, and also the introduction, which, between philosophical and poetic, incorporated Freire's thought in this way:

The word explains the consciousness that comes from action and, when questioned, pierces the massive thickness of the situation, breaks the spell of passivity in the face of oppression. If the word alone is powerless, the action alone is sterile. The image of the future is engendered between the two of them. The word draws the utopia that the hands build, and the piece of freed land makes the poem true. (Martin-Barbero, 1972, p. 3)

The program of Freire (1969) contained for me the first proposal for a Latin American communication theory: because it is by becoming an inquiry that the word establishes the space of communication and, reversing the process of

alienation that modifies the reified word, the *generative words* remake the social fabric of language, making it possible for men to meet their world and others'; and overcoming the inertia of language, the subject's word reveals itself loaded with meanings and history (pp. 111-133).

Today I can say that a large part of my own work program in the academic field of communication – *think communication based on culture* – was already outlined there. It contained the main clues that I developed over the 1970s and that I presented in Mexico in 1978, at what constituted the first meeting of academics and communication faculties in Latin America, organized by Hector Schmucler at the Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana, Xochimilco (UAM Xochimilco).

In this presentation, I dared to invert the meaning of the idea – almost a slogan – that dominated the critical view – “communication as a process of domination” to, mixing Freire with Gramsci, propose the study of *domination as a process of communication*. I started from the analysis by Freire (1970) of the oppression *internalized* by Latin American societies when “the oppressed find in the oppressor their model of ‘manhood’” (p. 42). And then I inserted this perspective in the Gramscian conception of *hegemony* as a “lived process” (Gramsci, 1977, p. 329), made not only of forces, but also of meaning. Understanding communication, therefore, implied investigating the dominator's tricks, and also *what in the dominated works in favor of the dominator*; this is the complicity on the part of the first and the seduction that takes place between both. Along with Gramsci, Freire was the one who taught me to think of communication as a social process and a cultural battleground.

THINKING THE MEDIA IN THE NATIONAL-POPULAR HISTORICAL FORMATION

Thinking about the relationship between communication and society was, for Latin America, the basis from which we faced the positivist paradigm and how our own theoretical work has started. Uncovering the social fabric of communicational devices was the way to access their meaning as a domain of oppression or emancipation. However, in the mid-1980s, the relationship between communication and society became what Mabel Piccini (1987) called a “chain remission to totalities” (p. 16) – imperialism, oligarchy, dominant ideology –, burdened with generalizations that spared us from analyzing national and local contexts. The critical perspective of denunciation has become mere empty academic jargon.

² On the subject refer to: Melo (1981).

My encounter with Brazil, in September 1983, brings me closer to a critical analysis of communication, in which thinking about the media implies not only revealing the conditions of ownership and power plots, but also *thinking about Brazil*: its complex formation as a country, its dense and conflicting cultural and political miscegenation. Starting with the ambiguities of a populism² that, crossed by the irruption of the urban popular masses, establishes the State's double commitment to these and to the old classes that held power, in a *commitment* whereby the people grant legitimacy to the State and the latter recognize the subject of the national in the people. Investigating, from this point of view, the radio or the press, cinema or education from the formation of political discourse redirected the axes of the critical project, introducing new issues and scenarios, in which what was at stake was not just the function of the media, but also communication between classes, and between state and people.

A text by Roberto Schwarz (1981), "As Ideias Fora do Lugar" [Misplaced Ideas], has played a decisive role in understanding the *political-cultural* scenario of communication, and inaugurated in Latin America the study of modern intercultural relations: in other words, the way in which these countries appropriate political discourses and forms, such as liberalism, which were in conflict with a society that still supported slavery and therefore could not appropriate them without modifying it. It is through this displacement that these discourses stop being foreign and begin to shape the country's national life. In the literary space in which Roberto Schwarz's text moves there is the intelligibility of strange ways in which cultures communicate, in addition to all the misunderstandings, disappointments and truths in the communication between different times and mental maps contained in the cultures and how this interaction mobilizes and becomes complex in the exchange and appropriation of any cultural trait or element.

I believe that this innovative perspective was possible in Brazil due to the density with which the historical contradictions of its formation as a *nation* have been considered and also the web of complicity and seductions which its national culture is made of. This is the Brazilian debate on *national-popular culture*. The culture that Mario de Andrade envisioned in his nationalist project of "synthesizing and stabilizing a popularly based musical expression as a way to conquer a language that reconciles the country in the horizontality of the territory and the verticality of classes" (Squeff & Wisnik, 1983, p. 148), but which, in the early 1980s, is seen by Adauto Novaes as an expression of an ideal without objective reality, which, however,

transforms the multiplicity of desires of different cultures into a single desire: that of participating in the national feeling. Diabolical and efficient operation that makes

the desire not fall into a real object – the culture itself – but into an external and abstract feeling. (Novaes, 1983, p. 8)

In my point of view, this debate seems crucial for communication studies, and with the exception of Mexico, no other country has had Brazil's theoretical and political density. A good summary of what this debate mobilizes are the seminars coordinated by Marilena Chaui (1983, 1990). After reviewing the different manifestos and moments of the debate, Chaui (1983) proposes three approaches: 1) that of the national and popular as “a field of theoretical, empirical, imaginary and symbolic meanings and practices, within which we learn to articulate politics, culture and history” (p. 55); 2) in a second moment, she points out the dilemma that continues to divide the research to this day: the search that aims to discover manifestations of the national-popular in *itself* or the questioning approach in some areas of cultural production to ways and forms as the national and the popular are represented; 3) finally, she addresses the imbrication of the national-popular in the productions of the cultural industry, and this on three levels: as a *portrait of everyday life*, that is, the way common people live; as a critical revaluation of everyday life and its values, and how cultural democratization that enables the presence of the people on television, obviously submitted to the demands of this *new populism* that mobilizes the market, imposing centralization and heteronomy as characteristics.

Two of the most lucid investigations, in which the enrichment introduced by this perspective is empirically perceived, are those carried out by Squeff and Wisnik (1983), in music, and by Ramos (1983), in cinema. In the first, starting from the slavery farm, the path that allows the arrival of black music to the city is traced. Despised as obscene by elites and reduced to folklore by populists, black music enters the city through two actors seen as culturally and ideologically dangerous: radio and record market, and the foreign avant-garde. Its incorporation into the city will generate a new culture, “which takes place through polymorphous appropriations and the establishment of a musical market where the popular undergoing transformation coexists with elements of international music and everyday citizenry” (Squeff & Wisnik, 1983, p. 148). *The black gesture becomes massive-popular*, that is, a contradictory field of affirmation of work and leisure, sex, religion, and politics. A circuit of comings and goings that intertwining and superimposing leads to the passage that from *candomblé* takes this music to the record and to the radio. It is the circuit of stratagems and astuteness, of *tactics*, in the sense given to them by Michel de Certeau (1980, p. 21), from which the dominated struggle to open their way to social recognition.

In the research of Ramos (1983) on cinema, we also witness the tracing of a path explicitly linked to the evolution of state nationalism and the consequent politicization of a cinema that seeks to explain Brazilian reality/identity, either through a “awareness cinema” (à la Diegues) or of an “anthropological cinema” (à la Rocha). What will happen is a perverse relationship between the dictatorial state and the film industry growth. State-oriented modernization will give rise to a National Policy of Culture (1975) in which “culture is conceptualized as a matter of nationality”, and it will be disputed by the state tendency to transform cinema into an “apparatus of hegemony” and by the search for construction of a national-popular identity, which, in turn, will become a strategic terrain of disputes between the totalizing vision of “defensive nationalism” (p. 199) – of certain left-wing movements and all right-wing movements in the face of the search for an independent cinema that brings out the country’s cultural diversity: the multiplicity of manifestations of popular culture in the face of state unification or market homogenization.

In 1988, Renato Ortiz, who had already dedicated a book to exploring the adventures and ambivalences of ideas about popular culture and national identity in Brazil (Ortiz, 1985), resumes this discussion – “it has always been a way of becoming aware of our destiny, which made it closely associated with the national and popular themes” (Ortiz, 1988, p. 7) – in the process of emergence and formation of the modern cultural industry. The shocking element is already in the title of the book, *A Moderna Tradição Brasileira* [*The Modern Brazilian Tradition*], and it can be also found from the first – when he calls attention to the silence regarding the question of mass culture among the majority of intellectuals, whose prejudices about radio or television prevented them from noticing the consolidation of a *mass culture* “that grew under their feet” – to the last pages, when he coins the category of the “international-popular”. In this excerpt, Ortiz (1988) perceives a series of phenomena that bring to light the Brazilian peculiarities of the cultural industry.

Since the 1950s, some writers, directors and theater critics have begun to realize that in Brazil, “contrary to central countries, stage dramaturgy is associated with a mass technology: television . . . [, allowing] a transit between spheres governed by different types of logic” (p. 29). In other words, it opens up new creative spaces for some cultural groups, while attracting certain intellectuals to act within the commercial logic. This Brazilian transit between different and even contrary types of logic has to do with a *modernity* whose meaning is also *out of place* and becomes especially clear in the mismatch between the aesthetic modernity of its cinema (or its architecture) and the material conditions of its

emergence. This silence about mass culture “gives place to a speech that articulates modernization and cultural industry” (p. 37).

The best example of the new idea of nation that the cultural industry promotes will be television as a vehicle for *national integration*. This is where the particularities of the place are definitively overcome by a modernization that finally integrates regional markets into a single national market: the consumer community is now the basis of the new national identity, of which the soap opera is the best discourse. But, as Walter Durst observes, the ‘telenovela’ presented to Brazil a double contradiction: it came from abroad, from Argentina, and it was also pure alienation: “That explains our arrogance when we talked about: oh boy, not making soap operas. We who had already conquered, left alienation to arrive at a Brazilian reality, and suddenly, everything went back” (Durst, cited by Ortiz, 1988, p. 177). But maybe not so much; for Roberto DaMatta (1985) the ‘telenovela’ is, on the contrary, the extreme form of the Brazilian genre par excellence, the carnivalesque: the genre “in which author, reader and characters constantly change their positions” (p. 96). Carnavalesque character that will find its fullness when, converted into a cutting-edge cultural industry, the Brazilian ‘telenovela’³ – from *A Escrava Isaura* to *Roque Santeiro* – replaces its ability to talk about the national in the discourse in a second moment of its modernity: *the international-popular*.

³ On the subject refer to: Ortiz et al. (1988); Fadul (1993); Busato and Capparelli (1990); Meyer (1996), mainly the second part: *O Folhetim no Brasil*.

I believe that this Brazilian perspective, which involves investigating the meaning of the mass media in understanding the country’s transformations, goes far beyond the academic space and inserts us directly into politics. It couldn’t be more significant than it is in Brazil, where television is perhaps more strongly mediated by market conditions until it constitutes a gigantic industry, in which this medium has become a space of strategic intersections with its cultural, theatrical, soap opera, cinematographic tradition, and even with the thought and work of many left-wing intellectuals and artists. While in most Latin American countries intellectuals and artists continue to suffer from a persistent *jinx* that makes them insensitive to the challenges posed by the media, and in particular by television, in Brazil some of the most important philosophers and social scientists, such as Décio Pignatari, Sergio Micelli, Muniz Sodré, or writers and artists such as Walter Durst, Dias Gomes, Doc Comparato or Aguinaldo Silva, are authors of research and decisive essays on the relationship between television and the country, or scriptwriters and directors of very expressive series and soap operas both of the country’s miscegenation and transformations and of its capacity for dramatic and audiovisual experimentation.

POPULAR CULTURE AS A SPACE OF COMMUNICATIVE COUNTERHEGEMONY

The other proper aspect that for me seems to characterize Brazilian communication research as a whole, and which constitutes a second strategic contribution to Latin American research, is the *early overcoming of dualistic reason*, which has tenaciously prevented us from understanding the complexity of relations between the popular and the massive, obstructing, in turn, the design of political projects capable of assuming what the media have in terms of culture and the various social uses that people can make of them.

It was in the early and pioneering research on television audience programs by Sergio Miceli (1972) that, for the first time, a theoretical reflection is formulated affirming, on the one hand, the presence of “peculiar symbolic demands, which do not entirely coincide with the dominant cultural arbitrary” (p. 210), in the products of the cultural industry, and, on the other, questioning a reading of massive products that, by ignoring and despising the system of representations and images with which popular sectors decode symbolic products, ends up assuming as singular the representation that the dominant culture offers of itself and the *other*. By attributing to the messages of the cultural industry the status of mere *ideological indicators*, the researcher puts as a presupposition, or as something already solved, what should constitute the problem to be investigated: what is the effective position that the cultural industry occupies in a *not unified material and symbolic market*, that is, in which products, demands and heterogeneous readings intersect?

In one of his most recent and expressive essays, *Antropologia da Saudade* [Anthropology of *Saudade*], Roberto DaMatta (1993) speaks of an anthropology capable of thinking together what this “double concept” – *saudade* – has in terms of the experience of space, passage and duration, experience of a time thinking *from within*, and of this other temporality that is uniform and abstract, chronometric and progressive. Because *saudade* – “that emotion that Brazilians learn to feel as we learn to play carnival and eat *feijoada*” (p. 23) – is a *relational category of time*, at the same time universal and marked by a peculiar way of dealing with duration: that of a memory whose collective time experience indicates returns, reversals, cyclical recursions. Thus, even the temporality *encompassed by the market* is crossed by duration experienced, aesthetically apprehended. This is the same conception that, ten years before, DaMatta (1985) had conceived to understand the relationship between *the house and the street*:

the basic thing is to study that “&” which connects the big house with the slave quarters, this supposedly empty and hideous space, which relates the dominant

and the dominated . . . and which is capable of bringing together desire and law, freedom and control, work and trickery: sex and marriage, discovery and routine, excess and restriction, personal relationships and universal laws, life and death, individual and relationships. (pp. 21, 106)

Between this non-unified heterogeneity of the symbolic market, approached by Miceli, and the relational temporality that for DaMatta constitutes the originality of *saudade*, there are the keys to a non-Manichean conception of the relations between popular culture and cultural industry that have allowed the advancement of two strategic lines of research in Brazil: one related to communicative counterhegemony and other to the competence of the receiver. The first is based on a *modern conception of popular culture*, that is, instead of tracking the traces of original purity, of the authentic-autochthonous, asks about what is still alive, so that the popular connects with today, with the worlds of people's lives, with their hopes and struggles. This is what the pioneering works of Luiz Beltrão (1980) point to when investigating the relevance and validity of popular forms of communication in the cultural richness of their festivals and discourses, both rural and urban, religious and civic, from the messianic discourses to political ones, including erotic and even pornographic graffiti.

It is very significant that from 1979 Cycle II (Melo, 1980) to 1981 Cycle IV (Silva, 1982) of the Brazilian Society for the Interdisciplinary Studies in Communication (Intercom) – 1980 Cycle was about communication and populism –, the thematic axis given to researchers has been communication in the subordinate classes and the relationship between hegemony and counterinformation. In 1979 Cycle, there is a demystification of the popular and one of the first Latin American critical readings of the Frankfurtians' pessimistic elitism based on the reading of Benjamin, Swingewood and Enszemberger, while a new map of the media as the scenario for the struggles for hegemony is designed. At a theoretical level, a statement by Brandão, cited in the splendid work of Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, deserves to be highlighted:

When living conditions are transformed and the people's struggle takes another turn, the speeches of their culture not only change, they must change. Wanting to preserve them just because they belong to "the people" or to "our tradition" is to play the game of those who control the "popular" transformed into a commodity for high-end consumption. (Brandão, cited by Silva, 1980, p. 47)

The objects of study that are sketched are not at all conventional, as they range from the history of forms of resistance of the popular culture in the sixteenth

century, or the popular press in the nineteenth century, to country music, pilgrimage songs and "cordel" literature. The Brazilian conception of popular culture and communication is enriched when, in Cycle IV (1981), this issue is rethought in the light of the Gramscian concept of *hegemony*, and the proposal, also at this time native to Italy, for a communicative praxis of counterinformation. However, one reaches the concept, more than by its theoretical richness, by means of a journey through the praxis of Latin American communication, in which the emergence of radio stations from Minas Gerais in Bolivia stands out, praxis created in the unions of the "altiplano" around 1950. And it is from there that it will be possible to rethink the specialized condition of communication research to propose an interdisciplinary perspective and a dialogue between the theory of the media and the social sciences, with an emphasis on political theory and on issues raised within the scope of the various hegemonic and subordinate communication practices (Silva et al., 1982, p. 9).

The concept of *hegemony*, which was just beginning to be worked on in Latin America, will relocate the study of communication in the field of *culture* and, especially, of *cultural policy*. This will allow the early connection with the *cultural theory*, proposed by Williams, from the Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, and with the reflection that, from Bologna, allowed Pio Baldelli to legitimize the social use of the mass media – from radio to theatre, passing through the cinema and the press – through the subaltern classes. That is, the insertion of the media in political projects of *cultural insurrection* or *semiological guerrilla* with the objective of *counterinforming*, that is, putting information into circulation at the service of popular sectors, and at the same time encouraging cultural initiative and popular creativity. The theoretical reflection and the map of Brazilian practices through which counterinformation goes through, in which a popular hegemony is built – workers' press and theater, documentary cinema, popular literature, communicative praxis in base religious communities – coincide with what gathers together in Europe, in those same years, at the conference coordinated by José Vidal Beneyto (1979) near Barcelona, in whose introduction he writes:

The alternative is popular or degrades into a toy and/or domain machine. And popular means that it enables the expression of collective aspirations and expectations produced by and from base social groups. Both majority and minority. Both at a patent and latent level. (p. XXXIX)

The communicative creativity of popular cultures will find support in Brazil, on the one hand, in the strength of social movements and their lucidity

in assuming the media as a stage for political and cultural struggle, when most unions and movements in Latin America still suffered from a great instrumental and moralistic short-sightedness in this regard; and, on the other, in the *gap theory* that the very political contradictions open up in the cultural industries. With regard to the relationship between social movements and the media, the work of Regina Festa and Luiz Fernando Santoro (1991) will be crucial: not only for their long experience as communicators in the large unions of São Paulo and their animation of communication projects in several movements in Brazil and Latin America, but also for their reflexive monitoring of the different moments that the country and social movements have been going through (Festa & Santoro, 1991; Festa & Silva, 1986).

The *gap theory* – which gave great hope to Latin Americans in the difficult years of dictatorial repression, which devastated most of our countries between the 1970s and the mid-1980s – is generated in Brazil from the meeting of some social sciences open to the transformations of the cultural industry, which they see not as “a monolithic and impenetrable whole, an instrument used by the ruling classes to impose their ideology on the entire population”, but as a space “of cultural activity in which there is relative autonomy” (Silva, 1986, p. 31). This is expressed in the contradictions of content and meaning that consumers give it, with the multiple experience of base Christian communities, and with the “jogo de cintura” [a knack for problem solving]⁴, from football to politics, which has allowed the popular sectors to dodge the adverse. Referring to black culture, Muniz Sodré (1983) gives us a fundamental background to understand the meaning that Brazilians give to *gaps*: they are spaces considered *harmless*, not cumulative from the white perspective, and in which “black people clandestinely revived their rites, cultivated their gods and resumed the line of community relationship” (p. 124).

This is especially the case of radio, a medium despised by the educated strata, precisely because it is the territory of the oral and, therefore, a space for popular experimentations, such as those pointed out by a group of researchers on Gil Gomes’ program⁵, which, before the news discourse – concealing the narrator subject and the narrative plot –, exalts the narrator, transforming the enunciation, the narrator’s own experience, into an *account of experience* that makes present the *corporeal side of the art of narrating*. Body that is voice, which carries the story with sensory effects and explores, from the tone and rhythm – which accelerates, decelerates, changes, alters, yells, whispers – the universe of emotions and the listening experience. And if, as Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes (1988) points out, Gil Gomes’ voice “is the testimony involved in his insertion in power” (p. 139) and in the maintenance of order, however, perhaps

⁴ Alves (1987) was who applied this expression to popular culture tactics.

⁵ In the original, the author makes a reference to “VV.AA. *A narrativa popular de Gil Gomes* [VV.AA. Gil Gomes’ popular narrative], São Paulo, 1984”. We tried to obtain the authors’ and the publisher’s names, according to the parameters of the standard used in the journal, but we did not succeed (E. N.).

this voice is not entirely flat and made of inflections and folds that, when *dramatizing the real*, endows the anonymous characters of the police chronicle with a face, situation and everyday life, and through this description allows feeling the uprooted poor, city dwellers, as people.

It was in the same movement that rescued the communicative creativity of popular cultures that Brazilian *researchers* detected the presence of the *listener's voice*, the receiver's hidden face. Alongside my readings of Michel de Certeau (1980), in the early 1980s, I have to put the text in photocopy of the investigation *Sobre a Recepção Crítica dos Meios de Comunicação de Massa no Brasil* [On Critical Reception of Mass Media in Brazil], by Anamaria Fadul (1983), investigation, if I am not wrong, commissioned by the *União Cristã Brasileira de Comunicação Social* [Brazilian Christian Communication Union] (UCBC). Also in photocopy, I received the manuscript of *A Rosa Púrpura de Cada Dia Trajetória de Vida e Cotidiano de Receptores de Telenovela* [The Everyday Purple Rose: Trajectory of Life and Daily Life of Soap Opera Receivers], by Mauro Wilton de Sousa (1986). If in Anamaria's text reception is explored mainly in the diversity of its capacity for *questioning reading* of the mass media messages, in Mauro Wilton's the investigation is already focused on the modalities of insertion of the "telenovela" in the young workers' daily lives.

I think that, in the early attention paid by Brazilian researchers to the receiver's reading competence and its insertion in the everyday world, the pioneering presence – in relation to the rest of Latin America – of an urban anthropology that manages to go beyond an anthropology *in the city* for an *anthropology of the city* (Cardoso, 1986), exploring the worlds of popular life, from the circus (Magnani, 1984) to the political culture of the neighborhood (Caldeira, 1984), and of the culture of the middle class (Velho, 1981) to the educators' representations and imagination (Rocha et al., 1984). It is precisely an anthropologist, Ondina Fachel Leal (1990), who systematically introduces ethnographic work in research on television reception, which will have a broad echo in investigations in other Latin American countries, especially for her inquiry into the space and time of watching to the "telenovela", and the comparison of the reading processes, that is, the production and symbolic reformulation that two social classes of spectators perform with the "telenovela".

From a sociological point of view, Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva (1985) was a pioneer in investigating the reception of Rede Globo's national news in two working-class communities, especially questioning the critical mediations that the Church, the union movement, the political parties, the movement feminist and other means of communication introduce in the interpretation of the TV newscast. Along with these pioneering works, I cannot fail to highlight the

seminar that a group of researchers from the University of São Paulo held in 1991, which included sociologists, anthropologists, communicators, psychologists and historians, whose mere title, *Sujeito, o Lado Oculto do Receptor* [Subject, the Receptor's Hidden Side] (Sousa, 1995), reveals the peculiarities that, in addition to academic craze, characterize reception studies in Brazil.

COMMUNICATION GLOBALIZATION AND WORLD MODERNITY

A ghost runs through the social sciences and Latin American communication research in recent years: the ghost is called *globalization*. Confused by many with the *old* and persistent imperialism – assimilated to transnationalization, or rather to the accelerated expansion of transnational corporations and logic – and identified by others with the technological *revolution* and even with the secret impulse of post-modernity, *globalization* doesn't seem to let itself be captured by academic schemes or traditional scientific paradigms. Articles and anthologies proliferate endlessly, but the vast majority of what is written in Latin America on this subject disappoints. Interestingly, it is in Brazil, the country that has most widely and polemically debated the vicissitudes of its national formation, that a horizon of understanding the novelty that globalization processes introduce into the economy, culture and sensitivity starts being traced, that is, in the perception of space and time.

Today, three Brazilians stand out as thinkers of globalization in Latin America. From geography, Milton Santos (1993) reflects on the transformations of space, stating that, due to the lack of analytical categories and the present history, we are still mentally anchored in the time of international relations, when what we need to think today is about the *world*: the passage from internationalization to globalization. It is precisely the communication technologies – satellites, computers, television – that, by transforming the *sense of place in the world*, make the relationships that structure it opaque, making a so interconnected world somehow obscure. This opacity brings to the fore the materiality from which *space* and *speed* come from, producing a noticeable world that, insofar as it transforms culture into the great vehicle of economics and politics, becomes the key to epistemological change that all disciplines undergo.

However, this assessment of the world does not prevent Milton Santos (1995) from making a strongly critical analysis of a *sick globalization* (pp. 22-42), because it seeks to *unify*, more than unite, and

what is unified throughout the world today is not a desire for freedom but for domination, it is not a desire for cooperation but for competition. . . . Space is

globalizing, but it is not global as a whole, but as a metaphor. The global dimension is the market. (Santos, 1995, p. 33)

There is then a universal and abstract, hegemonic clock, whose temporalities are the vectors of economy and culture. But there is no *world time*. And if it is true that world networks regulate an order at the service of hegemonic actors on a planetary scale, at the *local* level these same networks are carriers of *disorder*. The question about globalization thus becomes a question about the meaning of diversity: “Does diversification contribute to unity or unification?” (Santos, 1995, p. 41).

From sociology, Renato Ortiz (1994) introduces the need to differentiate the unifying logic of economic globalization from those that globalize culture. Because cultural globalization does not work from the outside, in spheres endowed with autonomy, such as national or local. Globalization is a

process that reproduces itself and breaks down incessantly . . . In this sense, it would be inappropriate to speak of a “world-culture”, whose hierarchical level would be situated outside and above national or local cultures. . . . The globalization process is a total social phenomenon that permeates all cultural manifestations. In order to exist, it must locate itself, root itself in men’s daily practices. (Ortiz, 1994, p. 30)

Globalization cannot, then, be confused with the *standardization* of different spheres of life, which was the product of industrialization, including the sphere of culture, this *cultural industry* that was the object of analysis by the Frankfurtians. Now we are facing another type of process, which is expressed in the culture of *modernity-world* as “a new way of ‘being in the world’” (Ortiz, 1994, p. 33), which concerns the profound changes produced in the world of life: at work, at marriage, at food, at leisure. It is because the full working day has made it impossible for millions of people to have lunch at home, and because more and more women work outside the home, and because children become autonomous from their parents very early, and because the patriarchal figure has been devalued as much as women’s work has been valued, that daily eating is no longer a ritual that brings the family together, and, de-symbolized, found its form in fast food.

Thus, the success of McDonald’s or Pizza Hut speaks less of the imposition of American food than of the profound changes in people’s daily lives, changes that these products undoubtedly express and monetize. Out of synchronicity with past ritual times and places that symbolized family life and respect for patriarchal authority, the new ways and food products “lose the fixity of

territories and customs . . . they are information adjusted to the polysemy of contexts” (Ortiz, 1994, p. 87)⁶. Recognizing this does not mean ignoring the growing monopolization of distribution, or the decentralization that concentrates power and uprooting pushing the hybridization of cultures. Structurally linked to economic globalization, but not limited to it, there are phenomena of globalization of imaginaries linked to music, images and characters that represent deterritorialized styles and values to which new figures of memory also correspond.

⁶Refer also to Ortiz (1996).

Also from sociology, Octavio Ianni (1996) has been one of the few Latin Americans to dare to take on the theoretical challenges involved in thinking “that the globe has ceased to be an astronomical figure to fully acquire historical significance” (p. 3). This meaning cannot be derived any more than it has hitherto been the central category in the social sciences, that of the nation-state, globalization cannot be considered as a mere quantitative or qualitative extension of national society. Not because this category and this society do not continue to be valid – the exasperation of nationalisms, regionalisms and localisms attests to this –, but because the accumulated knowledge of the national responds to a paradigm that can no longer account for “neither methodological nor historical nor theoretically to the whole reality in which individuals and classes, nations and nationalities, cultures and civilizations are inserted today” (p. 160). Resistance in social sciences to accepting this is a *new object* is very strong. Hence, on the one hand, the tendency to subsume this object in the classical paradigms of evolutionism, functionalism, etc., and, on the other, to prioritize partial aspects – economic, technological, ecological etc. – that seem to be able to remain understandable from a trauma-free continuity with the idea of national.

This continuity, which notions such as dependence, interdependence and imperialism speak of, hides the need to submit these notions to a profound reformulation in light of the radical changes that permeate the idea both of sovereignty and of hegemony. The fact that there are still dependencies and imperialism today does not mean that the scenario has not changed, but that the old types of bonds are subsumed and crossed by new ones, which do not accept to be thought of based on the transfer of categories and notions such as State, party, union, social movement, territory, tradition, etc., that is, without these categories and notions being previously reformulated. The conditions of inequality between nations, regions and states continue and even get worse, but they can no longer be considered apart from the emergence of networks and alliances that reorganize and comprise both state structures and political regimes and national projects. The challenge to the social sciences, which Octavio Ianni

addresses, becomes even more decisive in the field of communication, whose transformations play a leading role in the processes of globalization and in the world-modernity. And not just in terms of the technological dimension, but also in the epistemological horizon from which the new meanings of communicating become visible.

CRITICAL APPROPRIATION OF LATIN AMERICAN RESEARCH

If Brazil's contribution to Latin American communication research has been so fruitful, this is largely due to the dialogue that Intercom made possible. With a clear Latin Americanist vocation since its creation, Intercom has given shape to the rhythm of its consolidation as a national association and the institutionalization of its contacts with other countries in the region: through comparative research, the active exchange of researchers and professors and the publication of its annual study cycles and its newsletter, which has already been converted into the *Revista Brasileira de Ciências da Comunicação* [Brazilian Journal of Communication Sciences]. We must also add these other two journals, close to Intercom, which also maintain a permanent dialogue with Latin American researchers: *Comunicação & Sociedade* [Communication & Society] and *Comunicação & Política* [Communication & Politics].

Expressing this desire for dialogue, Cycle V, held in São Paulo in 1982, has as its theme "Impasses and Challenges in Research in Communication", in a clear indicator of internationalization, which becomes reality, on the one hand, in the works of Brazilian researchers who reflect on the trends in communication research in metropolitan countries and, on the other, on the opening to the participation of researchers from other countries, most of which Latin American. The relevance of this Latin American presence will be witnessed in the title of the publication, which, under the coordination of José Marques de Melo, brings together the following works: *Teoria e Pesquisa em Comunicação: Panorama Latino-Americano* [Communication Theory and Research: Latin American Panorama] (Melo, 1983). From this cycle on, the relationship of Intercom with Latin American research will become increasingly stronger. Cycle IX has as its central theme "Communication in Latin America: Development and Crisis" and Cycle XII is dedicated to "Cultural Industries and the Challenges of Latin American Integration".

The commitment of Intercom to reconstituting the Asociación Latinoamericana de Investigadores de la Comunicación (Alaic) will be especially decisive, which was achieved in 1989, within the sessions of Cycle IX, held in Florianópolis. Taking up the proposal made by several former presidents and

members of Alaic present at the Congress of the Association Internationale des Études et Recherches sur l'Information et la Communication (Aieri) held the same year in Barcelona, Marques de Melo promotes the reconstitution of Alaic, which had been going through a long period of crisis, and takes office as its president. This will culminate, in 1992, in São Paulo, in the 1st Latin American Congress of Communication Researchers, in which an assessment of the main research trends in the 1980s was carried out and a proposal for priority lines for the 1990s was presented (Melo, 1992).

The dialogue with Brazilian communication researchers has become particularly fruitful in recent years through the debates introduced in Brazil, both on the meaning and scope of theory and research in communication teaching and on the theoretical background with which research is performed and the methodological strategies used. In this regard, I see as extremely relevant the criticisms made by Maria Immacolata Vassallo de Lopes (1993, 1994) to certain culturalist tendencies in the investigation of processes of reception that, by replacing the concept of social class by the concept of social stratification, forget the structural meaning of the social groups, removing them from the conflictual character that covers their relationship with the various forms of organization and expression of power. Reduced to the relationship of different groups – age and gender – with the environment, and the instances of structural mediation by the family, school or neighborhood replaced, reception ends up becoming a circular process, which can hardly escape the circle that introduces the fragmentation of consumers proposed by the market. The author of this precise critique also wrote one of the few books in Latin America that had the courage to take on the methodological challenge implied by the new objects and new research proposals (Lopes, 1990).

Even if more controversial, the criticisms of José Marques de Melo (Melo, 1987, 1991) of communication teaching models far away from the demands that come from an increasingly specialized labor market and with a proposal with a multipurpose profile, which would condemn most graduates to unemployment or to the alternative field, also produced an important debate about the meaning of theory and research in undergraduate and graduate education. On the one hand, it is necessary to rethink the purely formal presence of theoretical courses distanced from the communicator's creative and producer work and, on the other, reveal the pitfalls of a type of research whose combination of formalism and denunciation makes it incapable of contributing to the knowledge of transformations that the field of communication is undergoing. This debate, at the same time, made it essential to consider ways of dealing with the predominantly market trends in the growth of graduate studies, which, although reflecting the

demands for specialization in the labor field, threaten to liquidate the presence of social sciences and any critical character of studies and academic communication research. These traits are part of this *Latin American school of communication* that Marques de Melo (1996) himself proposed to investigate and claim.

I will conclude by taking on the voice of my Latin American colleagues in order to recognize the decisive presence of Brazilian research in the development of Latin American thinking on communication, which, while allowing us a deeper understanding of the peculiarities and dynamics of our world, it is enabling us, at the international level, to move from the trade of *native informants* to that of true producers of thought and knowledge.

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