

Human practices constructing the History of Communication in Brazil

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BARBOSA, Marialva.

História da Comunicação no Brasil.
Petrópolis, RJ: Editora Vozes, 2013.

Abstract

History of Communication in Brazil (História da Comunicação no Brasil, in Portuguese) is the title of the new book written by the PhD Professor Marialva Barbosa (Federal University of Rio de Janeiro/UFRJ), published by Editora Vozes. In the book, the author addresses the classical themes of the implantation of Media in the country - Newspaper, Radio and TV - but, specially, puts on scene silenced facts, as the marks of Brazilian typical orality influencing the formation of our Press and the reading and clerks practices by black people, slaves or freemen. Thus, the story proposed by Marialva is focused less on the trajectory of the Media and more on society and individuals.

Keywords: History of communication; history of journalism; journalism in Brazil; trajectory of communication in Brazil

Nearly two decades have passed... From my college days, much has been erased, has been forgotten or silenced. The same way, it is still much remembrance. Memories that include courses taken and also non-routed. Among the latter is the History of Communication and/or Journalism, not covered by the official grid. But the story (or is it the path?) of the Media - newspaper, radio and TV -, we saw this in specific courses. It was a sort of prologue before practice, a nose of wax better saying... The first newspaper in Brazil, the shared parenting radio, the pioneering broadcasts of Assis Chateaubriand, a visionary Brazilian businessman.

Years later, when I returned to the Faculty of Journalism, now a teacher in the another institution, the History of Communication was on the list of courses offered,

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provided by Political Pedagogical Project of the Social Communication Department (Decs). But at first sight for the Teaching Plan caused me strangeness absence of a Brazilian perspective (Would the History of Communication is restricted to European countries? Communication was simply transposed from Europe here?). The conversation with the teacher responsible for the course did not explain much. "I work with Asa Briggs and Peter Burke", said the professor. "For what reason?". "It's the most current and enjoyable read." Okay, *Social History of the Media* (by Briggs and Burke) is a good book, but Brazil is not there. Human processes that influenced the acts and determined the communication practices in Brazilian territory definitely are not there.

Few more years needed to pass so that these concerns were minimized. Answers that came in the form of words that are spread by 389 pages on the new book of Marialva Barbosa, a Brazilian researcher:

We studied the History of Communication from absolutely alien worlds. The processes of Western Europe are translated into Brazilian territory, as if it were possible to make a story that is valid to all social spaces. But production toward rebuilding communication processes, primarily a Eurocentric gaze, does not address the specifics of what happened in Brazil. Subjected to its own history, also the communication here gained particular aspects. It is this story that this book intends to go. (Barbosa, 2013, p. 8)

This story is told over 10 chapters and includes communication actions in the Brazil beginning in the 18th century and following, still moving, building up until the present day. "The story we propose to tell", say Barbosa early as the second paragraph of the Introduction (p. 7), "begins in the practices of orality that are spread in oral modes of communication through the streets and alleys" of Rio de Janeiro city in the 18th century. And this noise so particularly Brazilian, who called (and probably still calling) the attention of foreigners arriving here is the starting point of this *History of Communication in Brazil*, in his first chapter - *Communication and practices orality: scenes from the 18th century*. After all, the author believes, "we are a society oral language, and the History of Communication in Brazil is understanding the universe of cultural practices of oral communication modes that were becoming the long term" (p. 11).

Orality as a trademark of our communication and our culture that is also present in all the work. Although it is a book written and, as such, to be read (with the eyes, as they said and continue to say the teachers of the early years literacy), it is undeniable that, when we go through the lines and look for your pages, is as if we heard the teacher Marialva Barbosa to tell your version from a localized look at the History of Communication. Who ever heard of the can perceive the materiality of writing the emphasis on certain words, the characteristic tone that sets out his ideas. After all, as she points out between pages 22 and 27, are powers "in the world of orality" storytelling, the musicality of speech and always be a communication always be oriented to the other.

And that's how I perceive each one of the paragraphs of the History of Communication from Brazil. It is as if each were written thinking of me while reading; it's like writing in order to win me for the story told in the following pages continue attracting me, keeping me in this conversation. And it was so charmed by the narrative (for its content and the manner of presentation of it) that I spent the following chapters. The uninitiated might think: "but orality and scientific way not go together". On the contrary. The orality of the text only confirms the first thesis of the book, that our History of Communication is woven in oral bases, and are historical data - in the form, for example, letters or pictures - that sustain it.

After all, the noise from the speeches that echoed through the streets of cities is still alive, he did not go out when we, as a nation, a society of letters, writing. Process that is leveraged by the arrival of the Portuguese royal family to Brazil, when it comes to *Typography in the luggage of the King* - the title of the second chapter. Until then, the same route of printed communication he heard in college. What keeps alive the interest in this "hearing read" are the details. An example is the complex network of news that made the facts "ran leagues" and "walked briskly":

(...) a network of rumors, heard conversations between information that 'hear-say', 'said one', 'speak up' and could prove to be published in the newspaper. The world of oral practice, the lines that to broaden the conversations in the streets and squares migrated frequently to the newspaper, showing once again that the communication systems of the early 19th century there was little separation between the world of voice and the printed letters (p. 44).

Or the historical materiality put on the scene by Barbosa, as illustrations in which slaves decipher maps, that lead us to observe her as

the expanding world of print allows multiple groups to take contact with these materialities and in many ways, by introducing them directly or indirectly in communication processes they perform. Although it was not the dominant mode in Communication, the written and/or printed letters will assume a symbolic place in the streets and in the imagination of those who are able (or not) to crack those codes (p.58).

And when that world of reading assumes a symbolic place in our society, the Journalism, therefore, may be constituted as an arena for debate and, thus, spread to many cities in various regions in Brazil, forming *Networks Communication*, the third chapter of the book. This presents not only a relation of the first newspapers in Brazil and where they are located, but shows the process by which these publications will abandon the distant news and simultaneously prioritizing ' the information from the territories where they were inserted" , those "had preferred were those that spoke directly to local interests" (p. 70). So gradually what was written in the newspaper would not do more just to inform, had also function as assuage rumors, developing policy positions, express opinions and value judgments, instruct. "When are fixed on paper the information, became the indelible truth" (p. 76), building a specific symbolism for Journalism in the public arena that it helped create. But, to be Journalism was necessary that a new public man arose: the journalist, the publicist, the editor or the man Gazette. He that by having the "the power of the pen" reached "visibility, prestige and distinction" (p. 80).

Thus, in order to expand the possibilities of political discussion, other people wanted for expressing their opinions in this privileged means of the public sphere, which was the Journalism. In this context, there was the appearance of Newspapers manuscripts: other communicative materiality, title of the fourth chapter . If ironic calls (*chamadas pasquinadas*, in Portuguese) come to "meet the banning of printed, over the years (and centuries) gain other meanings" (p. 119). However, what is interesting is the approach to these newspapers. Leaving the question of what grounds the manuscripts

submitted to oblivion, Barbosa shows that there is behind them a communication policy that requires, initially, a collective construction - as many hands helped in printing the same - and a shared reading - after all, as they circled letters, being intended for a reader to another. Also, another form of joint reading - who migrated to the traditional printed and still practice - is the fixing of the manuscripts in places of great circulation or overcrowding.

If ironic calls show a collective reading, the illustrated magazines of the 19th century point to read different gestures. After all, these printed full "of pen nib illustrations indicate, in its own materiality, other possibilities of reading the journals: it read also seeing images" (p. 152), the graphics are now produced new interpretations. Among these images readers are slaves, who are also portrayed the same and, sometimes, appear reading. This reader ability of slaves moved the author to show that they also knew how to write. For this, Barbosa presents letters written by slaves and, especially, ads published in newspapers that "repeatedly sought by those who, rebelled, ran away from captivity. The marks of their bodies and their various skills are described to facilitate their identification: among them appeared, specially, the fact 'read and write'" (p. 161).

The final of the 19th century and the first decades of the following are marked by an acceleration afforded time afforded by new technologies, by new media that allowed the exponential growth of information.

The 20th century lets see, according to the technologies available, a public that is in addition to the reader, viewer and listener. Secondly, but already in the last century, the observer will join to the listener of third nature (creating the viewer) and a new media will come into the public arena: the Television. (p. 180)

This story is described in the following chapters. *A sensory world: the construction of the observer and the expansion of the public*, the sixth, is focused on the explosion of visuality from the photograph, which fixed ways of seeing and, mainly, kept images of people, places and events. Already the center of chapter 7 - *Noises and sounds: imperfect mediations* - lies in the analysis of how the sounds, from the moment you leave appliances, direct listening and introduce new ways of listening. Story, then, "from the meanings that the Radio produced when he allowed his immersion in another

orality" (p. 228). *Television: a magical and lighted tube* is following chapter this *History of Communication in Brazil*, which deposited our future, according to the author, in the technological prospects of this new media (p. 262).

The technologies, thus, transformed the communication actions. But not only that. From the late 1960s, sociabilities shall be governed by technological devices "that establish social relationships mediated, more and more, by the action of the media. (...) Life is transported to the media and the media contain life" (p. 307). This is one of the themes of the penultimate chapter - *Years of Lead: a captive history of Memory*, which also addresses "the distance of the content policy of most publications, due to the violent censorship that would befall the media, especially, after the hardening of authoritarian regime in 1968 and the promulgation of Institutional Act n. 5" in Brazil. (p. 292). Barbosa also focuses on the consequences of political and social moment for the Journalism, as the disappearance of many journals and the consequent concentration process of newspapers; the end of the afternoon and morning editions; the proliferation of publications specialized content; and the transformation of the mission of journalists.

The transition from analogue to the digital world and the changes in the modes of communication incurred - are examples of the public as a producer of content and appearance of real-time "in the journalistic scene as ultra-reality" (p. 336) - are portrayed in the last chapter, number 10, entitled *Portable communication: new technologies and the end of the 20th century*. However, as the author points out, "to understand how an unfinished process?" (p. 339), a story still in the making?

When you finish the book, is the feeling I want more, that printed letters multiply by more and more pages... Pages that could portray other stories of communication in Brazil, forgotten or silenced stories as they were related to orality as basis of our communicative exchanges, the ability to read and write the slaves. Anyway, stories that show us, as did exemplarily Barbosa in his *History of Communication in Brazil*, we still know very little about the stories that made and still help build the history of communication in our country.

This text was received at August 2, 2013 and approved on March 13, 2014.