

# The Barberian theory of communication

## *A teoria barberiana da comunicação*

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### ABSTRACT

Within the 30-year milestone of the book *De los medios a las mediaciones*<sup>\*</sup>, we intend to trace a kind of *diurnal map* of Jesús Martín-Barbero's work. We propose to demonstrate that Martín-Barbero's communicational thought is not limited either to a theory of reception or to a theory of mediations but constitutes a specific theory of communication, characterized by its own epistemology, methodology and concepts, which we call the *Barberian theory of communication*. We intend to demonstrate it through three axes of analysis: 1) the epistemology of communication, with the metaphor of the *epistemological chill* that causes the rupture in the communicational knowledge; 2) the cartography as a method to promote new parameters of knowledge representation; 3) the theoretical-methodological maps that are the "nocturnal map" and four maps of the mediations.

**Keywords:** Jesus Martín-Barbero, Barberian theory of communication, cartographic method, maps of mediations, epistemology of communication

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### RESUMO

Dentro do marco dos trinta anos do livro *De los medios a las mediaciones*, pretendemos fazer uma espécie de *mapa diurno* da obra de Jesús Martín-Barbero. Propomo-nos a demonstrar que o pensamento comunicacional de Martín-Barbero não se conforma a uma teoria da recepção nem a uma teoria das mediações, mas constitui uma teoria da comunicação específica, caracterizada por uma epistemologia, metodologia e conceitos próprios, a que denominamos *teoria barberiana da comunicação*. Pretendemos demonstrá-la através de três eixos de análise: 1) a epistemologia da comunicação, com a metáfora do *calafrio epistemológico* que faz a ruptura no conhecimento comunicacional; 2) a cartografia como método para promover novos parâmetros de representação do conhecimento; 3) os mapas teórico-metodológicos que são o *mapa noturno* e quatro mapas das mediações.

**Palavras-chave:** Jesús Martín-Barbero, teoria barberiana da comunicação, método cartográfico, mapas das mediações, epistemologia da comunicação

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*Cartography lives on an ambiguity that puts it at the confluence of science and art. Geographical and historical, cartography elaborates an image that shows the relationships of human being with the territory, a general apprehension of the thickness of its conflicts, and, at the same time, the historicity of our knowledge.*

Jean-Claude Greshens (*Cartes et Figures de la Terre*. Paris, Pompidou, 1980)

<sup>1</sup> From now on: JMB.

IN THE BOOK *Ofício de cartógrafo: travessias latino-americanas da comunicação na cultura* [Cartographer's craft: Latin American crossings of communication in culture], of Jesús Martín-Barbero (2004)<sup>1</sup>, the introduction, whose title is *As aventuras de um cartógrafo mestiço* [The adventures of a *mestizo* cartographer], is especially interesting (Ibid.: 9-42) since the author reflects on his works by calling them cartographies and maps, and expresses his interest in the condition of cartographer with regard to what this craft may concern him. He is pleased with the discovery of the *cognitive cartography* as a theoretical-methodological strategy that would be appropriate for unstable, ambiguous, fluid times, for allowing the exploration and discovery of new itineraries in their permanent risks. And he asks: "but who said that cartography can only represent borders and not construct images of relationships and interweavings, paths on the run and labyrinths? (Ibid.: 12). This cartographic logic becomes *fractal* – in maps, the world recovers the diverse uniqueness of objects: mountain ranges, islands, jungles, oceans – and expresses itself textually in what is fold and unfold, in setbacks, intertexts and intervals (Serres, 1995).

<sup>2</sup> We retake the figure of the archipelago as a new episteme in footnote 8.

Crossing the figures of the universe and continents, today these cognitive maps reach the figure of the archipelago<sup>2</sup>, which, without connecting border, is a continent that unfolds disaggregated into multiple and several islands that interconnect. Thinking of the archipelago is to analyze the new type of *logos* that interconnects the diverse, at whose root there are the profound perceptual changes that our space-time experience goes through. We can approach the reorganizing cognitive schemes referred to by Morin (2000), the migrations of concepts from their original disciplines to fecundate the ground of objects and transdisciplinary projects. The same ones that are also in the well-known work of Wallerstein (1996), which presents a kind of cartography of the disciplinary state of social sciences and incites them to open up.

<sup>3</sup> "I came from philosophy..." became a common intercalation in his works.

It is from the place of philosopher<sup>3</sup> that JMB shifts his thought to renew the mapping of communication studies in Latin America, and does so by proposing a *nocturnal map*. Following the line of analysis we adopt, the

*nocturnal map* goes beyond the metaphor, and it is translated into a concept that indicates the horizon in which the author seeks to re-situate the studies of communication and media from cultural matrices (the popular) in a social space (Latin America). This research encompasses both the structural restrictions and the processes of subjectivation in which the different actors are empirically inserted.

It is a map to inquire about domination, production and work, but from the other side: the side of gaps and pleasure. A map not for the escape but for the recognition of the situation from the mediations and the subjects, to change the place from which the questions are formulated, to assume the borders not as subject but as enzyme. Because times are not for synthesis, and there are many areas of everyday reality that are still to be explored, zones into whose exploration we cannot advance except by groping or only with a nocturnal map. (JMB, 2004: 18)

Power, everyday life, word, narrative, and even Mauss' ritual of anthropology interact with Barthes' myths and with Merleau-Ponty's or Walter Benjamin's sensoriality (JMB, 2014). This is the series of heterodox intellectual resources that JMB has in his background and fed the formalization of the *nocturnal map* metaphor, which describes his way of *doing research* through an expression borrowed from Saint-Exupéry's *War pilot*.

As we will see later, even without naming it, JMB uses the *cartographic research strategy* since its first reflections on communication research in Latin America<sup>4</sup>. They are considerations that are spread and scattered throughout his work, in a constant process of complexification which increasingly difficult to unravel it due to the different levels of analysis that interweaves (philosophical, communicational, cultural, historical, etc.) and the innumerable objects that it includes (telenovela, youth, education, city, cultural policies, media, among many others). These considerations are made by movements of advances and resumptions, of partial systematizations, always incomplete, as mobile archipelagos that, gathered, show the continent of a living theory in close dialogue with the transformations of its context that is Latin America embedded in the world.

Therefore, it is worthwhile to *garner* cartographic elements throughout his work, in a specific (and not usual) way, that is, from the epistemological reflections that he develops systematically in more complex ground, such as in the conversations<sup>5</sup>, the exercise of his intellectual biography, and particularly from the successive prefaces or introductions to the book *From the media to mediations*<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>4</sup> Retos a la investigación de comunicación en América Latina (1982).

<sup>5</sup> It is remarkable the amount of "conversaciones" (as interviews) performed by the author, which are true paratexts, and fundamental to deepen and order the understanding of the multiplicity of subjects he dealt with. Several of these conversations are used in this paper and are included in the references.

<sup>6</sup> Besides the different introductions to the new editions of *From the media to mediations*, an interesting but restricted-circulation publication was made, which gathered the various "introducciones" of JMB (2010b).

## THE BARBERIAN EPISTEMOLOGY: *EPISTEMOLOGICAL CHILL AS RUPTURE IN COMMUNICATIONAL KNOWLEDGE*

### **Thinking communication epistemologically *from the communication cartography in Latin America***

The epistemology of the Barberian communication can be understood as a new attempt to map the knowledge of Latin American cultural and communication practices, and strengthens the approaches that claim the importance of peripheries in a new global map, where the new cartographers use the discourse of diversity and resistance.

Cartography, as an instrument to provide cognitive maps that guide the perception of a research space, is an epistemological tool used by JMB in a permanent but diffuse and interstitial way<sup>7</sup>.

The figure of the cartographer approaches the one of the *flâneur*, worked by Benjamin (1986), being the *flâneur* an urban character that leaves home just for leave, and this way, in the traffic without no destination traced, attempts to the city and sees beyond the apparent uniformity. As the *flâneur*, the cartographer develops a capacity for estrangement that uproots him both from the perception of what is usually recognizable and from the utilitarianism inherited from modern capitalist society in what concerns to scientific production.

In the introduction to *Ofício de cartógrafo*, JMB suggests to us to turn to cartography to think about new paths to be covered in the communication theory. In this cartography, the idea is to construct *maps drawn not only on but also from the borders* (JMB, 2004: 14). The question raised by the theorist is that it is necessary to think of the place of enunciation, in this case, to displace Latin American researchers' analysis axis, convoking them to see together with the subaltern populations. He criticizes the theoretical dependence of Latin American communication studies from hegemonic models, the reproduction of theories and approaches that the author considers "out of place," without sense in the universe in which they propose to insert. For the author, the maps and meanings they produce change according the point of observation shifts. He seeks for new map of the global periphery which establishes new meanings of frontiers to reach another cartographic logic, no longer established by the central nations, but by the recognition of the potency of peripheral practices.

With the shift of the analysis axis to think Latin America, the space to be cartographed is that of the *communicative mediations of culture*, considering the need for constructing a new map passes through the new ways of symbolization and ritualization of social ties, which are increasingly interwoven with

<sup>7</sup>Therefore, as we have already observed, we have decided to focus on the reading of his conversations, interviews and intellectual self-reports, places where he usually exercises reflexivity about his own works, in addition to contextualizing them temporarily.

communication networks, deterritorializing discourses and undermining space and time borders.

In this sense, JMB (2004: 12) contrasts the representational cartography of borders to one expressed by images of relationships and interlaces, of escape routes and labyrinths, to finally use, from the perspective of Serres (1995), the metaphor of the *archipelago*<sup>8</sup> as a new type of logos that interconnects the diverse.

The impugment of the coloniality of power and the opposition to universalizing Western thought are assumed by different authors of the so-called postcolonial perspective, such as Arjun Appadurai (1997) and Homi Bhabha (1998)<sup>9</sup>. This position claims for legitimacy and autonomy in an ideological confrontation translated into the deconstruction of Western epistemological models with a perspective of formulation of another episteme, of another thought signed by the idea of the otherness. This proposal already anticipates the role that JMB assumes as a kind of *mestizo cartographer*.

Cartography moves redrawing the map of Latin America, both of its borders and of its identities – spatially by the increasing movement of migrations, and because the meaning of borders goes off or worsens contradictorily to what is produced by market networks and satellite technologies, and identities undermine by losing their old sharpness (2004:14)<sup>10</sup>.

By emphasizing that communication technologies start functioning as structural and not just instrumental mediation, that is, by playing a fundamental role in the organization of the field of the culture, JMB values the communication flow and the decentralization for mapping another space, capable to provide different forms of culture.

His long-lasting fidelity to the crossing of life experience with theory is found in a personal episode that resulted in what he called an *epistemological chill*, which allowed to discover an aesthetic in the popular, that is, an aesthetic experience not reducible to the mere reflection, or to the resistance but the perception of the very diverse popular aesthetics from the massive or the enlightened.

This episode is explained in the introduction of the book *Procesos de comunicación y matrices de cultura* [Processes of communication and matrices of culture] (1987b: 11-13), where he deals with the displacement from the folklorized popular to the mass density of the urban. It is a curious and amusing event, an anecdote, which later he called *epistemological chill*. It was the strange experience he had while watching a Mexican tear-jerker (*La ley del monte – The mount's law*) at a cinema of a popular district of Cali.

<sup>8</sup> A new episteme marked by the idea of archipelization is defined by Edouard Glissant in *Introduction to a poetics of the diverse*. “This would be characterized by imprecision, ambiguity and relativity, since the archipelago is both one and multiple, where each of its islands forms a whole, without losing, however, its specificity. [...] Transversalizing the monolithic and universalist Western perspective with the mixed look, Glissant evaluates the archipelization of the continents constituting regions beyond national boundaries. The cultural regions would be like open islands that transgress geographical borders (Western cartographies) drawing new polycentric and polyphonic cultural cartographies” qtd in Bragança (2011: 4).

<sup>9</sup> The first Barberian map is the result of a strong criticism to the scientific dependency which leads JMB to place three strategic fields for communication research in Latin America, see below, p.13

<sup>10</sup> This cartography is expressed in the Third Map of Mediations, which we will see later.

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He and a group of students could not contain the constant laughter due to a huge “bad taste,” while the public, mostly male, was moved and came to tears. However, the people, outraged because of the laughter, almost chased them away. This event was reported on several occasions, as, for instance, during an interview – Huergo, Morawicki (2016 [2008]: 155) –, when he describes his emotion:

<sup>11</sup> In the original: “El verdadero escalofrío epistemológico residió en darme cuenta que yo había visto otra película, y lo que yo necesitaba era aprender a analizar la que veían ellos, los otros. Insultar a la gente del común por su ignorancia no nos ayuda nada a transformar la sociedad. Y eso fue lo que me puso a ver con la gente lo que a la gente le gusta. Que es la única manera de salir de nuestro mundillo y acercarnos a sus mundos de vida [...]. Salgo del cine traumatizado, traumatizado completamente. Aquí fue que nació *De los medios a las mediaciones*”.

<sup>12</sup> In the original: “Fue a esa experiencia a la que tiempo después llamé pomposamente un escalofrío epistemológico: un escalofrío intelectual que se transformó en ruptura epistemológica por la necesidad de cambiar el lugar desde donde se formulan las preguntas. Y el desplazamiento metodológico indispensable, hecho a la vez de acercamiento etnográfico y distanciamiento cultural, que permitiera al investigador ver-con la gente, y a la gente contar lo visto por ellos. Aquel ejercicio me transformó la vida y, a partir de ahí mis preguntas e investigaciones dejaron de partir de los medios para indagar las mediaciones que entretejen la compleja relación de la gente no sólo con los medios audiovisuales, sino ¿cómo se comunica la gente en la plaza de mercado, en la esquina del barrio, en el estadio?”.

<sup>13</sup> According to Bachelard, theories genesis conditions should be understood from a historical and sociocultural point of view. Refer to Lopes (2010).

<sup>14</sup> In the original: “Era necesario mirar el proceso entero de la comunicación masiva desde ese otro lugar que es lo popular”

The true *epistemological chill* came when I realized that I have watched another movie, and I needed to learn and analyze what they, the others, saw. Insulting ordinary people because of their ignorance does not help transforming society at all. And this was what led me to see with the people what people like. This is the only way of leaving our little world and approaching to their life worlds [...]. I left the cinema traumatized, completely traumatized. It was when *From the media and mediations* was born<sup>11</sup>.

This episode was also matter of a conference entitled *The Unexpected Effects of an Epistemological Chill* (2011a: 5):

It was this experience that I later called pompously *epistemological chill*: an intellectual chill that was turned into an epistemological rupture because of the need for changing the place from which the questions are formulated. And the indispensable methodological displacement, made of ethnographic approximation and cultural distance, which would allow the researcher to see-with the people, and the people to tell what they had seen. That exercise changed my life and from there my questions and investigations stopped starting from the media to investigate the mediations that form the complex people’s relationship, not only with the audiovisual media, but: how do people communicate in the market square, on the neighborhood corner, at the stadium?<sup>12</sup>

This experience, which he called “initiation to the everyday culture of the popular world” [“iniciación a la cultura cotidiana del mundo popular”], boosted JMB to a starting position to study the “mass mediation”, and then to a broader approach, opened to cultural and political dimensions.

But what map could be drawn to explore the *nocturnal map* of these mediations which connect subjects of a culture to the most diverse phenomena of communication? It would have to be a map that proposed an epistemic reflexivity for the research and a rupture in the knowledge of the communication and its consequent (re) construction<sup>13</sup>: “It was necessary to look at the whole process of mass communication from *that other place that is the popular*”<sup>14</sup> (1987a: 13).

With this positioning, the theorist will show that there is *another epistemology, a Latin American one*, anchored into the category of popular-massive, from which it is possible to review the communication processes.

The objective then becomes to review the whole process of communication from another *place*, that of reception, that of the resistances that take place there, that of the appropriation through the uses. It was a matter of changing the place of the questions to enable to research the processes of constitution of the massive from the mediations and the persons, that is, from the articulation between communication practices and social movements.

This Barberian epistemological perspective introduced innovative conceptual displacements within communication studies, which enabled new objects of study and the definition of interdisciplinary methods and dialogues to approach communication phenomena that mix the cult, the popular and the massive.

### **CARTOGRAPHY AS THE BARBERIAN METHOD TO PROMOTE NEW PARAMETERS OF KNOWLEDGE REPRESENTATION**

Before starting the analysis of the cartography of mediations, it is necessary to situate it within the lineage of cartographic thought. We will make some epistemological and methodological notes that bring to light dialogues between JMB and some currents of thought that have been little explicit in the readings of his works. We refer mainly to the theories of cartography and cognitive maps, as well as some authors who are at the base.

First of all, cartography is a *method* or, as Morin (2000: 107) would say, “a support to the thought strategy,” and it is necessary to emphasize the philosophical inspirations that span the procedures suggested, because these only make sense while operationalization of an epistemology proposed for the communication research.

In the method, we can identify the tools through which the look for the new occurs. These tools are the *conceptual migration* and the *construction of metaphors*. Conceptual migration from one domain to another, which guarantees the re-signification and enlargement of concepts and notions, originally disciplinary; and the construction of metaphors for non-linear thought, its openness to different interpretations or reinterpretations to find resonance with the ideas of an interlocutor.

The open character of cartography generates for JMB a context suitable to the crossing of authors and concepts from different areas of knowledge, setting up an interesting field for transdisciplinarity experiments in its broadest sense, that is, in terms of intertwined references and ways of thinking from

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different disciplinary domains, and not just the juxtaposition of “results” or “methodological practices” of several scientists.

The transdisciplinary attitude aims to produce destabilizing interferences between any compartmentalized domains – whether philosophical, theoretical, political, artistic, etc. This destabilizing investment undermines the boundaries of the fields and allows to engender new knowledge and practices through hybridizations (Santos, 1997).

We identify these cartography principles disseminated in JMB’s work, which is known for performing *displacements* of concepts and authors from their traditional places and *ruptures* with reductionist or Manichean approaches. The use of cartography is strategic and historical, appropriate to a contemporaneity defined by uncertainty and ambivalence (Bauman, 1999; 2000).

We do not intend here “to systematize the cartographic method,”<sup>15</sup> but to gather indications or clues of the dialogues between the author and this method which functions as support for his critical theory, while being used as instruments of intervention in the reality of Latin America. This cognitive cartography connects to several fields of knowledge of human and social sciences and is expressed by diagrams of relations, confrontations and crossings between forces, assemblages, enunciations, games of objectification and subjectivation, always in some empirical space of Latin America<sup>16</sup>.

As proposed by Foucault and Deleuze (Deleuze, 1988), cartographic analysis is an instrument for the history of the present, enabling the critique of our time and of what we are. It is not a method perceived as proposition of rigid rules, procedures or protocols of research, but rather as a strategy of critical analysis and political action, a critical view that goes along and describes relationships, trajectories. Such methodological strategy draws not exactly maps in the traditional sense of the term but rather diagrams, which refer to places and movements marked not by determinisms, but by densities, intensities, and to expose the force lines of a given space, which is here the communication field. *The diagram is the map, the cartography, coextensive to all fields of knowledge.* Here we have, in general terms, the principles that rule the Barberian cartography expressed through theoretical-methodological maps of mediations.

Following this argument, another approach we make is between the map of mediations and the rhizome as method.

The main references to cartography as rhizomatic method are in the “Introduction” of *A Thousand plateaus [Mille plateaux]* (Deleuze and Guattari, 1995 [1980]), in which the authors develop the concept of rhizome, making

<sup>15</sup> We did a kind of cartography of the cartographers through the reading of several authors who seemed to be in direct dialogue with the Barberian cartography: Passos; Kastrup; Escóssia (2009); Ferreira (2008); Prado Filho; Teti (2013); Fonseca; Regis (2012); Pozzana (2013); Arellano; Santoyo (2009).

<sup>16</sup> To explore connections between Barberian maps and action research will be a hypothesis to be investigated.

connections with cartography. Cartography is of rhizome's order, and it is exactly why is the antidote to the action of the dispositive.

The rhizome spreads and unfolds in a horizontal plane, in acentric, indefinite and non-hierarchical way, it opens up to the multiplicity of both interpretations and actions, referring to the root formation of potato, grass and weed. It does not operate by the game of opposition between the one and the multiple, it has no beginning, end or center, nor is it formed by opportunities, but by dimensions or variable directions, besides constituting linear multiplicities, at the same time as it consists of multiple lines intersecting each other forming a mobile network, connecting points and positions. We also must take into account the subterranean aspect of a rhizomatic formation, which leads to problem of immediate visibility of this complex and intricate web of relationships.

The rhizomatic perspective traces cartography, drawing a map as a variable diagram. The map is open, connectable in all its dimensions, demountable, reversible, susceptible of receiving modifications constantly.

One of the most important features of the rhizome perhaps is that it always has multiple entries. A map has multiple entries (Ibid.: 22).

Therefore, in a curious way, but not as mere historical coincidence, the same characteristics of JMB's communication theory and Morin's (2000) complexity thought are present in these *operative concepts* that are the dispositive, the rhizome and the cartography, enabling this latter to function as a method of analysis and tool for disassembling the dispositive, since it is guided by the same principles.

According to Deleuze (1990), Foucault indicates several elements and characteristics of a dispositive, indifferent to bring them in a unitary concept. He highlights the strategic nature of the dispositive, as historical apparatus that is formed around acute and strategic problems for a society, such as: madness, criminality, sexuality, health and education, among others.

However, as a broad description of dispositive occur references to aspects of diversity, complexity, mobility, concealment, articulation, strategic character, knowledge  $x$  power  $x$  subjectivation games, and fine, subtle, capillary and subjective ways of operation attributed to dispositive's actions.

On the other hand, the rhizome model serves as methodological orientation for a cartographic approach to be applied on a field, a network, a web of relationships, suggesting that cartography operates in rhizomatic mode, coursing the points, lines and network of the rhizome, applying rhizomatic strategies of analysis and action, making and designing trajectories that are also of action research. Cartography refers to a *strategic-rhizomatic method*.

The similarities of the rhizome model with the Barberian cartography are outstanding, in which we identify fields of forces and relations, movements and processes, and no fixed positions. In the maps, the rhizome model is applied to the communicational field where the mediations are dispositives that cross each other in a constant movement of mutation, renewal and update. In other words, *mediations are historicized dispositives*.

Therefore, it is crucial to note that instead of methodological rules to be applied, JMB uses the idea of *methodological clues*<sup>17</sup>. They are clues to guide the research work, knowing that to follow processes we cannot have the totality of methodological procedures predetermined in advance. The clues that guide the cartographer are like references that contribute to the maintenance of an openness attitude to what is taking place and of calibration of the path in the course of the research

As Passos and Barros (2009:17) clarify:

Cartography as a research method presupposes orientation to the work of the researcher that is not done in a prescriptive way, based on rules that are already ready nor with previously established objectives. However, this is not an action without direction, since the cartography reverses the traditional sense of method without giving up the orientation of the research course. The challenge is to perform a reversal of the traditional sense of method – no longer the path to achieve pre-set goals (*metha-hódos*), but the primacy of the path that traces its goals along the course. The reversal, thus, affirms a *hódos-metá*. The cartographic guideline is made by clues that guide the research course always considering the effects of the research process on the object of the research, on the researcher and on the results.

Armed with this set of clues about the cartographic method, we proceed to the analysis of the methodological foundations of the the Barberian theory of communication which are the maps of mediations.

#### **THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL MAPS OF THE BARBERIAN THEORY OF COMMUNICATION: NOCTURNAL MAP AND THE MAPS OF MEDIATIONS**

The first great synthesis of the theoretical proposal was formulated by the author in the book *From the media to mediations*, published in 1987. However, in spite of the remarkable repercussion of this book, some voices have urged the author to write another book that answered to the reversal of

<sup>17</sup> We discuss the subject in the next topic of the article.

this title, which is *From mediations to the media*, in order to “re-balance”, in the binomial, the weight of the communication that would have been subsumed by culture. Although we do not agree with the reductionism that underlies this proposal, the author may indeed have accepted the incitement, for what we have seen in his writings of recent years is a notable attempt to provide clues to increasingly elucidate (“see-in-between,” as he says) the relations among media and mediations. It is the reading that he himself proposes of the successive maps of the mediations presented in the introductions of the new editions of *De los medios a las mediaciones*<sup>18</sup>.

Indeed, JMB already used the term *mediation* in the 1970s, which appeared to articulate Paulo Freire’s libertarian pedagogy with Paul Ricœur’s hermeneutics. In an interview, he affirmed: “There is no direct, immediate communication, every communication requires tear it off from the immediate use or enjoyment of things, every communication requires otherness and a minimum of distance. Communication is separation and bridge: mediation”<sup>19</sup>(2008: 25).

And later he wrote in the introduction to the latest edition of *De los medios a las mediaciones*, the reasons why he never intended to define the concept *mediations* (2010a) 29):

*Mediations* then refers more to the trace that connects into a net the scattered, distinct and distant points and lines that form a map than to a reality that is verified or to a concept that one has and manipulates. Hence my tenacious resistance to defining *mediations*, and my commitment to unfolding and delimiting them according as communication processes, cultural practices and social movements were becoming closer, through the dense relation of the world of media production in cultural industries with the worlds of mass consumption, yes, but differentiated, active and ones<sup>20</sup>.

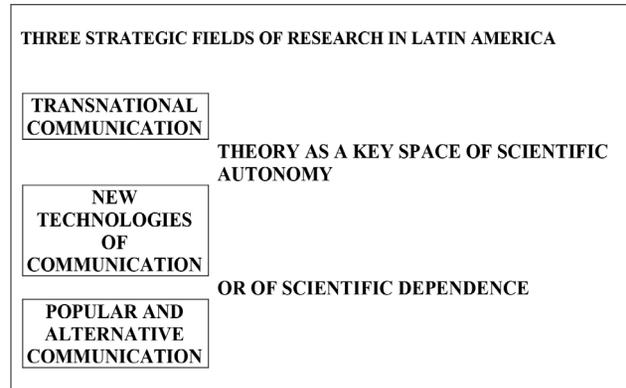
But one may ask: how does take shape the operational translation of the *nocturnal map* metaphor to guide the researcher’s explorations?

It dates from the beginning of the 1980s the moment in which the theoretician begins to assemble questions in a *first map*, presented as a research agenda of *three strategic fields* of research for Latin America (JMB, 1982). It is important to note that in this map the mediation concept still did not appear and, therefore, we do not call it a map of mediations.

<sup>18</sup> I introduced this in my article “Mediação e recepção. Algumas conexões teóricas e metodológicas nos estudos latino-americanos de comunicação” [Mediation and reception. Some theoretical and methodological connections in Latin American communication studies] (Lopes, 2014).

<sup>19</sup> In the original: “No existe la comunicación directa, inmediata, toda comunicación exige el arrancarse al uso o goce inmediato de las cosas, todo comunicar exige alteridad y un mínimo de distancia. La comunicación es separación y puente: mediación”.

<sup>20</sup> In the original: “*Mediaciones* remite entonces más al trazo que pone en red los dispersos, distintos y alejados, puntos y líneas que tejen un mapa que a una realidad que se constata o a un concepto que se tiene y se maneja. De ahí mi tenaz resistencia a definir *mediaciones*, y mi apuesta por ir las des-plegando y acotando a medida que los procesos de comunicación, las prácticas culturales y los movimientos sociales *iban haciéndose cercanos* mediante la puesta en relación densa del mundo de la producción mediática en las industrias culturales con los mundos del consumo, masivo sí pero diferenciado, activo y ciudadano”.



**FIGURE 1 – Jesús Martín-Barbero’s Methodological Map, 1982  
(before mediations)<sup>21</sup>**

Source: Retos a la investigación de comunicación en América Latina.  
*Comunicación y Cultura* 9, 1982.

<sup>21</sup> Map drawn by this author based on JMB’s article *Retos a la investigación de comunicación en América Latina*. [Challenges to communication research in Latin America](1982).

This map was the result of disagreements then present in the community of Latin American researchers about the so called “out of place ideas,” which was the uncritical transposition of analysis models from Anglo-Saxon and European countries, as JMB (2009a) emphasized. The three strategic fields of research pointed out were: 1) *Transnational communication*. The tension between transnational economic processes and national power structures stimulated him to think of “production structures” as “dispositives connecting technology, market, and productive routines” (1982:10); 2) *New communication technologies*. The arrival of “new technologies” in Latin America led him to study the “non-contemporaneity between technologies and their social uses”: “by placing technology in the singular and cultures in the plural, we activate the signs of identity that pass through usages – including anachronistic and aberrant – because they make visible the diversity of modes of appropriation and, therefore, of our cultures” (1982:12); 3) *Popular and alternative communication*. The debates on alternative and popular communication have encouraged him to look at “other forms of communication by which the word of dominated groups is released, so that what really matters is not the media but popular creativity. Understanding as popular, the memory of another economy as political as symbolic, the memory of another cultural matrix often denied” (JMB, 1982:15).

### Methodological map of mediations

JMB’s strategic-rhizomatic method indicates the direction in his maps of mediations:

1. from cultural mediations of communication to communicative mediations of culture (maps 1 and 2)
2. communicative mediations of the cultural mutations of our time (maps 3 and 4).

There are multiple entries in Barberian cartography. Mapped reality presents itself as a moving map, in such a way that everything that has the appearance of *the same* is only a concentrate of meaning, knowledge and power, which may sometimes have the illegitimate pretension to be the center of organization of the rhizome. However, a rhizome has no center. In an acentric system, how to conceive methodological direction?

It is also worth to recall that there are as many possible cartographies as fields to be mapped, which raises the need for a strategic methodological proposition for each situation or context to be analyzed. From this perspective, method and object are singular and correlative figures, produced in the same movement, and that it is not a question of methodology as a set of pre-established rules and procedures, but as a flexible strategy of critical analysis (Fonseca and Kirst, 2003).

And, as we pointed out, Barberian cartography refers to a *strategic-rhizomatic method*, and mediations must be seen as dispositives that intersect in a constant movement of mutation, renewal and updating.

### **Mediations as “operative concept” and concept in construction**

We find a set of principles assigned by JMB to the concept of mediation

1. Communication is today a *matter of mediations* rather than of media.
2. Mediations constitute a *comprehensive theoretical perspective* of production and product, as well reception.
3. The whole process of communication is articulated *from mediations*.

Following temporally the concept, we note that:

1. mediations are initially seen as a research perspective *on and from* reception;
2. the importance of mediations for a *theory of communication* is progressively affirmed;
3. there is not a *unique* definition for mediation;
4. mediation is a plural notion: *mediations*.

As the author affirms (1992: 20):

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Mediations are this “place” from which one can understand the interaction between the space of production and that of reception: what [the media] produces does not respond solely to the requirements of the industrial system and to commercial stratagems, but also to the requirements that come from the web of culture and ways of seeing.

Given mediation is an operative concept, we will trace its course through four maps that are constitutive of the theoretical-methodological foundations of the Barberian theory of communication.

### METHODOLOGICAL MAPS OF MEDIATIONS

The reading of mediations proposed by the author himself is that it must be done through the successive maps of the mediations which are presented in the introductions of the different editions of *De los medios a las mediaciones* (1987a, 1998, 2010a, 2017)<sup>22</sup>.

It is essential to follow the changes that the maps of mediations present along the Barberian work, since they seem to be a moving notion, which follow permanently the transformations of society, and particularly those of communication.

In short, the notion of mediation would, allow to inscribe the phenomena in their relations and interdependencies, to make bridges between multiple mediations, besides to connect communication processes to the subjects and to think the place of each of these subjects in the structuring processes and the logics that mobilize them. (Rueda, 2010: 90)

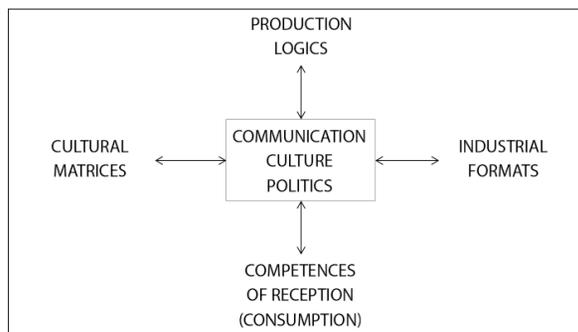
#### **The first map of mediations: Cultural Mediations of Communication, 1987**

The first map allows, in synthesis, to make visible the relations and the logic of the power that underpin the functioning of the media (JMB had as paradigm the television). And just like mapped objects do, mediations will indicate their importance through greater or less intensity traces.

All these principles boost the development of the *first methodological map of mediations*, of 1987, in which JMB proposes the epistemological approach of *communication from the culture* or the study of *cultural mediations of communication*.

This is shown in Figure 2.

<sup>22</sup> We made this mapping through the three introductions to the different editions of the book *From the Media to Mediations*. So far there are three introductions: in the first edition, of 1987, published by Editora Gustavo Gili, Barcelona; in the fifth edition, of 1998, published by the Convenio Andrés Bello, Bogota; and the one published in 2010 by Anthropos Editorial, Barcelona and Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana de México. All these three introductions were gathered in the little book *INTRODUCCIONES De los Medios a las Mediaciones*, published by the Friedrich Ebert Foundation, in 2010.



**FIGURE 2 – First Methodological Map of Mediations – 1987a<sup>23</sup>**

**Cultural Mediations of Communication**

Sources: Ed. Gustavo Gili, Barcelona, 1987a, p. 229-242; Ed. UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, 1997, p. 287-303; *Introducciones*: Introducción 1, p. 5-8

<sup>23</sup> Map drawn by the author based on the pages of JMB cited in Spanish and Brazilian editions

**Cultural Mediations of Communication**

*Constitutive mediations: Communication-Culture-Politics*

**Two axes:**

1. **diachronic or historical:** *cultural matrices and industrial formats*
2. **synchronous:** to the *logics of production* correspond the *competences of reception*

In the center of the map are the *constituent mediations: communication, culture and politics*<sup>24</sup>, which refer to two axes: the diachronic or historical axis, between *cultural matrices and industrial formats*; and the synchronous axis, between *logics of production and competences of reception (consumption)*<sup>25</sup>.

About the three constitutive mediations, JMB affirms:

I think of the urgent need to study the communication-culture-political articulations, of the transformations of political culture and the protagonistic role that the mass media scenario has there: at the same time, as a scenario of social recognition and of perversion of the social bond, the crisis of representation, and the new ways of representing<sup>26</sup>. (2016: 145)

The *Cultural Matrix* mediation acts as a semantic mark of a thing from which shapes generatively others. And it also summons heterogeneous images. More than a metaphor, it has the informational mathematical sense of matrix,

<sup>24</sup> JMB's thought is always focused on the horizon of communication, culture and politics.

<sup>25</sup> We will not dwell upon the maps mediations contents, already divulged in many publications, since our perspective is that of the methodological deconstruction of Barberian cartographies and maps.

<sup>26</sup> In the original: "Pienso en la urgencia estratégica de estudiar las articulaciones comunicación-cultura-política, en las transformaciones de la cultura política y el papel protagonista que ahí tiene el escenario massmediático: a la vez como escenario del reconocimiento social y de la pervisión del lazo social, de la crisis de la representación y de las nuevas formas de representar".

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like an *algorithm* capable to order numerical series and generate new series from a particular distribution in axes of abscissas and ordinates<sup>27</sup>.

<sup>27</sup> According to study cited in Huergo and Morawicki (2016: 174-176), there is no antecedent for the term *cultural matrix* in authors who influenced JMB on the cultural, such as Certeau, Hall, Williams, Thompson or Bourdieu

### The second map of mediations: Communicative Mediations of Culture, 1998

The second map is from the late 1990s, when becomes evident a complex theory of mediations that goes beyond the configuration of a theory of reception. Now, the map aims to study culture from communication, displacing the study from *cultural mediations of communication* to *communicative mediations of culture*. The perspective is not reversed in the sense of going from mediations to media, but from culture to communication. It is the very notion of communication that is rethought. It is given greater epistemological density to the knowledge that comes from communication.

This is shown in Figure 3.

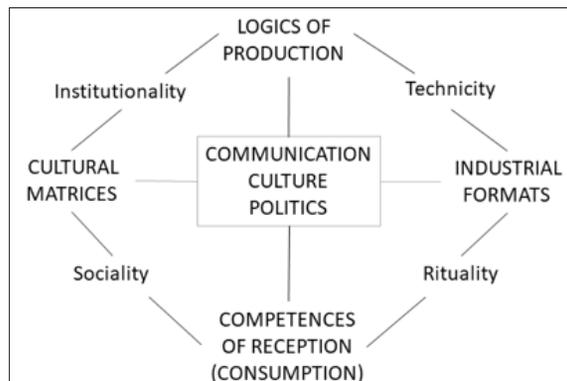


FIGURE 3 – Second Methodological Map of Mediations – 1988  
Communicative Mediations of Culture

Source: Convenio Andrés Bello, Bogotá, 1998; Ed. UFRJ, Rio de Janeiro, 2001, p. 11-22; *Introducciones*. Introducción 2, p. 13-21

***This second map adds to the previous one:  
From Culture to Communication:  
epistemological density of communication knowledge  
Multiple Mediations:  
Institutionality, sociality, technicality, rituality***

Through this map, which JMB called *clues to see-between media and mediations*, it is possible to operationalize the analysis of any social phenomenon

that relates communication, culture and politics, laying up as a dimension of the articulation between producers, media, messages, receptors and culture.

Mediations should be understood as structuring processes that configure and reconfigure both the logics of production and the logics of use. They require simultaneously thinking about the space of production and the time of consumption, both articulated by everyday life (use/consumption/practices) and by the specificity of technological and discursive dispositives of the media involved.

Given the need to *decoupage* the concept in order to make it methodologically manageable, we affirm the following principles:

1) The central mediation is of indissoluble triadic nature: culture-communication-politics, which we call *constituent or founding mediations* because:

More than politics objects, communication and culture are today a primordial field of political battle: the strategic scenario that requires politics to regain its symbolic dimension – its capacity to represent the bond between citizens, the feeling of belonging to a community – to face the erosion of the collective order. (JMB, 2001: 15)

2) In the map, mediations are the spaces that link in a dialectical relation the logics of production and consumption, industrial formats and cultural matrices. The cartography moves into two axes: the diachronic one, or long-term history – between *cultural matrices and industrial formats*; and the synchronous one, between *logics of production and competences of reception*. These constitute the four *basic mediations* (of more intensity) which are articulated through a kind of *sub-mediations* (of less intensity), all articulated as *multiple mediations*.

3) In the intersections of the two axes, the map designs four spaces to *decentralize* our researchers' perspective, and where other mediations are located. The relationship between *cultural matrices* and the *logics of production* is mediated by different regimes of *institutionality* (existing interests and powers, public and private), while the relationship between *cultural matrices* and *competences of reception* is mediated by several forms of *sociality* (social bonds, everyday relationships of people as agents). Between *logics of production* and *industrial formats* appears the mediation of *technicity* (new context of the media; technical, perceptive and aesthetic operators) and between *industrial formats* and the *competences of reception* emerges *rituality* (authorized ways of looking, listening, reading, connected to the social memory of taste, class, habits).

These are the *clues* that constitute a theoretical programmatic proposal that draws open epistemological spaces with the promise of visualization of a common territory and points of fundamental communicational issues.

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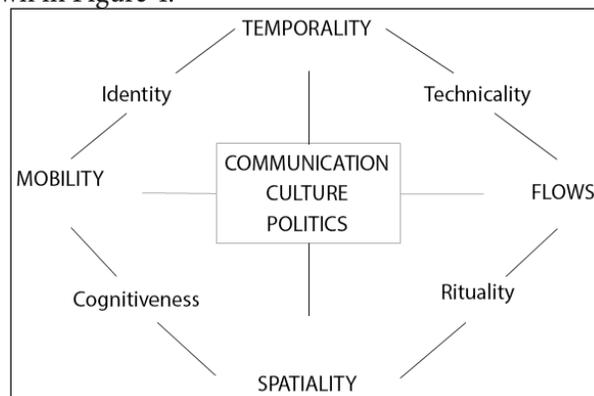
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It does not seem to be by chance that, from a systemic point of view, the object of study of JMB are the mediations, firstly interwoven of communication processes and materialities in a particular social and cultural environment; and in second place, being an instrument of *discovery* of false polarities. And it is not by chance that every object of communicational study can be methodologically approached by a researcher from the perspective of mediations.

The importance of this second map lies in recognizing that communication is mediating all forms of cultural and political life in society. Therefore, the perspective is not reversed in the sense of going from media to mediations nor mediations to media, but to see the complex web of multiple mediations. It was necessary for the author to rethink the very notion of communication, a notion that leaves the engineering paradigm and connects with the *interfaces*, with the *nodes* of the interactions, with the communication-interaction, with the *inter-mediated* communication<sup>28</sup>. And being language increasingly intermediated, the study must be clearly interdisciplinary. That is, it is an epistemology that puts in crisis the very object of study. According to the author, what existed was that communication identity was found in the media, and today it does not occur only in the media. Communication occurs in the interaction that enables the interface of all the senses, therefore, it is an *inter-mediation*, which is a concept to think the hybridization of languages and of media.

<sup>28</sup> According to Bastos (2012), the shift from communication research to mediation research in Latin America is somewhat analogous to the shift from information studies to studies of signs in France, and from information studies to media studies in Germany.

**The third map of mediations: Communicative and Cultural Mutations I, 2010**  
It is shown in Figure 4:



**FIGURE 4 – Third Methodological map of Mediations – 2010**  
**Contemporary Communications and Cultural Mutations – I**

Source: Anthropos, Barcelona, 2010a; Entrevista à *Revista Pesquisa FAPESP*, 163, São Paulo, set. 2009b; *Introducción* 3, p. 27-41.

**This map adds to the previous ones:**  
***New axes: temporality/spatiality and mobility/flows***  
***New mediations: identity, cognitiveness***

Focusing on the vertical and horizontal axes, this third map connects the previous two to the investigation of contemporary mutations. The basic mediations are other and appear for the first time: in the vertical axis are *temporality* and *spatiality*, and in the horizontal, *mobility* and *flows*.

Following the author, contemporary *temporality* configures the crisis of the modern experience of time, manifested in the profound transformation of the temporal structure, in the cult of the present, in the weakening of the historical relationship with the past and in the confusion of the times that bind us to the simultaneity of the present.

*Spatiality* breaks down into multiple spaces: the inhabited space of the territory made of proximity and belonging; the communicational space woven by electronic networks; the imagined space of the nation and its identity; the experienced space of the modern city, with the subjectivity that emerges from the new relations with the city and their ways of appropriation.

*Mobility*, the incessant transit of migrations and virtual navigations by the internet users, brings us the emergence of new figures of sensitivity. And the *flows* that, as those of the migrants inducing social and political disorders in the city are also the flows of images, information, languages and virtual writings that destabilize literate and school culture. Into non-spatialized world of internet users, networks constitute new spaces of sociality.

Through the mediation of *technicity* it is possible to understand technique as constitutive, an immanent dimension of anthropological notion of communication. We take this expression not in the usual sense relating this notion to the discipline of anthropology, but in the Gramscian meaning of the *elementally human*. JMB justifies in this mediation the use of the term *technicity* and not that of *technique*, since what happens today does not give due account to the Greek notion of *techné*, which refers to the skill, the ability to do, but also to argue, to express, to create and to communicate through material forms; skill which is updated on new ways of dealing with language. However, the notion of *technique* was driven to the meaning of apparatus, as objectification of *techné* in machines or products. Neither of these meanings of *technique* seems to be sufficient today.

Is because in *technique* there are new ways of perceiving, seeing, hearing, reading, learning, new languages, new ways of expression, of textualities and scriptures. The meaning of *technicity* is not related to the idea of mere technological apparatus, but to competence in language, to materialities of

discourse referring to the constitution of grammars that create formats and media products. Technicity is not the array of the instrument, but of the knowledge, of the production of discursive innovation practices, of social perception modes. It moves away, therefore, from the notion of technique as a mere apparatus, recovering the original meaning of the Greek term *techné*. There would be a kind of *intermediation of communicative experience*, that is, of many interfaces between the different media and the different communicative spaces of consumption and creation (JMB, 2014). Here is implied the refusal of the instrumental sense of technology quite settled in communication studies.

Recognizing the spread that technicity has today, no longer as an instrument but embedded in the very structure of cognition/logos and of everyday life, we believe that is here a strong *methodological clue* given by JMB.

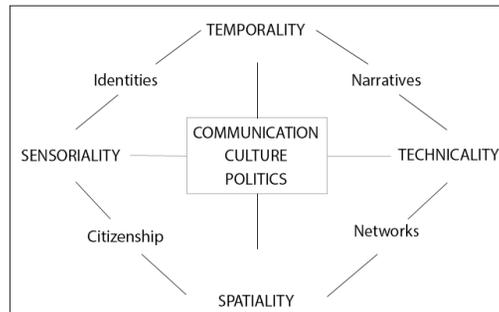
Digital technology displaces knowledge by modifying both the cognitive and institutional status of the conditions of knowledge, leading to a strong blurring of the boundaries between reason and imagination, knowledge and information, art and science, specialized knowledge and common knowledge.

Among other factors, this elapses in particular from the *technological competitiveness* and of the uses of technicality, where the capacity to innovate and to create is largely present. Just because technicity is less subject of apparatuses than of perceptive operators and discursive skills. According to Scolari (2008), it is a cognitive and creative technicity, because confusing communication with techniques and media results as deforming as thinking that they are external and accessory to communication.

This is the landscape that features the contemporary society with its “technological mutation began to set up a new communicative ecosystem” (Martín-Barbero, 2010a: 222).

#### The fourth map of mediations: Communicative and Cultural Mutations II, 2017

It is shown in Figure 5:



**FIGURE 5 – Fourth Methodological Map of Mediations – 2017  
Contemporary Communicative and Cultural Mutations – 2**

Source: JMB interview to Omar Rincón, 2017

**This map adds to the previous ones:***New axes: technicality/sensoriality**New mediations: narratives, networks, citizenship*

Along the historicity of the issues brought to the researcher, JMB lands on another and newer map to continue focusing the *communicational and cultural mutations of our time*. The theoretical density given to the mediations of *technicality* and *sensoriality* is represented in their new statute of *basic mediations* to which they are raised in the fourth map.

Through dialogues with Merleau Ponty, Stuart Hall, Walter Benjamin and Milton Santos, among others, JMB points out that today technicality implies to reconfigure the mediations of *sensoriality* and *sociality*:

I think it is crucial to rethink the relations between the universal and the particular from this new place that the world has become, the second<sup>29</sup> challenge I have set out is to rethink the technique. Which means, first of all, to think the hypertext and palimpsest together, and, secondly, to assume without fear or cheats complex, the challenge posed by the sensitivity of the youngest and their cognitive and expressive empathy with those narratives enabled by technologies. And, thirdly, to think about technique is to begin the recognition of a new figure of reason, that of the computer image that stops being mere appearance, mistake, expression of irrational dimension, to start becoming a constituent of the new ways of constructing knowledge<sup>30</sup>. (2011b: 118)

It is about a new rhizomatic map in which these mediations have become basic and un-fold and they can be connected in different directions and densities. Depending on the research problem, mediations can be mobilized and articulated with *identities, networks, citizenship* and *narratives*. We are facing several clues that will surely attend the phenomena of the contemporary communication research.

In this last map, JMB projects his present interest in the theory of sensitivity which, we think, leads him to dialogue with Jacques Rancière and *The sharing of the sensible* in two ways. First, in the lineage begun by Benjamin and the emergence of a *new sensorium* in the modernity and that arrives to Rancière. Similar to him, JMB refuses to reduce the aesthetic to a speculative thought, or circumscribe it to the scope of the artistic, but rather extends it to a reflection connected to the very different regimes of sensitivity that coexist in a society, which leads him to meet with a regime that had not been traditionally considered aesthetic – the melodrama. Second, the Barberian cartography gives a view of

<sup>29</sup> The first is the process of globalization.

<sup>30</sup> In the original: “Considero crucial repensar las relaciones entre lo universal y lo particular desde ese nuevo lugar en que se ha convertido el mundo, el segundo desafío que enuncié es el de repensar la técnica. Lo que significa en primer lugar, pensar juntos el hipertexto y el palimpsesto, y en segundo lugar, asumir sin miedos, ni tramposos complejos, el desafío que nos plantea la sensibilidad de los más jóvenes y sus empatías cognitivas y expresivas con las narrativas que las tecnologías hacen posible. Y en tercer lugar, pensar la técnica es iniciar el reconocimiento de una nueva figura de razón, la de la imagen informática que deja de ser mera apariencia, engaño, expresión de la dimensión irracional, para entrar a formar parte constitutiva de los nuevos modos de construir conocimiento”.

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the disposition of individuals' positions and competences, since his epistemology (let's remember the *epistemological chill*) is based on the decentralized view of the scholar who contemplates the margins and the value of the communication flow and the cultural exchange. Still, the mediation of *sociality* reveals traces that will mark the different experiences with the sensible, or with "taking part in the sharing" mentioned by Rancière. Therefore, cartography can be an instrument to promote new parameters for representing the sharing of the sensible.

The construction of the Barberian cartography has a dialectical nature, insofar while one map dialogs with the sources of the previous maps, we have the proposal of a new map. Therefore, one map does not replace the previous one, but it appropriates, reinterprets and adds this one in a process that demands a thought of more complexity. Seeing that cartography to operate the rhizomatic way, points, lines and network of the rhizome are crossed, using strategies that must be applied and reviewed in function of the phenomena under study. Cartography refers to a *strategic-rhizomatic method*.

The historicization of mediations within the Barberian theory of communication leads to distance from metaphysical certainties and from positivist rationalism to propose categories possibly transitional to be able to deal with a mutable reality but susceptible to intervention<sup>31</sup>.

<sup>31</sup> Identifying the Barberian cartography to the Foucauldian make/can binomial and to the facet of action-research is a hypothesis that must be object of new reflections.

### **BRIEF FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: WHAT SHOULD WE DO WITH THE BARBERIAN MAPS IN EMPIRICAL RESEARCH ON COMMUNICATION?**

This question is object for a new article. But, I did not want to stop asking it, even as brief final considerations of this text.

The incorporation of these maps of mediations into communication studies gives rise to new methodological places. The appropriation of the maps by the researcher depends on the methodological strategy that he adopts in a given empirical research, in order that his choices can fall on certain mediations and not on others depending on the emphasis they gain in the analytical approach. Since the research on telenovela reception (Lopes et al., 2002), which has become a reference for empirical work based on the methodology of mediations, it has been demonstrated that the Barberian maps should be used strategically in communication research. When a certain communicational product (television news, telenovela, advertising) is object of study, from its *industrial format*, the researcher can trigger elements of its *narrative* in articulation with the *logics of production* exploring the *technicity*. He can also articulate the communicational phenomenon with the *competences of reception* through the mediations of *rituality* or *sensoriality*. It is therefore

a matter to draw up a specific strategic use of the maps of mediations for a specific empirical research. ■

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