

Media in capital territorialization¹

Meios de comunicação na territorialização do capital

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ABSTRACT

This paper discusses the fundamental role of the media in the territorialization of capital. To accomplish the task, the paper makes a theoretical effort and moves the concepts of territory and territorialization of capital, in view of the assumption that the media are means by which capitalism is realized. It seeks to demonstrate, through the analysis of large media conglomerates and their ramifications, that the economic and political dynamics that guide the territorialization of media organizations form the discourses that are produced by themselves. Even in times of popularization of the internet and apparent democratization of communication, stopping access to the means of producing information is still a form of territorial isolation and the maintenance of power of local leaders.

Keywords: Territorialization of capital, means of production, media conglomerates

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RESUMO

O texto problematiza o papel fundamental dos meios de comunicação na territorialização do capital. Para tanto, faz uma reflexão teórica, na qual discute o conceito de território e territorialização do capital, a partir do entendimento de que os meios de comunicação são meios de produção. Busca-se demonstrar, por meio da análise de grandes conglomerados midiáticos e suas ramificações, que as dinâmicas econômicas e políticas que orientam a territorialização das organizações midiáticas formatam os produtos discursivos por elas produzidos. Mesmo em tempos de popularização da internet e aparente democratização da comunicação, deter o acesso aos meios de produção da informação ainda é uma forma de isolamento territorial e manutenção de poder de líderes locais.

Palavras-chaves: Territorialização do capital, meios de produção, conglomerados de mídia



INTRODUCTION

THIS ARTICLE PROBLEMATIZES the fundamental role of the media in the territorialization of capital. Theoretically, to do so, some key concepts are articulated that allow for the analysis of the dynamics in the territorial relations of large media conglomerates and their ramifications.

The text was set up in three parts. The first moment concerns the critique of the concept of territory and the territorialization of capital. The second discusses the media as a means of production, communication within the work environment, and then deals with media oligopolies as models of organization in the economic sector of communication. Finally, the analysis takes on a local scale when dealing with the media as a means of production within the process of territorialization of capital and maintenance of municipalities isolation. This subject often raises questions, brought up by the advent of the internet and mobile technologies, given the impression that all people are connected and have the same means of access to cultural, technological, and information goods. As we will see, this is nothing but appearances.

THE QUESTION OF THE TERRITORY

In *Pour une géographie du pouvoir*, Claude Raffestin (1993) seeks to understand how political geography was born and developed, in order to build a theoretical and methodological proposal for contemporary studies of human geography. In this process, he began his discussions based on a criticism of Ratzel, a German geographer and ethnologist who, according to Raffestin, founded the term *political geography*, in 1897. Ratzel (1990) presupposed the existence of a close relationship between the land and the State, which would then compose the nucleus of power in a territory. To that extent, there would be an interfusion of State and power. For the author, as the State represents its people, the power struggle cannot take place against itself, its people, and other internal powers, but only between States defending their territories or seeking to expand them. This theoretical formulation culminated in the concept of *geopolitics*.

According to Raffestin, the term 'geopolitics' was coined by Rudolf Kjellen, in a globalization perspective of the State. In 1916, Kjellen published an article entitled "The State as a Living Organism," in which he analyzes the set of political forces perceived as a struggle between ethnic groups or confrontations between communities, the rivalries of power over the territory (Boulanger, 2014; Raffestin, 1993). The notion of geopolitics is based on a strategic study, especially for military power, princes, and traders. Therefore, under this conception, it is a policy of war.

In the theoretical-methodological development, Ratzel created generic categories of analysis on the territory that, according to Raffestin, allow for the reading of a geography of the totalitarian State that would only deal with clashes between two or several powers: the war between States. In this sense, when criticizing Ratzel, Raffestin (1993) problematizes that “other forms of conflict, such as revolutions, which question the State in its interiority, have no place in his system. The underlying ideology is exactly that of the triumphant State, of the power of the State” (p. 16). For Raffestin, Ratzel’s formulations, while considering only the power of the State, give rise to a problem for the studies of geography, first, because they only portray one level of spatial analysis, “the one which is limited by borders”. Also, because when we regard the State as a higher power, there is the need to define what the lower powers would be, and this is not presented in Ratzel’s formulations. In Raffestin’s words (1993),

with the increasingly integrating and globalizing character of the State, these levels materialize, above all, as spatial landmarks intended to spread State power rather than articulated levels of the exercise of inferior powers. That is, the scale is given by the State. In a way, it is a one-dimensional geography, which is not acceptable as there are multiple powers manifested within regional or local strategies. Also, State power is treated as an evident fact that needs no explanation, since it is found within the space crystallizations that sufficiently manifest their action... Finally, there is a rupture between the dynamics that can be granted to such State power and the forms that may be observed within the operational field of a territory. (pp. 16-17)

This way, starting from Lefebvre (1972), – for whom there is only political power –, Raffestin (1993) advocates for a geography of power that does not shelter the political fact under the State; a political geography that considers “organizations that develop within a space-time framework that contributes to the organization or... disorganization” (p.18). For him, new semantic categories are necessary for the comprehension of the existing relations inside the territory, which cannot necessarily be generalized.

In line with these discussions, Marcos Aurélio Saquet (2007), Raffestin’s pupil, maintains that there are territorialities concerning economic, political, cultural, and natural relations that find themselves within a historical continuity and discontinuity process. A “multiscale movement concerning the different ways of acting by individuals, a relational procedural movement of appropriation, domination, and material production (i) of the territory” (p. 158). To that extent, not only the totality and complexity of the process must be considered, but also its particularity, thus, the debate initiated by Raffestin has expanded. According to Saquet (2007),



there is a plurality of subjects within the territory, in a reciprocal, contradictory, and unity relationship with each other, *in* and *with the* place, as well as *with other* places and people – identities. The basic elements of the territory, that is, the circulation and communication networks, power relations, contradictions, and identity, are interconnected, merging into one another in an inseparable relational (multitemporal and multiscale) plot. (pp. 158-159)

For Saquet and Raffestin, there are different territorialities in motion that communicate, confront each other, and negotiate consensus. A complex exchange concerning the ways of living and relating in space, within a historical time experienced in different ways depending on each subject's stage of life. It is, therefore, an exercise of powers that are not restricted to the power of the State and that transform the territory.

A highlight is necessary regarding the territorialization of capital. Raffestin approaches work as any territoriality, and there is the need to particularize it, as within the process that autonomizes and turns work, land, and money into merchandise (Marx, 2013) through economic and extra-economic violence, the territorialization of capital decisively affects any kind of sovereignty.

Capitalist logic presents itself as universal, manifested in the territory in a particular way. Regarding the local daily performance of the territorialization of capital, symbolic singularities – circulating values, identities, rituals, etc. – occur, materially, in and as relations of production. That is, as Raymond Williams (2011) noted in his effort to overcome the reflex theory between base and superstructure, the circulating symbolic material is a productive force of life already established as social relations, effective social practices which, at the same time, are both determinants for economic relations and determined by them, since the circulating symbolic values occur as a dispute between the maintenance, transformation, or annihilation of the production method.

That is why the production relations are crossed by a universally woven logic that is also procedurally constituted. When crossing the other forms of territorialization, such territoriality articulates with local historical aspects, naturalizing a way of life as the only possible one. Effectively, it is a hegemony sustained by a symbolic sharing, socially constructed within everyday life; therefore, a communicated action.

The human, natural, and historical being (Marx, 2004), through education and social conformation, develops its thinking, resulting in the description of their reality. But thinking does not happen without the support of language; to that extent, for Schaff (1974),

language, which is a specific reflection of reality, is also, in a sense, the creator of our image of the world. In the sense that our articulation of the world is at least, to some extent, the function of not only an individual but also a social experience, transmitted to the individual through education and, above all, language. (pp. 254-255)

Language mediates human relationships. Through language, man learns to master the manipulation of objects (natural and social) essential to life. This learning carries with it the assimilation of social relations, initiated by human contact with groups (family, school, work, church, neighborhood). The latter, in turn, mediates the individual's contact with traditions, customs, values, and daily practices. This way, the man develops an individual memory from a collective one, in which memories are made permanent. And, in contact with other humans, the individual shapes their "consciousness of the Us", as well as a "consciousness of the Self" (Heller, 2004, pp. 17-41). As an individual and a singular being, the man is also a generic being, as they are part of nature and a "product and extension of their social relations; an heir and preserver of human development" (Heller, 2004, p. 21). Communication is, therefore, perceived as a dialogical process between subjects producing knowledge from their local and private realities. In other words, communication is an ontological element of the human being and a condition of sociability through the sharing of meaning about the world (Wolton, 1996; Motter, 2002; Sodr , 2014; Figaro, 2018). Thus, understanding communication as an ontological element of the social being (Luk cs, 2012) means, in an exchange with Figaro (2018), abandoning theories that approach communication as consensus, acceptance, or any value related to the answer.

What is communicated in social relations starts an action affecting the environment that manifests itself materially within the production processes' everyday life. According to Raymond Williams (2011), this is because communication and its material means are "intrinsic to all distinctly human forms of work and social organization, thus constituting indispensable elements for both the productive forces and social relations of production" (p. 69).

In this sense, the forms of communication, from the most common – related to everyday language – to the most advanced of communication technologies, play an intrinsic part in the territorialization of capital. They are related to an action without which no territorialization process could take place. For example, the security policy in Brazil during the military government relied on a communication policy to guarantee the government's power across the national territory. Or a more contemporary example; the internet is a communication network bound to the idea of globalization – more than that, economic globalization is only



possible through the symbolic globalization provided not only but mainly by the telematic networks of information distribution. The internet has enhanced the compression of time and space (Harvey, 2001) and reticular connections. It has become essential for the current dynamics of capital and its mobility. Even today, the dispute for media regulation in Brazil and Latin America shows the relevance of the media in defending the sovereignty of States and the cultural diversity of their peoples. Inside the work environment microcosm, also a territory of disputes (Figaro, 2018), for example, daily communication between workers, conflicts and negotiations, work prescriptions, and information that guide production flows and routines are also permeated by and participate in the territorialization of capital. In this process, the media has a role in the construction of the imaginary, as well as a means of production with its own territorialization processes.

MEDIA AS A MEANS OF PRODUCTION

According to Raymond Williams (2011), the media as a means of production are subordinated to historical development. First because, both as a product and a means of production, they have a specific history of development that is linked to the general historical periods of societies' productive and technical capacities. Second because, as it is in constant transformation, the media have historical relations with the "general complex of productive forces and general social relations, which are produced by them and whose general productive forces both produce and reproduce" (pp. 69-70). However, despite this relationship, there is what Williams named ideological blocks; conceptions that sometimes separate the media from the rest of the productive forces, and sometimes conceive them as a force *per se*, capable of establishing the remainder of the productive forces, giving rise to an eventual shortsightedness towards the complexity of the process.

The first block concerns the equivalence of means of communication specifically as media, there is, a transmission device that connects an emitter to a receiver, usually passive. This postulate has already been challenged – and strictly, adjusted – by contemporary studies on communication sciences, as the message recipient does not react to stimuli, on the contrary, it elaborates and takes actions from a historical context, be it social, economic, political, of identity, from a natural who experiences a social process.

The second block concerns the distinction between *natural* and *mass* media, the former being related to daily communication in face-to-face situations and the latter, the one performed by means of electronic or mechanical devices. This shortsightedness ignores the communicative process built by language in social

relations, which are manifested mainly through the word – since thought needs language. The word carries an understanding of the world, as it was socially constructed, and articulates a point of view. Making it an ideological icon, reflecting and refracting the society in which the subject participates (Volochinov, 2004). Mass media does not sustain a naturalized way of acting, this is the work of social relations, the so-called communicative relations. The separation between mass media and the natural means of communication, or everyday language, disregards the fact that the mass media includes everyday forms of language. On the other hand, the grouping of mechanical and electronic means as media hides the variations between the different types of means, in the words of Williams (2011), “under the cover of a formula taken from capitalist practice, in which an ‘audience’ or a ‘public,’ always socially specific and differentiated, is perceived as a ‘mass market’ of opinion and consumption” (p. 71).

The third block consists of the abstract and *a priori* separation between media and the means of production. For Williams (2011),

it relates, first, to the specialized use of time “production,” approached as if it only manifested through capitalist production – that is, the production of goods or “for the market,” in general, in which all goods produced take the form of isolable and expendable objects. Within Marxism, this position is related to and even dependent on mechanical formulations of the base and superstructure, in which the inherent role of the media in all forms of production, including the production of objects, is ignored, and Communication becomes a second-order process or a second stage, which joins the process only *after* the decisive productive and socio-material relations have been established. (pp. 72-73)

If communication is an ontological element of the social being, it is also necessarily constitutive of the capitalist means of production, as it is present in the prescriptions and techniques that guide the work in its planning, as well as in the division of tasks and forms of hierarchical manifestation. As noted by Fíguro (2018), “above all, communication is the link that allows the subject to work and express as a social being” (p. 179). To that extent, the means of production are intrinsically related to the media and the way through which action is shared. However, while carrying out such separation, only the means of production arise as a production form. Communication, especially mass communication, appears after this process and only as an ideological disseminator.

For Williams (2011), two aspects of this position need revising. First, so that it is possible to perceive that the base and the superstructure are not subsumed in one another, one as a determinant (base)² and the other as determined

²The author uses the base nomenclature, instead of infrastructure. His discussions problematize the idea of a determinant base and a determined superstructure, a critical analysis of the currents of what he calls deterministic and vulgar Marxism.



(superstructure), as necessarily universal forms and relations. Quite the contrary, they must be historically perceived in movement, in their contradictions and dynamics, as they relate to relationships taking place between real humans, in their complexity; spatially experienced from given social and natural conditions but transformed through the existing means of production and communication systems. This transformation can either keep or modify the *status quo*, depending on the logic and forms of distribution of the production process among people in space. As an example of this dynamic, there are the media conglomerates belonging to political and economic groups, holders of the broadcasting licenses, which adapt hegemonic values of the media and capital monopoly for the development of their own power territories, at the same time they feed back into the system. Within the 'micro' of the work performed by the subjects taking part in the productive process of communication, business objectives are translated and manifest through media products, such as journalism which shapes public opinion, as mentioned below.

The second aspect highlighted by Williams (2011) deals with the media as social means of production – as well as the production of the media that, in contemporary societies, gain new importance due to the communicative expansion *of* and *between* societies. At the present time, for example, mobile devices connected to the internet, especially cell phones, participate in the organization of production processes and have even been incorporated into the work routine of different professionals in different economic sectors. They became essential to the logic of flexible accumulation, have extended the time and space for carrying out work, changing the dynamics of the work environment. In this sense, according to the author, there is a need to shift the analysis “between the communicational means and processes for the crises and problems of the advanced capitalist societies and – apparently – for the various crises and difficulties faced by the advanced industrialist socialist societies” (pp. 73-74).

We must also consider the fact that each place appropriates capitalist models of production according to particular and singular aspects of the territory, including the productive force. This problem is also related to the means of production in the media. In the construction of narratives about everyday life, the content needs to take *shape* and adapt to the environment. This does not mean that the choices made are merely technical and, in this perspective, neutral – much less that the technique is conceived as neutral, distinct, and isolated from social dynamics.

In the communication production process, certain subjects are organized, and the professionals who build the narrative, as in journalism, for example,

choose to frame the fact in a certain way, focusing on one specific point of view at the expense of another. Reality does not fit without framing (Gitlin, 1980)³; therefore, the perspective of the narrator and the means of production directly affect the story. For example, television production stations with local/regional coverage, in general, claim to be local spokespersons and seek to fulfill this mission through the production of journalistic content (Santos, 1955). Journalism, in turn, is perceived as the guardian of the truth and, in the volume of news demands, some criteria need to be considered before choosing or denying a story. In this regard, there are prescriptions for the activity that takes place in the assessing of the *news value*; there are commercial interests that “recommend” or “suggest” content, in addition to an organizational culture articulated with the values of those who operate as a “lens” in the work of the professionals who, while proposing, or refusing a subject, use such lenses to evaluate their pertinence concerning the place where they work (Traquina, 2005; Wolf, 1992).

The framework necessarily presents a point of view, which happens in a specialized way in mediatized content, and the problem faced is that not everyone is able to financially support the medium and distribute content, nor are they qualified to develop the material communicated. Despite the existence of technologies that allow for the production and dissemination of content, this does not ensure polyphony. Mostly because it goes beyond the access to the amplified media with great dispersion. If access alone could guarantee the expression of multiple voices, the internet would have fulfilled the promise of democratizing communication (Castells, 1999; 2008) – and what has been perceived as a technological imperative that is incorporated into the human mentality, as discussed by Lucien Sfez (1994) regarding the *era of communication* in general, anticipating the phenomenon of social networks; thanks to its algorithms, virtual space and, especially, social networks lead their users to only reinforce and replicate positions in agreement with their ideological horizon.

Likewise, in the – specialized – communication production process, productive skills that can shape the communicated material are needed, both regarding the technical elements of the medium used to communicate, and the points of view currently shared. These are hegemonic production models that were procedurally constituted, socialized, “fossilized”. To this measure, the reality of access concerning the means of communication production is unfair as, with technological development, the potential for media dispersion and comprehensiveness has been amplified and the actors who have better access to the means (meaning financial resources) and carry out the work of producing the products are also the ones most capable to share a lifestyle and defend their points of view.

³ According to Gitlin (1980), media frameworks are “persistent patterns of cognition, interpretation, and presentation, of selection, emphasis, and exclusion, by which symbol-handlers routinely organize discourse, whether verbal or visual” (pp. 6-7). This and other translations from the author.



To that extent, there is a dispute between conglomerates in different areas of production that compete for conquering the market and the preference of public opinion through the circulation of communicative materials. The production resulting from this dispute implies a way of life sustained within the capitalist industrial production process, based on work as a commodity exchanged for money, which, in turn, is exchanged for another commodity, produced by labor that no longer transpires in merchandise (Marx, 2013). In this arena, there is also a dispute between and with large communication corporations competing for advertising funds, the expansion of strategic markets, the attention of the receiver, and the power to hold technologies and information. According to Irene Machado (2015), there are

disputes over control of technological communication systems in which control over cables, networks, fiber optics, satellites, and databases are nothing but a hint on a complex power game that unfolds far beyond the Earth's surface. (p. 79)

The geographic distribution of the technology itself is not fair and bases itself on the private interests of global telecommunications corporations investing in opening the market.

For Boulanger (2014), the studies on information flows carried out by *media geopolitics*⁴ present the geographic analysis on the distribution of submarine cables and internet flows in the world as an example. According to the author, these analyzes reveal large controllers located mainly in North America, Europe, and Asia (Japan). This points to the inequality of access to new technologies, for example, between the Northern and Southern hemispheres. Regarding what takes place in Brazil, the main applications downloaded and used by Brazilian users are from corporations based in the United States, as demonstrated by the *Monopólios Digitais* (Digital Monopolies) survey, conducted by Intervezes (2017).

In the flexible accumulation production system, access to information and communication technologies, as well as information control are indispensable for the development of States, and a condition for competition in the global market. Having access – or not – and, more than that, hosting the organizations that control the technology and the data that circulate through it are presuppositions for world political leadership. As discussed below, this situation is reproduced locally, in each region, municipality, territory. For this very reason, according to Boulanger (2014), the media effectively constitute a factor of considerable change in world geopolitics. The author highlights some of the elements that appear in contemporary times and participate in this transformation:

⁴ In short, media geopolitics represent an interdisciplinary perspective between geography, politics, the media, and communication. It consists of studying the rivalries of powers over territory, between media players, and the representation of these struggles of influence by the media. For Boulanger (2014), information sources and tools are both components of opinion formation processes and, thus, – considering the symbolic power and ownership of symbolic means of production – constitute a constituent power over the circulating opinion. In this sense, the author points out that geopolitics is a privileged field for understanding control strategies, tensions, and rivalries between the actors, which takes place through its own theoretical-methodological approach, consisting of criteria and categories of core concepts.

The layout of underwater fiber-optic networks, the power of large global media groups, the rise of cyber conflicts, competition between media cities, the rise of smart cities, wars and battles of meaning through the media, and the uses of social networks in popular protest movements appear among other elements listed⁵. (p. 8)

Technological aspects are relevant in the distribution process, but they do not overlap with the production of communicative content and media treatment. In the media production process, media oligopolies have the best distribution conditions, access to high-tech means of production, and the most qualified workers to shape the content based on the singularities of the territories where the produced goods are circulated by the media. For Boulanger (2014), this is the very reason why the analysis of discourses, images, media supports, can be used methodologically to understand the issues that constitute the territorial strategies of the actors together with the public opinion and the State.

⁵ From the original: “La mise en place des réseaux de fibre optique sous-marins, la puissance des grands groupes du Global media, l’essor des cyberconflits, les concurrences entre les cités des médias, l’émergence des smart cities, les guerres du sens et les batailles de la perception à travers les médias, l’utilisation des réseaux sociaux dans les mouvements de contestations populaires apparaissent comme des éléments parmi d’autres”.

THE DOUBLE ROLE PLAYED BY THE MEDIA IN THE TERRITORIALIZATION OF CAPITAL

The productive process of symbolic material is a contested territory, as it is possible to use the power of censorship and the benefit of access to prevent or allow access to information. In democratic societies, this directly impacts local politics. The narrative about the Movimento Sem Terra (MST) as a violent group is one such example. The media coverage that deals with the MST dispute the lexicons “invade” – claimed by landowners and distributed by hegemonic media groups – and “occupy,” which is used by the movement. Despite their attempts, MST is unable to oppose the circulating discourse presented about the movement in front of the public opinion, as it does not have the same access to the media or reach of large media groups.

From the above if communicative processes are central to the productive arrangement, media organizations also participate in this system in two ways. First, in the role of advocates of the culture of capital accumulation, they act as discursive agents; second, as economic agents. For Dênis de Moraes (2005), media corporations reiterate the diffusion of an ideological cohesion proposal around globalization, which becomes the hegemonic social discourse, propagating ways of life and views about the world that transfer to the market the regulation of collective demands. According to the author:

The so-called mainstream media builds consensus on the superiority of open economies, insisting that there is no way out of neoliberal assumptions. The



ideological axis consists of framing consumption as a universal value, capable of converting needs, desires, and fantasies into goods integrated into the production order. (p. 188)

Information and entertainment industries seem to support the neoliberal ideology throughout the development of their productive system and, to this extent, symbolically structure the advance of capitalism and its mutations. Nowadays, they press for the logic of flexible accumulation, supported by the flexibility of work processes, markets, and consumption patterns. Flexible logic involves a “time-space compression” (Harvey, 2001) movement that dynamized peoples’ and markets’ lives as a result of the information and communication technologies popularized at the end of the 20th century (Castells, 1999; Harvey, 2005). In this context, the media corporations – called *mainstream media* – took a prominent position in the productive and social relations and, it can be said, in the territorialization of capital, since it is in the domain of communication that the political-ideological synthesis of the hegemonic order lies. According to Moraes (2005), these corporations “not only organize the discourse of life and production but also make their justification immanent, repeatedly proposing a self-validation speech” (p. 188).

This is because the production methods in media corporations are in tune with the production organization models, as in any capitalist company. The shaping of the speech deals with flexible accumulation only from a positive perspective and, continuously, the meaning of some words supporting the logic of deregulation and precarious work changes. Life alternatives are exalted in the precariousness logic that arises as a creative outlet for “liberation” from work: such as disruptive innovation, entrepreneurship (Dardot & Laval, 2016). This process also aims at the suppression of State interventions regarding the economy to restore the self-regulation of economic processes, which defend the interests of capitalists at the expense of social interests. Neoliberal logic is presented as impartial, deterritorialized. But corporate interests impose themselves on the conduct of the State and, in this intervention process, other States, representatives of advanced capitalism, act with financial and extra-financial violence to restrict, exclude, and impose the logic of the market on territorialized social interests.

Media corporations are the ideal actors to sustain the hegemony of flexible accumulation, not only for their capacity for discursive dispersion – capacity for symbolic manipulation to build consensus and ways of seeing – but also for the technological apparatus of integrated systems of broadcasting in a reticular logic (Durand, 2003). The result is the articulation between the capitalist production

method, and the communication and information technologies – a synergy that fuels the accumulation of financial capital in the global economy of electronic interconnections, allowing for its territorialization.

Besides acting as agents for spreading neoliberal values, media corporations are based on the logic of profit, seeking to optimize their production processes and profitability. In this context, media groups aspire to achieve similar profitability parameters to those that guide multinationals. But local organizations that do not own the necessary means, which is made worse by the current economic situation, are able to amass large financial reserves through the exploitation of work and funds raised from local/regional advertising by micro and small advertisers. However, to hold the media within the *holding*⁶ has the same effect as controlling an instrument of construction of the imaginary that allows them to defend their territories of power and, during the process of territorialization, articulate with other economic groups, building ties that allow for the expansion of the territory where the group operates, as well as their access to public resources through financing, service offering, and exchange of favors.

To that extent, networks of enterprises representing economic and political powers are articulated. As observed by Moraes (2005) when discussing media as a business, during the 1990s, the communication industry adapted to the model of network corporations. “The multisectoral approach was adopted, exploring related branches and synergies capable of rationalizing costs, shrinking debts, merging know-how, and saving in scale” (p. 190).

Such corporations organize the production process, expanding the living work of workers, who suffer from the compression of time and space and the naturalization of work constraints. In the same proportion that their products get valuable, there is a devaluation of the work of the communication workers, increasingly forced to “become flexible” and “creative” to fit into the process; they give up work protection systems, extend working hours, multitask, and put themselves in transit according to the corporation’s need or the opening/closing of jobs. Therefore, there is a process of strangeness in the work occurring through dialectically co-opted involvement, where professionals in the communication industry incorporate the values and culture of flexibility, versatility, and competence criteria to communicative practices experienced within the organizational environment through culture and work prescriptions. On the other hand, they become agents of what Durand (2003) called *sociotechnical*, as they produce themselves statements that naturalize values achieved from the same logic that oppresses them, which will be socialized through the media products (built by them) and offered by corporations. In turn, those have a techno-productive pattern that relies

⁶ A *holding* is a company that holds most of the shares of other companies, controlling their management and corporate policies. (Rocha & Santos, 2012). It is a common business administration model in the management of communication vehicles belonging to media conglomerates in Brazil.



on the belief that companies should manage their ventures from a strategic center charged with formulating priorities, guidelines, and innovation plans, in addition to establishing profitability parameters for subsidiaries and branches, as stated by Moraes (2005). The *holding* company stands out as a hub for intelligence and decision, serving as a reference to local, national, and regional strategies. It organizes and supervises the institution from top to bottom, in fragments and nodes of a network comprised of common strategic axes and flexible intermediate hierarchies. (p. 194)

This is the model followed by large groups and reproduced by their affiliates, for example. Yet not everyone is oriented in the same way. The territorialization of capital in the means of production of communication is not homogeneous; still, there is an administrative cultural matrix that guides the constitution of power of regional conglomerates and their groups. It is a management model that aims to streamline internal communication flows, speed up technological solutions, and achieve high levels of consensus in increasingly decentralized decision-making processes. This practice, on the one hand, calls for a worker mobilization regime so that they take on new responsibilities regarding their work, and the results they bring to the organization's revenue (Figaro, 2013). On the other hand, they seek to expand markets in a process of spatial adjustment through the colonization of new territories (Harvey, 2001; Marx, 2013).

By branching into different regions, large media conglomerates expand their activity perimeter, creating economic and political networks of production and distribution through their branches, in a process accepted as a necessary form of sustainability that, however, also sustains the power decision-making within those corporations and their territorial ideological weight. Their branches, in turn, follow the "booklet," producing from models pre-established by their headquarters, which pursues the corporation's private interests, locally presented as universal interests. In this process, media oligopolies play a strategic role as a means of production that ideologically legitimizes the globalization of capital. According to Moraes (2005), this happens because such corporations hold

the ability to interconnect the planet in real-time, as communication devices symbolically concatenate parts of the wholes, seeking to unify them around beliefs, values, lifestyles, and consumption patterns almost always aligned with the competitive reason behind globalized markets. And so, they act by presenting themselves as open spaces for the reverberation of the "general will" – in fact, a skillful rhetorical device to hide organic links with the logic of capital. (p. 9)

In this context, a small number of organizations take the lead in the cultural production of information and entertainment. It is customary to say – and this idea may be reinforced when the concentration and appropriation of the media is exposed – that the “media,” as a set of communication means, a powerful social institution. However, it is necessary to distinguish the type of power it exercises, and which media controls this power.

A study carried out by Reporters sans frontières and Intervezes (2017) on media concentration in Brazil, revealed that four major media groups stand out for their distribution of content on open TV across the country: Grupo Globo, SBT, Record, and Bandeirantes. Through their affiliates, and in this order, they have the highest penetration of content across the national territory, concentrating 70% of the audience. Such groups exercise their power in different ways. As the largest Brazilian communication company, the business conglomerate Globo has a large audience and moves a huge amount of capital related to advertising funds. Due to its technical and human apparatus, together with its capacity to penetrate the territory, Globo influences behaviors, establishes aesthetics and productive models, as well as exercises political power. Grupo Record, on the other hand, has its power rooted in the Christian population faithful of the Igreja Universal (Universal Church). They make use of the group’s means of communication to oppose Globo and erect its own power territory (Raslan Filho, 2010). Leaders of this religious and media congregation exercise parliamentary activity, also holding political power. In both cases, there is an appreciation of the symbolic dimension of communication as an instrument of social domination, in which the domain of the image permeates political, as well as personal and religious relations, turned into nothing but a spectacularization of life.

Indeed, this is what Debord (1997) has called the *society of the spectacle*. Inside of it, the commodity, a social relationship mediated by objects with exchange value, manifests through image, says Debord. It is no longer just a matter of inseparability between social and consumer relations. Within the society of the spectacle, the merchandise itself is dematerialized – or, to put it another way, the merchandise, which already alienated the same social work without which it would not exist, when transformed into a spectacle, an image, undergoes double alienation; as merchandise, work is overlooked; as merchandise transforms into image, even its content is ignored, leaving only the image as a value. Thus, everything in the society of the spectacle is permeated and surrounded by image; there is an interdependence between the accumulation of image and the accumulation of capital. The author affirms that the spectacle twists what is real and presents itself as a product. In this sense, reality presents itself as a spectacle that becomes the only possible reality. According to Debord



(1997), this process of reciprocal alienation serves as the basis of contemporary society. The power of the visual dimension of communication can be exercised in capitalism due to the social division of labor and resulting inequalities. As per the author's words:

The spectacle is the undisturbed discourse that the current order makes about itself, its laudatory monologue. It is a self-portrait of power at the time of its totalitarian management of means of existence. In spectacular relationships, the fetishistic appearance of pure objectivity hides its character of a bond between men, as well as classes; it seems that a second nature, one with fatal laws, takes over the environment in which we live. But the spectacle is not necessarily a product of technical development, regarded as a natural development. On the contrary, the society of the spectacle is the form that chooses its own technical content. If the spectacle, while taken under the restricted aspect of 'mass media', that are also its most overwhelming superficial manifestation, gives the impression of invading society as simple instrumentation, such instrumentation is anything but neutral, suiting society's whole self-movement. If the social needs of the time in which these techniques are developed can only be satisfied through their mediation, and the administration of this society and any contact between men can only be exercised through this force of instant communication, it is because such 'communication' is essentially *unilateral*; its concentration is equivalent to accumulating the means that allow them to continue in that precise administration in the hands of the system administration. The generalized split of the spectacle is inseparable from the modern *State*, that is, from the general split in society, product of the social work division and the organ of class domination. (pp. 20-21)

The spectacular power uses the production of images concentrated in the State as a justification of the actions taken by this power. Within the sphere of spectacle, there is a social force through which human fulfillment occurs, according to the author, through the degradation of the *being* by the *having*. The concentration of means guarantees the unanimous discourse of capital as a social regulator. The process of producing goods and consuming them is justified by the *appearance* built through social life. Class exploitation and capital accumulation relationships are hidden. This is possible because the language of the show is made up of "*signs* of reigning production which, at the same time, serves as the ultimate purpose of said production" (Debord, 1997, p. 15).

When developing his formulations, Debord (1997) analyzes the spectacle society's space planning and construction of the territory. For him, urbanism is a way of safeguarding class relations, because it allows atomizing workers

who “dangerously” met due to the conditions of production. The author looks back towards Lewis Mumford’s, whose *La Cité à travers l’histoire* states: “With long-distance mass communication means, isolating the population proved to be a much more effective tool of control” (quoted in Debord, 1997, p. 113). According to Debord (1997), urbanism gives rise to a general movement of isolation of people who are gathered in a controlled way in condominiums, clubs, and factories as *pseudo* collectivities. This isolation also occurs within the atomized family structure, using the TV sets and, more recently, mobile devices that surround them with dominant images and gain strength as a result of isolation. In a dialogue with Marx and Engels (1998), Debord (1997) argues that the city is a space of history and should also be a space for freedom, but the collective strength of the approach – in comparison to the isolation of people in the countryside – was subjugated by the economic power. Debord (1997) points out that urbanism destroys the city to rebuild a *pseudo countryside*, controlled by the spectacle, and where an *artificial peasantry* is found. The latter, in turn, dispersed in space and lacking political training, perpetuates the conditions of exploitation. Thus, workers, for not asserting themselves as a

historical creative force, acquiring, once again, the characteristic of producers. The movement of the world that they themselves manufacture is completely out of their reach, as was the natural pace of work for the agrarian societies. (p. 117)

From the above, it appears that urban designs associate a particular spatial form and social strata, in which the spatial form plays the role of a class indicator. This association is strengthened by rules that allow certain groups to use certain goods or access certain urban places and buildings. In this sense, it is not possible to dissociate the spatial configurations from a symbolic content: its production will involve the refusal or acceptance of what has been established.

It is in this measure that we can understand the isolation of the municipality, one of the conditions for the maintenance of the power by local leaders, as understood by Vitor Nunes Leal in *Coronelismo, enxada e voto* (1997), when analyzing the phenomenon of coronelismo – the rule of the coronels – in Brazil. With the opening of popular access routes to urban centers and the arrival of the radio, providing daily updates on the events, Leal hoped that this manifestation of power would be weakened. Access to information through broadcasting would play an important part in this process. However, differently from what the author believed, coronelismo not only did not end but took an even more complex presentation with the advent of broadcasting and its appropriation by local political and economic groups (Lima, 2011; Santos, 2006; Santos & Aires,



2017). This was because the mode of production and social reproduction under spectacle capitalism simulates reality, deliberately confusing and, at the same time, hiding the work relations of production and exploitation as it presents the spectacle in the forefront, while whatever should have been debated would take place in the backstage (Thompson, 1998).

In this sense, as Stated by Venício Lima (2011), the emancipation of workers, even in no longer isolated but strengthened municipalities, social relations mediated by goods turned into image, as well as the atomization of these people following to the work environment dynamics in a spectacular capitalist society, maintain the isolation necessary for the exercise of local power. At present, even in regions where there is a diversity of information and communication technologies, mobile devices with internet access, to which local people have access – financial resources to buy equipment, afford navigation plans, and mastery of the language –, the conditioning of the observation and the habit of searching and referencing keep limiting the information's reach. In other words; if individuals, when searching for informational content on a daily basis do not break the bubbles that prevent their access to information, restricting themselves to content produced by hegemonic communication vehicles with similar points of view, or stop participating in virtual groups in which there are no opposing interlocutors, chances are that the torrent of images in constant repetition will dull their gaze, reaffirming what was already known by them and reinforcing the hegemonic discourse.

TERRITORIALIZATION OF MEDIA CONGLOMERATES AT THE LOCAL SCALE

When dealing with cultural-ideological practices and space, Sônia Barrios (1986) says that, in each historical context, cultural practices comprise actions intended to

a) develop explicit formulations of knowledge capable of answering the questions asked by people about themselves, society, and space-time and that allow them to solve the issues they may be facing; b) create representations, values, models, interests, aspirations, beliefs, and interdependent myths, which affect daily practice and force a choice between two options: either to maintain and reproduce the existing order or to transform it into new ways of doing and thinking. (p. 14)

In this context, the mass media fulfill the role of spreading this knowledge, fomenting either consensus or dissent, and making public what is of collective

interest. As previously discussed, however, we must consider that, as a means of production, the media advocates for logics that participate in the cultural practices that they themselves produce and reproduce. Despite exercising power, it is necessary to distinguish what kind of power it is, which leads us to regional or local media organizations.

There is a diversity of regional/local media organizations. Some organizations are affiliated with media conglomerates and that constitute new conglomerates⁷. Some local organizations try to establish their own conglomerate – with the concession of more than one communication vehicle – but are not affiliated with them. There are also broadcasting, press, and online media organizations (Peruzzo, 2009) alternative and/or independent from the media conglomerates, which play an important role in the production of local information, regardless of not having the same means to maintain, produce, and distribute content as the conglomerates or, in some cases, refer to the productive process of the hegemonic media. Of these organizations, the ones that have the best conditions for the production and defense of their territory are affiliates of large media conglomerates. Here, we analyze the relationship of Grupo Globo and its affiliates in the process of territorialization of capital undertaken by groups.

⁷ By regional or local conglomerates, we mean 'media groups that hold the cross-ownership of more than one media, such as radio, TV and/or print concessions operating in specific regions or cities'.

As a head-end, Grupo Globo is responsible for an average of 22h50 minutes of the programming aired by its affiliates. Such content mixes studio programs, journalism (domestic), movies, series, debate shows, talent shows, and soap operas. Soap operas, along with journalism, are the broadcaster's flagship. Due to its diversity of content, this media conglomerate ventures exercise power through the spectacle, naturalizes behaviors and ways of existing in the world based on the logic of consumption. It creates host environments to facilitate the debates that suit and seem relevant to their interests, whether regarding human rights, natural, political, or economic environments. Globo ventures are a Brazilian media group with the power to dictate procedures and politically interfere within the domestic context. Its production method shapes a communicative production aesthetics, mainly audiovisual, which is followed by other broadcasters. Its competitors even hire celebrities working for Globo – as their behavior and competence are already known to the public – to achieve a quality standard that may give them credibility and build rapport with their audience. This organization and the cultural goods it produces have the power to maintain the existing order. It materializes the territorialization of capital, its political logic and neoliberal ideology.

Affiliates, on the other hand, produce only 1h10, on average, of local content, specifically journalism. The head of the network is the one who makes themes visible and organizes daily life, from the national scale. In turn, the power of the



affiliate is in the organization of daily events of the city and the region where it is installed, which are presented by the journalism it produces, named as local journalism.

The journalism made by the affiliate, due to the agreements with Grupo Globo, must refer to the content of the network. Therefore, it follows prescriptions meant to standardize production and material. Affiliate media groups are the autonomous business groups that relate to the Globo commercial group. Both have powers and are articulated in each other's territorialization process. However, its political and economic groups have interests that, in the logic of capital, concern the increase in accumulation and, for this very reason, expansion and defense of their territories of power. In this sense, for example, since the implementation of Globoplay, the broadcaster's content platform, in 2017, Grupo Globo reformulated Globo TV's website and standardized its available content, erasing traces of the stories from affiliated companies that retransmit their content across the national territory. In 2016, when we started to collect the first data on TV Integração, a Globo affiliate that operates in the State of Minas Gerais, there was a navigation route on Globo TV's website that led to the Southeastern region of the country, then to the State of Minas Gerais, its regions, and, finally, to information concerning Integração, their affiliate, which had dedicated tabs with institutional content, such as the station's timeline. In 2019, while searching the website to update previous information, we noticed that the navigation route had changed. It now leads to TV Integração, but no longer grants access to institutional information from its affiliates. Its content follows the same standard presented by Globo. Affiliate groups do not always have their own website, as they are also responsible for Globo corporation's G1 portal; with the removal of the institutional history, the history of the affiliate as an 'independent' group ceases to exist and is subsumed by Grupo Globo.

On the other hand, as a local distributor of Globo content, the affiliate becomes a representative of the 'head' company in the regions where it is installed. It appropriates the reputation and power of the network to exercise local power over its competitors, representing the interests of the organizations that participate in its *holding*. While Globo's content deals with the national scale, the content produced by the affiliate concerns the local/regional scale (Santos, 1955). To that extent, its spectacular power is in the production of local journalistic material – which concerns the cities where the affiliate is installed and the commercial area where these contents penetrate –, attracting viewers.

We may ask: does the production and distribution of online content pose a threat to the power of large media conglomerates, such as Grupo Globo, as well as its affiliates? The answer, at least for now, is: no. Research has revealed

that, outside of large urban centers, there is not a significant number of online vehicles and, even if there were, the fact that they are on the internet does not assure them the conditions to deal with ‘hot’ issues, or with a scoop – as it calls for resources to investigate and produce the material, and organizations producing online journalism do not always have them available (Barros & Raslan Filho, 2017). *Atlas da Notícia*, carried out by Projor with the objective of mapping news-producing vehicles – especially of local journalism – in Brazilian territory, identified *news voids*, places where there is no production of journalistic local content, despite information technologies and contemporary communication. Even in São Paulo, which is the capital of the State and has the highest GDP in the country, online vehicles that claim to be independent and alternative to the main hegemonic media do not have the means to deal with the coverage of facts or scoops (Figaro, Roxo & Barros, 2018). Currently, even with the presence of new means of journalistic production, it is the websites linked to large media groups that guide the daily life and can handle news production in real-time⁸.

In this context, outside of large urban centers, television is highlighted to narrate local everyday events, which are not found in other network materials. Local journalism is configured as a specific level of social activity in the territory and participates in the other social practices of those who experience the daily life it narrates, as it gives it meaning and purpose. In contemporary society, local journalism plays the role of making public the exercise of political power – both legislative and executive –, giving local social actors’ actions visibility, as well as problematizing pacts they guide and participate in the life dynamics within that territory. From the above, the local media can reproduce and maintain hegemonic ways of thinking or transform them. The radio is also able to narrate daily events through local journalism, but the power of the image takes over in places where television content is generated.

Local journalism, like national journalism, creates host environments for the debate about time and space of living. However, the prescriptions of the head-end and the commercial interests of the affiliate’s group give way to a production process that does not privilege relevant events within the municipalities where they operate. A process that blocks and hides information, while airing irrelevant material, maintaining the power of the spectacle sphere over real life. Then, there are movements complementary to each other. One concerns the dynamics of the relationship between the affiliated groups and the Grupo Globo. Another refers to the dynamics between the units of the affiliates’ conglomerates and their spatial distribution.

Local articles must dialogue with the national content broadcast by the head of the network. Given their affiliation contracts, there are production rules

⁸The *Monopólios Digitais* survey, conducted by Intervozes (2017), reveals that Grupo Globo and Folha have the most accessed news sites in the country.



standardizing journalistic materials. There is a commercial dynamic between the affiliate and the head-end. In Globo's case, the so-called national journalistic content is produced, primarily, by journalistic material coming from Brasília, São Paulo, and Rio de Janeiro, with inserts of articles about events in the other municipalities across the country. Affiliates produce local content (described as content from the inlands of the country) and sell it to the network, waging a dispute between affiliates for the insertion in national journalism that grants them credibility with the network and reputation across the territories where they are installed. Therefore, the affiliate strives to produce local content of national relevance.

Meanwhile, the spatial distribution of an affiliate's group creates a territory that does not always coincide with the territory experienced by the subjects or with that organized by the State's spatial planning division, which splits regions for resource distribution and proposes public policies concerning the government action on municipalities. The logic of expansion and territorialization of the undertakings of the affiliated media group establishes its own regions within its territory of power, through which they kickstart their media influence (Aguiar, 2016). Such regions do not exist outside the group's spatial division but come into existence from the moment they are established by local journalism.

Haesbaert (2010) discusses the use and disuse of the term "region" saying that all regionalization must be considered as a form of power – meaning to name, organize, separate, crop, classify. According to Haesbaert, the concept of region presents itself as "a kind of device or instrument that allows for the understanding of the geographic space 'parts' through general principles of differentiation/homogenization" (p. 91). The region can be understood as a space for symbolic sharing, socially constructed by material relations, or defined from a natural demarcation of space. Another conception of the region, according to the author, and which seems consistent with the regionalization built by media conglomerates of affiliates, has a normative or pragmatic-political character. This perspective perceives the region as a space for intervention/action, aiming at the construction of a reality, a kind of created region, guided by what it is expected to become.

Thus, the content produced by the affiliate in its units is guided by the spatial profile of the broadcaster, defined by different commercial factors. First, there are the station's concessions for the exploitation of commercial TV. Then there is the agreement between Globo and its affiliate organizations, establishing limits on the penetration of the affiliate's signal. The affiliate, in turn, will determine the production, scope, and marketing territories for each of its units. This territorial demarcation brings together municipalities and regions that do not always share

the same cultural, natural, and social traits; or economic relations between the productive sectors and the historical process; but come into existence due to the political and economic definitions of the affiliated group. This composition has the population living in one region consume journalism produced from another region's reality, and vice versa. To minimize the strangeness and maintain the recognition of the topics covered by the station's local journalism by the audience, there is a generalization of the themes, which cannot be limited to the particularities of the municipalities and regions. The pieces end up dealing with common themes. With this approach, local journalism cannot dwell on local political issues that change the lives of people within a specific territory. Common, or even exotic subjects, will be deemed relevant by the *gatekeeper* and the public interest. Under the cloak of relevance and national news criteria, replicated in local daily life in the form of spectacular content, the particularity of events and daily affairs within that territory is lost.

Another aspect, still linked to the territorialization of affiliated groups, is the establishment of spatial blocks through the agglutination of grants. The concentration of grants and the diversity of ventures, common to holders of the means of broadcasting production across the country (Lima, 2011; Santos & Aires, 2017), operate blockades that maintain their political power and the isolation of the territory where their groups operate.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

If, on a global and national scale, preventing access to information and communication technologies, as well as information control, is fundamental for the development of States and global competition, as described, locally, within the territory where both women and men weave their lives, the possession of technology-mediated media can be an instrument of social participation, empowerment of local culture, and the diversity of the people living in a specific area – as well as also an instrument of power for local political leaders, who take over the media as a way of isolating their territories of power, and controlling or preventing transformative forces. Communication permeates social relations because it is an ontological element of the social being; and the media participates in the organization of the space, in guiding and (con)forming the audience. The media acquire geographic materiality in the process of territorialization of capital. More than a product and reflection of the economic order and power relations, they are constituents of these relations. Obviously, the same can be said of journalism, whose narratives permeate and are permeated by such relations.



In this context, the commercial logic of production of the media guides the local circulating information, since, in the end, what broadcasters aim to do is maintain the audience and the advertiser's capital. In this situation, what is considered positive for sustaining economic and political interests gains visibility, as whatever does not matter is hidden. There is also the fact that the spatial organization of enterprise networks interferes with the productive logic of local information. These choices are made in the production process according to editorial lines, political interests of broadcasters, ability to treat content, and social values shared by producers. Issues to must be considered from listening to the subjects who work for local conglomerates.

One way to balance forces is to enforce what is governed by Article 223, chapter V of the Federal Constitution, which deals with the system of complementarity in which educational and public means must produce discursive material that portray how social demands can be organized outside the hegemonic neoliberal model. However, there is a system of appropriation of the public good by private groups that use the media as an instrument to defend their interests and, at times, improperly appropriate these educational and community grants as a means of maintaining their local power. Debates that, due to the limits of the text, could not be held here, but are held by Barros (2019), Lima (2011) Santos (2006), Santos & Aires (2017). ■

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