

# Range deficit in narratives of contemporaneity

C R E M I L D A M E D I N A \*

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## Resumo

O artigo analisa as narrativas da contemporaneidade, na vertente da reportagem, e cruza as práticas jornalísticas com o discurso científico da complexidade. Do intercâmbio inter e transdisciplinar, apresenta os desafios epistemológicos vivenciados nas mediações sociais da comunicação. Dessa forma, o presente texto desliza constantemente entre as narrativas das mídias brasileiras contemporâneas sobre temas emergentes e os suportes teóricos que desenvolveu em sua obra. Apontando as dinâmicas empíricas e a crise dos paradigmas teóricos, o artigo apresenta, ainda, um diagnóstico do *déficit* de complexidade nas práticas interpretativas da experiência coletiva.

**Palavras-chave:** narrativas da contemporaneidade, jornalismo, complexidade, teoria e prática epistemológica, sensibilidade intuitiva, razão complexa

## Abstract

The article analyses narratives of contemporaneity, on the report style, and combine journalistic practices with scientific discourse of complexity. From inter and transdisciplinary interchange, it presents the epistemological challenges experienced in the social mediation of communication. Thus, this text constantly slides between the contemporary Brazilian media narratives about emergent subjects and the theoretical basis developed in their work. Indicating the empirical dynamics and the crisis of theoretical paradigms, the article presents, further, a diagnosis of the complexity deficit in interpretative practices of the collective experience.

**Key words:** narratives of contemporaneity, journalism, complexity, epistemological theory and practice, intuitive sensibility, complex reason

On the tenth anniversary of the integrated research project “O Discurso Fragmentalista da Ciência e a Crise de Paradigmas” (Fragmentalistic Discourse of Science and the Paradigm Crisis), I published in the seventh edition of the series New Pact in Science, with the title *Paths to plural knowledge* (1999), an evaluation of wrongs and rights about the complexity of the article-essay, the main expression of narratives of contemporaneity.

The research, which was a result of the work carried out in the graduation and post-graduation courses of the University of São Paulo’s School of Communication and Arts, gained strength in 1990 with the First Transdisciplinary Seminar which has determined the interdisciplinary routes of the present “Projeto Plural e a Crise de Paradigmas” (Plural Project and the Paradigm Crisis), which as currently nine publications.

But at the end of the decade of epistemological experiences, after national and international exchange among researchers that had been in the seminars, reviewers and authors of great articles, all of them bringing up emerging social issues and scientific challenges to diagnose problems of the present, it was possible to detect a common discourse about the complexity in opposition to narrative praxis, in which it can be seen the fragmentation of ideas, the interpretative dispersion of facts, the inability to articulate meanings and senses. It became evident during the interdisciplinary path that «it's not enough to choose the complex thinking. The praxis of the Social Dialogue – either through authors-mediators of Communication, or through other mediations like Science and Society or teacher and student – influence, in the daily life, schematic or ideological reductions».

At the end of last century, I wrote in the text “The workshop of complexity doesn't give a break”. If dialogism is in the center of the training of professional of communication, especially as a journalist, the mental tools able to compose the polyphony and the polysemy in a wide range of diagnosis complete the axes problematized in pedagogical labs. There's been some awkwardness when, in meetings among specialists of the field, I bring this concept of «lab». It is not about traditional projects, also necessary without any doubt, like newspapers, radio, television, digital media, etc. The big deficit comes from the absence of the «epistemological lab», which works with a global vision and atrophies of creative sensibility, reason and action (2003). The XXX author, whether he/she is a communicator, an academic researcher or a professor, goes through a surprising transformation when exposed, in the lab experience, to these atrophies.

In the research applied to themes of great repercussion in contemporary societies, the media coverage strenghtens the meaning of such axes in the formation of journalists. You can find few authors with a complex vision within a fragmentary ocean of diluters of immediate facts. This reminds us of an opening moment of the research about «the art of weaving the present» (1973), at ECA (School of Communication and Arts), in which Paulo Roberto Leandro and I have pointed at four gauging and comprehensive deepening instruments of the concrete reality: the humanization of the leaders of the social action, the wider context of the fact itself, the historic-cultural background of a given situation and the diagnoses and prognoses of the specialists researching such theme. We have seen these tendencies in major newspapers at the time and nowadays, 35 years later, it is still necessary to look for these virtual possibilities in the media and scientific bibliography to come up with an interpretation if not definite, at least complex enough.

## THE RENEWED FORCE OF PRINTED NEWSPAPER

In an evaluation of the media, published in *O Estado de S. Paulo* newspaper on August 4<sup>th</sup>, 2008, the meaningful information is the growth of printed means of communication in Third World countries, such as China, India and Brazil. The balance of the North-American group owner of *The New York Times* (World Association of Newspapers – WAN) lead director Daniel Chalfon, from MPM Advertising agency, to state: “It's visible that there was an enormous exaggeration when people used to preach the disappearance of the newspaper, destroyed by the power of the Internet”. Daniel Chalfon's ideas meet what I have always defended – the multiplicity of media and its complementarity. However, the enthusiasm of digital media, of new

technologies, a «disease» that reached its peak in the 1980's-1990's, becomes fragile in terms of density of the information that circulates on the Internet. Chalfon points the biggest quality of the printed newspaper: the credibility and hierarchy of the information. "The speed of the Internet is so huge and so broken into pieces that you waste time to reach what you actually want to read", he states. And as a professional need, he confesses a daily behaviour: "Nowadays, I feel better to face a day at work reading a printed paper before leaving home". Would it be the case of interpreting this quality of printed media as a mature practice in opposition to other types of media? That's not the case. If nowadays, the youngest of them all, the digital media, still searches for a dense, tense and synthetic narrative, television and radio occasionally show some interpretative capacity. In newspapers and magazines, authorship is seen more frequently, if we consider the great article. But there are vigorous narratives on television. Examples of a printed daily journalism occur frequently on *Estado* (specially on Sundays); in magazines like *Veja*; on *Globo TV Channel* (*Globo Rural*, *Globo News*). I insist in the authorship, because even in team works there are traces of an author with the competence to orchestrate scattered senses, to put together (edit) times and spaces, to reveal tendencies and obscure sides of the social reality, to embark oneself in cultural imaginaries.

Recently, while taking part in a jury of a journalism prize granted by Fundação Ayrton Senna, I met Ricardo Kotscho, a student from the early 1970's in ECA, and he tenderly suggested I should write a book entitled – *To my dear former students*. I don't know if I'll do it, but I take the opportunity to mention that many of these authors I admire today in different media of social communication, I have known since early years of college and they have never rejected what I call the epistemological lab.

You can see, in their work, the local effort for a global vision that's been shaken up in the academic environment by the crisis of a fragmentalist discourse of the news. Specialists have taken motivation and consistency to professional praxis in order to move from the factual to wider diagnoses of contemporaneity. Many went back for post-graduation and adopted the plural knowledge in their research, on the communicational praxis or as professors in higher education. Now, the upcoming generation has as a ballast the one who preceded them in the electronic era or in the Gutenberg era. The dialogue has been fluent in the perspective of graduation, masters and doctorates, qualifications or narratives of contemporaneity workshops.

I'm optimistic with future generations, but the reality of the process does not hide constant and repeated losses. In each historical moment, the learning is put to the test. And that's not a national authors' dilemma. I always mention one of the international voices that brings a comprehensive diagnose of today. French author Gilles Lapouge transforms any social event in a journalistic fact of complex reverberances. Using Jacques Le Goff's expression – a historian writes *le fait historique* from *l'événement* (1984) –, a journalist also produces meanings over the event, but he only sticks to contemporaneity. The symbolic creation of the journalistic fact gives the authorship dimension. On specific coverages, beyond the factual news, fragmented and superficial, you can see the emergence here and there of distinguished narratives due to its difference. A recent example, not by Lapouge, but by a North American journalist, put in evidence the importance of deeper approach in contemporary reality. Beyond the present event of the Olympic Games in China in

August 2008, emerges an interpretative text that understands this country through corners enlightened by the party-show searchlights.

## ARTICLE-ESSAY AND CLAY FEET

John Pomfret, editor of the analytical section *Outlook* of the newspaper *The Washington Post*, was the editor in chief of the Chinese branch in Beijing and wrote the book *Chinese Lessons: Five Classmates and the Story of the New China*. He published in the newspaper *O Estado de S.Paulo* on August 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2008, a summary of such experience, entitled *Chinese giant has clay feet*. The general tone given by Brazilian media about the Olympic Games focuses on sports and their players. Some sports journalists take advantage of the rare opportunity of being in China to compose some very specific narratives, almost always with a view of magnitude and not of clay feet. Globo TV Channel, with its power, makes itself present in a wider way and has sent some of its reporter-authors, able to find out some of the angles forbidden by China's official marketing and politics. Special sections and editions that anticipated the world sports event, which are quite well designed and have beautiful illustrations, give priority to the fragmentation of themes. Information and signatures are spread out and the reader does not find the wide view, which actually happens in Pomfret's article-essay.

In the methodology of academic works, there is always the difficulty of the researcher to find a coherent path of investigation. The problem of the fragmentation happens in science as well as in the narrative of contemporaneity. The North American author captures, in his story about China, elements of the North-American imaginary and ideology concerning the giant. He observes that people have been talking about the country like an obsession in the United States. The hype has reached Brazil in its journalistic production, as well as in the production of some reviewers, entrepreneurs and politicians. John Pomfret mentions the versions of his compatriots: "Worried with the American educational system? China becomes a model. Are anxious about our military promptitude? Chinese missiles seem like a threat. Bothered with the decreasing world influence of the USA? China seems ready to take over". The experienced author reverses these versions. "But will China actually become another world power? I doubt it".

The North-American journalist, who studied in the Chinese University and followed the country's big transformation over the last 28 years, confesses that this is his second home. But he does not fight against the data and the subtle observation that leads him to the wide diagnose of the giant with clay feet. From this point, he goes through the country's fragilities, which were not very much mentioned by Brazilian journalists: the demographic issue. China is a country of old people. Consulting Chinese demographers, Pomfret mentions the current one hundred million people over 60 years of age and the complex challenge of the estimate of 334 million until 2050, with the aggravation of one hundred million people over 80 years of age. What to do with them? Pension them off? But today, less than 30% of the urban Chinese population and none of the 700 million agriculturists receives it. For more radical analysts, Chinese demography is a time bomb, a human tragedy in slow-motion. The author then gets ironic: "No month reaches the end without a strategist in Washington blabbering that the Chinese economy is beating the American".



On the net of meanings of a wide diagnose, it is not possible to embrace all the angles, but, on the other hand, to keep looking at only one of them – generally, the economist view on the facts – takes you to reduction and not to complexity. This text about China is a good example of an author understanding subtly a partial and chosen articulation of data, behaviors and specialized information. That's why he chose demography, economy, environment and State's authoritarianism. This way, in opposition to what is commonly preached about the giant, the author produces a dense, tense and synthetic vision of a specific demystifying tripod of a potential future: «failed demography, ideology with no popular appeal and pollution». Obviously, the book-medium, also practiced by the journalist, opens up the board of information he's been gathering, what makes it complementary and not contender to the daily printed medium. Works of daily periodic journalism like this are to be kept or not. Anyway, they contribute to the process of interpretation of contemporary societies.

## COMPLEXITY IN THE WORLD OF IDEAS

The systemic theories, the complex thinking and the understanding of conflicts in the notion of process have gained in Edgar Morin an untiring spokesman in the last century. No specialist who wants to deepen his/her knowledge of the world and develop comprehensive methodologies in the empiric work, is far from the epistemology advocated in the work of the French thinker and summarized in the book in co-authorship with Jean-Louis Le Moigne, *The intelligence of complexity* (1999). In terms of theoretical remission in doctorate theses, Master's dissertation, scientific articles, the references to epistemologists is largely spread out, especially in social communication. From the 1970's on, in the first Latin American post-graduation course on this field (USP, 1972), Edgar Morin was already renowned in the academic world. The stimulation he had provoked in researchers had opened up reductionists views in the cultural industry to a complex and contradictory process of the symbolic production. However, it's necessary to highlight that the praxis of the complex reason in narratives of contemporaneity comes after the declared theoretical understanding.

In the interdisciplinary proposal, you can notice exactly the same problem: although scientists assigned in many different fields of knowledge recognize the importance of dialogue, or better saying, «pluralogue», as well as identify the arrogance in the positivistic hierarchy (2000), the resistance in the interdisciplinary praxis persists around human and social demands that are transdisciplinary. You can notice this fact throughout the 18-year experience in the "Projeto Plural e a Crise de Paradigmas". This substantial leap from the world of ideas towards a concrete operation when facing historic emergences or, what challenges the most the complex mind, the imponderable facts of life, have been the educational fact in the epistemology of the complexity labs.

Besides the bibliography, which presents theoretical conceptions, the narratives written by journalists-authors have been very profitable because they give substantial answers in their reports and represent improvements in the art of weaving the present. In group discussions, they enrich the pragmatic exercise of each researcher. Scholars from different fields, i.e. social, biological or natural sciences have been demonstrating in their texts that it is possible to use factual contemporaneity and create meaning nexus that go beyond their fields.

Doctors are a good example and the books that register *Projeto Plural's* meetings are filled with eloquent testimonies in threshold situations, such as infectious disease specialists who treat people with HIV, neurosurgeons that make brain interventions, developers of public health policies or generalists who evaluate doctor-patient relationship. Situations and problems that are brought to the interdisciplinary debate contain elements that go beyond theoretical inheritance and unveil crisis that are truly transdisciplinary – within human relations. If communication has a privileged space in this situation, it is exactly one of promoting dialogue and encouraging convergent practices that tackle these themes, behaviors and points of view of today's world.

Texts written by essayists are read in the epistemology of complexity laboratory and offer a vital contribution for narratives of contemporaneity. I have recently written for the magazine of the *Fundação Memorial da América Latina* (2008) about the fertile creativity of essays in the continent. Poets and fiction writers also write essays, such as Carlos Fuentes; sociologists and essayists such as Antonio Cândido; doctors and scholars such as Pedro Nava, who has already left us. The genre that gathers the flesh and bones of everyday life, observation-experience of the world, in deep accordance with human behavior and comprehensive reflection about culture, reveals the creative intuition of authors and influence, due to its boldness, future essayists. New researchers, apprentices in the scientific work methodology or scholars who are trapped in the tough hierarchy of science, gain with the essay new strengths to dive in the comprehension of phenomena.

## WHEN PRACTICE MATCHES THEORY

One of these inspiring essays was published in the work organized by Octavio de Barros and Fabio Giambiagi, *Brasil globalizado* (2008). It would be appropriate for everyone who superficially talks about globalization to read this work's first text, which is signed by the sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso. With erudition and theoretical preciseness, the former president is able to mobilize in a 60 page-essay a memorable amount of information that articulates a contemporary international panorama whose epistemological axes move around economy, sociology, history and culture. Without any progressive euphoria, the author does not limit globalization as a phenomenon whose precise date is in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, but he analyses, within the context of technologies and communications, moments of acceleration and crisis in this process. When talking specifically about the United States' paradigmatic case, the author follows the success in geopolitics and economy, but does not forget cultural values that gave to it a unique leadership until the end of the last century.

Among these values, Fernando Henrique highlights the innovative, organizational, technological capacity and the spirit of freedom. All articulated in a cultural-historical ballast that, whether criticizers of the North-American model of society like it or not, has spread enchantment and has vigorously reflected itself in cinema.

When examining the most recent social framework and the hegemony crisis, the essayist practices the epistemology of complexity in contemporary pluralism and deeply analyzes emergent States, the BRICs. The interlinked and contentious multipolar world of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century demands mentalities to overcome dualisms. Brazil,

Russia, India and China whisk the scenario of the old rich ones, alter profoundly traditional logics of development and underdevelopment, reference theme of the work of the young sociologist Fernando Henrique Cardoso. In spite of the update, which is a key to understand the Brazil's new place in the world, it does not contaminate itself by easy convictions, such as the decline of the United States in *vis-à-vis* China or the historical grandiosity of the European Union I comparison with other international forces. The essay is careful and has plenty of information and questioning. Or marked by the virtue of the genre: to question more than affirm.

The crisis of the National State, subject debated in the series *Novo Pacto da Ciência* (Science's New Pact) in the title *Agonia do Leviatã* (1996), converges with

Fernando Henrique's analysis. Also in this field, he captures mutant variations that coexist in the contemporary world, without adopting the proselytism of a specific model of National State. In Brazil's case, he explains with serenity the post-military dictatorship democratic experiences up to the government of Luis Inácio Lula da Silva, including his own period in office without using the third person. With analytical propriety, he talks about the incomprehension of critics towards globalization regarding privatization, for example, which he enabled in his term. But if at the time he already had a historical perspective in what he was doing, today he writes plainly about phases that preceded and succeeded him. The options of Brazil in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century, the last chapter of the essay, refer to a contemporary puzzle, in which there is no space for a political-economical-cultural homogeneity. A sentence I'd like to highlight is: "Nothing assures that History must walk towards any kind of balance".

The issue of balance through political and diplomatic mediations among States is reproduced among powers and citizenship within national societies, regions of a country or any other community group. Under the protection of democracy, social communication plays a rich and complex role in conflicts. That's why it shows resentment regarding the prohibitions of authoritarian States (2001). The 2008 Olympic Games unveiled *China's digital wall*, with the explicit censorship to the circulation of symbolic properties on the internet. In any democratic society or in the regulations that rule the concert of Nations, the struggle for balance, although not having any warranty of success, demands a communicative action of which Habermas is a well-known analyst (1987). The practice of complexity in this game of contentious forces – that always represent interests and power – takes place in the complementarity of politics, diplomacy, law and communicational intervention. So, the communicators, producers of narratives in contemporaneity, are partners and not supporting actors in the dialogue among of the different, opponents, the ones who need voice to face official voices.

Habermas and other scientists legitimize social communication in the search for balance among social forces. And many times, they interpret it as a useful auxiliary in the communicative action carried out by sociology, politics, law or diplomacy. Sometimes, they accuse it without solid arguments, using only the ideology of conscience manipulation. For researchers that are inside of the communication process, interdisciplinarity reinforces disciplinarity, which is constituted by dialogical language in social communication. Social sciences authors keep the rationalist current of communicative action, whereas the creative social interaction takes place in the *Signo da Relação* (2006) that supposes the conjugation of three virtualities –

emotional intuition/complex reason/solidary action. Once more, the pedagogical lab steps up, for the theoretical tendency is to emphasize rationality (which, in my opinion, easily becomes schematic and lacking affection towards the Other when emotional intuition is put aside). And, on the other hand, professional grammars reinforce reductionism in formulas. Therefore, the communicational act does not take place, since it becomes a routine of publication of fragmented information, many times authorized by the sources of power.

So, it is important to have the sensitive experience of having contact with the living world, which shakes up the technical routine and arouses a curiosity to research the bibliography and get from it epistemological notions that are more accurate with the questions of the immediate real. Persisting on the complexity issue, an awarded essayist and history of philosophy professor of the University of Zaragoza, gives a meaningful contribution to politicians, journalists and scientists. Daniel Innerarity has been awarded the Miguel de Unamuno Prize and was considered by the newspaper *Le Nouvel Observateur* "one of the 25 greatest scholars of the world". His book, *The Transformation of Politics* (2002), is being read by my students, because it makes a comprehensive diagnosis about concepts that rule political practices of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century and provokes politicians, voters or any citizen for the necessary mutations in the new social logics, which is weaved, also according to Fernando Henrique Cardoso, by the new pluralism. To this, Innerarity adds the new antagonism, politics of identity, visibility, security and nature. When talking about the diagnosis that exists within the complex web of conflicts, Innerarity reaches his peak as an analyst of contemporary societies, emphasizing, obviously, Europe.

The transformed political culture demands a transnational political action. Within the limits of the National State, which will persist, governments need to prepare themselves to act in a complex society; dialogue and negotiation become necessary, since "great part of the current ideological disconcert is a result of the fact that the right is using a progressive language and the left is using a conservative tone"; and this dialogical negotiation is based on the understanding that "the course of time still exists, but it no longer indicates the path of servitude to reach freedom: it indicates the path of complexity towards a greater complexity". For the author, "the main problem we face today is not to carry out the revolution or to substitute it for partial reforms, but to seek the co-existence of completely heterogeneous types of men, cultures, times and institutions". To the next generations he proposes: "The future will belong to who is able to properly conceive the mix, the complex and the articulation of what is heterogeneous".

## MACROSCENARIO OF NEGOTIATIONS

The journalist and the analyst of today have always placed themselves within the space of conflict. In extreme situations, such as wars of authoritarian States, they risk their lives. But the everyday life is also a process of confrontations. Election periods put in evidence things that may be invisible in other periods. Man and his environment are separated, in a crazy fight; the world of economy, basically capitalist, of class struggles, of corporations, of regions, of multinationals etc; in small and medium communities, organized or not, the fight for power reaches inhuman levels. In which social space Paradise can be recovered after all? This is something very difficult



to be found by the well-intentioned reporter searching for a positive action in his/her daily routine.

In spite of the fact that microscenarios of conflict are inherent to human experience, the attraction for macrosenarios really seduce journalists of narratives of contemporaneity. And it is in this macronarrative where articulating visions are searched in the midst of a fragmentation devoid of comprehensive diagnoses. An example of this fragmentation is the narrative of the internet. But the printed media that in its editorial marketing glorifies itself of deepening the interpretation of happening does not escape from the fragmentalist practice. There are exceptions in authorial, individual productions, in which one is able to find the exercise of a complex thinking, defended by Innerarity, Morin and other epistemologists. I add the full exercise of the five senses. Damasio (2003), Del Nero (2002) and Restrepo (2001) describe, based on neurosciences, the supreme importance of the sensitive and sensorial contact with the world in order to stimulate the rationality that articulate the meanings of things and the transforming solidary action. Then, the possibility of feeling-thinking-acting takes place: before the chaos of reality, a symbolic cosmos is created – the narrative.

When I was reading the national journalistic coverage of the Doha controversy, in July 2008, it was difficult to get enough information that would enable the reader that was distant from the fact to form a minimally comprehensive cosmos. The fragmentation of the theme – international trade – in the economy pages (or blocks of the electronic media), by itself cuts the subject into pieces of chaos. It is curious to notice that a title of an editorial of the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo* meets this perception – *Juntando os cacos de Doha* (Joining the pieces of Doha), August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008. The metaphor would be perfect to describe the work of the reader – “joining pieces of the journalistic coverage” during ten days. The editorial reaches a diagnosis: “The world becomes more dangerous for the international trade with the collapse of the Round of Doha”, asserts the first sentence of the editorial, an evaluation that intends to summarize the “imposition of the survival of the fittest”.

This opinion is not identified with the ideology of the journalistic company; it intends to represent the general frustration of Brazilian authorities from diplomacy to presidency, which according to the newspaper, deplore the fact that negotiators didn't even reach a balanced composition among different economies. The pieces in international chess, which moved according to the heritage of the Uruguay Round, which finished in 1994, only reached minimum order at the World Trade Organization. However, the historic dynamics announces imminent risks with the rural protectionism of the USA and the energy crisis. *Estado's* editorial supposes at the end of Doha: A successful round would have produced three great benefits – a broader trade, because it would be freer and equal, safer markets for all producers and the overcoming of some old conflicts. The multiplication of processes in the WTO must be one of the consequences, and the Brazilian government, according to Celso Amorim, is willing to start new actions against North-American subsidies.

When systematically observing the stylistics of the editorials, it is possible to notice an expansion of the interpretative plot, which substitutes the decisive opinion. This density is expressed particularly in the newspaper *O Estado de S. Paulo*, which in the 1980's proclaimed the articulation between information collected by journalists and analysis done by editorialists (journalists in dialogue with directors of the newspaper).

The degree of complexity of arguments and explicit opinions has a lot to gain with this coordination between the living world and the world of ideas. So, it is not strange when, in many occasions, the journalistic coverage of an important event is fragmented, there are editorials in the newspaper *Estado de S.P* that have a very strong interpretative texture of certain aspects of the social, political and economic context. The newspaper gives a good example, since it quotes works of journalists to base the evaluations and inferences about these scenarios.

This happened in the Doha coverage in July 2008. The Thursday, July 31<sup>st</sup> edition of the newspaper brings outstanding articles that set a network of meanings scattered during the debates in Switzerland. *Brasil pós-Doha* presents an interpretative synthesis of the history of the diplomatic, political and economic conflict in the editorial and instead of showing a negative attitude before the problems and frustrations, the editorial closes with perspective for the future: The good piece of news is that chancellor Amorim is willing to have good performance in Mercosul and to struggle for the accomplishment of an interesting deal for Brazil, without being too attached to group or strategic alliances partners, which used to be the pillars of the external policy. If this intention is kept, maybe there will actually be the expected and important review of Brazil's commercial diplomacy.

A counterpoint of the specialized view is found in the same edition and signed by the diplomat Luiz Felipe Lampreia, who in this article talks about the current international situation, including the actors United States, Europe and China, and consciously defends Itamaraty's action throughout the last decades.

The difference between the diplomat's article and the economy reviewer who are from the same newspaper, can be measured by the amount of information of the diplomat and the machine gun of the reviewer, representing the constant monitoring of the Fourth Power, which is a tradition of liberal journalism. Signatures of these spaces of opinion, which are not mistaken by rigorous analysis, try to be tribunes or pulpits with the ambition of giving definite judgments. A more attentive reader does not pay attention to them when the fragility of judgment is noticed. So, he/she tries to look for elements that will make him/her understand the event in the midst of the coverage mosaic. In this case, interviews with the chancellor Amorim, declarations of president Lula, different articles about the environment of the specific moments of negotiation, or, of the absence of negotiation. Newspapers in general have the habit of stratifying or "framing" the theme, dividing each theme into blocks and signing these small parts of the mosaic as if the reporters produced broad and authorial views of the event. But there are exceptions: few authors deserve to sign narratives of contemporaneity.

In the systematic research of the media, the coverage of the Doha Round, launched in 2001, need, like other themes that are part of macro-scenarios, a challenging historical and cultural ballast for the most subtle interpretation. But it is rare for reporters and reviewers to shift from the economic, political and diplomatic space and time. A *Arte de tecer o presente* (2003) never puts aside the cultural interface. Any event interpreted based only on its appearance (such as the political and economic conflict) would -refer to, in a symbolic and subtle production, the invisible network of meanings that come from culture. Good efforts of media coverage of current events result in the emergence of important data but lack a subtle interpretation of identity marks and collective imaginary. An economic theme, such as

the international trade or the asymmetric encounter of interests, has these traces of different conflicts. However, it is difficult to find explorers of these cultural traces that underlie in the so-called objective reality of events.

A good and recent example is the well-done edition of *Veja* magazine, 23<sup>rd</sup> of July 2008, when editing Brazil's victories in globalization, it gathered some data that are available for the reader to consult. The excellency of info graphics and well-written texts give a special touch to the narrative that has characters that represent statistic data and also brief statements by specialized sources. O caráter de verbetes informativos não chega à versão contemporânea do ensaio interpretativo como o faz a Enciclopédia Einaudi, which has been previously mentioned in this text, among various volumes, o de História (1984). Ao verbete de informação jornalística falta a trama ensaística da compreensão cultural.

## THE REAFFIRMATION OF THE GREAT ARTICLE

In the tortuous path of professional training, there are corrosive heralds that ignore historical results and do not realize the islands of excellency: professionals-authors that support learning and improvements of the vision of the world and complex, sensitive and solidary mentality towards society. I always remind my students of the anguish felt by a deceased Mozambican poet. When I used to work with Portuguese-speaker writers in Africa, in 1986, José Craveirinha confessed: "I Don't feel like I deserve to be poet of my people and I constantly struggle to be this poet". I transposed this notion of dignity of poetry to people in the field of communication Who try to be mediators-authors in contemporary societies. This is why there is a constant struggle in communication colleges to have a more dense theory and practice.

Some announce the death of some phenomena. Others announce, for example, the death of the novel; others proclaim the death of the great article. In the case of this last one, how to explain the strength of special editions in printed media (newspapers and magazines) as well as in radio and, specially, in television? If scholars gave more importance mapping *Globo Rural*'s documentaries about themes that vary from the behavior of Brazilian society in the countryside to the biography of the jacaranda or Roquefort cheese, they would have subject for academic thesis in social communication. Speaking of documentary, it is impossible not to mention the extensive cinematographic work of the paradigmatic Eduardo Coutinho? If someone says that a strong narrative demands financial investment and author-professionals, I agree – effectively, this manifestation only exists in companies that gather financial investment and authorship.

In this context, we see the creation of magazines such as the one edited by the company *O Estado de S. Paulo*, which following the example of *Veja*'s edition about Brazil and Globalization, adopted the principle of the thematic edition – *Megacidades*. The launching of the project *Grandes Reportagens*, in August 2008, reaffirms and legitimizes the journalistic effort of interpreting contemporaneity. The narrative travels around bit metropolis and ends in São Paulo, which is facing, on the fifth place, the advantages and problems of the 25 biggest cities of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. In the urban century, megalopolises increasingly have "third world" characteristics, according to the interpretation made by edition of population statistics. The articles tackle the main

urban concentrations and are signed by journalists assigned for the task. The narrative is also composed by interviews by specialists from the fields of sociology, history and urbanism; other journalists are responsible for editing, in third person, a polyphonic text; São Paulo, whose article is the biggest, includes a text by the state governor José Serra.

Thirty-eight of the 118 pages of the edition are dedicated to the Megacity or “the urban stain that grew up to the point of joining São Paulo and Campinas, united 65 towns and currently represents 12% of Brazilian population”. Here and in Veja’s edition, the unfolding of sub-themes follow the traditional principle of fragmentation.

The great article, which is the name of *Estado*’s new project, offers precious information that challenges the reader to make a comprehensive diagnosis about the worrisome phenomenon of migration from the country to the city, which has increased in the 20<sup>th</sup> century and reaches its peak in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.

The epistemological workshop faces this fragmentation issue, which was systematically detected during the interdisciplinary discussions of Saber Plural, since 1990. The fragmentalist discourse of science and the paradigm crisis, diagnosed by physicists, mathematicians, doctors, psychologists, sociologists, historians, educators, biologists, artists, theologians and mediated by communicologists, has displaced the issue to the transdisciplinary sphere. The objective was not to exempt communication professionals from working with the partitive mentality, but to locate them in a historical-cultural context that ascends up to the culminating moment when the scientific disciplines are formed. Augusto Comte has already talked about this in his *Discurso sobre o espírito positivo* (2000). In my latest book (to be published), I started to look for these origins and they become very expressive if we get to a discourse that is previous to Comte’s, René Descartes’ *Discurso do método* (2008).

*Ciência e jornalismo, da herança positivista ao diálogo dos afetos* (Science and journalism, from the positivist heritage to the dialogues of affections), title of this journey of mine, intends to put dilemmas of both fields of action in a common sphere. In the first transdisciplinary seminar, whose title was “Novo Pacto da Ciência” (New Science Pact), in 1991, a summary of notions in crisis that remain current when analyzing communicational practices.

They are changes in the view of the world and of ways of operating in the symbolic production that were debated in various national and international academic environments during the last 20 years. These notions come from the paradigm crisis in quantum physics, but its study is valid in any Field of knowledge. They are:

1. From the notion of subject and object, we pass to the notion of interconditioning subjects in a reversibility process;
2. From the notion of cause and effect, we pass to the notion of intercasuality, in a network of strengths that Interact;
3. From the notion of destructible or indestructible mass, we pass to the notion that the mass is in transformation;
4. From the notion of solid universe, we pass to the notion of porous universe, as an exam, a maelstrom;



5. From the notion of substance and accident, we pass to the notion of complex relation;
6. From the notion that the being of the matter exists and also does its activity, we pass to the notion that the being of the matter and its activity cannot be separated; they are different aspects of the same reality;
7. From the notion of right and wrong, we pass to the notion that data of reality are not organized in a hierarchy, but attached to the notion of coherence, interlock and sustainment.

In the 1990's, when these notions were enunciated, there was a certain feeling of strangeness to the fact of transferring it to the journalistic practice. But as soon as these mental tools were out in practice and experiences in epistemological laboratories, they became essential for the change of paradigms. The alarm was set off as a result of ideological mistakes, reductionisms and precariousness of analysis. Stratified concepts are incapable of building a comprehensive understanding of contemporary events. Studies carried out by the media and presented in the classroom, congresses and seminars confirm, from the end of the last century up to the first decade of the 21st century, the emergence of the above mentioned transdisciplinary notions substituting postulates of inertial grammars.

When Silvan Medina and I were researching the coverage of the biggest tragedy involving a commercial airplane in Brazil's history, the accident that occurred in São Paulo with the Airbus 707-300 from TAM Airline Company, on July 17<sup>th</sup>

2007, we observed in the two major newspapers – *Folha de S. Paulo* e *O Estado de S. Paulo* – the epistemological limitations of a narrative that surpassed any other in terms of journalistic space. The collective magnitude of the emotion, with the death of 199 people and the proximity of the accident has certainly influenced the quantitative data and the qualitative broadening of editions that projected the national aviation crisis. Five months later, we presented this work in a European meeting organized by the *Réseau des Centres Méditerranéens de Formation Multimedia*, at Fernando Pessoa University in the city of Porto, and European researchers seemed to be very interested on the diagnosis of the coverage. Besides the national repercussion of the tragedy, the way it was covered by Brazilian media was discussed considering some epistemological variables that are transnational.

One of them, which has a special meaning in narratives of this nature, is the *monocasuality*. The symbolical path to understand *intercasuality*, in this case, the accident, is tardy and many times does not reach flow of time of the immediate present. The search for the *single cause* is restricting recurrence of the complex feel-think-act. This seems to be one of the cluttered notions. But the other notions listed above are also, in their own way, similar challenges. In laboratorial exercise, some of them are chosen and what always takes place is the persistent heritage of the shallow thinking that is lost in the maze of fragmented information.

## THEORIES OF AFFECTIONS OR GESTURE OF ART

When I feel tired of the paradigmatic debate and reductionist practices, I renew myself in art, which in all its manifestations, especially in literature, has the virtue of stimulating sensitive and clever tune with human situations. *O gesto da arte ou povo*

*de personagem* (The gesture of art or people of a character), written in 1996, are present in the laboratory of “Saber Plural”, but instead of instrumentalizing the work of art, I prefer the intuitive-synthetic experience. I share with my students the enchantment and the enjoyment of art, which is a result of motivation in order to better understand features of cultural identities. The artist is solidary with the people that shelters him. The complex network of a society that is subtly reflected on artistic singularities. Diving into the poetics opens pores that are atrophied for universal human meanings and updated by culture in a certain society. The experience is inexhaustible, which suggests each week in the lab room, the pedagogy of affections—citizen and artist who are contemporary to each other or the ones that left the gesture of the past in the history of art.

I have been registering this collective pleasure in previous reflections and the cultural understanding by means of art has become necessary for the epistemology of complexity. But I would like to point out the motivation (or passion) I bring to partners in work hours in undergraduate, post-graduate levels and in workshops about narratives of contemporaneity. I always socialize this daily experience, which is as necessary as bibliographic studies and communicational practices. For example, I am addicted – in the best of senses – to travelling from Europe to Brazil in a daily flight, because I like the pleasure of sleeping at home. Despite the other attractions of the trip, including cinema, which is another addiction of mine, I prefer to read some fiction when crossing the Atlantic.

Um two latest trips, I started to read again a Portuguese writer I met in 1982, when I worked with Portuguese contemporary literature. Teolinda Gersão emerged among fictionists, poets and essayists as special author of the Portuguese language. You can imagine what has happened between that time and the fiction that is written nowadays.

In my latest trip, in July 2008, I started to read on the airplane the novel *A árvore das palavras*, in its 6<sup>th</sup> edition (2008). Teolinda, who lived in Mozambique until she was a teenager, builds in this book the particularity of a girl in the first part, the mother who leaves Portugal to marry a Portuguese man in Lourenço Marques (currently Maputo) in the second part and, in the last part, another girl, now with 17 years of age, who goes back to Lisbon. It is not an autobiography: the author, a university professor in the field of Language and Literature, with a PhD in Germany, did live in Mozambique her whole childhood and adolescence. But she creates different narrators in her work. She creates narrators who can be a man or a woman, children, adolescents, adults or elderly person. She knows how to represent the plural voice of a people and she cultivates the syntax of orature. In the novel *A árvore das palavras*, she works with the Mozambican Mia Couto, with the mixed syntax of Africa, even though she is catalogued among her peers in Portuguese Literature.

What moved me in this novel was the subtlety and the complexity with which the artists invites the reader to blend in the collective, even if only by means of personalized life stories. The scene of Lourenço Marques under Portuguese colonialism seems to be completely changed, with unique vigor, by Mozambican originality.

When I went to Maputo for the first time, in 1986, eleven years after the independence, it was a shame not to have this novel with me. I would be much more

prepared for understanding the cultural features of that young African nation. Mozambique cannot be mistaken by any other Portuguese-speaking country and it is art that register its fingerprints. Teolinda Gersão published the first edition of this book in 1997 and, reading it now makes the images of my first contact acquire new tones by the hands of the girls, the character. Lourenço Marques I did not know and the 17 year-old teenager living in the time of decolonization, make me feel Maputo pounding little time afterwards. The affection I felt by Mozambican people is unfolded in the subjective poetics of the character (and, who knows, Teolinda herself) who sees herself forced to leave the Indian Ocean to go to Atlantic grounds.

The young lady is sad with her departure,

“Sound of Africa, I think fetching a dry *maçala* and listening, next to my ear, the noise of the seeds. Sound of Africa, close and far away. Like a *búzio*”.

She will have to stay at the house of some cousins in Lisbon. The magic sound of Mozambique will be broken: a definite loss.

In narrative of Teolinda Gersão, who is a well-known writer in Europe (awarded and translated), the echoes of Africa and a cultural synthesis – the ones only artists are able to express with their creative intuition– draw a confrontation of societies: “It’s all inevitable, I believe. It’s all inevitable. The cousin from Africa will naturally have to help with house chores and to suggest this we offer her a bed in the room of the other, who also does house chores – because it is obvious that the outsider does not have any rights and has to earn her bread by serving the ones who are inside – The boring life, the lack of air and space in the house-of-my-cousins-country. Anyway, I don’t have a choice. I don’t have a choice”.

It is not a good idea to tell more. The Brazilian reader, who little knows about Teolinda Gersão, can discover the plot of the tree of mixes words. If it is a journalist who wishes to widen his/her understanding of people and society, it is certain, that his/her gesture and the gesture of other makes us more open to the complex network of meanings of contemporaneity.

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