

Cultural-mediatic analysis as a theoretical-methodological protocol of communication research¹

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is to explore the characteristics and potentialities of the cultural-mediatic analysis as a theoretical-methodological protocol of communication researches. In order to do this, we turn to Cultural Studies, especially to cultural analysis, to demonstrate possible appropriations of communication studies. We elucidate with applications and methodological tests in master's degree dissertations, which found in this protocol a possibility to carry out research with critical depth and contextual density. As a contribution, this paper proposes to clarify a concept for cultural-mediatic analysis in order that such methodology becomes even more accessible and contributes to qualify the investigative process in the area of communication.

Keywords: Communication. Cultural Studies. Methodology. Research protocol. Cultural-Mediatic Analysis.

Initial Considerations

Exploring different methodological possibilities in the area of Communication is a way to find new paths that allow to analyze increasingly complex and heterogeneous media objects. This diversity demands greater theoretical openness and critical depth so that the analyses do not become superficial and repetitive and contribute, indeed, to the advancement in the understanding of how the various social means of communication and contemporary media are immersed and articulated to the daily life.

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In this sense, the purpose of this paper is to explore the characteristics and potentialities of the cultural-mediatic analysis as a theoretical-methodological protocol of communication researches. Based on the theoretical assumptions of Cultural Studies, we intend to show how the cultural analysis, proposed by Raymond Williams, can be applied to media studies. With origins in the concept of cultural materialism (WILLIAMS, 1979), this protocol allows a rich contextual investigation, bringing to light political, economic and social aspects of the production period of the analyzed objects, which demonstrate the influence and interdependence of the media in relation to other instances of society.

In order to show how this protocol can be applied in practice, we present the examples of three master's degree dissertations written by members of the Cultural Studies and Audiovisual Research Group at the Federal University of Santa Maria, linked to the Post-Graduate Program in Communication, which found in the cultural-mediatic analysis the possibility of carrying out a study with criticality and contextual density through the development of an authorial methodological path. As a contribution, through bibliographic review and the presentation of theoretical and methodological protocols based on classic texts of Cultural Studies, this paper also proposes to elucidate a concept for the methodology, in order to qualify the epistemological development of the investigative process.

Cultural Studies as an epistemic perspective

Cultural Studies emerged in a post-World War II period, of great political and economic crisis, when Europe was undergoing profound transformations and themes such as culture, industry, art and democracy began to permeate the means of communication, since there is a great emphasis on the so-called cultural industry. At that moment, Cultural Studies emerged in England: with a political perspective, trying to understand culture through the social movements of the time, and from a theoretical point of view, seeking to build a new perspective with an interdisciplinary character.

Historically, the origin of Cultural Studies is intertwined with the trajectory of the *New Left*, the union movements, the education for young people and adults, the publications aligned with political militancy and the commitment to radical social changes. According to Escosteguy (2010), the main research topic was centered on the relations between the contemporary culture and the society with focus on cultural institutions, forms and practices. For the author, the starting point of the studies lies with the social structures and the historical context as essential elements to understand the action of the mass media and the displacement of the elitist idea of culture towards its daily practices. Thus, through openness and theoretical interdisciplinarity, Cultural Studies thematizes and investigates the popular culture, especially its political aspect. In this sense, it stands against any attempt of institutionalization or codification, since its reactions could be paralyzed by rigid and pre-defined structures (ESCOSTEGUY, 2010).

Thus, this movement approaches Marxism as it is related to a group of intellectuals that is concerned with the popular classes and opposes capitalism and cultural domination. However, this relationship is developed through the cultural criticism of the Marxist reductionism and economism. Hence, to contrast Marx's economic materialism, Williams (1992) significantly influences the Cultural Studies project by coining the term cultural materialism. For the author, cultural practices must be understood as real practices, elements of a material social process, with specific intentions and conditions. In other words, through a revolution of the classical Marxism, Cultural Studies defends that culture is not an autonomous nor an externally determined field, but a place of differences and social struggles. This means that it cannot be explained and determined only by an economic dimension, since society is a complex whole and is composed of several factors.

Based on this principle, Williams (1992) argued that domination in a society is not only based on property and power. The lived culture also influences the way we think and feel through its pressures and limits that promote the (re) production of a deeply ingrained social order. From this perception, the need arises to study culture not only as a product, but also as a material production that articulates in a concrete way the dynamics of the social totality. For this reason, the author criticized Marx's proposition that society would be composed of two fixed and separate spheres: the infrastructure, which would represent the real social base, and the superstructure, composed of intellectual, political and social processes. For the economic materialism, the economy would determine the conscience of men, who would be alienated from the productive process. When proposing the cultural materialism, Williams (1979) considers that culture must also be seen as a real and material social practice with concrete consequences for the subjects, who come to be understood as active social agents, responsible for the social struggles. Thus, culture is not determined by an economic base, but it is in constant relationship and tension with the other forces of society.

Such theoretical and political position considered the study of culture as the gateway to a committed criticism, which aims at understanding the functioning of society with the purpose of transforming it. Therefore, the cultural totality becomes the object of analysis, seeking to highlight the complex relations of institutions and cultural forms with the social relations established between the subjects. "The central focus is on culture, thought of as a productive force based on what is actually experienced by the subjects" (MORAES, 2015, p. 3).

Thus, Culture Studies breaks with passive and undifferentiated conceptions of the public, starting to analyze the ways in which the messages are decoded by different recipients, according to the social and political context (HALL, 2003a). This perspective defends that, in the popular sphere, there is not only submission, but also there is room for resistance and social intervention.

The understanding about the mass media undergoes a profound shift, since they are not seen as merely reproducing social stability, but they also adapt to the pressures

of society, integrating them into the cultural system, constituting themselves as modes of production. In this way, the massive ceases to be the place of manipulation to become a space of conflict and negotiation of social power formations, crossed by tensions related to class, gender, race and sexuality. Cultural Studies understands the mass media as cultural producers, acting in a dynamic and active way in the construction and consolidation of ideologies and hegemonies. From their structures, the mass media support, update and reproduce social and cultural stability.

Considering such theoretical assumptions, we will, in the next topic, go through the paths of cultural analysis as a procedure that is attentive to structural conjunctions and localized demands, committing to a contextual and complex practice which is opposite to any type of reductionism (MORAES, 2015). The analysis aims at discovering the nature of the organization that constitutes the complex of social relations, revealing identities and correspondences, as well as discontinuities. Thus, we will explore how this methodology can be appropriated for media studies, critically placing the means of communication in the social whole, in permanent relationship with social, economic and political issues.

Cultural-mediatic analysis: an analysis protocol for communication

In the cultural theory developed by Williams (1979), some central concepts explain the epistemological bases on which are developed the methodological paths that have culture as their main point of investigation. In this paper, we mainly refer to two of these concepts because they are the most used in the studies developed by the Research Group. The first notion, selective tradition, promotes a displacement of the concept of tradition as an inert historicized segment to understand it as an intentionally chosen version of a modeling past, perpetuated by hegemonic pressures and limits. The second concept of the cultural theory presented is structure of feeling, which clarifies the residual, emergent and dominant dimensions that coexist in society, giving a dynamic, contestative and variable character to the social process.

In this sense, it is essential to analyze the concept of culture in order to understand the theoretical and methodological applications. According to Williams (1992, p. 11), it comprises different meanings,

[...] from a developed mental state - as in “person of culture”, “cultured person”, through the processes of that development - as in “cultural interests”, “cultural activities”, to the means of these processes - as in culture considered as the arts and the intellectual work of man. In our times this is the most common general sense, although they are all common. It coexists with the anthropological and widespread sociological usage to indicate the “global way of life” of a particular people or some other social group.

Based on this understanding, Williams (2003) presents three levels of culture: *Lived culture*, which is presential; *Recorded culture*, which includes pieces of art, videos, documents, among others; and, finally, the *Culture of the selective tradition*, which functions as a mechanism for rescuing and incorporating practices from the past into the present. Over the years and the death of the past generation's people, the lived culture, little by little, becomes recorded culture, leaving only some of its traces in the current generation. From this point, the culture of the selective tradition establishes a culture and also a historical record of a specific society, as well as creates the rejection of "considerable zones" of the past generation. This selection is determined by several interests, such as class and gender. It should be noted, then, that considering only the characteristics of a dominant group of a given period can be a problem, since one can ignore part of the historical process, the social character of the moment and the activity of different classes, factors that are not considered when observing the dominant group. The study of this tradition requires a critical view, because it mainly involves a cognitive analysis based on everything that is known about it, that is, "it is not only a selection but also an interpretation" (WILLIAMS, 2003, p. 61 – Our translation).

The culture of a given period is described by Williams (2003) through the concept of "structure of feeling", that is, the result of all the elements reunited of a general organization. Older generations may pass on the "cultural pattern" to the new ones, but the "structure of feeling" will be different, as this new generation will deal with this data in its own way. According to Brennen (2003), methodologically, structure of feeling helps to understand the material elements of a specific generation, in a given historical period, based on a process of hegemony. In this context, Williams (2003) conceived the concept of structure of feeling not only as a theoretical construction, but also as a method of analysis, whose categories would be dominant, residual and emergent. By dominant, we refer to the hegemonic elements of a culture, based on the relationships established within it and how they predominate over each other. Residual means that "throughout the historical process, new social practices emerge and values, customs, norms and experiences are replaced or merged by new experiences, but traces and vestiges of past characteristics remain" (MORAES, 2013, p 105). The residual are those elements that, throughout history, resisted the dominant culture and still operate in the present, that is, they are elements that were formed in the past, but remain active in the current cultural process. The emergent, on the other hand, results from the tension of the dominant and residual aspects, which gradually lose strength in the face of new social practices. There is, then, a fusion between the new and the old, since there are dominant and residual aspects that survive the emergent.

Thus, the analysis of culture must consider the social totality, as it must aim at discovering the nature of the organization that underlies the complexity of the social relations (WILLIAMS, 2003). In order to analyze the social whole, the relations must be studied dynamically, since their changing organization makes it possible to observe the different

meanings produced between social activities and their interrelations. In other words, the cultural analysis as an analytical protocol enables the observation and the description of such interrelations that are meaningful in the social practices. From this idea emerges the sense of culture as ordinary, which, according to Williams (2003), refers to something that is common and that is everywhere. Culture is always contextualized, because it is a social practice that occurs among people in specific situations. It has, thus, specific meanings that can vary in different socio-historical situations. Therefore, it is a space of domination, since the social decisions about culture affect an entire way of life and function as an articulation of the values that will be privileged and the groups that will have access to the production of these values according to their interests (CEVASCO, 2001).

Applied to the mediatic sphere, the cultural analysis allows us to think about human relationships in the context of interrelation with the media, which occupy an important place in the subjects' cultural action and conception. For Kellner (2001), the theoretical and methodological models of Cultural Studies seek to understand the mutual relations between economy, politics, society, culture and daily life. These components are inseparable from the contemporary social theory, which questions the various social dimensions in the face of the mediatic environments and processes that, at the same time, act as mediators of culture, but are also mediated by it, articulating "ideologies, values and representations [...] and the way in which these phenomena are interrelated" (KELLNER, 2001, p. 39).

Taking all these considerations into account, it is possible to elucidate a concept that clearly and succinctly highlights the potential of the cultural-mediatic analysis as a theoretical and methodological research protocol in the area of Communication. By articulating the spheres of production, circulation and reception, such analysis considers that the mediatic products do not exist in isolation and should not be studied only from their internal characteristics, but that they are, in fact, entirely dependent on the contexts that surround them. In this sense, such methodology analyzes the media in a broader context, going beyond the means of communication to incorporate them in the complexity of the lived culture of the period in which they were produced, what demonstrates that the cultural environment is a field of conflict and negotiation of power social formations, which are crossed by political, historical, economic, social tensions, among others. In summary, the cultural-mediatic analysis is a theoretical-methodological strategy that highlights the context, revealing scenes that are not always explicit and, for this reason, exposes hidden social interests and tensions which are often responsible for explaining current social models and patterns that perpetuate inequalities and prejudices. Thus, for the analysis to reach a critical depth and obtain greater political character, it is essential to have a detailed and comprehensive view of the aspects that make up the social environment, what requires the media to be analyzed as an integral element of the culture of a certain period, as a result from the production conditions and the social tensions.

In the next topic, in order to clarify, we will explore the potentialities of the cultural-mediatic analysis as a theoretical and methodological protocol in communication researches by explaining three applications carried out in 2015 and 2016 in master's degree dissertations developed by members of the Cultural Studies and Audiovisual Research Group at the Federal University of Santa Maria - RS.

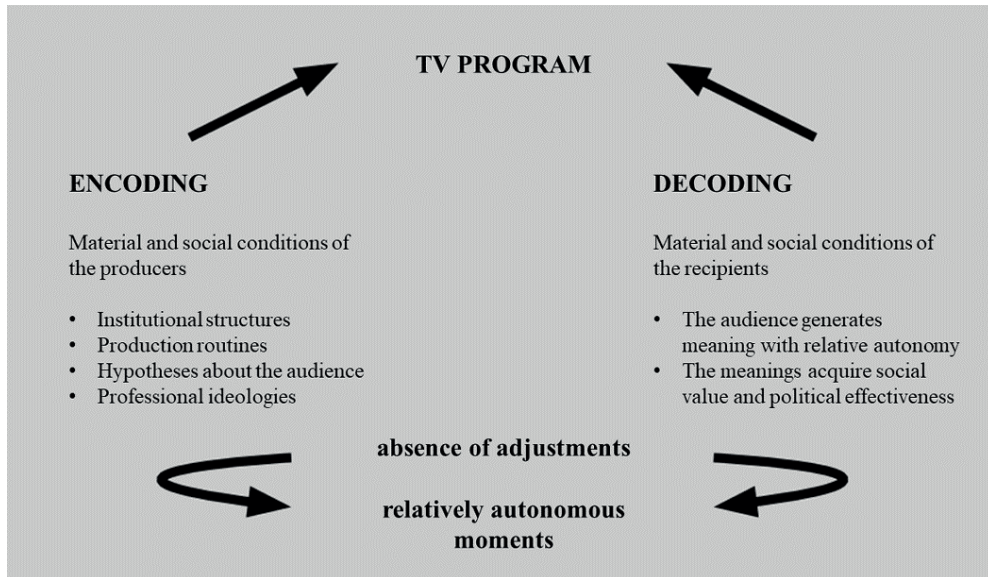
Applications of the cultural-mediatic analysis protocol in communication researches

With epistemic bases in Cultural Studies and methodological bases in the cultural materialism, the cultural-mediatic analysis has been systematically used as an investigative protocol in the Cultural Studies and Audiovisual Research Group at the Federal University of Santa Maria. Most of the time, the researchers also associate secondary procedures for analyzing the investigated objects, such as the textual analysis, the content analysis, among others, in order to complement or deepen a specific aspect in their researches.

The use of such methodology allows the construction of an authorial methodological path, according to the research objectives and the specific demands of each object. It should be noted, however, that some analytical protocols have already been developed based on the analysis of culture and have served as an inspiration for the researchers. This authorial process is necessary, since the mere application of an existing circuit often fails to meet the objectives proposed in the investigation or presents unnecessary elements to approach the research problem. For this reason, in order to carry out a more detailed cultural-mediatic analysis, we elaborate a synthesis diagram that reflects the choices of our own methodological strategies, despite being inspired by the existing circuits, such as the ones elaborated by Hall (2003b), Johnson (2006) and Du Gay *et al.* (1999). These circuits value not only the production aspects of the product, but also its surrounding context and its reception. Based on these proposals, a particular appropriation of the circuits is carried out, selecting the necessary elements for the investigation, always paying attention to the social totality in the circulation period of the analyzed products. Considering the importance of these previous creations, we will briefly explain each of the most used circuits in the Research Group, in order to elucidate the appropriations made.

Hall's (2003b) essay, Encoding/Decoding, originally published in 1980, points out the central idea that a television program is a meaningful discourse encoded within the scope of production and decoded by the recipients (Figure 1).

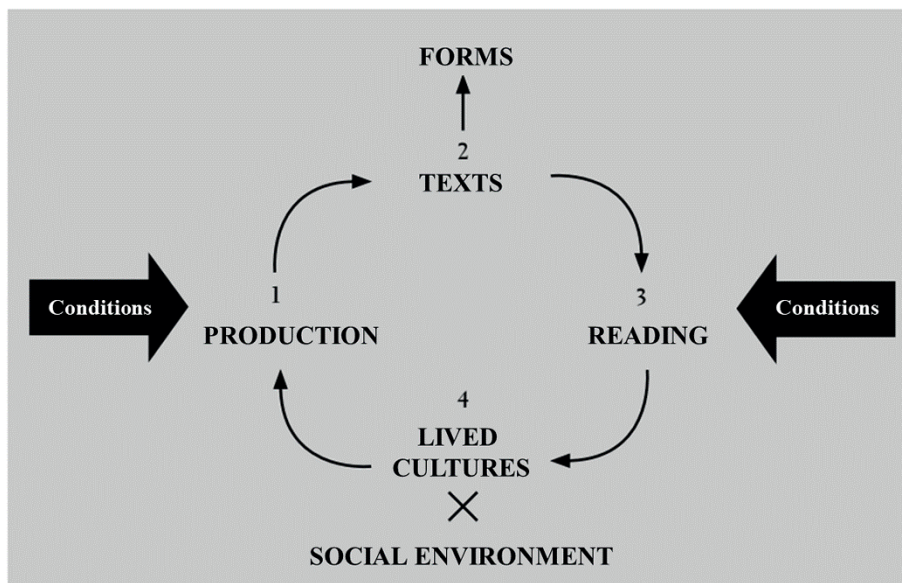
Figure 1 – Encoding/Decoding Model by Hall



Source: Escosteguy (2007, p. 125 – Our translation).

At the time of coding, the institutional structures of the producers operate, including their technical infrastructure, their knowledge, their professional practices and routines and the formulation of hypotheses about the audiences. In the sphere of decoding, the audiences also contribute to the production of meanings, interpreting the messages according to their cultural references and life experiences. Thus, according to Hall (2003b), the decoding of the message can occur through three reading positions. The dominant reading, which is in line with the sender's point of view; the negotiated reading, which recognizes the communicative intentions, but does not agree with all the proposed ideas; and the opposition reading, which is contrary to the message sent. For the author, the objective of this model is to highlight the processes of articulation that occur around the message, including its origin, the expectations created about it, the interpretation of the readers and the way this interpretation can impact the production stages of new messages.

Another circuit used as a reference by the Research Group is the one elaborated by Johnson (2006), who developed it based on the relationship between textual forms, reading conditions, production conditions and lived cultures (Figure 2).

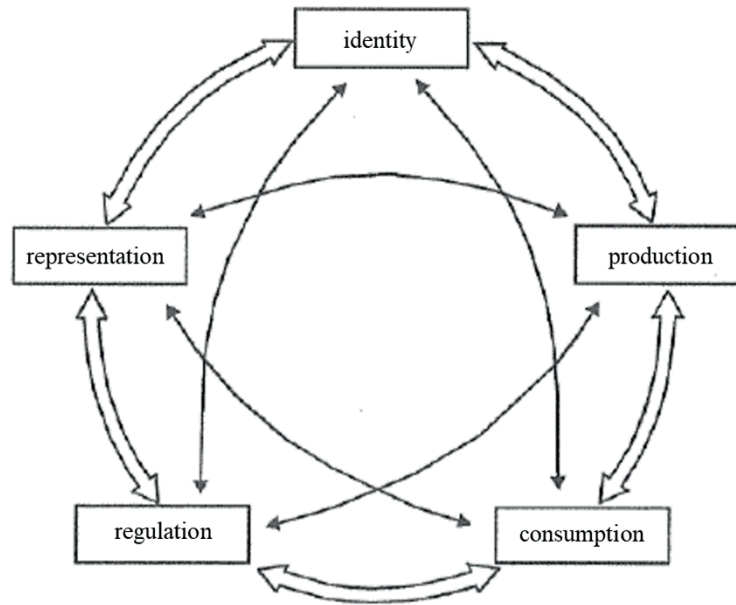
Figure 2 – Johnson’s Circuit

Source: Escosteguy (2007, p. 120 – Our translation).

In the circuit, production refers to the concerns about the organization of the cultural forms, that is, the political organizations of culture, the institutions. It must be related to the lived cultures, that is, the context by which it is surrounded, since “the conditions of production include not only the material means [...], but a stock of cultural elements that already exist, extracted from the reservoir of the lived culture or from the already public fields of the discourse” (JOHNSON, 2006, p. 56). Thus, the lived culture is the social environment on which production and reading are based. In other words, it is the surrounding of the object of study, the context in which it is produced and received. The text is related to the way in which the symbolic forms are organized to produce meaning. The focus is on textual, discursive and other analyses related to the mediatic product. According to Johnson (2006, p. 75), the study of the text allows us to identify the basic narrative repertoires that organize society, considering it “just a medium [...], a raw material from which certain forms can be abstracted”. Finally, the readings refer to the audience’s practices, it is the space of meaning production. Thus, it is impossible to ignore its relations with the structures of production.

The proposal of the circuit of culture by Du Gay *et al.* (1999) was based on the study of the Walkman as a cultural artifact, articulating consumption, production, regulation, identity and representation (Figure 3).

Figure 3 – The Circuit of Culture by Du Gay *et al.*



Source: Du Gay *et al.* (1999, p. 3 – Our translation).

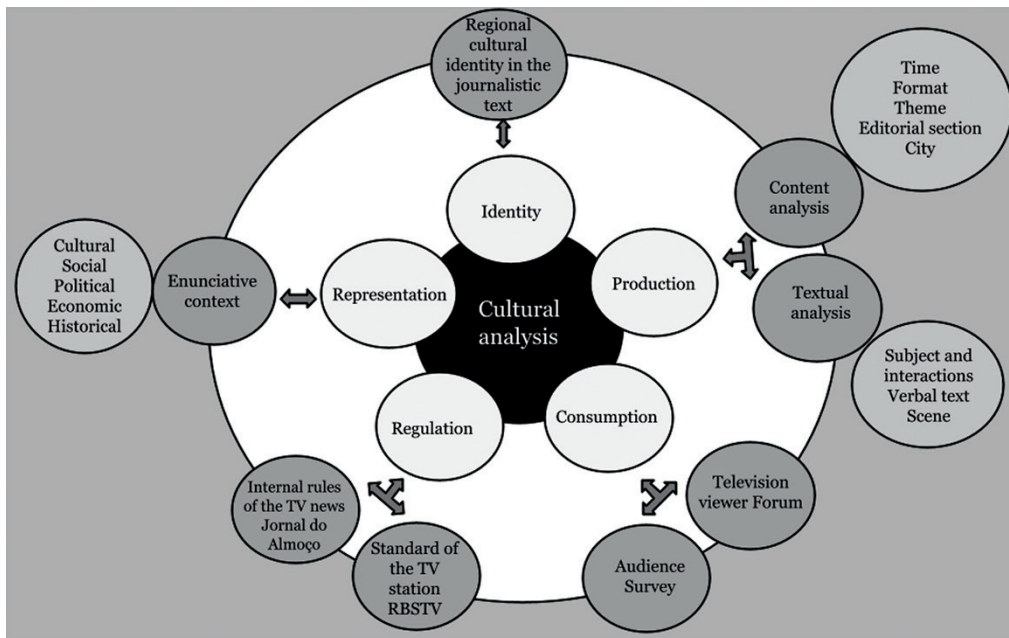
In this circuit, production refers to the conception processes of a cultural product, that is, the conditions and the means of production, until the final elaboration of the material, including the narratives associated with it. Thus, investigating the production also means understanding the beliefs, the values and the standards that are embedded in a given product. The consumption instance is directly associated with the one of production. This moment is related to the reception and the audience, based on the public's appropriations when consuming the cultural products. The great differential of this circuit in relation to the one elaborated by Johnson (2006) is the instance of regulation, which corresponds to the laws and norms through which the social practices are ordered and the cultural policies are implemented, such as regulatory laws for the media. In the instance of representations, we observe the meanings produced through the discourses which are capable of signifying. This representation is based on and highlights the social, cultural, political and economic context by which it is surrounded. It is closely related to questions of identity, which is built within the representations, since identity is a process of identification with what is displayed, being considered a conscious bond.

Through this brief explanation, it is possible to notice the consideration of the entire communicational process in the three circuits, exploring elements from production to consumption and allowing to understand its cultural complexity and its social integration. However, many times, during a research, it is not possible to cover all the instances equally, what can produce superficial results or analysis when not deepened as necessary. Thus, we

highlight that in the studies presented in this paper there is no intention to cover equally all the points exposed by the referred authors. In addition, the Research Group states the importance of considering the audience’s practices when analyzing cultural television products, although the main theme of the researches presented is focused on production. We present below the example of three master’s degree dissertations² that found in the cultural-mediatic analysis the possibility of carrying out a broad study, with critical depth and contextual density through an authorial methodological path.

One of the first studies presented in this perspective was the master’s degree dissertation entitled “Cultural analysis of local television news: representation and identity in RBS TV Santa Rosa”, by Rossana Zott Enninger (2015), which aimed at carrying out a cultural analysis of the television news *Jornal do Almoço* (JA)³, broadcasted by RBS TV Santa Rosa, in order to identify how the regional identity is represented in the local television news. Establishing as methodological bases the circuit of culture by Du Gay *et al.* (1999), Enninger (2015) considered the instances of production, regulation, consumption, identity and representation (Figure 4).

Figure 4 – Analysis Protocol by Enninger



Source: Enninger (2015, p. 55 – Our translation).

² All the researches developed by the Cultural Studies and Audiovisual Research Group can be accessed in full through the link <http://w3.ufsm.br/estudosculturais/>.

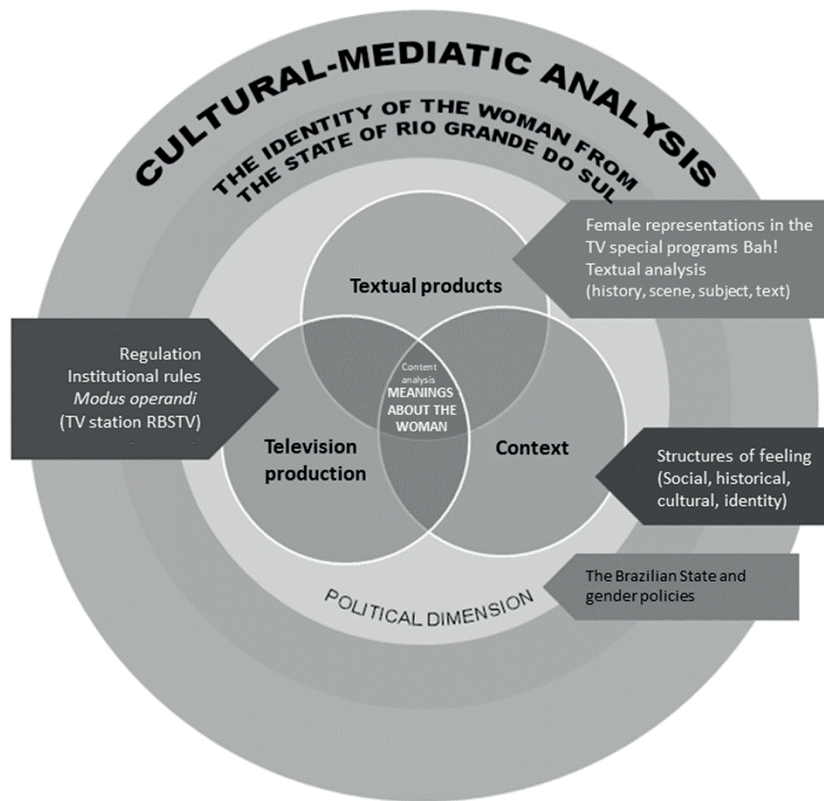
³ Television news program broadcasted at midday by RBS TV, which is an affiliated broadcaster of Rede Globo in the state of Rio Grande do Sul.

The detailing of the production was carried out through the content and the textual analyses of each of the television news selected editions. The content analysis considered the date of exhibition, duration, format, theme, editorial section and city of reference as categories. The textual analysis considered the categories of subjects and interactions, verbal texts and television news scenes. For the analysis of consumption, the study explored the results of the television news audience data and carried out a survey with the viewers through Google Forms, which was composed by 17 open and closed questions related to the profile of the audience and to how it consumes the television news. The regulation dimension was studied based on the internal rules of RBS TV and the television news *Jornal do Almoço*. To explore the dimensions of identity and representation, the author searched for data in the enunciative context based on a technical documental file, through which she investigated the context of the cities in which the television news was broadcasted, exploring the political, economic, social, cultural and historical aspects. Through the analysis, the researcher concluded that the television news proclaims an approach to a regional identity, but the individual or group identities are not yet represented there in a way that characterizes the region and its 69 cities.

From the first researches, exemplified here by the study developed by Enninger (2015), it was observed that the circuits, as they were set, would not contribute for the effective complexity of the studies and would not reflect the investigation's proposal. This perception made it necessary to rethink the uses of the circuits, so that they could serve as an inspiration for the development of more authorial processes, demonstrating the choices of own methodological strategies. Based on these proposals, the following researches will already make specific appropriations of the circuits, selecting the necessary elements for the investigation and paying attention to the social totality of the products circulation period.

In 2016, the master's degree dissertation entitled "Female identity from the state of Rio Grande do Sul: gender representations in the regional TV programs Bah!", written by Mariana Henriques (2016), aimed at analyzing the meanings related to the identity of the woman from the state of Rio Grande do Sul mobilized by the TV station RBS TV through the special TV programs called "Bah", which are a series of programs made to celebrate the Farroupilha Revolution. Through the elaboration of an own methodological model, inspired by Johnson's (2006) and Du Gay *et al.*'s circuits (1999), the author carried out a cultural-mediatic analysis to observe the object through three major instances: the television production, the textual products and the context by which the product is surrounded (Figure 5).

Figure 5 – Analysis Protocol by Henriques



Source: Henriques (2016, p. 71 – Our translation).

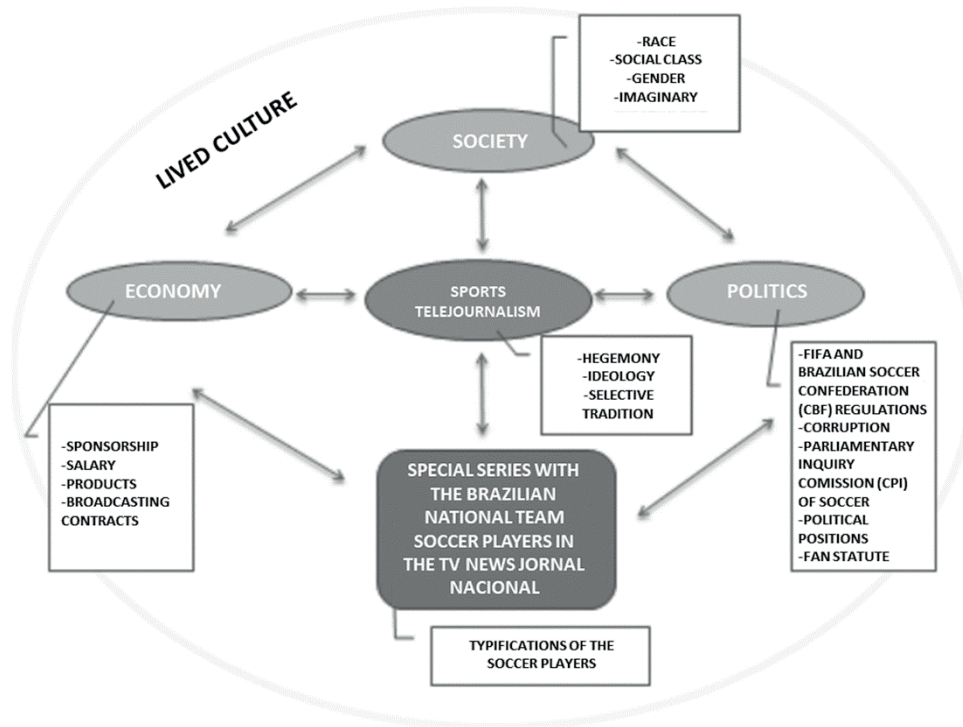
Thus, in order to analyze the television production, she collected, through exploratory research, information on television regulation, institutional rules of the TV station RBS TV and its *modus operandi*, understanding the submission of the TV station in relation to Rede Globo and its history, since the 1970s, of developing programs that aim at strengthening regionalization and reinforcing an identity for the state of Rio Grande do Sul. The textual forms were investigated through the textual analysis developed by Casetti and Chio (1999), based on the categories of history, scene, subject and verbal text. The context was observed based on the structures of feeling related to social, historical, cultural and identity aspects. In addition, the political dimension was included to give visibility to gender issues, presenting demographic data, legislation, public policies, violence indicators, among others. Finally, the researcher carried out a content analysis based on Bardin (2002), in order to list the main meanings activated in the programs. From the research, Henriques (2016) inferred that the three main meanings built by the TV station in relation to the female identity are

concealment, objectification and masculinization, characteristics that produce a stereotyped female identity. Besides, she also pointed out that the special programs have the intention of perpetuating a hegemonic and masculine identity, giving the false idea of female empowerment, in the quest to generate audience and gain recognition.

During the development of this second stage of researches, the need to tension the analyses through broader categories became evident. Thus, the current studies developed by the Research Group take up and deepen the Marxist theory elements, from the perspective of Williams (1979). These concepts started to be part of the studies as large analytical categories or as tensioners of the results achieved, making the intersection between the mediatic product and the aspects of the contemporary society. Each researcher chooses the concepts according to the research theme, what contributes to develop the study and to find answers to the research problem.

Lauren Santos Steffen's master's degree dissertation (2016) already follows this logic when analyzing the topic of sports television news from the analytical categories of lived culture and typification. The research "Relations and tensions in the field: typifications and lived culture in the special series about the soccer players of the Brazilian national team in the television news Jornal Nacional" aimed at analyzing the tensions and relations between the typifications of the soccer players, represented in the special series about the Brazilian national team soccer players in the television news Jornal Nacional, and the elements of the lived culture, from the exploration of the political, economic and social context. Steffen (2016) developed a proposal for the cultural-mediatic analysis of sports television news, inspired by Du Gay *et al.* (1999) and Johnson (2006), focusing on dynamic and interdependent spheres of the lived culture: the economy, the politics, the society and the sports television news. These spheres were described in the research based on information collected in the media, on results found in other academic studies and on data available on the websites of official bodies and non-governmental entities related to sports television news and soccer. Finally, the researcher used the textual analysis by Casetti and Chio (1999) to map the typifications built in the life stories presented in the special series, considering the category of history and the category of subjects and interactions. (Figure 6). Steffen (2016) focused the research on the life stories of three soccer players represented in the special series: Daniel Alves, Maxwell and Victor.

Figure 6 – Analysis Protocol by Steffen



Source: Steffen (2016, p. 96 – Our translation).

As a result, it was possible to identify three typifications of the soccer players represented in the special series: the poor type, characterized as hegemonic and representative of the majority of these athletes, which is highlighted in the series; the graduated type, represented in the series through a single player, to whom a concession is made in the series and, finally, the rich type, also represented by a single athlete, which is represented in an attenuated way. As they are rare cases in soccer, the graduated and the rich types are considered counter-hegemonic representations because they challenge the narrative pattern of such stories. Thus, the author concluded that, by attempting to place the soccer players as the main characters of the special series, the TV station and the news program accomplished only one marketing task, in an attempt to gain audience and generate identification through an illusory and homogeneous representation. The research demonstrates that this false protagonism masks numerous problematic situations, conveying the idea that all soccer players are valued and represented, ignoring the diversity and the plurality of their life stories. Therefore, the special series does not discuss new representations that could lead to more complex constructions of the Brazilian soccer player's identity.

Final Considerations

The main purpose of this paper was to demonstrate how the cultural-mediatic analysis can be used as a methodological possibility in Communication researches, so that more researchers can benefit from this analytical protocol and take advantage of its flexibility and scope. We presented the theoretical bases of Cultural Studies, which are the foundations of this analytical resource, and without them it is unfounded and superficial to dive into an analysis that considers culture its main point of investigation. The exploration of the concept of cultural materialism, the genesis of this type of analysis, is essential for the media to become evident as an institution, a process and a material social practice, which are interconnected, but not subordinated to the other spheres of the social whole.

The examples of master's degree dissertations, presented in this paper as instances of practical applications already carried out, allow us to observe how the Research Group has appropriated the methodology over time. Initially, the investigations developed more direct applications and adaptations of the circuits. After these first approaches, the researchers started to develop increasingly complex, dynamic and authorial appropriations of the existing models, according to the objectives of each research and the needs raised by the empirical objects. Thus, a gradual evolution in the use of the methodology is noticeable, as there was a more intensive contact with the theory, which brought depth and autonomy to the elaboration of each researcher's paths.

The master's degree dissertations also demonstrate the capacity of this methodological strategy to be applied to the most varied objects, from regional to national television programs, and to adapt to a diverse range of themes, such as regionalism and sports television news. Such versatility shows the potential for its use in the most different contexts and mediatic platforms, from traditional and hegemonic media to new media and alternative formats, which demonstrates how much the research limits can still be expanded and explored. The possibility of elaborating a specific analytical path demonstrates the researcher's autonomy to adapt the already existing protocols, selecting the appropriate elements and exploring the necessary spheres for the investigation.

Finally, the contribution of this paper also involved the elucidation of a concept for the cultural-mediatic analysis, in order to make the methodology even more accessible and consolidated in the area of communication. Thus, we hope that this proposition, with epistemic bases in Cultural Studies, can be explored in new researches and be studied by other research groups, exploring paths that increasingly lead to the contextual density and the critical depth of the media products analyzed.

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