

THE RURAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BRAZIL-PORTUGAL

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Introduction

There are several parallels between Brazil and Portugal as regards the formation of environmental protection movements (BARROS and SOUSA, 2010). This finding indicates that the similarities also extend to sociomediatic perspectives adopted by scholars in both countries, especially with regard to ways the media address the rural environment. These two countries share many convergences from the sociomediatic point of view, especially in light of the relevant cultural and political role of television, as pointed out by Barros (2013).

Since the 1990s, after the reverberations of the Earth Summit (Rio 92), environmentalism has established itself as a mediated phenomenon (Barros, 2013). The media coverage is understood as a social reference process in which are included other specific processes developed (fully or partially) according to the media logic (BRAGA, 2006). As Schmidt (1999, 2003) points out, the effects of environmental media coverage are reflected on the design of the issues on the public agenda, on the environment, and on the public attention cycle (more or less time spent in the coverage). In addition, the author notes that much of the knowledge and experience of the public in relation to environmental matters comes mainly from media coverage, which became the primary source of information, especially television. “The media reflect and form the perceptions that people do not experience directly” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.69). Valente (2000) adds that the conquest of media space by the green theme was accentuated with the propagation of environmental risks, which increased the interest of the media, enhanced the awareness of citizens and encouraged the mobilization for environmental protection.

Another important parallel concerns the formation of the environmental sociology field in both countries, as pointed out by Schmidt (1999), Alonso & Costa (2002) and Barros e Sousa (2010)ⁱ. Before developing the theme of environmental issues, sociology went through an analytical path of broad and diverse spectrum, such as the approach on rural issuesⁱⁱ, shown by Mathieu and Jollivet (1989). As in other countries, in Brazil and Portugal the role of rural sociology, specifically with regard to research on agricultureⁱⁱⁱ,

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was also critical for social scientists to begin to study the environmental issue, since “the social processes began to be studied in greater context of the biosphere, considering that deliberate human practices affecting the environment have caused unanticipated negative effects” (GUIVANT, 1995 p.99). From this perspective, rural sociology is considered one of the pioneers of environmental sociology, including in Brazil and Portugal (Ferreira and Ferreira, 1992; Schmidt, 1999).

The analysis on urban scenarios started to be addressed in the context of the reorganization of the rural environment in face of a globalized society (ALONSO; COSTA, 2002; Ferreira 2004). In this sense, the theme of rurality basically articulates three positions, according to the historical perspective of territorial occupation and social forms of production and social organization: traditional rural, modern rural and environmental rural (BRANDENBURG, 2010). First, the rural production centers are delimitedly separated from the urban environment. In the first, the country emerges as a space redefined by the rationality of capital. In the third, there is a coexistence of the traditional with the modern, i.e., a reconfiguration passing for environmental issues and the rhetoric of sustainability. In short, as the author’s reasoning, the Brazilian countryside is marked by diversity, from the three perspectives mentioned. This shows that coexist, in contemporary times, different rurals, “a vast territory characterized by heterogeneous spaces, from a geographical point of view and its prevailing social relations” (BRANDENBURG, 2010, p.427).

Similar analytical approach is adopted by Schmidt (1999, 2003) in the study of the Portuguese countryside, with some particularities highlighted by Portuguese authors as Figueiredo (1994; 2003; 2008; 2011), Valadas de Lima (1991; 2000) and Ferreira (2011). These scholars emphasize the plurality of ruralities in Portuguese territory, with the coexistence of old and new methods of production and different social experiences in these contexts. They also emphasize the formation of two ways to represent them: one for rural living and other to enjoy in sightseeing’s or media images. Similarly, Portuguese scholars call attention to the fact that the application of agro-environmental measures in the field resulted in the emergence of environmental conflicts and controversies surrounding the greening of peasant farming practices. This is because the rural and urban have become increasingly integrated contexts, forming not dichotomous social spaces, i.e. a continuously interconnected (XAVIER, 2007).

In both countries^{iv}, rural ceases to be a space that favours agriculture to become a socio-environmental arena of multiple activities, a productive network with multiple social, economic, environmental and cultural impacts. In this view, the land (in physiocrat design) is no longer the center of discussion on production processes, since other elements are aggregated, such as biotechnology, agricultural techniques, knowledge, human rights and environmental perspective, from the point of view of social relations. Thus, the rural is analysed from the perspective of the reorganization of economic activities, where technological progress plays a leading role in social reorganization processes (BRANDENBURG, 2005, p. 62).

From the socioenvironmentalist perspective, rural began to be studied from different perspectives, highlighting two perspectives: ecological modernization^v (BUTTEL, 2000; CATTON and DUNLAP, 1980) and reflexive modernity^{vi} (Giddens, Beck and Lash,

1997). Rural environmentalism became then a privileged object of social sciences study, in interdisciplinary approaches (ALONSO; COSTA, 2002). This concept became relevant not only to understand how rural reorganizes itself, but mainly to guide social actors, organizations and social and government institutions in the formulation of development policies that articulate dimensions of environment and society (BRANDENBURG, 2010; GUIVANT, 1995).

The proposal of environmental sociology has as its starting point the notion of unsustainability of contemporary civilization. Unsustainability whose main factors are: (a) exponential population growth and concentration of population in specific areas; (B) reduction on support of natural resources; (C) production model that uses waste technologies and low energy efficiency; (D) value system which promotes the growing expansion of consumption. In short, on the one hand, studies of agrarian issues and research on the impacts of adopting technologies in the production mode and social relations of the rural context contributed to create a field of interest among social scientists concerning ecological studies (ALONSO & COSTA, 2000; 2002).

Based on the broader scenario presented above, the article aims to analyse the sociomediatic representations of the rural environment in Brazil and Portugal, from two specific angles: the rural degraded and the rural idealized. Hence the relevance of the above parallel between rural sociology and sociology of the environment, one of the brands in studies conducted in both countries, according to a survey of Barros e Sousa (2010).

Description of research and methodology

The analysis was based on literature search and systematic review of academic studies on environmental mediatization, history of ecological ideas, sociology of communication and social sciences of the environment. The meta-analysis or systematic review procedure comprises scrutiny of previous studies on a particular topic, in order to organize the knowledge produced, compare trends, methodologies and produce inferences (Clarke, 2001). Meta-analysis is a research method based on data and findings obtained in research and studies performed by other researchers. "But not to mere literature review or literature", since "the meta-analytical studies require selection procedures, coding, data filtering, classification of the information and resulting bibliographic database management" (Aguar, 2011, p.3).

From this perspective, meta-analysis was applied using operational design of works-synthesis, i.e., expressive and representative publications in terms of approaches, thematic scope, methodological tools and theoretical framework. For this observation, a sample was collected (MARCONI, Lakatos, 1996), comprising ten emblematic and relevant works (five from each country), to include in the research corpus scientific reference works for the various phases of the historical period studiedⁱⁱⁱ. The reference studies are understood as a research that brings together a wealth of knowledge summarizing the main ideas, methodological paradigms and procedures for an area of knowledge in a given historical period. The assumption, therefore, is that a single work can serve as a reference for the analysis and understanding of the contents of an area of knowledge during a specific

period, such as a decade or five years. Regarding the corpus, we shall still explain that a preliminary survey already showed that there is no record of studies on environmental media coverage in the 1970s, in both countries, with few and unsystematic studies in the 1980s (Barros and SOUSA, 2010).

Since the mid-1980s, research on environmental communication and more specifically about the environmental media coverage began to be published, both in Brazil and in Portugal, but still sparsely. The profusion of studies on the subject is characteristic of the 1990s, driven by media coverage about the Rio 92. Another peak production of research on environmental mediation occurred with the signing of the Kyoto Protocol (1997) and the release of reports of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (2003-2007). All this explains the concentration of publications in the decades of 1990 and 2000.

It should be noted that the analysis was not limited to these ten works selected. This corpus is the main reference, which does not mean the exclusion of other works. As a complement, dozens of other publications were used, in order to supplement information and enrich the research. The supplementary material to the main corpus consists of journal texts, academic portals, scientific papers presented at events, as well as books and book chapters that present topics related to the analysed subject^{viii}.

Sociomediatics representations about the rural world

For analytical purposes, the environmental representations of rural world were grouped into two categories: the idealized rural and degraded rural. This procedure is justified by the prospect of environmental media coverage in both countries, whose logic consecrated this duality, although it is a built dichotomy, open to criticism. To embrace it, therefore does not mean that we agree with the way this duality is built. The criterion was the relevance that these two representations assume in the media content analysed. The criticism will be presented in the conclusions.

Rural idealized in Brazil

In Brazil, in this idyllic view, which refers to the mythological vision of paradise, either the Amazon, Cerrado, Caatinga, or the Pampas and other natural landscapes recognized for their beauty are portrayed by the media as enchanted places, laden with mysteries, legends and myths (Barros, 2007). In addition to the landscape itself, illustrated magazines and special TV series highlight aspects of the diversity of fauna and rare species.

During the 1970s, illustrated magazines, predecessors of television media environmental coverage, highlighted natural features of the landscapes unpublished images (SODRÉ, 1983). The virgin places, even without recording the presence of men, were given special attention. From this point of view, surprising the audience with rare bucolic images appeal seems to be one of the main editorial motivations. The environment is not yet integrated to the logic of environmental newsworthiness. Just the landscape is new to the public or there is a related appeal to the charms of nature or something that can surprise even the scientists themselves.

In this nature of representation stage, there is a kind of patriotic and vainglorious narcissism, based on the continuous need to display an expanded repertoire of beautiful landscapes, as “the only game in South America, the tropics or Brazil” (Barros, 2007). Until this point nature is represented as a natural heritage or a good to be enjoyed in a plastic /contemplative or tourism/economic point of view. There is neither political coverage nor environmentalist in the strict sense yet (Barros and SOUSA, 2010).

The idealization of rural life includes reports on fascinating discoveries of Brazilian biodiversity, with the inventory and identification of species still unknown to scientists and to the public. Reports of spectacular natural phenomena typical of the Brazilian landscape are also widely explored, such as the hydrodynamic phenomenon of tidal bore in the Amazon. Similarly, the articles that privilege images of rare orchids, large birds and species of peculiar corner are common (Barros, 2007).

Fall into this same perspective representations about the lifestyle of indigenous peoples and maroons descendants. The symbolic universe of indigenous peoples is explored thoroughly, as idealized and romanticized representation. “Medicinal” practices and the “shamanic healing”, the indigenous oral literature, legends and myths, and the economic calendar of some tribes are also part of this cultural universe studied by anthropologists and brought to attention of the public by the media, albeit in a simplified form and romanticized as criticize Folladori and Taks (2004) .

The rural idealized in Portugal

In Portugal, the tropical ecosystems are also the subject of idealized media coverage of the rural world, “represented as distant curiosity^{ix}, wild, object of knowledge and enjoyment and only recently as a global problem, given the risk of its destruction” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.196). This representation was reinforced by the view of Brazilian soap operas, as well as reports and documentaries that explore the image of lush tropical forests, whether in Africa or in remaining areas in South America. It is a “candid discourse on forest as wilderness benign “. The exploitation of the image of natural landscapes of broad aesthetic appeal becomes one of the trends of the Portuguese television, “a kind of slideshow of beautiful views.” Another icon of media representations of idealized rural are aquatic environments, such as waterfalls, nature reserves, rivers and rural lakes. The association with water is due to its landscape, “very important as aesthetic representation and place of recreation, deriving also for economic value, as a natural resource” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.200)^x.

In terms of local production still stand out documentaries and special reports on peasant populations, presented as if they were living in “wise and peaceful interaction with the environment” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.359). The author compares these populations to endangered species: “They and their practices, because the product of the interaction between people and environment is often given as an excellence of goods: bread, cheese, sausages, snacks, some typical dishes”

In the Portuguese television production still stands out the program “There is only Earth,” RTP (Portuguese Radio and Television), which exhibited series of documentaries

and reports on various ecological issues. As stressed by Schmidt (2003), the issue of nuclear energy, natural disasters, major pollution accidents and the first oil crisis marked the agenda of programs and environmental news until 1974. Even during the dictatorship, that program addressed local issues, but the intensity increases with the beginning of the democratic period, with media coverage of issues such as pollution of watersheds. The emergence of private channels increased environmental media coverage.

In this sociomediatic track, ecotourism or rural tourism is portrayed by the media of both countries as a practice that seeks the nostalgia of country life, the return to Arcadia. This type of tourist is seen as “respectful visitor of nature, curious about her and generous with her hospitality” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.359). Thus, “there were films about trips and the landscape, animals on the landscape” (p. 358) until the emergence of images of protected landscapes and its idealized rural value, especially the urban parks and natural reserves in the vicinity of large cities. Hence, the media construct a new representation of the idealized rural:

... A mix of scientific documentary and sequence of ‘beautiful views’, with incantatory plans, darned by the clear identification of the protected area we are - Gerês, San Jacinto dunes, Paul Boquilobo, Sado estuary, saw of Star ... Of each one in particular, it is highlighted its morphological and chromatic character, in short, landscape, with timely approach to one or another detail: a plant, an animal, a type of rock, a native or craftsman, in its life of ecological Integration in the landscape (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.358).

This trend is consolidated with the valuation of land images, replacing consecrated representations of the sea and rivers. With protected areas, rural pictures become valued under the mountains, dunes, valleys and hills. “It is as if the landscape moves inland and to the land, restoring a sense of rurality as an image of ‘good scenery at some point’” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.359).

The emergence of protected areas has changed the media framing on rural environment in Portugal. If before the field was explored only as a frame or scene for certain activities, especially agricultural and cultural, primarily focused on the valuation of peasant heritage of gastronomy, with protected areas, the country itself became the object of media representation, as there was a renewal or reissue of traditional rustic landscapes, valued as historical and cultural heritage (Vieira, 2006).

The redefinition of the rural world in its media representations still give way to other images, especially on television, such as programs on aesthetic and landscape values of urban gardens, even those in small spaces, in an almost mystical vision of the landscape, which highlights the power of plants to reconnect urban citizens to the ideal of woody, green and flowery field. In addition, the media began to highlight the value of natural food produced without pesticides and without fertilizers, like ancestors who lived in villages without electricity and without interference of industrialized products used to do. The idealization of rural areas include the representation of animals, whose images associate animals to the ‘living toys’, in a perspective that replaces the wild by fun and recreation. “Directed primarily to

children, we have clear preference for baby animal pictures, either playing with children, or being visited by them at the Zoo” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.372).

Most of the times, these representations follow the logic of entertainment, without environmental content in the strict sense. In general, television explores the playful and aesthetic aspects of the represented scenarios, which generally refer to the bucolic ideal of a romanticized and distant past, a kind of lost Arcadia:

As first implication of this general analysis, it can be said that in general, the programs on ‘environment-nature’ are polarized into two groups, with different features and timelines. A clear majority and more constant over time focused on the fauna, flora - particularly wild and tropical - and the items of natural landscape - especially seas, rivers and islands - and natural resources - especially water [...], in short in nature as a large group that expresses life on Earth. With this nature it is established in the programs a relationship of knowledge / curiosity and it is adopted a scientific/didactic and playful approach, in the form of documentaries - filmed mostly in Africa, Australia and America and produced by English and Americans. It should be noted that, initially, in the years 50-60, the representation of family and pets got a meaning in the context of rural landscape, a relation of production and / or usufruct / leisure linked to fiction / recreation (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.163).

The idealization of the landscape and distant rural contexts is considered one of the causes of the late development of the Portuguese environmental culture (inference that certainly also applies to Brazil):

So, unfollowing what once happened out there in Western industrialized countries, the home ‘environmental culture’, transmitted by RTP, centered itself on the wonderful world of nature – be it intact, wild and distant, traditional, rural and next (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.163).

This type of representation would lose space with the emergence of approaches to environmental risks and disasters, which took privileged place in television coverage. This shift from idealized rural to degraded rural was driven by the primacy of so-called global issues such as pollution, degradation, energy crisis, trash and disordering of the territory (Vieira, 2006). Other guidelines favoured this transition as the controversies surrounding the regional planning and construction of buildings in areas originally designated to preservation, especially in some suburbs of large cities, such as Lisbon. In these areas poorly designed high buildings were built, called “mamarrachos”.

The rural degraded in Portugal

In Portugal, the images of forest fires are considered as emblematic of the countryside degradation:

Noting the thematic route of fires over the analysis period, there are some changes in the way they are being treated in the media. If initially the fires refer to a predominantly descriptive, factual discourse and even scientific discourse, from the mid 80 the theme becomes something more preventive, with an increasingly political tone (...), the fires becoming an object of debate and criticism (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.195).

The fires were the natural disasters most reported in Portugal in recent decades, “posing on them a negative speech that highlights a relation of ‘destruction’ (...) mobilizing an emotional, critical, alarmist and almost exclusively negative speech” (SCHMIDT 2003, p.197). The emphasis on the issue is due to the incidence of a sequence of large fires, as occurred in 1996, in Serra de Sintra, which caused alarmism in society and damage of major proportions to local biodiversity. However, the seriousness of the issue led the debate on environment in Portugal to its heart and complexity. The disaster served as a warning to the Portuguese society that, until that point, used to see environmental news as if it were related to issues beyond national reality.

Fires touched the heart of the complexity of environmental phenomena in all its aspects - technical, economic, social, political, historical, natural, and cultural - like no other disaster that had happened before. This is the first thematic area in which a disaster is treated in reflexion of all the Portuguese society, even if the result of this reflection is something inconclusive (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.321).

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The impact of news about fires, especially with television broadcasting, drew attention of the media, society and the authorities to the need for preservation of green areas, with emphasis on the idea that the forest is an economic wealth for the country that, “beyond the scientific application and state technical, it complains the individual care of citizens who live on it, be they hunters, campers or just passing motorists” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.322).

The media coverage of the fire paved the way for the inclusion of other environmental issues in the Portuguese agenda, such as the importance of conservation of national parks, water sources and preservation of plant and animal species. In addition:

The mediatic camp of fires then begins to be increasingly taken in an intermediate space for other topics: the causes are one of the most chronic controversies of televised debates. The extinction techniques, prevention policies, always accused of missing the tensions of

interests, continually hinted but rarely explained, absorb almost all the space of representation on the disaster. This will have its only moments of affirmativeness, especially in large forest fires in protected areas, as an environmental problem overall. In Gerês, in 1989, as in Arrábida in 1991, criminal intentions were the same invoked, but the news effectively underline the loss of forest heritage, and not, as it usually is, the mere destruction of x hectares and y wood esters (SCHMIDT, p.323).

Another point was highlighted on the media coverage of the flames in the forests regarding the politicization of the debate on forest degradation. With the deepening of coverage, it is no longer represented as a cyclical fatality attributed exclusively to natural causes. Gradually, the natural disaster character starts to be perceived by the media as a result of inconsequential human actions. Thus emerges the concept that the forest is such an important asset as the territory “and when it is burning it is the country that burns” (SCHMIDT, 2003, p.323). Another consequence was the association between the harmful effects of fires and the generation of gases that cause global warming, releasing large amounts of CO₂.

The media coverage of the rural environment degradation in Portugal also includes the case of pollution of rivers in the early 1990s:

... it will be mainly due to the use of their images - parched, green, pasty, poisoned by dragging dead fish - that the domestic alert against pollution will come. Everything comes together: water seen as strategic resource in degradation and lacking with the drought worsen in the first half of the 90s, the rivers in slow death in pre-desert landscapes in the Alentejo and then the debate on the Spanish Hydrological Plan (SCHMIDT, 2003, p. 357).

In short, the representations of the rural degraded in Portuguese media are established in the dichotomy between fire and water, both ambiguous symbols which can evoke positive and negative aspects. The heat used to prepare food, for example, is the same which can destroy forests. Similarly, the water that brings forth the sources and feeds the rivers is the same which can also cause destruction, with floods. In addition to the strong emotional and cultural appeal, this duality has a contrast that allows rich exploitation by media images, especially on television, with the aforementioned association with popular imaginary (Vieira, 2006). We also emphasize the role played by the “Rural TV” program (RTP), which began in 1960 and lasted until 1990, marking 30 years of emissions focused mainly in agriculture (Schmidt, 2003).

The degraded rural in Brazil

Forest fires have also become an emblem of the Brazilian degraded rural, a catastrophe repeated every year in the dry season in most of the country, especially in the Caatinga

and Cerrado. However, with the emergence of involuntary fires of great proportions in the Amazon, media coverage was also intensified. In 1998 there was one of the fires that would call world's attention, through the media angle. The flames burned in Roraima. While the burned forest, government, journalists from different countries, researchers, firemen, volunteers, curious, viewers, chiefs, farmers wondered how a fire of those proportions was possible. What would happen to the green of the Amazon and its people in the forest? Which implications would it have to the ozone layer, to the greenhouse effect, to carbon release into the atmosphere? The answers came from all sides and words such as 'environment', 'ecology' and 'environmental protection' received the most diverse and sometimes contradictory meanings (COSTA, 2006, p.27).

The intense media coverage - both national and international media - drew attention of the United Nations (UN), which sent a mission to Brazil to assess the impacts of fires. "The findings of the mission, the size of fire, as well as its intensity exceeded the expectations of local and federal governments, which did not have the material and human resources to tackle forest fire that size" (Costa, 2006, p.42). The fire in Roraima, whose proportions were attributed to El Niño, reached an area of almost 40 000 km² and affected grasslands and primary forests. As the study cited, the burning plant material issued about 20 million tons of carbon into the atmosphere.

The flames in the region are classified by scholars as "accidental fire", a category that refers to the intentional and located burned, which is outside the control of the farmer. Also fall into this category fires caused by cigarettes thrown in areas with dry vegetation. Research Coast (2006) concludes that the case of forest burning in Roraima was a milestone in the history of Brazilian environmentalism. In addition to the wide international repercussions, "putting Brazil in the world television screens and motivating a number of government and non-government" (p.57)

Moreover, the impact of the images contributed to intensify public debate on the various social sectors involved, including the family farming. However, the opposite also happened because family farm has become a major source of concern for the environmental field, "since among its agents found themselves family farmers, responsible for fires that could turn out to be forest fires in Amazon" (Costa, 2006, p.57). For the author, the fire in Roraima, also led to the creation of some government programs that, "despite the initial emergency character, continue to be the main working strategies of the Government on the subject" (p.57).

The extraction of forest wood is another factor pointed out by the study mentioned as an enhancer of fires:

This is because during the removal of commercially valuable species, other trees also end up being torn down or having broken branches, which would turn into combustible material to fire. Another consequence of this activity is to increase the forest canopy, facilitating the penetration of sunlight through the trees and drying faster sheets deposited on the ground, which also become flammable material (Costa, 2006, p.47).

The researcher presents data indicating that, in case of burning the same area for the second time, the fire will be proportionally twice as much taller and wider, and ten times hotter than the first, which increases destruction of trees which had survived the first fire. "In addition, an intact forest can remain resistant to fire even after 16 days without rain, while a forest that has already had fire more than twice is quite vulnerable to fire after nine days without rain" (Costa, 2006 , p.47).

Another emblem of rural deprivation in Brazil, as the studies analysed, is the so-called "Arc of Deforestation", which concentrates 80% of deforestation and burning in the Amazon region. The area covers 1.7 million km² that are formed by Acre, Amazon, Rondônia, northern Mato Grosso, south and east of Pará, Tocantins and Maranhão. In this specific area, the felling of trees reaches 23 thousand square kilometres per year. Extensive farming is the activity that causes most deforestation, being responsible for 80% of the problem. In the sequence it is the grabbing of public lands and logging, with 15%, and agriculture, with 5%, according to the Ministry of the Environment in 2005. The "arc of deforestation" is characterized by the strong expansion of the agricultural border, based mainly on the advancement of soybean and extensive livestock - activities often used as a justification for public land invasions.

Because of this combination of elements, the Amazonian problems assume peculiar amplitude in environmental media coverage in Brazil, which hinders a comprehensive and exhaustive inventory. However, we remark other aspects that are highlighted emphatically by press coverage, such as:

- The need to establish legal criteria for the exploitation of natural resources in the region, especially timber resources;
- The exploitation of minerals and the impacts of mining activities, especially the reduction of soil quality for agricultural activities; reducing the natural growth of flora; and the emergence of pests and diseases around the mines;
- The lack of objective rules for the use of physical space and agricultural cultivation;
- The increasing degradation of vegetation in the side roads of the Trans-Amazon highway;
- The improper use of wildlife resources of the land in the region, including the illegal trade of wild animal skins;
- The lack of policies for the sustainability of the relationship of the Amazon with other aquatic ecosystems, such as the Pantanal and all the surrounding area flooded forests and streams that contribute to the formation of the basins of major rivers in the region: the Solimões, the Negro and the Amazon itself.

The inhabitants of rural areas (coastal and hinterland) are also represented as part of the degraded scenario (or even as "degraded lives") in an attempt to relate the man with natural environment and culture, as did Euclides da Cunha in *Os Sertões* and Josué de Castro in *Geografia da Fome*, besides the representation in literature as *O Quinze*, by Rachel de Queiroz and *Vidas Secas*, by Graciliano Ramos (Barros, 2007).

Perhaps because of this tradition already established by the Social Sciences and Literature, the media coverage on Brazilian rural degraded follow the same trend. Unlike Portugal, where the studies emphasize the degradation of the landscape and natural resources, in Brazil the human factor is also highlighted in a socially important perspective. Phenomena and endemic and chronic socioeconomic problems are recurrently addressed by the media, such as drought, slave or degrading labour, devastation in mines, especially in Serra Pelada (in the state of Pará), charcoal producers, felling of trees, fires and the consequences of all these problems in lives of rural areas residents.

Despite the breadth of approach on the rural degraded, drought and its consequences is the most constant theme in press coverage (SILVA, 2003, p 361.):

Generally, the findings and propositions are referenced in historically built images on a space-problem, land of drought, hunger and misery region, economic backwardness explanation and regional disparities. These images are the result of superficial judgments about the reality of semi-arid and political interests of local elites that explain poverty, hunger and the delay as a product of adverse natural conditions, climate, land and its people training.

The author also emphasizes the political use of reports, which disclose the phenomenon nationally as a serious practically insoluble problem. Thus, journalism serves those who intend to transform the drought in political argument “to get resources, works and other amenities that would be monopolized by the local ruling elites” (Silva, 2003, p. 362).

This view on the drought prevailed until the mid-twentieth century. From the 1960s it begins to emerge other views on structural causes and consequences of drought, placing it beyond mere weather phenomenon. In this sense, *Geografia da Fome*, the book by Josué de Castro, denounces the lack of rain as blamed for the northeastern drama, “covering up dominant forms of economic exploitation that created and reproduced wealth concentration and political power, generating poverty and dependency of thousands of backlanders” (SILVA, 2003, p. 362). The argument of Josué de Castro, taken by Silva, points out that land concentration and exploitation of the hinterland labour began to have highlights on explaining the misery maintenance of Brazilian backlands.

Silva’s study identifies two dominant paradigms in academy regarding the thematization of drought, which are also reproduced by the press:

The drought relief is closely related to the traditional paradigm, which is based on a fragmented, mechanistic and utilitarian view of the world, and particularly of nature. The strangeness and detachment of human beings in relation to nature are guided by the belief of anthropocentric domination, which allows to use, in a predatory manner, natural resources for economic growth and accelerated consumerism satisfaction. [In this view] The natural adversities should be stricken, so the human realm would be fully full field: the lack of

water should be faced with hydric solutions; low productivity with innovative irrigation technologies and modernization of farms etc. (SILVA, 2003, p.380).

The other paradigm identified by the author is associated with the prospect of living with drought and climate conditions of the semi-arid. This perspective is related to an emerging concept which is based on an ecological vision,

breaking with the anthropocentric view of domination and providing a reconciliation of man with nature. Living with the Semi-Arid is based on a holistic understanding of ecosystems complex realities and the use of knowledge, values and practices appropriate to the environment. To this perception it shall articulate initiatives that aim to improve the quality of life of local people (SILVA, 2003, p.381).

The consequences of the drought in the Northeast, the situation of people affected by the phenomenon, with dramatic testimony of country people, besides tillage destruction, as well as cattle white ring, are explored in great emotional appeal of images, mainly in special reports and television programs.

Conclusions

The comparative analysis between the two countries shows that the thematic repertoire, imagistic and media frameworks are very convergent. In both countries television is considered as the main responsible for this convergence. In addition, the importance of the rural environment in television programming reflects the cultural heritage of two agrarian countries, with long rural tradition, due its basis on codes and towns and villages symbols of that at the time, which were more extensions of life in the field than of urban life itself.

In the light of the urban population interests, one of the most significant trends in media coverage on the rural environment is the performative character. This means that, to frame the rural themes in media perspective, the facts are re-contextualized in order to meet the requirements of media culture, which are closely linked to happening, that is, something that is projected by itself, in the form of event - usually an event considered merely for its performing features. Both, therefore, (performance and happening) are elements of the called postmodern culture (Harvey, 2009). These are elements that oppose themselves to the art object itself or to the perfect work, typical traits of modern culture.

This perspective brings another consequence, which is the standardization of approaches on environment in two perspectives (idealization and degradation). This standardization produces a homogenized, polarized and simplified view (FOLLADORI; TAKS, 2004), as if all the issues of complex rural areas could be reduced to two media categories in order to meet the requirements of the media coverage, regardless of diversity and the complexity of rural contexts, as argued Brandenburg (2010). The sociomediatic framework transforms places, landscapes and people of the rural environment into "products" to be consumed by individuals and groups from other countries, regions or cities,

as something that can entertain and delight the viewer, with episodic appreciation of the rural idealized and degraded scenarios. There is a clear tendency to assign a sporadic character to these manifestations. Not that they exist only at certain times, but they are valued at certain specific periods, as the logic of mediation, due to agenda and framework mechanisms (Barros; SOUSA, 2010).

This perspective reinforces the previous two. First because the environmental agenda must always meet the requirements of performance and happening. Second because it implies little diversity in approach, although there is interest of newsworthiness promoters in presenting environmental events that are presented as “new” if they are unusual and performing. In other words, the issues raised must be in accordance with the spectacular or dramatic rhetoric of media coverage (BRAGA, 2006).

In short, what can be seen, in a comparative perspective, is that in both cases media coverage of rural issues is made according to the interests of urban public, either in the case of the rural idealized as in the representation of degradation. Media coverage reinforces aspects of social imaginary already established concerning the nature, from culturally relevant elements such as fire, earth, water, forests. All these elements are consecrated references to the constitution of the legends and myths of the countryside, which also have become raw material for the construction of the environmental scenario representation built by the media and aimed at the urban public. Thus, according to Braga (2006), the media coverage works as a powerful interactive process reference to the assimilation of the images and representations of nature, or in relation to the rural idealized or to the degraded rural.

The rural media representations are characterized by a number of limitations that result in simplification and concealment of greening processes of the field, without the nuances of the various rural (traditional, modern and environmental), as analyses Brandenburg (2010). It makes the media representations of the rural world deprived of their complexities and undocked of its contexts and local struggles (LOPES, 2006). The duality built by the media, i.e. the idealized rural and the degraded rural, shows how this framework recreates reality and reconfigures it in a limited frame, typical of media coverage, thus contributing to the naturalization of the the citizen look and to direct the education of the public’s perception on rural issues and their environmental forces, as if it could be homogeneous and unique from the point of view of degradation and greening.

Notes

- i The convergences are pointed out from the analysis of each work and its context.
- ii It is not part of the analytical scope of this article describe the process of transition from rural sociology for environmental sociology, as already exists bibliography on the subject, such as the seminal study of Mathieu and Jollivet (1989), and Hannigan (2009) Guivant (2002), Ferreira (2004) and Brandenburg (2005).
- iii In the ballast of the green revolution of the 1970s and the growing modernization and mechanization of agriculture, is emerging in the scientific community, the warning about the consequences of the use of chemical additives to the soil and other practices which are now considered harmful to ecosystems (Brandenburg, 2005).
- iv This process was accentuated with the increasing migration from the countryside to the city, after the accession to the European Union other than their emigration to other countries.

- v This part considers the perspective of sustainability, ie the possibility of linking economic growth and environmental protection, based on the restructuring of the economic face new environmental policies postures.
- vi According to this interpretation, social modernization processes necessarily include elements of productive infrastructure of the rural environment, which began to consider environmental principles.
- vii The main corpus of the research consists of the following studies: Brazil: (1) DENCKER; KUNSCH (1996); (2) OLIVEIRA (1991); (3) COSTA (2006); (4) MOTTA et al. (2006); (5) TRIGUEIRO (2005). Portugal: (6) SCHMIDT (2003); (7) GARCIA (2004); (8) PEREIRA ROSA (2006); (9) VIEIRA (2006); (10) FREITAS (2007).
- viii Note that it was not possible to cite and reference any supporting material that served as the beacon for the study design, due to the page limit.
- ix The media coverage of the idealized rural was more intense during the dictatorship, with the image of a rural and bucolic country, due to the industrial backwardness. The degradation was presented as a problem of industrialized countries. The Portuguese countryside was used as opposed to the degraded and polluted scenarios these countries.
- x Constant use of this author is justified because it was the study of larger thematic and methodological emphasis on rural setting with a time frame of 40 years on the coverage of Rádio e Televisão Portuguesa (RTP).

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THE RURAL MEDIA REPRESENTATIONS: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF BRAZIL-PORTUGAL

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Abstract: This paper analyses the sociomediatic representations of the countryside in Brazil and Portugal, from two specific angles: the idealized rural and the degraded rural. This procedure is justified by the media coverage of the environment in both countries, whose logic consecrated this duality. The research was based on the systematic review of academic studies on environmental mediatization, ecological history of ideas, sociology of communication and social sciences of the environment. The main conclusion is that, in both countries, media coverage of rural issues is focused on the interests of the urban citizens and reinforces aspects of the social imaginary, based on culturally relevant elements like fire, earth, water, forests. The mediation process acts as a powerful interactive reference to the assimilation of images and representations of nature, whether in relation to the rural idealized or the degraded rural.

Keywords: Environment and Society. Rural environment. Media and environment. Brazil and Portugal.

Resumo: O presente estudo analisa as representações sociomediáticas sobre o ambiente rural no Brasil e em Portugal, a partir de dois ângulos específicos: o rural degradado e o rural idealizado. Esse procedimento se justifica pela própria perspectiva da mediatização do ambiente nos dois países, cuja lógica consagrou essa dualidade. A pesquisa foi realizada com base na técnica de revisão sistemática de estudos acadêmicos sobre mediatização ambiental, história das ideias ecológicas, sociologia da comunicação e as ciências sociais do ambiente. A principal conclusão é que, nos dois países, a mediatização das temáticas rurais atende aos interesses dos públicos urbanos e reforça aspectos do imaginário social, a partir de elementos culturalmente relevantes como o fogo, a terra, a água e as matas. A mediatização funciona como um poderoso processo interacional de referência para a assimilação das imagens e representações sobre a natureza, seja em relação ao rural idealizado ou ao rural degradado.

Palavras-chave: Ambiente e sociedade; Ambiente rural; Mídia e ambiente; Brasil e Portugal.

Resumen: Este trabajo analiza las representaciones mediáticas en el medio rural en Brasil y Portugal, desde dos ángulos específicos: el rural degradado y el rural idealizado. Este procedimiento se justifica por la posibilidad misma de la cobertura de los medios del medio ambiente en los dos países, cuya lógica consagra esta dualidad. La investigación se basa en la técnica de la revisión sistemática de los estudios académicos sobre la historia de la mediatización del medio ambiente, de las ideas ecológicas y la sociología del medio ambiente. La principal conclusión es que, en ambos países, la cobertura mediática de lo rural atiende los intereses de la población urbana y reforza los aspectos del imaginario social, a partir de elementos culturalmente relevantes como el fuego, la tierra, el agua, los bosques. El proceso de mediación actúa como una poderosa referencia interactiva para la asimilación de las imágenes y representaciones de la naturaleza, ya sea en relación con el rural degradado o con el rural idealizado.

Palabras clave: Medio Ambiente y Sociedad; Entorno rural; Medios de comunicación y medio ambiente. Brasil y Portugal.
