

# BRAZIL AND LATIN AMERICA IN THE TELEREALITY FROM DAVOS TO BELÉM:

The journalistic coverage of the  
Brazilian newscasts

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SBP *Jor* / Sociedade  
Brasileira de Pesquisa  
em Jornalismo

## ABSTRACT

Television and news reports function as fundamental tools in order to amplify or restrict public interest. Journalistic discourses are strategic as mediators among the different powers and the civic society, and contribute to maintaining or transforming social practices, especially the narratives of the TV news. This work aims at identifying how television news programs build political dimensions, identities and Latin-American physical and symbolic territories, starting from an analysis covering two events that marked the international agenda in 2009: the World Economic Forum in Davos, and the World Social Forum in Belém, as treated by the most watched Brazilian television news programs.

**Key-words:** Television, television news, mediation, Brazil, Latin America.

## INTRODUCTION

A critical reflection on Brazilian and Latin-American contemporary realities requires investigations of media productions and their mediations as social and cultural practices that are identity generators<sup>1</sup>. In that sense it is important to show their representations, especially in the TV news, the information products that carry greater impact contemporaneously, through which TV creates and seeks to give visibility to a collective and everyday experience of the nation (BECKER, 2005). TV news functions in Brazil as the only collective expression of representation and construction of the social reality, and reflects and interferes in the expression of the national identities. It has an important place in the building of perceptions in the nation as a daily ritual. TV and the news, in their almost sixty years of existence, have consolidated themselves in Brazil as a symbolic territory, where the different social groups experiment feelings of citizenship and belonging to complex societies. They assume

a role of maintaining power relations and consequently a social control in the political and cultural agenda of the country. However, they also exert a forefront role as unifying agents of Brazilian society, and offer national references of everyday reality, showing conflicts and making changes viable, although they themselves model those possibilities. Those discursive actions, although apparently contradictory, endorse and give importance to their own existence, in the fulfillment of their objective action of narrating the main social events of Brazil and of the world and their subjective function of presenting everyday social reality, mediating conflicts and sociocultural differences (BECKER, 2005).

In the programming grid of the open TV networks, which receive almost 60% of the advertising investments<sup>2</sup>, the television news programs sell credibility and attract investments. They are information products of such power that they have achieved, in critical reflections on the mediations of the media, the concept of telereality, a power that is also proven financially, and points to a surprising commercial value for the news programs<sup>3</sup>. In Brazil the evening TV news maintains the highest break values of all the programming of Brazilian open TV channels. The cost of airing a 30" commercial in the "*Jornal Nacional*", the main TV television news program that has the greatest audience in the country, on the Globo Network, is over R\$ 339.000,00<sup>4</sup>. The cost of a commercial insertion of the same duration in the intervals of the "*Jornal da Record*", with the second largest Brazilian TV audience, is R\$ 201.812,00<sup>5</sup>. The gist of the TV Globo Network programming still is entertainment and journalistic information; the duo eight o'clock soap opera – "*Jornal Nacional*" have maintained the highest audience ratings of open TV, even considering that those ratings were more representative in the past<sup>6</sup>.

On TV they show many of the most important dimensions of contemporaneity, but there are also promotions of knowledge of the social reality. In fact, television and television news may function as fundamental instruments for amplifying or restricting public interest and the expression of different social actors. The narrative of the TV news is the more or less ambiguous result of the intersection between information and disinformation, truth and trickeries, ritualized settings and spontaneity. The collective experience of social realities both local and global is produced in images through discourses on what is real, not discourses of fiction. Television news is the main agent of that process. We consider therefore that journalistic discourses are strategic in the mediation between the different powers and the civic society, and may contribute to the conservation or to the transformation of social practices,

especially the narratives of the TV news in Brazil, in Latin America, and all over the world. For that reason, we point to the need for reflecting on journalism as a kind of contemporaneous knowledge and carrying out a critical reading of the television news.

We are interested in identifying how the TV news builds identities and the physical and symbolical Latin-American territories; for that reason we have chosen as the subject for study the coverage of two events that marked the international agenda in 2009: the World Economic Forum (WEF) in Davos and the World Social Forum (WSF) in Belém, by the two Brazilian newscasts that maintain the largest audience in the country: the *Jornal Nacional* and the *Jornal da Record*. In the period from January 27<sup>th</sup> to February 3<sup>rd</sup>, the international areas contributed with 28% in the *Jornal Nacional* and 23% in the *Jornal da Record*. And 12% on the average of the news of each one of the editions of those television newscasts concerns Latin America. We take it as a hypothesis that the quantity of news does not necessarily guarantee the quality of the journalistic coverage, that is, diversity of themes and social actors, plural interpretations, more critical elaborations on the construction of ideas on the present state of affairs (BECKER, 2008, p.367); and we investigate whether the TV coverage of those two happenings contributed or not to promoting a differentiated look at Brazil and at Latin America, and to check whether Latin America is represented in the contemporaneous geopolitical telereality.

We start from Journalism Theory, especially the *agenda-setting* and the *newsmaking* hypotheses, and systematizations of newsability criteria and news values, as well as the Semiology of Social Discourses and of Cultural Studies, which offer a fertile path for the investigation of the dynamic negotiations of meanings in the field of Communication and the interactions between production and audience, and also of the studies on quality television in order to complete our theoretical tools for this research. During the course of the investigation, we adopted as methodology the quantitative and qualitative analyses proposed by Becker (2005) in order to carry out a critical reading of the Brazilian TV coverage of the Economic and Social Forums. We used five categories associated with 11 principles of enunciation and with 8 newsability criteria that we will present below.

### **Building a critical reflection**

Meanings, significances, ideologies and prejudices are acquired, confirmed and exerted by the discourse in an intrinsic power relation. According to Van Dijk (2008), in spite of their subtlety and complexity,

the most influential discourses are the political, pedagogical and media discourses. And the role of television newscasts as components of the Brazilian and world reality, especially in the coverage of the major happenings, is relevant. For Dayan and Katz (*apud* BECKER, 2001), the coverage of the major television happenings, also called media happenings or teleceremonials of the electronic era, attracted the largest audiences in the history of the world. According to the authors, those happenings are characterized by being transmitted by groups or by heroic individuals, who confer on them a dramatic meaning or ritual. They produce social effects that make their viewing compulsory, permitting the reinforcement of consensus, but also surpassing crises and therefore generating social changes, in accordance with the dialectic theory of Fairclough, who proposes to examine in depth not only the role of language in the reproduction of social practices and of ideologies, but also its fundamental role in social change. On one hand Fairclough (2001) considers the discourse as molded by the social structure, and on the other hand, as part of the social structure. "Discourse contributes to the constitution of all the dimensions of the social structure which, direct or indirectly, shape it and restrict it, its own norms and conventions and also the relations, the identities and the institutions subjacent to it" (FAIRCLOUGH, 2001).

We relate the media happening to TV news coverage of relevant social events accompanied by large audiences because the two narrative forms follow in neighboring areas whose frontiers are still very tenuous, especially when we consider the political and cultural context of each nation during those transmissions and the potential interactions and negotiations in those communication processes, the meanings produced and attributed to those telereal ceremonies and media coverages at a specific historical moment by the transmitters, the professionals, the government and the audiences. The daily conflicts serve to structure the TV news narrative that functions as a place of reference and security in the daily chaos of contemporary society (VIZEU, 2008, p.12). And TV newscasts do not fail to perform their objective function of informing. At the same time, however, in the transformation of the social events into news, they build representations of distinct experiences and intervene in reality. Thus, they tend to establish the conservation of social relations. However, television newscasts have assumed symbolically the role of defenders of human rights and of the public interest, since interviews and reports even legitimize differentiated and non-hegemonical voices. Therefore, TV news narratives may even promote transformations and

social changes. With a greater impact and constancy than any other contemporaneous narrative form, television newscasts have also occupied in the enunciations of the events the place of other more fragile institutions in their representations, such as the law and the police, in the judgment of social actions, condemning or absolving the most different actors and the most different political attitudes, seeking to justly deflate and dilute conflicts which are threats to the established order, but at the same *Time* struggling for democratic principles, in accordance with a “non-partisan” market logic, and therefore presenting themselves as prominent actors in the mediation of social relations and interests.

For those reasons, we will understand the singular characteristics of the major happenings, as systematized by Dayan and Katz (*apud* BECKER, 2001), from the Brazilian television news coverage of the WSF and the WEF, adopting and endorsing their contributions to analyze specifically the effects produced by TV news coverage of those two events, which may be studied from the viewpoint of three important concepts: competition, celebration and conquest, which we will comment on in time. Even so, performing the proposed investigation is not an easy task, especially when the analysis seeks to identify identity constructions and representations of physical and symbolic territories, concepts that demand clearer and more precise definitions. A different kind of structural change is transforming societies and provoking a crisis of identity nowadays. Hall (1999) assumes that man in modern society had a well-defined identity in the social and cultural world. However, he says that structural change is fragmenting, decentralizing and dislocating the cultural identities of class, sexuality, ethnic groups, race and nationality. If before those identities were solidly situated and individuals fitted in socially, today they find much less defined frontiers. The nation-state, in turn, has lost the major part of its power, but not its influence; it no longer plays the role of producer, but tries to be identified as the regulator of social actions, thus facing the challenge of surpassing the power of the networks and of global interests to sustain autonomy.

Besides, on the cultural level, national symbols and myths compete with world symbols and myths; globalization, however, helps local and regional forces, which before were subject to the dynamics of the nation-state, to attain expression in the different communities, in the communication networks and in the market. However, the negotiations of meanings and values of cultural identities and of minorities do not reinforce the unification of national identities, making them predictable; on the contrary, the processes of identification are consequently more

provisional, variable and problematic. The different cultures adopt and promote a more dynamic discursive game in which they simultaneously explicit their peculiarities and distinguish themselves from other cultural forms. For that reason, the concept of identity results necessarily in the relation and the identities and aspirations of the non-hegemonical groups, as explained by Sodré (1999, p.34), that are not able to transit freely in the discursive economies and in the symbolic representations of the juridical, political, economical and cultural systems. At the same *Time* that the logic of the market sustains human diversity, it does not equate the differences nor lessen the inequality of men in daily practices. According to Barbero (2001, p.26), “television is much less an instrument for leisure and amusement than a presentation of the daily scenario of the most secret perversions of the social structure and also of the construction of the collective imagination, from which people recognize themselves and show what they have the right to expect and desire.” However, he points to the need for some criticism capable of distinguishing between the indispensable denouncement of television’s complicity with the manipulations of power and of the most sordid commercial interests (BARBERO, 2001, p.26) and the strategic place that television occupies in the dynamics of the majority’s daily culture, in the transformation of their sensibilities and in the ways to build imagination and identities. We adopt this perspective in order to develop our analysis.

### **An object of complex study**

The choice of the Brazilian television coverage of the Social and Economic World Forums was not made by chance. Rarely in the agenda of the international press have two political-economic events with such differentiated profiles mobilized the major media so much and so simultaneously. The World Social Forum (WSF), interested in proposing alternatives to neoliberalism, does not intend to be a representative example of civic society, nor does it seek to become a permanent organization<sup>7</sup>. It was created as a counterweight to the dominant development model propagated by the World Economic Forum (WEF), which takes place in Davos annually. The latter is against any control or regulation that might inhibit market “freedom”<sup>8</sup>. According to its organizers, the WSF is an open space, plural, diversified, non-governmental and non-partisan, which stimulates, in a decentralized fashion and on the Internet, debate, reflection, formulation of proposals, exchange of experiences and articulation among entities and local and international movements engaged in concrete actions characterized by

the emphasis on diversity and co-responsibility<sup>9</sup> in the construction of a more responsible, democratic and just world<sup>10</sup>.

The 2009 World Social Forum was promoted from January 27<sup>th</sup> to February 1<sup>st</sup>, on the grounds of the Federal University of Pará – UFPA and of the Federal University of the Rural Amazon Region - UFRA, both in Belém, State of Pará, and brought together about 133,000 people and 5,808 organizations from 1,442 different countries<sup>11</sup>. The 2009 Forum was one of the largest in the series of events, second only to the 2005 WSF in Porto Alegre, the fifth in the series which had over 150,000 participants.. The 2009 WSF promoted the largest indigenous mobilization in its history. Belém gathered together about 3,000 indians, men and women, from over 120 ethnic groups<sup>12</sup> in the entire Pan-Amazon Region composed of Brazil, Bolivia, Peru, Colombia, Venezuela, Ecuador, Surinam, Guiana and French Guiana<sup>13</sup>. That significant indigenous participation is even more relevant when we consider that the Amazon Region, one of the principal themes of this year's meeting, has about 27% of its territory occupied by indigenous land and that 10% of the population of Latin America, equivalent to 44 million people, is composed of 522 traditional peoples of different ethnic origins<sup>14</sup>.

In 2009, the World Social Forum also had the greatest participation of chiefs of state in its history. Five presidents from Latin America – Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva (Brazil); Evo Morales (Bolivia); Hugo Chávez (Venezuela); Rafael Correa (Ecuador) and Fernando Lugo (Paraguay) – participated in a panel on “Latin America and the challenge of the international crisis” and presented their proposals and alternatives to the “bankruptcy” of the world financial system in order to achieve sustainable development, especially in the Amazon Region. It should be noted that the Brazilian federal government spent R\$ 77,500,000 by means of agreements with the State of Pará to help in holding a Forum in Belém<sup>15</sup>. In his speech at the World Social Forum, President Lula criticized protectionism and defended measures for regulating the futures market and the financial system as ways to overcome the crisis<sup>16</sup>. Besides the Latin-American presidents, 12 of Lula's ministers attended the meeting and participated in the debates with the social movements. However, only the ministers in the social area participated in the event. Among the Brazilian ministers who went to Belém, those responsible for the economic policies of the country were not present - neither Guido Mantega (Finance) nor Paulo Bernardo (Planning); nor the President of the Central Bank, Henrique Meirelles<sup>17</sup> who was present in Davos, Switzerland, for the World Economic Forum, deemed the “rival” of the World Social Forum<sup>18</sup>.

However, in spite of the initial planning of the meeting which was discussed two years before the meeting took place and which foresaw that the question of the Amazon Region and the effects of deforestation on environmental equilibrium would be the main topics of the discussions at the event, the direction of the debates changed on account of the economic crisis. After the changes in the world financial scenario, the crisis overshadowed the Amazon Region issue, and more importance was given to reflections on alternative proposals to the neoliberal model that led to globalization<sup>19</sup>.

The visibility of the event was unquestionable. Of the 4,500 communicators involved in the coverage of the event, 2,000 got their credentials at the place of the event, and 2,500 worked on coverage from a distance. The event was covered by 800 communication media from 30 different countries<sup>20</sup>. However, according to social scientist and philosopher Emir Sader, the World Social Forum's main idea was left aside when it took the position of just a "resistance space" which needed to be up-dated and to present alternative models of social and economic organization..

"Molding the World Post-Crisis" was the main theme of the 39<sup>th</sup> edition of the World Economic Forum, which occurred from January 28<sup>th</sup> to February 1<sup>st</sup> in Davos<sup>21</sup>. The 2009 Davos Forum discussed questions such as "basic ethical values for the business world in its role as a constructive social agent" and the effects of the crisis in Latin America, especially in Brazil, mentioned as an emerging power and development agent that received more optimistic evaluations from entrepreneurs regarding the country's ability to combat the weakening of the economy in a rapid, creative manner<sup>22</sup>. The organization of the Forum evaluated that the world was passing through "the birth of a new era" and that the crisis was "a warning to rebuild our institutions, our systems and above all, our way of thinking"<sup>23</sup>.

The World Economic Forum had more than 2,500 participants from 96 countries. According to the organizers of the event, 56% of the participants were business leaders and represented a group of 1,000 companies of world importance that are permanent participants in the Forum<sup>24</sup>. Over 1,400 chief executives and chairmen of boards of directors were present, the largest number since the creation of the Forum in 1971. The civic society was also represented. – 50 NGO chiefs, 215 representatives of academic sectors, 10 religious leaders and 10 union leaders. The meeting also had the participation of 41 chiefs of state or

heads of governments – twice as many as usual<sup>25</sup>. In 2009, there were present at Davos political leaders such as Angela Merkel, the German Prime Minister; Vladimir Putin, the Russian Prime minister; Gordon Brown, the United Kingdom Prime Minister and Al Gore, Vice President of the United States from 1993 to 2001. The entrepreneur group included names such as Bill Gates, co-founder and president of the Microsoft Corporation, and Larry Page, co-founder and president of the Google search site. The Brazilian delegation was led by the Foreign Relations Minister, Celso Amorim, accompanied by the Central Bank President, Henrique Meirelles, the Governor of Rio de Janeiro, Sérgio Cabral and the president of Petrobras, José Sergio Gabrielli<sup>26</sup>.

Besides the analysis of the world economic crisis, the meeting intended to propose new forms of organization and world management after the crisis. According to specialists, the 2009 World Economic Forum was marked by pessimism, no doubt a consequence of more than one year of recession that placed the largest world economies in a crisis only parallel to the one that the United States suffered during the Great Depression, almost 80 years before<sup>27</sup>. The executives and political leaders gathered at the Davos Forum had never warned so much against protectionism as a consequence of the measures adopted by some countries. In the meeting there were threats and complaints principally on account of the attempt of some American congressmen to include “Buy American” provisions in the fiscal stimulus measures that were being prepared by the Obama administration. Those provisions linked government aid to the obligation for the companies to use American products, raw materials and inputs<sup>28</sup>. Perhaps for that reason the need for international cooperation was mentioned so many *Times*. After all, according to British Prime Minister Gordon Brown<sup>29</sup>, we have a global financial system, but we do not have global control. According to economist Nuriel Roubini, those questions acquired even more relevance due to the fact that the world crisis was also social<sup>30</sup>.

In fact, the two Forums discussed two sides of the same coin, like facing the world crisis with new development models and businesses able to offer a better quality of life to the world’s population, even if divided into different worlds, one marked by the themes of inequality and poverty, and the other by the financial interests of the developed countries.. Due to the uncertainties and instabilities of the debates during the 2009 World Economic Forum, the next meeting of the G-20 set for April in London was consolidated as the most adequate environment for pointing to solutions for the crisis<sup>31</sup>, especially the construction of a new

system of regulation for the world financial system. Curiously, in the World Social Forum, President Lula launched the same proposal<sup>32</sup>.

The Economic Forum in Davos was marked by warnings that a new protectionist wave threatened the world due to the worsening of the financial crisis<sup>33</sup>. On the other side of the Atlantic, in Belém, Presidents Hugo Chávez (Venezuela), Evo Morales (Bolivia), Rafael Correa (Ecuador) and Fernando Lugo (Paraguay) celebrated the “Davos collapse of neoliberalism”. In an event from which Lula was excluded, a debate organized by the Movement of Landless Rural Workers (MST), “the presidents tuned their discourse and left a clear message to the participantes of the World Social Forum: it is necessary to unify Latin America to face the economic crisis. Taking advantage of the platform where they stood, they asked furthermore for the support of the worldwide left for their governments”<sup>34</sup>.

Facing so many uncertainties, Latin America and Brazil stood out in the world agenda in a differentiated manner not only because they were the site of one of the two meetings, but also because they presented new experiences in the management of national economies. In the coverage of the two Forums, Brazil seemed to have achieved a relatively autonomous position in international politics. The return of Latin America as a site reinvigorated the WSF and lent importance to the Latin-American economy. The president of Mexico’s Central Bank, Guilherme Orti<sup>35</sup>, said that Latin America might suffer on account of the effects of a recession in the USA. According to him, some of the main economies of the region such as Mexico, Argentina and Brazil had managed so far to avoid problems on account of the deceleration of the American economy. Were those contradictions and challenges touched on by the Brazilian television coverage of the WSF and of the WEF? How did the television news relate such relevant happenings to the increasing importance of Latin America and of Brazil in the world agenda? We will attempt to answer those questions in our comparative analysis of the *Jornal Nacional* and of the *Jornal da Record*, the two television newscasts most watched in Brazil<sup>36</sup>, from the period of January 27<sup>th</sup> to February 3<sup>rd</sup>.

### Comparative analysis

Inspired by the methodology proposed by Becker (2005), as we have already mentioned, we used five categories associated with principles of enunciation and with newsability criteria. The first category is the **narrative** structure, which indicates the way the audiovisual product is organized, the average *Time* of the subjects and of the blocs, which

show the rhythm of the television news program. **Enunciators** is the second category, which allows us to observe how the anchormen and the reporters present the text, and how the building of the credibility of those professionals is accomplished. The third category is the **social actors**, in which the interviewed parties stand out, the other voices that also participate in the reports of the news. The fourth, called **editorialization**, offers the possibility of identifying the themes touched on in the grid of each newscast. And the last category, **visuality**, is used to investigate the graphic resources employed in the enunciation of the events, noticing especially how the combinations of text and image produce meanings.

With each of those categories we associate the following enunciation principles: (1) timing, ubiquity, relaxation and immediatism, (2) neutrality and objectivity, (3) dramatization and definition of identities and values, (4) fragmentation and commercialization, and (5) spectacularization. Considering Journalism as a social construction of a supposed reality, we identify that the news is constituted by a series of discursive operations. Those enunciative strategies are called newsability criteria and are formed by news values, used to define which happenings are significant and interesting enough to be transformed into news. A critical reading of those operations starting from newsability criteria requires awareness of the characteristics of the organizations, the role of the organizations in relation to Latin America, which amounted to 47% of the journalistic content of the international area. In the *Jornal da Record*, of the 122 subjects exhibited, 28 were part of the international area and represented 23% on the average of the journalistic contents of each edition. Of those 28 reports of the *Jornal da Record*, only 13 were related to Latin-American themes, that is, 46%. We note further that the number of international news items common to the *Jornal Nacional* and to the *Jornal da Record* was very much lower: of the 34 reports transmitted by the *Jornal Nacional*, only eleven were also exhibited by the *Jornal da Record*, two of them being precisely the WEF and the WSF. The *Jornal Nacional* showed 10 reports and notes on the Economic and Social forums (5 news items for each), while the *Jornal da Record* performed the same coverages through 9 news items (5 on the WSF and 4 on the WEF).

The *Jornal Nacional* presented in the period analyzed a wider and more diversified international coverage, in principle, although some of the facts were only reported through covered notes and audio. The *Jornal Nacional* invested more in correspondents and special envoys, which favored not only more depth and contextualization of the information

but also the obtaining of images differentiated from those sent by the news agencies. A journalist was assigned full-*Time* to cover the event, which could guarantee a better account of the debates in the encounter, stemming from the accomplishment of superior reporting. Nevertheless that was not what was observed, because the reporter followed the guidelines set by the event's organizers to produce his stories, kept the focus on the official program of the event and seldom made more critical or esthetic interventions. For example, there was no elaborated reporting about the attitude of the people who participated in the meeting. As a consequence, the coverage of the WSF performed by *Jornal Nacional* and *Jornal da Record* ended up by being quite similar, both of which presented records of the meeting, debates and cultural activities. This finding becomes evident when we consider the coverage of the Davos meeting. The *Jornal Nacional* sent two journalists especially for the event, Sonia Bridi and Paulo Zero. That resulted in two exclusive interviews and other reports very different from those exhibited by the *Jornal da Record*. We should note, however, that the sending of correspondents did not lead to a broader representation of the questions discussed in Davos with respect to Brazil and Latin America. The tapes exhibited by the *Jornal Nacional* presented three audios (interviews), the same average verified in the reports analyzed.

In the World Social Forum, among those interviewed, emphasis was given to the organizers of the event, the social and environmental activists, as well as the representatives of the indigenous peoples, not only from Brazil but from all of Latin America. This might show an attempt on the part of the television news to let several social actors voice their opinions, something not confirmed because most of the statements were too short, received no credit, and served only to endorse the text in *off*. Be that as it may, one of the leaders of the indigenous movement in the WSF, Marcos Aburinán, had his interview credited in the edition of January 28<sup>th</sup> – “If the world does not hear us, we will not have the Amazon Jungle fifty years from now” -. which in some way gave importance to the representation of the indians in the world meeting. To present some thoughts on the economic crisis, one of the most debated subjects during the meeting, the only interview selected from the ones with the Latin-American presidents who attended the meeting was the one given by Lula. He reaffirmed the authority given to the politicians and to the representatives of the government. In that sense it is worth mentioning also the interview of a Swiss teacher, who said she was delighted at the possibility of sleeping like the peoples of the Amazon,

that is, in hammocks. The statement, no doubt, conferred an exotic touch to the representation of the Amazon Region and Latin America. The coverage performed by the *Jornal Nacional* of the World Social Forum presented different social characters. It did not, however, offer to each of the subjects a real possibility of legitimization of different voices because, as we noticed, the statements were too short and received no credits, which characterized a simulation of the broad representation of the social actors and damaged the effective diversity of discourse, to the detriment of quality journalism. In general, the reporters' *off* only mentioned the themes of the debates and the discussion groups, as well the number of people present and the investments. The images of the tapes referred in most cases to the debates and to the activities offered in the WSF program. The protests that happened during the meeting were touched on in a very brief, superficial fashion which resulted in further deflating the manifestations and in cutting *off* the different social interests and demands.

In the reports on the World Economic Forum, they only offered interviews with entrepreneurs and government representatives which, in most instances, were of a collective nature. Of the 11 reports presented by Sonia Bridi, only two were exclusive. Among those interviewed was the Minister of Foreign Relations, Celso Amorim, who gave the interview in English.

The *Jornal da Record*, on the other hand, did not maintain a significant number of international correspondents. Some reports were produced by journalists who were not present at the site of the event, which might seem odd to a more alert viewer, as happened with the tape on the opening of the Economic Forum, whose production was signed by the correspondent in Washington, USA, Heloísa Villela. She was not present in Davos. The absence of special envoys to Davos ended up by damaging the coverage of the meeting; only the most relevant and controversial factors were reported in a very synthesized way, which made them seem only superficial. The *Jornal da Record* did not even mention the Economic Forum in its January 29<sup>th</sup> edition.

However, in the international coverage as a whole, the *Jornal da Record* stood out for prioritizing the use of tapes, not just notes. In the *Jornal Nacional*, of the 34 international news items, 14 were presented in the form of notes, that is, 41% of the journalistic contents of the international area were made up of an average 30" audio-visual briefs. In the *Jornal da Record*, of the 28 international news items, only 7 were presented as notes, which amounted to 25% of that area's production.

The greater number of tapes favored a differentiated treatment of the facts, but did not guarantee a more contextualized coverage of the WEF.

In relation to the World Social Forum held in Belém, we noticed that the *Jornal da Record* gave it more space when compared to the Davos coverage. They even sent reporters every day of the event. The coverage was not performed by the same reporter, and the word “diversity” was frequently used in the reporters’ accounts, but never was it used in enunciations or in narrative constructions capable of representing the plurality of voices and social actors present at the meeting. The images exhibited by *Jornal da Record* presented an average of three different statements. This figure was maintained in the reporting on the Forum held in Belém.

The coverage of the Social Forum showed that *Jornal da Record*’s concern was to highlight the diversity of the event. There were interviews with a higher number of social types, such as Brazilian and Latin-American Indians and activists from Africa and Europe. Although most of these social agents were given credit, their voices were used to legitimize the information of the text in *off*, as in the report that was aired on January 31st, when six event participants only uttered the names of their hometowns, in a rather timid attempt to represent the nationalities and ethnic groups that were present at the Forum in Belém, which was made up of a fragmented mosaic of diversities of identities and values represented there. The images did not only present the activities and actions officially programmed by the WSF, but also showed the protests organized during the event. Nevertheless, they were not very creative. The reporters tried to show differentiated aspects and discussions in the forum, both in *off* and directly, like in the segments chosen in the statements. But the reports needed contextualization and more critical approaches to the social reality in Brazil and in Latin America. The video tape of the Economic Forum did not feature any interview; instead, it showed parts of the speeches by the chiefs of state in Davos. None of them was from Latin America.

We note that the *Jornal Nacional* gave more relevance to the World Social and Economic Forums. The meetings stood out in two different editions of the *Jornal Nacional*: on January 27<sup>th</sup> they announced the WSF event in the Amazon for the first *Time* and on the 29<sup>th</sup> they touched on the criticisms made by the participants in the Davos Forum in relation to President Obama’s protectionism. The reports about the two Forums were presented in a sequence, suggesting that there was a relationship between the two events. However, in the *Jornal da Record* the forums held in Belém and in Davos were not mentioned in any opening of the

television news program, and the reports exhibited were not presented one after the other, which showed the absence of connection in the television news narrative between themes that are so politically associated with the world agenda, resulting in a very fragmented coverage of the events.

The emphasis given to the World Social Forum being held in Brazil showed a way to offer more importance to the country and to Latin America in the Brazilian news, as noted in the January 29<sup>th</sup> coverage when there was a meeting of five presidents of Latin-American countries. That meeting was considered both by the *Jornal Nacional* and by the *Jornal da Record* as the main happening of the Belém Forum. We have noted that in the two reports Brazil occupied a central mediating position in the Latin-American discussions not only because the country hosted the meeting, but also because the media attributed more relevance to the debate that featured the presence of President Lula besides the other four Latin-American presidents:– Evo Morales (Bolivia); Hugo Chávez (Venezuela); Rafael Correa (Ecuador) and Fernando Lugo (Paraguay). It should be mentioned that a second debate promoted by the Landless Rural Workers` Movement (MST), which symbolizes a more aggressive social resistance movement, was held in Belém, and brought together those four chiefs of state of Latin America, but Lula was not invited.

Thus the Brazilian television coverage of the Social Forum showed Brazil as the principal mediator and representative of Latin America, already integrated and mobilized politically. That representation was more restricted in the Brazilian news reports of the WEF, even if the leaders present conferred importance on Latin America in Davos, where Brazil was pointed to as a reference in terms of development and weathering the world economic crisis. The sending of special correspondents to Davos did not reflect a broader, deeper and plural coverage of the continent`s economic issues in the opening of the *Jornal Nacional*.

### **Final Comments**

Dayan and Katz (*apud* BECKER, 2001), as already mentioned, identify three different characteristics in the narratives of the media events: competition – when the facts present themselves as a struggle for a new record, a new way of doing or of thinking, or for the passage of an era; celebration – which integrates different societies into a collective emotion, appealing to a renewal of loyalty and stimulating the obligation of a unanimous mass commitment to the values and symbols celebrated; and conquest – emphasizing a unanimity surpassing the

social diversity and at the same *Time* presenting consensus as a process for overcoming differences.

We were able to clearly identify those three concepts in the coverage of the WEF and of the WSF. The competition for visibility in the world agenda was clear in the two forums, even more so because in 2009 both proposed to present new perspectives for the world economy and policies to face the financial crisis. The celebration was also clear because the two meetings constituted environments of integration and exchange of experiences and expectations among different social groups united around common objectives – even if in the Economic Forum those groups were formed mostly by political authorities, economists of developed countries, and in the Social Forum the exchanges were established among political authorities and representatives of indigenous communities and activists of social and environmental non-governmental organizations. Finally, the achievement was verified in the visibility conferred on Latin America in the telereal public arena, especially with regard to the WSF which, besides being held in Brazil, attracted five Latin-American presidents. No doubt the World Social Forum was the winner over the Davos meeting in the Brazilian television coverage. Although it was an event of minor proportions and of more modest political and economic relevance, the Belém Forum got more prominence and a more careful treatment on the part of the *Jornal Nacional* and the *Jornal da Record*. It was treated, in general, as a “diversity party”, while the Economic Forum was the place of pessimism and conflicts.

The narratives of the two television news programs analyzed did not present quality journalistic coverage. However, if the coverages of the WSF and of the WEF did not result in intelligent and creative treatments of Brazil and of Latin America in telereal geopolitics, they promoted the visibility of the country and of Latin America; they made room for public deliberation, exposing controversial themes and amplifying ways of access to the social debate. It is clear that “when it becomes interested, communication may have distortions, restricted fields of expression, themes that are intentionally kept in the shadow” (BARBERO, 2001, p.86) and become diluted when the variations of the interpretation are at stake. As Barbero (2001, p.86) explains, the act of “watching”, especially in front of the TV set, is transformed into a conceptual paradigm of the links between democracy and communication, citizenship and media. “And the crisis of representation in a democracy gives way to different manifestations, as well as to a more direct action of the citizens in their relations with the State.” (BARBERO, 2001, p.86)

In some way, we were able to follow that process in the coverage of the WSF, even if the action of the media gave more importance its own power of mediation. In Latin America, it is in the images of television that the representation of modernity is daily accessible to the large majority. Television has become a decisive actor in political changes, a protagonist of the new ways to engage in politics, for both politicians and citizens need the media as a scenario and symbolic territory of recognition of their identities. However, as also stated by Barbero (2001, p.86), the communication media have obligations with whatever news that appears: themes, actors and social and cultural interpretations, which usually create uncertainties for the media and are not always welcomed as much as would be desirable. In those interactions, however, new meanings are generated, perceptions of contemporaneity, and renewals.

This critical reflection on the Brazilian television coverage of the WSF and of the WEF in 2009 is an attempt to contribute to a less restricted reflection on the role of the media in the construction of realities and of the everyday social actors. No matter how much the television news program is accused of manichaeism or compromise, it also produces an ambiguity of senses (BECKER, 2008). The TV news orders and systematizes reality, but at the same *Time* it is a text open to the interpretation of the television viewer and of the researcher, and a reference – for national and global experiences. We note therefore that the news functions as an instrument for maintenance or transformation of everyday realities, able to amplify or restrict the perception of identities and of individual and collective social experiences.

## | NOTES

- 1 Presented in the panel “Old and New Models in Television News: Reconsidering Inequalities in Mexico, Brazil and Latin America” of 2009 Congress of LASA (Latin-American Studies Association), held in the Pontifical Catholic University (PUC), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, from June 11 to 14, 2009. site: <http://lasa.international.pitt.edu/eng/index.asp>.
- 2 Open TV invoicing in 2008 was R\$ 12.6 billion, 12% over 2007. The private channels of Brazilian television control 98% of the audience in the country. TV Globo, the fourth largest private network in the world, has 80% of the national audience, absorbs from 77% to 80% of all advertising investments destined to television and 60% of the total investments channeled through Brazilian agencies.

- 3 Data from the Tables of Current Costs on the Brazilian Market, based on the audience ratings measured by IBOPE systematized and made available by advertising agencies to advertisers, according to the value of breaks determined by the TV channels, from May 2007 to March 2008.
- 4 [http://brincotv2.blogspot.com/2008/04/values of publiciy ads.html](http://brincotv2.blogspot.com/2008/04/values%20of%20publiciy%20ads.html)
- 5 [http://brincotv2.blogspot.com/2008/04/values of publiciy ads.html](http://brincotv2.blogspot.com/2008/04/values%20of%20publiciy%20ads.html)
- 6 The audiences of those two programs in January, 2008, according to the PNT (National Television Panel) individual sample by IBOPE (Statistics Institute) were 40 points for the III soap opera, the “eight o’clock soap”, and 35 points for the *Jornal Nacional*.
- 7 [http://www.forumsocialworld.org.br/main.php?id\\_menu=19&cd\\_language=1](http://www.forumsocialworld.org.br/main.php?id_menu=19&cd_language=1)
- 8 <http://www.nossasaopaulo.org.br/portal/node/2412>
- 9 <http://www.fsm2009amazon.org.br/o-que-e-o-fsm>
- 10 <http://www.fsm2009amazon.org.br/o-que-e-o-fsm>
- 11 [http://www.fsm2009amazon.org.br/noticias/fsm-amazonia-gathers about-133-thousand people/](http://www.fsm2009amazon.org.br/noticias/fsm-amazonia-gathers-about-133-thousand-people/)
- 12 [http://www.fsm2009amazon.org.br/noticias/indigenous mobilization/](http://www.fsm2009amazon.org.br/noticias/indigenous-mobilization/)
- 13 <http://www.nossasaopaulo.org.br/portal/node/2412>
- 14 <http://www.fsm2009amazo.org.br/noticias/mobilization-indigenous/>
- 15 <http://g1.globo.com/News/Politics/0,,MUL969164-5601,00-GOVERNMENT WILL TAKE LULA +LULA+and+secretaries+to+Forum+social+world+AL.html>
- 16 <http://jbonline.terra.com.br/nextra/2009/01/30/e30016731.asp>
- 17 <http://www.globoamazonia.com/Amazonia/0,,MUL972988-16052,00.html>
- 18 <http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Politica/0,,MUL969164-5601,00-government+take+LULA+and+ E+MINISTROS+AO+FORUM+SOCIAL+MUNDIAL.html>

- 19 <http://www.globoamazon.com/Amazonia/0,,MUL972988-16052,00.html>
- 20 <http://www.fsm2009amazon.org.br/news/fsm-amazon-gathers-about-133-thousand-people/>
- 21 <http://www1.Folha.uol.com.br/Folha/dinheiro/ult91u493710.shtml>
- 22 <http://www.ces.fgvsp.br/index.cfm?fuseaction=noticia&IDnoticia=141526&IDidioma=1>
- 23 <http://www1.Folha.uol.com.br/Folha/dinheiro/ult91u493710.shtml>
- 24 [http://www.estadao.com.br/economia/not\\_eco314190,0.htm](http://www.estadao.com.br/economia/not_eco314190,0.htm)
- 25 <http://www1.Folha.uol.com.br/Folha/dinheiro/ult91u493710.shtml>
- 26 <http://www.agenciabrasil.gov.br/noticias/2009/01/28/materia.2009-01-28.0166386378/view>
- 27 <http://www1.Folha.uol.com.br/Folha/dinheiro/ult91u493665.shtml>
- 28 <http://www.ces.fgvsp.br/index.cfm?fuseaction=noticia&IDnoticia=142120&IDidioma=1>
- 29 <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3994172,00.html?maca=bra-uol-eco-1394-xml-uol>
- 30 <http://www.dw-world.de/dw/article/0,,3994172,00.html?maca=bra-uol-eco-1394-xml-uol>
- 31 [http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Economy\\_Negocios/0,,MUL981522-9356,00.html](http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Economy_Negocios/0,,MUL981522-9356,00.html)
- 32 [http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Economy\\_Negocios/0,,MUL981522-9356,00.html](http://g1.globo.com/Noticias/Economy_Negocios/0,,MUL981522-9356,00.html)
- 33 O GLOBO, January 30th 2009 issue, #27.570, p.1.
- 34 O GLOBO, January 30th 2009 issue, #27.570, p..21.
- 35 <http://www1.Folha.uol.com.br/Folha/dinheiro/ult91u366179.shtml>
- 36 According to IBOPE data, *Jornal Nacional* shows an average audience rating of 35 points. *Jornal da Record*, second in the ranking, has an average rating of nine points in the same period.

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