

## REVIEW

***Brazilian perspectives in digital environments:****communication policies, e-government and digital journalism*

JAMBEIRO, OTHON; PALACIOS, MARCOS (ORGS.)

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Reviewed by **LEONARDO MENEZES**

*Brazilian perspectives in digital environments: communication policies, e-government and digital journalism* is the most recent book organized by Professors Othon Jambeiro, from the Information Science Institute, and Marcos Palácios, from the Communication Faculty of the Federal University of Bahia (UFBA). Written in English, in the book's introduction the need is noted for improvement in the political processes which regulate the technological convergence in the production and distribution of information, culture and entertainment in their utilization by individuals or civic, academic and governmental entities. The technological universe requires planning and coordination of several sectors in order to be able to function in an efficient way.

In the first chapter, Othon Jambeiro describes the way in which the dynamics of the Information Society have influenced the regulation of the communication industry. This orientation has been intensified to the extent that information, media and electronics begin to occupy an increasingly central role in the development and expansion of the communication companies throughout the world. In a historical analysis of the strategies of governments and the private sector in the regulation of economic activities since the XIX century until the current debates on the circulation of information on the Internet, Jambeiro notes that the emergence of supranational companies requires a more obvious governmental regulatory presence, protecting elements intrinsic to the Brazilian identity. These "affirmative policies" would potentially make Brazilian society more democratic and socially responsible.

The second chapter, written by Jambeiro and Sônia Serra, focuses on the legislation and the political strategies of the city of Salvador for the development

of telecommunication infrastructure, questioning the role attributed by the municipality to this infrastructure, especially in the services devoted to the low income population. This was done from a perspective which analyzes historically how the Brazilian government, based on the Federal Constitution, and the city of Salvador, based on the municipal Organic Law and Master Plan, have regulated the activities of the telecommunication sector since the decade of the 1980s. Salvador's current limitation in developing actions to expand this industry in the face of the growing demand for these services is obvious.

The text written by Fábio Ferreira is centered on the discussion regarding the redesigning of the urban space for the creation of conditions constituting the so-called "network society". Salvador is seen from the perspective defining global cities and creative cities, places that function as hubs connecting global corporative operations. The author discusses how the "digital economy" is redefining the notions of space and time in urban life through the improvement of the society's connectivity by means of the communication technologies. In this connection, the local universities are seen as poles for concentration and attraction of talents which could join the private sector in developing Salvador's information industry, capable of leading the northeastern region's technical scene, as long as it is allied with outstanding cultural areas such as music and tourism.

The fourth article by Helena Pereira da Silva and Jussara Borges analyzes the situation of digital exclusion experienced by the majority of the Brazilian population, especially in Salvador, and the difficulties in obtaining access to the services offered by government portals on the Internet. The authors draw correlations between the need for training in the use of technical applications and the potential for the population's action in exercising its citizenship. In a clear and objective way, they present a panorama of the characteristics which link electronic government with democracy, mainly by means of the transparency of governmental actions and in the expansion of the population's participation, as in electronic voting and discussion forums. In this way, electronic government would redefine its relationship with the citizen, since the citizen's access to information at a distance by means of the portals brings closer together personal and community interests in reducing costs and expediting service. However, the services offered to the population are still few, and training in the use of the information is almost nonexistent.

The article by Helena Pereira da Silva and Lídia de Jesus Oliveira Loureiro da Silva attempts to delineate how governmental actions, following the example of the private sector, are migrating to the virtual environment by means of their portals and the expectations with relation to the reduction

of the bureaucracy in government processes involving the population. On offering the concepts of electronic governance and government, they analyze how the access to technology and the involvement of society with the portals could represent the strengthening of democracy and the creation of e-citizens, a much more difficult issue to be resolved due to the massive training which it requires. The question that remains is how to speed up e-democracy in this new concept of citizenship?

The sixth text, written by Marcos Palácios and Elias Machado, studies how the gradual incorporation of technology in the production processes generated a demand for strong training both of future communication professionals as well as of university professors, especially for digital journalism. These transformations in the labor market are modifying the methodologies of teaching and of academic research. To investigate these changes, interviews were held with professors and representatives of communication and entertainment companies with headquarters in Salvador regarding their perception of the digital competencies needed by the new Communication graduates. Among the results, more than knowing how to handle equipment, the essential aspect is rapid learning, since technological evolution is continuous. Interest in other areas of knowledge, mainly the Humanities and “Internet culture” was also highlighted.

The last article by Marcos Palácios, André Holanda, Cláudia Quadros and Jan Alyne Barbosa Silva, presents a panorama of participative journalism as one of the transformations of journalistic practice in its entwinement with digital technologies. Examples of blogs, forums and open code sites are analyzed with respect to their potentialities and restrictions. The need for a more obvious methodological definition among the academic works devoted to the topic is reiterated.

On termination of the reading, one perceives that the thread that binds the articles together is centered on the conceptualization of the political strategies for information and communication as a structured set of technologies, processes, products and services which connects individuals to a world to be consumed. This book consolidates the enunciation of an information society formed by the massive utilization of these informational instruments, generating new apprehensions of reality.

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