Stuart Hall's Legacy and the Community Communication

O legado de Stuart Hall e a Comunicação Comunitária

ADILSON VAZ CABRAL FILHO*

Universidade Federal Fluminense, Program of Post Graduate in Social Policy, Program of Post Graduate in Media and Everyday Life. Niterói – RJ, Brazil

MARCO SCHNEIDER**

Universidade Federal Fluminense, Program of Post Graduate in Media and Everyday Life. Niterói – RJ, Brazil

* Professor at the Social Communication Course and Programs of Graduate Studies in Social Policy (PPGPS) and at the Graduate Program in Media and Everyday Life (PPGMC) at Universidade Federal Fluminense (UFF). Doctor and Master in Social Communication by the Universidade Metodista de São Paulo (UMESP). Orcid: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-8132-6675
Email: acabral@comunicacao.pro.br

** Researcher at the Brazilian Institute of Information in Science and Technology (IBICT). Professor at the Graduate Program in Information Science (PPGCI-IBICT) of Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro (UFRJ). Professor of the Department of Communication and PPGMC at UFF. Associate researcher at PACC-UFRJ. Post- doctorate in Cultural Studies at the Advanced Program of Contemporary Culture (PACC) at the UFRJ. Orcid: http://orcid.org/0000-0001-5053-9491
Email: marcoschneider@ibict.br

ABSTRACT

This article advocates the relevance of Stuart Hall's legacy for the study and practice of Community Communication, highlighting part of his production in the 1970s and 1980s, in which Marxian thought was more present. It is argued that the analysis of the various types of oppression and resistance that permeate the communicational practices only have to gain from its critical articulation to the general plan of the class struggle. It is defended, in epistemological, theoretical and methodological terms, a rapprochement between Cultural Studies and the Political Economy of Information, Communication and Culture, as a movement capable of revealing little explored horizons for the praxis of Community Communication.
Keywords: Stuart Hall, Community Communication, popular culture, class struggle

RESUMO

Este artigo advoga a relevância do legado de Stuart Hall para o estudo e a prática da Comunicação Comunitária, destacando parte de sua produção nos anos 1970 e 1980, na qual o pensamento marxiano era mais presente. Argumenta-se que a análise dos vários tipos de opressão e resistência que perpassam as práticas comunicacionais só têm a ganhar com sua articulação crítica ao plano geral da luta de classes. Defende-se, em termos epistemológicos, teóricos e metodológicos, uma reaproximação entre os Estudos Culturais e a Economia Política da informação, da comunicação e da cultura, como movimento capaz de descortinar horizontes pouco explorados para a práxis da Comunicação Comunitária.
Palavras-chave: Stuart Hall, comunicação comunitária, cultura popular, luta de classes

INTRODUCTION

THE AIM of this text is to demonstrate the importance of Stuart Hall's work to theoretical investigations and contemporary practices of Community Communication. We focused on part of Hall's theoretical production during the seventies and eighties of last century, when his thinking was closer to Marxism, for reasons to be presented along with the arguments.

We argue that Stuart Hall's reflection on the relationship between class struggle and popular culture contributes for a better understanding of the other, in a logic of diversity that permeates community performance and makes it complex. It also contributes to affirm a difficult and necessary activism, that aims to implement non-State / governmental and non-private / commercial Communication experiences.

The text is divided into three parts:

1. the first one tries to make evident the Marxist influence on Hall's thought, notably his article "Notas para uma Desconstrução do Popular" (2003c);
2. the second one explores how this article and three other ones of the same period of Hall's work (1980; 1988; 2003a) can contribute to research on Community Communication in Brazil and Latin America;
3. the third one deals with certain current theoretical challenges regarding Community Communication, using part of the arguments from Stuart Hall's legacy considered here.

CRITICAL CULTURAL STUDIES

"Notas para uma Desconstrução do Popular" is a text from Stuart Hall (2003c) that already introduces characteristics of what Douglas Kellner (2001) would later call *Critical Cultural Studies*. Without mentioning "Notas…" specifically, Kellner differentiated this critical perspective of Cultural Studies, supported by him, from a tendency that he identified in part of the theoretical production linked to Cultural Studies in the 1990's. The criticized tendency would be the one marked by a reductionist bias, centered exclusively on text or reception, abandoning criticism to the moment of production and the whole of the communicational process. Such abandonment would lead to what he considered "populist and indiscriminate derivation of consumption and reception" (Kellner, 2001, p. 45).

In other words, Kellner made a point of mentioning the little attention given by quite a few authors[1] to the power of the hegemonic media – identified by us as institutionalized organic intellectuals of the capital – of acting within the most diverse and dynamic mediations. These operated in processes that produced meanings in reception and consumption, in the sense of ideological and cultural legitimization of the *status quo*, or, to use Hall's (2003a) terms, of producing dominant readings, that reproduce and legitimize the sender's discourse. The important comprehensive gain obtained from the cultural dynamics, particularly from popular culture, due to the emphasis on the analysis of dispersed factors, does not justify so little attention paid to the former issue. These dispersed factors are active though, in the production of different meanings of those intended by the sender, especially the ones defying cultural and ideological legitimization, in the moments of reception and consumption. Finally, if mediations different from the ones operated by hegemonic media were potent enough to cancel the ideological effect of the legitimization of the *status quo*, removing the risk of the dominant reading, criticism of the hegemonic media and support of community communication themselves would turn out to be irrelevant.

Other authors who engaged in a dialogue with Cultural Studies, like Paula (1998), Ahmad (2002), Eagleton (2005), Mattelart (2011)[2] and Schneider (2013 and 2015), sounded a critical note similar to this distance of the Cultural Studies in regard to Political Economy, or rather, to the criticism of political economy, inspired on Marx's theory, the main cause of the aforementioned "populist derivation" and of the "fetishism of reception" reported by Kellner (2001).

Indeed Hall could never be fairly accused of having had, anytime throughout his work, a view of a "populist and uncritical derivation of consumption and reception" or any kind of "fetishism of reception". But it is also right to say that his late work is more distant of the perspective that we adopted than the work he did in the 1970's and 80's. Therefore we opted to work here with a previous stage of his production: because we understand that it is now more necessary than his late work (or the part of it that we know) in order to achieve the theoretical reinforcement of criticism on the aforementioned "populist derivations".

Having done with our preliminary clarifications, we shall analyze Hall's text used as the main reference of our argumentation.

In his "Notas sobre a desconstrução do 'popular'", Hall (2003c) discussed the notion of popular culture itself, the complexity of communica-

1. Kellner (2001, p. 49-50) mentions, among others, Tony Bennet – *Putting Policy into Cultural Studies* (1992) and John Fiske – *Reading the Populat* (1989), *Understanding Popular Culture* (1989) and *Power Plays* (1993) – as representative of the trend that he criticizes.

2. In this text, Mattelart highlights Ien Ang's study about the soap opera "Dallas" as the harshest example of a trend in Cultural Studies that he identifies and criticizes in similar terms to Kellner's, Fiske's and others› criticisms.

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tional phenomena and its dialectics, in a totalizing historical perspective. Thus, he expressed an articulate synthesis of what constitutes a fundamental legacy to Cultural Studies in general, and particularly to his work, for the studies in Communication and Community Communication.

Within the text, the constitution of a "popular culture" was cited by Hall in the tensioned context "of the long transition to agrarian capitalism and, later on, in the formation and development of industrial capitalism", when "there was a more or less continuous struggle in regard to the.; workers' culture" (Hall 2003c, p. 247), parallel to the genesis of modern press itself, with an emphasis on the workers' popular press and its later appropriation by the bourgeois popular press. In his analysis of these processes, Hall never lost sight of the economic movement in the background, that is, the class character that pervades the whole of the articulated processes of transformation of a rural society into an urban one: "The capital had an interest in the culture of popular classes because the constitution of a new social order centered on the capital demanded a process [...] of reeducation in the broadest sense" (HALL, 2003c, p. 247-248).

In other words, Hall never lost sight of the class struggle that constitutes the issue of cultural disputes, that echo in them and are in great measure influenced by them at the same time and each and every moment, in an argumentative line that reminds Thompson (1987-1988). Among these disputes, he was particularly interested in those involving the media:

> [...] the liberal media of the middle class of the mid-nineteenth century was built at the cost of the effective destruction and marginalization of the local radical media of the working class. However, besides this process, something qualitatively new occurs towards the end of the nineteenth century and beginning of the twentieth century in this area: the effective massive insertion of an advanced and mature working class audience in a new kind of *popular* commercial media (p. 251).

This "new kind of *popular* commercial media, produced by the bourgeoisie, leads us to a second moment of the text, where the notions of "culture" and "popular" are reflected in various of their multiple senses, many of them antagonistic, some of them complementary, other ones contradictory. "Culture" is conceived in terms of worldviews, customs, knowledge, practices, discursive manifestation, identity; "popular", as everything that comes from the people or is absorbed by them. The multiple intertwinements of these issues are crossed by the problem of defining who are the "people",

what is "popular" and what is not, and how both affect each other, in a play of power relations, discursive and extra-discursive, that unfold *from* and *in* a number of actions – central ones – of restraint and resistance. The prominence of the popular commercial bourgeois press is ever-increasing amid these processes. The argumentative line of "Notas para uma Desconstrução do Popular" was, in fact, to a large extent, based on the historical analysis of this press, in its role of reeducating the popular classes for the Capital and in the accomplishments and resistance that the process as a whole faces. Class struggle – central category of the marxist social analysis – occupies a position that guides the whole of this argumentation.

In his late works, Hall began to move away from Marxism. This process certainly did not prevent him from producing relevant theory, especially in his studies about multiculturalism and identity. However, we believe that Hall's previous work about the problem of ideology, of hegemony, particularly about the difficult relation between culture, class struggle and the media, is, at least, as relevant and up-to-date as his late works. We even venture thinking that what was gained refining the issues of identity and multiculturalism eclipsed previous achievements.

"Notas...", as well as other texts of the same period (see Hall 2003a; Hall et al, 1980), were, finally, a report where Hall worked not *against*, but *with* Marxism (see Hall, 2003b)[3], in a totalizing approach of the phenomenon of popular culture and communication. A fact that placed class struggle – that is, the comprehensive, tense, dynamic, and potentially disruptive articulation between economy and politics, determining or conditioning socially a wide range of phenomena, although not "everything" – in a central position in the middle of other operant mediations.

How will Community Communication be considered in the key points of this analysis?

First of all, presenting the problem of the relation between class struggle and culture again, in its due complexity.

"Class struggle" is a concept that can be thought of in various levels of abstraction. In the one that is the closest to empirical processing, it regards the most diverse movements of routine collaboration and conflict among individuals and groups, derived from proximity and clash of interests that correspond to the diverse positions these individuals and groups occupy amid the relations of production and circulation: employers x employees; creditors x debtors; businessmen x businessmen; industrialists x bankers; industrialists, businessmen and bankers x farmers and workers[4] etc. Political/ideological positioning of agents, their alliances and belligerence will

3. We refer to a Hall's comment saying that Cultural Studies were never completely comfortable with Marxism, having worked sometimes with it, other times against it.

4. It is worthy remembering that the class struggle does not only occur among classes, but within classes as well, and despite the conflict between owners and non-owners of the means of production and circulation constitute its predominant moment, alliances and ruptures happen not only in horizontal lines, but vertically and in transverse ways also, composing, always temporarily, what Gramsci called "historic bloc", through specific forms of combination between imposition and consentment among the diverse classes and fraction of class, in the exercise of political-economic domination and of moral direction combined to constitute hegemony.

correspond to greater or lesser symmetry in relation to these interests, according to acuity in identifying them, in the short, medium, or long term. Greater or lesser interpretive acuity of social relations is what was usually called class consciousness.

In a higher level of abstraction, the notion of "class struggle" refers to a structuring fissure in human societies, since they were divided into owners and non-owners (of means of production), and between commanders and obeyers. In spite of the immense historic variety and complexity of their phenomenal forms, as well as the evidence that it is not possible to explain everything in terms of this structuring fissure, ignoring its ubiquity and central importance in human history as a whole is an error at least as serious as reducing everything to it. Hall knew it and he made good use of the ideas of Marx, Bakhtin (Volochinov), Gramsci, and Althusser, among others, in the sense of thinking about language and culture in articulation with this particular background.

ABOUT COMMUNITY AND WHAT IS POPULAR

What is "community"? From Tönnies classic distinction between *Gesellschaft* (society) and *Gemeinschaft* (community), among social groupings more or less wide and organic, to the current notion of "community", in the city of Rio de Janeiro, as a sociocultural reference that means "favela". Besides, there are cross-sectional notions of interest communities, identity communities, deterritorialized communities and network communities, Community Communication that addresses, particularly, from alternative forms of communication to those of the cultural industry, produced by the less favored classes, the poor, the working class, consisting, in Brazil, in its huge majority of black people and people from the northeast.

Of course this reduction – poor, Blacks, people from the northeast – does not exhaust identity variety and complexity of those who produce community communication in Brazil. However, generally speaking, it accounts for the reality of northeastern owners or dealers of cultural industries and white Cariocas (people from the city of Rio de Janeiro) in the "favelas" producing community communication. On the other hand, as far as we know, rich people from the northeast or rich black people producing community communication; and most certainly, there are not northeastern women or poor Black women that are owners or dealers of cultural industries.

Facing the difficult and recurrent clash of the distinct initiatives of alternative communication with the cultural industries, how could Hall's

refined perception be useful – from the discursive plays of resistance, imposition, appropriation, criticism, subversion, and reproduction, from "both" sides (popular culture and culture of the powerful) – to think about this dispute in today's Brazil? Certainly without ignoring, amid the diverse cultural mediations that are part of it, the political and economic interests that go through it, and that involve, among other factors, ownership of means, legislation, its regulation, its ideological, electoral, and commercial use.

For example, in "Notas...", Hall accused the State processes of popular reeducation as a necessity of the Capital. But he believed himself in the importance of a popular reeducation of another sort, having even dedicated part of his practices in doing so. In other words, Hall did not ignore progressive elements that may be part of popular reeducation, nor reactionary elements in popular resistance. As Downing (2002, p.35) reminded us: "[...] popular culture can be perfectly elitist, racist, misogynist, homophobic, and harbor prejudices in regard to age and, yet, express these values in creative and superficially appealing ways".

Kellner (2001) also mentioned a series of elements ethically retrograde – misogyny, racism etc. – that are present in numerous studied processes of active, pleasing or resistant media reception, reporting, as seen, a certain "fetishism of resistance" from theoreticians related to the field of Cultural Studies, for ignoring these elements in their studies on reception. We highlight this point in order to emphasize that a theoretical approach, correctly refusing any authoritarian manner of elitism or intervention in studies and policies related to communication and to popular culture, should not refuse simultaneously the need of a critical reflection of what Hall (2003a) called "dominant reading"[5]

Due to the fact of considering the "dominant reading" as an identifiable form of active reception or sense production in consumption, criticism of the political economy of information, communication and culture, that has one of its privileged objects in the opposition of hegemonic media and community communication, remains up-to-date and necessary, when we produce social criticism and discuss communicational alternatives to cultural industries whether commercial or governmental. The difference of this criticism and these alternatives in relation to more traditional concepts of "consciousness", inspired by Illuminism (and Hall's contribution is important in order to make this transition), is the fact that, nowadays, we think in more dialogic and multicultural terms.

Nevertheless, it is always good to remember that the perspective of universalizing instruction and rights, including the ones related to information and

5. In this regard, see also *The Toad in the Garden: thatcherism among the theoricists* (Hall, 1998) and Jorge Larrain's (1996) critique of Hall's text.

communication, for which we struggle, is a legacy from Illuminism, despite its known limits and contradictions. This is the reason why, even pessimists like Adorno and Horkheimer (1985) wrote the *Dialectics* of Enlightenment (or Illuminism), not the *Curse* of Enlightenment. This dialectic perspective, that leads to the identification of the contradictory element of the Enlightenment project of universalizing instruction and rights, to the unveiling and the denouncement of its character, partly authoritarian, ethnocentric, and mystifying, should not imply uncritical refusal of the perspective of universalizing instruction and rights, nor uncritical praise of popular culture and each and every process of reception that might be identified as "active".

Everyday clashes of community initiatives of communication engage in a dialogue with their needs of ample legitimation before society, besides overcoming adverse situations in economic and political fields. The challenge scholars face in search of an alternative project distinct from the predominantly private American model or the predominantly governmental European model led to the design of what is called Communication for Development, or Communication for Social Change, in relation to emerging social movements in Latin America.

In spite of a similar inspiration to that of Stuart Hall, another path was followed by the well-known works of authors like Paulo Freire (1979), Antônio Pasquali (2007), and Armand Mattelart (1977), in Latin America, who started a tradition of reflections committed to the social appropriation of the Information and Communication Technologies before marginalized sectors of the population. Amparo Camdavid (2013, p. 41), dealing with the Latin American context, suggested:

> […] both the experiences of communication for social change that led to a reflection on their existence and social impact, and the thoughts derived from them, need to be not just another capricious chapter of anti-hegemonic communication, like others before. It is necessary to reflect upon and deepen […] these experiences, in order to get from them lessons for the future.

Tension between the identification and the understanding of popular knowledge less heteronomous – that is, less likely to reproduce worldviews opposed to concrete possibilities of empowerment of the lower classes submitted to Capital and all other forms of oppression that could be listed – and the political awareness of a wider scenario, that penetrates their own realities, besides specific knowledge in the educational and communicational fields, were always a challenge for activists, supporters, collaborators, and

researchers, when asserting the initiatives of Community Communication. Apart from an evident detachment in relation to distinct centers of intellectual production, the development of methodologies like participatory research and action research (THIOLLENT, 2000) done by Latin American researchers may have contributed for a loss of reference of Hall's intellectual contributions to Community Communication.

However, the need to contextualize community experiences in Communication that demands criticism of a scenario related to wider political and economic aspects, that penetrate the own condition of community, as we have seen, as well as community performance itself, had in Hall (2003b, p. 252) a powerful ally:

> As an important area of historic investigation, the study of popular culture is like the study of the history of labor and its institutions. Declaring an interest in it is the same as correcting a major imbalance. However, at the end, its results are more revealing when seen in relation to a wider general history.

Therefore, it would be productive to rethink Community Communication in a line closer to Hall's who – considering the study of popular culture – argued in favor of the possibility of constructing foundations and applications related to understanding in a wider range, involving the historicity of legal frameworks – understanding here the role of the State – and the redefinition of the system of communication of the countries -, having in mind the need of understanding the area of communications as a whole, as part of the survival and sustainability of these experiences. Provided also that an attitude of criticism is adopted to face the increasing ability of listening to and engaging people, done by the companies – not only those of the media – along the process of consolidation of capitalism, whether apprehension of dialogic pedagogy of models more suitable to socialism, or a more subtle reassertion of capitalism, or even, a mixture more or less well engendered of these two alternatives. From the notorious saying "damn the audience", reference counterpoint to the principle of studies in Public Relations, to theories based on sharing, like "*wikinomics*" (TAPSCOTT; WILLIAMS, 2007), the feedback capacity of capitalism is noteworthy, it cannot ignore a critical understanding reflecting on community participation and performance.

Therefore, it is about asserting the need of a political-epistemological debate, on the basis of an articulation between academic and social sectors that view Communication as a human right. This articulation has to be founded on democratic bases, suitable to initiatives around which society, in its diverse

areas of action, increasingly takes possession of the technologies of information and communication, and their regulatory processes. This appropriation, in turn, has to direct itself preferably toward the implementation of the processes of content production and circulation that regard them, on the most diverse supports available, with an emphasis to projects committed to overcome realities of oppression inflicted upon the working class, besides other forms and contexts of social vulnerability (GUARESCHI, 2007).

Thus, in order to face the challenge of producing wider forms of political action, researchers and activists must work around the recurrent transposition of limitations and contradictions that people have to deal with in their routine, bearing in mind the necessity of fomenting critical competencies in information (Bezerra, 2015), that is, knowledge and abilities related to the search, to the critical evaluation, to the use, to the production, and to the circulation of information.

Understanding that an acceptable diversity of initiatives and modes of action is intended in order to guarantee the minimal parameters of mutual understanding, in a common struggle in favor of distinct demands and not specific standards of performance related to certain frameworks, involving management modes, the composition of programming and references of production, in the everyday chores of those involved in different experiences of community communication.

The preparation and support of legitimation discourses of these experiences are a contribution to local development in each area of action and for society in general. The debate and the disputes also involve the issue of the implementation of general public policies, that need to be based on the understanding of the role of communication as a fundamental factor in the various counter-hegemonic processes concerned.

This reflective and propositional range has been approached by researchers engaged in initiatives of community communication of different nuances[6], who rethink relevant conceptual re-definitions of recent technological changes and, consequently, bring not only new proposals of community media activism but new perspectives of political participation and collective organizations as well. This makes the political scene more complex in regard to what is popular and its ways of cultural production.

PRESENT APPROXIMATIONS

Abandoning a more vigorous criticism at the moment of message production and to the possibility of dominant readings of media discourses

6. We cite Rozinaldo Miani, who links popular communication to trade union communication and other popular movements, and Eduardo Yamamoto, who tries to reconstruct an epistemological path making evident limitations and possibilities of the concept and the community accomplishment through communication. Some of their texts may be found from the GT of Communication for Citizenship at INTERCOM.

7. See Lopes, 2003.

8. It is important to say that Moretzsohn's criticism is directed to Martin-Barbero's book *Dos Meios às Mediações*, and he himself, in later works, dedicated more critical attention to "means", as can be seen in his "Os exercícios do ver: hegemonia audiovisual e ficção televisiva" (2001). Nevertheless, ample dissemination of *Dos Meios às Mediações* in current bibliographies of communication courses among us supports Moretzsohn's up-to dateness and ours too.

marks the contribution, undoubtedly relevant for this argumentation, of Jesus Martin-Barbero's (1997) interesting project of thinking "the popular uses of the massive", inspired by Gramsci, alongside the movement going from the "popular to the massive" and from the "massive to the popular"[7]. Moretzsohn (2007, p. 43) calls attention to the following:

> The author emphasizes the multiple expressions of the popular culture to demonstrate that the origin of the products produced by the means of communication that return to popular consumption can be found there. Yet little or any importance is given to the return route, operated by another neglected "subject" in the process: exactly the means, that is, the large communication companies.[8]

If this is right, and we deem it is so, Martin-Barbero's perspective when thinking about the popular uses of the massive in Dos Meios às Mediações would be inspired by Gramsci only in part. He tended toward overlooking Gramsci's important criticism on what eventually appeared in popular cultures that was retrograde, as well as their vulnerability (so real as their capacity to resist), in his analysis of the presence of what is popular in the massive, and what is massive in popular processes. Consequently, there was a concern, so important for the Italian thinker, about the need of a moral reform of popular culture, of a new culture, involving a struggle around the direction of the hegemonic private apparatus:

> The modern Prince (meaning the Communist Party) must be and needs to be the disseminator and the organizer of an intellectual and moral reform, and this means creating the ground for subsequent development of the collective national-popular will in the sense of achieving a superior and total form of modern civilization. These two fundamental points: forming a collective national-popular will, of which the modern Prince is at the same time organizer and active and effective expression, and the intellectual and moral reform, ought to constitute the structure of the work (Gramsci, 1968b, p. 7).

This kind of reform, according to Gramsci, should not "deny" what is popular, "folklore, but surpass it dialectically, engaging in a dialogue with it, stimulating the conservation and the flourishing of what it has that is more dynamic, creative, progressive, and fighting inertial, banal, reactionary elements.

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Gramsci not only did not refuse the perspective of "cultural elevation of the masses", but he deemed it necessary, even though, thinking like that, he did not consider that such a reform ought to be mechanically imposed from top to bottom. Neither did he think that the reform should level common sense as a whole to "false consciousness", but to a predominantly non-systematic way of thinking, Just like Hall, as well as Lumley and McLennan (1980b), pointed out:

> Gramsci considers that the party should not act mechanically from the exterior on popular thinking, but that it enters the mentality of thinking based on common sense to reveal its contradictions: "It is not about introducing a scientific way of thinking in the lives of everybody starting from zero, but it is about renewing and making "critical" an activity that already exists." The relationship of the party with the masses is not a mechanism of one way direction, but a dialectics between leadership and spontaneity. Due to the fact that Gramsci did not work with true/false conciousness or a science/ideology model, his thinking is directed to contradictory possibilities within spontaneous forms, non-systematized, of thought and action. And here he makes a positive evaluation from calls to attitudes, emotional and moral, rejecting a rationalistic view of persuasion by pure logic. Gramsci sees spontaneity in itself condemned because it is divided by internal contradictions and incapable of providing a systematic explanation about the world; however when "educated and expurgated of contradictions that are strange to it", that spontaneity is, to Gramsci, the motor of revolution (Hall; Lumley; McLennan, 1980b. p. 68-69).

Concerning the role of the State (and the superstructure as a whole, that involves the means of communication or "hegemonic private apparatus") in this dialogic educational process, according to Gramsci (1968b, p. 96):

> […] the State has to be conceived as "educator", since it tends to create a new kind or level of civilization. Due to the fact that action is essentially directed to the economic forces, making it possible to reorganize, to develop the apparatus of economic production, to innovate the structure, but it should not lead to the conclusion that the elements of the superstructure ought to be left to themselves, to their spontaneous development, to casual and sporadic germination.

Could expressions like "elements of the superstructure left to themselves", "spontaneous development", "casual and sporadic germination" be

other ways of saying *in accordance to market forces* apparently democratic, effectively particularistic? That is why we need to be very careful with the interpretation and the discursive operationalization given to expressions like "freedom of speech" and "press freedom", and to terms like "democracy"(as well as "citizenship") when their specific ideological content is out of a certain historic context, at a certain moment of the discursive debate. After all, the opposite of "control"by the State on communications instead of being "freedom"or "democracy"may be *lack of control*, or better saying, control by plutocracies disguised as sovereignity of the citizens. In other words: here the ethical-political problem is not the control of *the* State, but the kind of control, founded on what premises, what objective, what social basis, that is, class-based.

Furthermore, Gramsci`s concern with popular culture and his important methodological indication in the sense of considering it in terms of what people make part of what belongs to them, more than what they produce themselves – that inspired Martin-Barbero`s important perspective of thinking the popular uses of the massive -, did not mean at any time refusal of the illuminist perspective of universalization of enlightenment, but rather its refinement:

> [...] the philosophy of praxis [that is marxism] does not try to keep the "simple-minded" in their primitive philosophy of common sense, but, conversely, it tries to lead them to a life conception superior to that. If it states the demand of contact between the intellectuals and the simple-minded, it is not to limit scientific activity and maintain unity at the bottom level of the masses, but exactly to forge an intellectual-moral bloc able to achieve the politically intellectual progress of the masses and not just small groups of intellectuals (GRAMSCI, 1978, p. 20).

Expressions like "simple-minded", "bottom level of the masses"and "primitive philosophy of common sense", may be a real scandal to whoever holds in mind the author`s well-known interest in popular cultures.. However, it is important to remember that we are not dealing with a random passage, but with one that expresses Gramsci`s recurrent and central concern about the relationship of intellectuals and the masses, of a clearly Leninist inspiration. In Gramsci, interest in popular culture is not like the interest of an ethnologist or someone who studies folklore, but of someone who sees it as a means, the same interest that Hall demonstrates, when stating that "[popular culture] is one of the places

where socialism can be constituted. This is why popular culture is important. As for the rest, to say the truth, I do not care about it" (HALL, 2003c, p. 262).

This does not mean that, to Gramsci or to Hall, popular culture would be devoid of complexity, dynamism, vigour, of a certain kind of autonomy, creativity, or aesthetic wealth; that it would be a mere expression of the superstructure of class domination. It is this also, but the fact that it is this also, and not only this, makes it fundamental as an arena of political disputes amid class struggles.

This tension is currently special, in the face of the critical debate in regard to the opposition to traditional forms of thinking about development as a perspective of social and community action, bringing perspectives like that of Buen Vivir to some of the Latin American countries. They do not necessarily break away from the logic of contributing to development that is dedicated to revitalizing the role of society in the construction of full citizenship. In her article "Rádio Comunitária, educomunicação e desenvolvimento local", in the book *O retorno da comunidade:os novos caminhos do social*, organized by Raquel Paiva, Cicília Peruzzo pointed to some assumptions for development that are not opposed to the ones in *Buen Vivir*:

> a) Equal Access to economic and cultural assets; b) possibility of political participation – from participation in small associations to public bodies; c) enjoyment of benefits derived from riches socially produced and redistributed through means of salaries and services of education, health, transportation, security, communication technologies etc. (PERUZZO, 2007, p. 72-73).

The author also stated that understanding development implies in "addition to citizens' rights". That is, it is not about something inherent to society, but something that has to be assimilated, formulated, demanded, and conquered by the organized society, in articulation or not with the state public power, in distinct performing stages aiming at public policies. This perspective has clear affinities with Hall's (2003c, p. 263) following statement:

> Popular culture is one of the places where the struggle in favor or against the culture of the powerful is engaged; it is also a prize to be won or lost in this struggle. It is the arena of consent and resistance. It is not the sphere where socialism or a socialist culture – already formed – can simply be "expressed".

9. See among other seminal texts by Williams, Marxismo e Literatura (1979).

10. On the occasion of Hall's death, Venício Arthur de Lima (2014) wrote an excellent article where he defends the up-to-dateness of Hall's thought in the nineteen-seventies and eighties, highlighting the seminal Encoding/Decoding, and the importance of communication and journalism studies in recovering that period of his intellectual production. Without discussing community communication itself, the author presents important arguments in favor of a viewpoint somewhat similar to ours. We recommend reading of the article.

CONCLUSION

This artcle, inserted in a reflexive collection on the importance of Stuart Hall's work for studies in the field of communication in Brazil, seeks to bridge the gap in the construction of references about, and for action related to, Community Communication in the country and in the broader context of Latin America. Using this approach we tried to understand a public directly or indirectly influenced by themes, concepts and authors having a very strong identification with Stuart Hall's work, generally related to reference paradigms in Latin America, around the idea of Communication for Development.

As seen, the part of Hall's work that we discussed is close to what Kellner (2001) called "critical cultural studies", closer to the political economy of information, communication, and culture. We hope we demonstrated how this perspective can enrich the study and practice related to Community Communication inasmuch as its demand of articulation with the studies of Community Communication in their historic, political and cultural dimensions that, this way, becomes a logical outcome of the maturity of the analytical process.

The need for re-articulation between the fields of Cultural Studies and Political Economy, proposed by Kellner, in our view, would already have been handled by Stuart Hall's texts that we worked with more sharply in here. Or rather: these texts written by Hall represent a stage of Cultural Studies – having in Raymond Williams[9] another well-known representative – in which rapprochement between the fields would not even be necessary, as long as distance between them would not have occurred, despite the difficulties of a regular dialogue.[10]

Finally, we tried to explore one of the theoretical paths where Hall's sharp thinking can be rather valuable as a reference for investigative projects and for projects of appropriation of information and communication technologies by involved actors. This perspective indicates the need of approximation among activists, scholars and society in general, not only in terms of positions vis-à-vis productive dynamics, products and programs, but projects of social transformation, where full experiences of Community Communication effectively take place.

It is possible to consider that pioneer authors in the area of Community Communication deviated, aware or not aware, from Hall's critical perspective, the one we work with herein, for focusing on a more immediate engagement, committed to the current popular initiatives of communication and their contribution to human and social development. At the time, perhaps

the questioning of complicated internal contradictions of popular culture itself, as well as popular culture in relation to the culture of the powerful and to the media, were not the biggest challenge. Nevertheless, Hall's questioning analyzed here are an evidence of his striking disposition to face the challenges that we face, all of us who position ourselves resolutely in the struggle for social transformation. **M**

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