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Is social semiotics a unitary research field? An introductory and comparative mapping of Argentinean, Brazilian, French, Italian and English-speaking semiotic approaches to social meaning-making*

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Abstract: In the 1980s, researchers from different academic circles around the world started paying attention to the functioning of the social realm with a focus on signification and sense-making. Since then, they have shown particular interest in studying practices, interactions and spatiality, among other objects of study, as activities that convey social meaning and produce sense. This is how the field of social semiotics emerged within general semiotics. However, the emergence of this new research field occurred in a fragmented manner. Nowadays, English-speaking 'social semiotics' coexists with at least two French *sociosémiotiques,* with Argentinean *sociosemiótica*, with Italian *sociosemiotica* and with Brazilian *sociossemiótica*. This article examines these five accounts of social semiotics in a comparative manner with a focus on the theoretical and methodological references they use as their sources. Therefore, the article should function as an introductory roadmap for researchers within the social and human sciences interested in approaching contemporary social semiotics and sociosemiotic research.

Keywords: social semiotics; semiotic theory; cultural semiotics; semiotics.

Introduction

In the *Cours de linguistique générale*, Ferdinand de Saussure proposed the creation of *sémiologie* [semiology] as the science – still to be developed at the time of his academic activity – that would be part of social psychology and whose purpose would consist in studying the life of signs in the framework of social life. Since that very first reference to semiology as a social science with a specific object of study, scholars influenced by Saussure's ideas – many of them educated in linguistics and, in particular, *structural* linguistics, like Roman Jakobson, Émile Benveniste and Louis Hjelmslev – developed the epistemological, theoretical, methodological and empirical grounds of semiotics, the discipline within the social and human sciences whose objects of study are sense, signification and meaning-making.

Semiotics was originally conceived as a science of signs. However, during the last decades of the twentieth century, it became a discipline interested not so much in describing and classifying signs and sign-structures, but one rather interested in signification, sense- and meaning-making. These are three objects of study normally conceived of as *processes* in which signs do not have fixed meanings but can be used as semiotic resources to produce multiple and diverse meanings depending on the context. As Theo van Leeuwen (2005, p. 3) proposes, "in social semiotics the term 'resource' is preferred, because it avoids the impression that 'what a sign stands for' is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use."

This premise is similar to that embraced by many social semioticians working in other academic circles, which have tended to abandon the concept of *code* and have given more relevance to what individuals do with semiotic resources. This is also the reason why Umberto Eco (1975) preferred the analytical category of *sign function* instead of *sign*. In this sense, van Leeuwen (2005, p. 4) claims that "almost everything we do or make can be done or made in different ways and therefore allows, at least in principle, the articulation of different social and cultural meanings." This articulation of different social and cultural meanings is a common object of interest for social semioticians.

Social semiotics is nowadays a fragmented research field that, from a theoretical and methodological point of view, still needs to find some unity. In other words, the meaning of the tag *social semiotics* is not univocal, and the question included in the title of this paper, 'Is social semiotics a unitary research field?', must be answered negatively. Over the past three to four decades, social semiotics experienced relevant developments in different academic circles around the world, usually linked to different languages, disciplines, authors and research traditions. Van Leeuwen is a practitioner of what we could call 'English-speaking social semiotics'. This is a research tradition that grew from functional

linguistics and that is based on the social account of 'language as social semiotics' put forward by British linguist Michael Halliday (1978). Halliday moved to Australia and became a key figure of what some refer to as Sydney Semiotics Circle. Based on Halliday's work, Robert Hodge, Gunther Kress and van Leeuwen himself, among other scholars, developed a social semiotics aimed at studying meaning-making in the social sphere beyond verbal language and in close cooperation with other disciplines. As van Leeuwen (2005, p. 1) argues, social semiotics "only comes into its own when it is applied to specific instances and specific problems, and it always requires immersing oneself not just in semiotic concepts and methods as such but also in some other field." Currently, this type of social semiotics is the theoretical ground for multimodal textual analysis (Ledin; Machin, 2020).

Besides English-speaking social semiotics, at least four more research traditions should be considered in the attempts to map the research field of our interest: the French, the Italian, the Brazilian and the Argentinean. As argued below, in contrast to English-speaking and Argentinean social semiotics, its French, Italian and Brazilian manifestations are inheritors of de Saussure's structural linguistics and the works of scholars that embraced the structural premise, in particular A. J. Greimas (Broden, 2021). In France, the works of Jean-Marie Floch (1990), Jacques Fontanille (2008, 2015, 2021) and Eric Landowski (1989, 2005, 2014), among other semioticians, were crucial to expand the theoretical potential of semiotics as it was conceived by Greimas to study practices and interactions.

Landowski's research has been highly influential in France, but also in Italy and in Latin America, in particular in São Paulo, Brazil, where a Centre for Sociosemiotic Research [*Centro de Pesquisas Sociossemióticas*] was created in the 1990s at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica de São Paulo. With Landowski and Ana Claudia de Oliveira as its leading figures, researchers based in Brazil have used Landowski's semiotic theory to study practices (de Oliveira, 2013), interactions (de Oliveira, 2004), space (de Oliveira 2014) and lived experience (Demuru, 2019). In doing so, they have contributed to the development of social semiotic theory strongly informed by case studies.

The work with case studies, consistent in concrete semiotic analyses of different phenomena using the *text* as a model and with a focus on social discourse*,* is also the usual working method of Italian social semioticians. Researchers in Italy have developed a "marked" semiotics (Marrone, 2022, p. 11), also influenced by Greimas' work, as opposed to an unmarked type of semiotics originating from other theoretical accounts. Over the past 30 to 40 years, Italian semioticians have used semiotics to analyse texts that belong to – and construct – multiple social phenomena and domains, such as gastronomy (Mangano, 2022), space (Giannitrapani, 2013, 2022), memory (Violi, 2014; Mazzucchelli,

2022) and many other phenomena of a socio-cultural nature (Marrone; Migliore, 2022). These studies have usually been grounded on "identifying their conditions of possibility, the (semiotic) devices of their discursive functioning, [and] the cultural models that bring them into being" (Marrone, 2022, p. 16, my translation).[1] The premise underlying Italian social semiotics is, as Ilaria Ventura Bordenca proposes, that,

> to understand society, […] we must look at the heterogeneous communicative products and sociocultural phenomena that found, traverse and transform it. This must be done with a specific theoretical apparatus, and its departure point should be the mode of conceiving the emergence of the social. (Ventura Bordenca, 2022, p. 26, my translation).[2]

Sharing an interest with French and Italian research circles for discourse, in the 1980s Argentinean semiotician Eliseo Verón (1988) proposed a sociosemiotic theory based on the study of the production, circulation and consumption of social discourses, with a particular focus on the gap that exists between enunciation and reception (*production* and *recognition*, in Verón's terms). For Verón (1988, p. 125-126), semiosis is the signifying dimension of social phenomena, and it is in the process of semiosis where the reality of the social is constructed. According to Verón, social semiotics is "a matter of conceiving of phenomena of meaning, on the one hand, as appearing always in the form of signifying conglomerates and, on the other hand, as referring to the functioning of the semiotic network, conceptualised as a productive system" (Verón, 1988, p. 124, my translation).[3]

Despite the different sources and objects of interest that researchers interested in studying the social domain using semiotics might have, these projects seem to converge towards an understanding of society as constructed in discourse, even if partially. Sense, meaning and signification are central in that process. In a nutshell, it could be argued that, normally, social semioticians – and semioticians interested in the social and cultural dimensions of life – use semiotics' concepts, methods and theories to make sense of the socio-cultural realm as something that is constructed in and through discourse. Semioticians

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[1] "Piú che lavorare direttamente sui fenomeni sociali, la sociosemiotica, in Italia […], cerca di individuarne le condizione di possibilità, i dispositivi – semiotici, appunto – del loro funzionamento discorsivo, i modelli culturali che li pongono in essere."

[2] "Per comprendere la società, infatti, bisogna volgere lo sguardo ai prodotti comunicativi eterogenei e ai fenomeni socioculturali che la fondano, la attraversano e la trasformano, ma occorre farlo con uno specifico apparato teorico e a partire dal medesimo modo di concepire l'emergere del sociale."

[3] "Se trata de concebir los fenómenos de sentido como apareciendo, por un lado, siempre bajo la forma de conglomerados de materias significantes; y como remitiendo, por otro, al funcionamiento de la red semiótica conceptualizada como *sistema productivo*."

can gain access to that process thanks to the analysis of traces that are empirically perceivable and that stand for something else.

This article examines in a comparative manner the five accounts of social semiotics introduced above. Some questions underpinning the article are: What do these accounts have in common? What are the differences between them? Which are the theoretical sources and references of each of these accounts? Are any of those sources and references common to them? How can they complement each other when considering social semiotics' disciplinary goals? In a nutshell, the article should serve as an introductory roadmap to some of the most visible circles of contemporary social semiotics and sociosemiotic research.

1. Methodology

To deal with these research questions, the article studies a selection of some of the most salient bibliographical references from each of the five sociosemiotic accounts presented above. In reading the texts, special attention was paid to: (1) the definition of (social) semiotics their authors provide, (2) the concepts and analytical categories they introduce as key to conduct a sociosemiotic analysis, and (3) the theoretical references they use. These are the texts that were examined:

Table 1: Bibliographical references used as sources.

Account	Author	Text	Date
Argentinean	Eliseo Verón	*La semiosis social* (book)	1988
Brazilian	Centro de Pesquisas Sociossemióticas	Texts "Quem somos" [Who are we] and "Sobre o CPS" [About CPS] on the institutional website	n/a
English-speaking	Robert Hodge & Gunther Kress	*Social semiotics* (book)	1988
English-speaking	Theo van Leeuwen	*Introducing social semiotics* (book)	2005
French	Eric Landowski	"Les chantiers sociaux de la sémiotique" (article)	1984
French	Eric Landowski	Point 10 of entry "Sociosemiotics" in Greimas and Courtés' Dictionary, second volume	1986
French	Eric Landowski	"Sociossemiótica: uma teoria geral do sentido" (article)	2014
French	Jean-Marie Floch	*Sémiotique, marketing et communication* (book)	1990
French	Jacques Fontanille	*Pratiques sémiotiques* (book)	2008
Italian	Gianfranco Marrone	*Corpi sociali* (book)	2001

Source: Own elaboration.

The selection of these specific texts is based on the salience they have in semiotic literature. Since it is a small sample, more or different texts could be

added to the corpus. Nevertheless, the texts listed above are good starting points to examine the foundations, tenets, concepts and theoretical references of the research accounts considered here.

2. Is social semiotics a unitary research field?

2.1 French social semiotics: *sociosémiotique*

Let us begin with the study of French social semiotics for two reasons. On the one hand, the most ancient from all the texts listed in the previous section, "Les chantiers sociaux de la sémiotique", by Eric Landowski, belongs to this tradition. On the other hand, the three French social semioticians considered in these pages worked directly with A. J. Greimas and the filiation of their projects with the work of Greimas is salient. In fact, the idea of a social semiotics was advanced by Greimas (1976) when he argued that semiotics should be the overarching method of the social sciences.

Eric Landowski is perhaps the most prominent name in the field of social semiotics as evidenced in the references other researchers do to his publications (including researchers working in other academic circles). Landowski was also responsible for writing a complement to the entry *sociosémiotique* in the second volume (1986) of A. Greimas and J. Courtés' *Dictionnaire* (1979), which constitutes a fundamental reference for semioticians working within the structural (and, after Greimas, generative) tradition. In the point 10 of the entry, included in the second volume of the dictionary as a stand alone complement, Landowski writes the following passage:

> Formulated in succinct and intentionally naive terms, the great question posed to the social semiologist would therefore be that of accounting for 'what we do' to give the social (or political life) substance as such: how we construct its objects and how we situate ourselves in it as subjects who speak and act. In this case, the empirical object of social semiotics is defined as the set of discourses and practices that intervene in the constitution and/or transformation of the conditions of interaction between subjects – either individual or collective (Landowski, 1986, p. 207, my translation).[4]

This brief passage contains some elements that will be central in social semiotic accounts based on Greimas' work. To begin with, the main focus of

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[4] "Formulée en termes succincts et volontairement naïfs, la grande question posée au sociosémioticien serait alors de rendre compte de « ce que nous faisons » pour que le social (ou le politique, etc.) existe en tant que tel pour nous : comment nous en construisons les objets et comment nous nous y inscrivons en tant que sujets parlants et agissants. L'objet empirique de la sociosémiotique se définit en ce cas comme l'ensemble des discours et des pratiques intervenant dans la constitution et/ou dans la transformation des conditions d'interaction entre sujets (individuels ou collectifs)."

interest is set on *discourses* and *practices*. Second, discourses and practices are interesting and pertinent for social semioticians as long as they are involved in the construction and reproduction of the social world. Third, there is an intersubjective and interactional dimension that is central to social semiotics as a discipline interested in the social realm.

Some years earlier, in a 1984 article entitled "Les chantiers sociaux de la sémiotique", Landowski (1984) renders the constructivist premise of social semiotics clearly visible:

> Semiotically speaking, we must remember that nothing is given *a priori*, neither the existence of a 'social field' nor the reality of 'social relations.' Everything that makes sense is constructed, and therefore presupposes a cognitive process, which in turn depends on the semiotic competence of individual or collective subjects. From this point of view, the great question of social semiotics, put in deliberately naive terms, should therefore be to know 'what we do' so that, on the one hand, the 'social' exists as such for us as a relatively autonomous 'field' – that is, how we construct its objects – and so that, on the other hand, the relations that are established between 'social actors' are themselves – for the subjects who experience or observe them – charged with meaning and, consequently, endowed with of a certain effectiveness in determining their own practices (Landowski, 1984, p. 143-144, my translation).[5]

Neither the entry in the dictionary nor the 1984 article include any theoretical references. However, in the latter, Landowski (1984, p. 146) claims that social semiotics, a discipline still to be built, would be influenced by structural semantics, structural anthropology and the structural analysis of narratives.

The structural component of Landowski's social semiotics – at least in its first stage – is visible in the first sentence of a 2014 article entitled "Sociossemiótica: uma teoría geral do sentido," where the author renders explicit the intellectual affiliation of his project with "semiotics of Saussuro-Hjelmslevian inspiration." (Landowski, 2014, p. 10). Since Landowski's social semiotic account is based on Greimas' work, it is clearly structural, that is, based on the works of Ferdinand de Saussure and Louis Hjelmslev, who believed that semiosis consists in the union of two dimensions: signified/signifier in the former; plane of the content and plane of the expression in the latter.

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[5] "Sémiotiquement parlant, faut-il le rappeler, rien n'est donné a priori, ni l'existence d'un 'champ social' ni la réalité des 'rapports sociaux'. Tout ce qui fait sens est construit, et présuppose par conséquent un faire, d'ordre cognitif, renvoyant lui-même à la compétence sémiotique des sujets, individuels ou collectifs. Dans cette optique, la grande question de la socio-sémiotique, posée en termes volontairement naïfs, devrait donc être de savoir 'ce que nous faisons' pour que, d'une part, le 'social' existe en tant que tel pour nous, comme 'champ' relativement autonome – c'est-à-dire comment nous en construisons les objets – et pour que, d'autre part, les rapports qui s'y établissent entre 'acteurs sociaux' soient eux-mêmes – pour les sujets qui les vivent ou qui les observent – chargés de signification et, par suite, dotés d'une certain efficacité quant à la détermination de leurs propres pratiques."

Between 1985 and 2014, Landowski published several books and articles with the purpose of delineating the field of social semiotics. Three of those books – *La société réfléchie* (1989), *Présences de l'Autre* (1997) and *Passions sans nom* (2004) – include the subtitle *Essais de socio-sémiotique*. In those works, Landowski elaborated on interactions and *aesthesia*, that is, the bodily dimension of semiosis. According to Landowski,

> today, besides the analysis of meaning invested in texts and discourses, semiotics (and especially its version originating in Greimas' works) claims to account for the way how sense emerges from daily life and lived experience with its many dimensions, from our sensitive relations with the world around and with the objects we use; in a word, from all kinds of human practices (Landowski, 2014, p. 10).

Exploring Landowski's work to identify further theoretical sources and how it changed through the years would be a task to accomplish in a separate article. For our purposes, it is enough to present some evidence pointing towards the structuralist and, in particular, Greimassian imprint of the social semiotics he proposes. This is a feature also present in sociosemiotic accounts in other countries than France that follow his work, like the Italian and the Brazilian.

In 1990, Jean-Marie Floch, also a French semiotician from Greimas' circle, published the book *Sémiotique, marketing et communication*. The book is composed of six studies and an introduction, and its subtitle is *Sous les signes, les stratégies* ["Under the signs, the strategies"]. Although Floch does not use the label *social semiotics*, his approach is a type of social semiotics grounded on a structural premise and openly based on Greimas' work – in fact, the first footnote of the book states that "the personality and presence of A. J. Greimas will – hopefully – become quite clear as you read this book."

The influence of Greimas' work is salient in the book's introduction, whose title is "Hors du texte, point de salut" ["There is no salvation outside the text"], a phrase pronounced by Greimas during a congress that became a sort of mantra to defend the *principle of immanence*, that is, a methodological approach consisting of analysing texts as they are empirically perceived, without taking into consideration external variables that are not evidenced *in* the text (like the author's biography or social context). In the introduction, Floch refers to the principle of immanence as one of the key tenets of the semiotic he proposes and mentions F. de Saussure, R. Jakobson, L. Hjelmslev, É. Benveniste, A. J. Greimas, G. Dumézil and C. Lévi-Strauss as examples of structuralist scholars (Floch, 1990, p. 6), together with R. Barthes.

In the book, Floch presents empirical analyses studied from the viewpoint of semiotics, which he defines as a viewpoint interested in sense and signification (Floch, 1990, p. 1) and as a discipline that can be defined by its field of research:

"languages – all languages – and signifying practices, which are essentially social practices" (Floch, 1990, p. 4, my translation).[6] As in Landowski's account, practices are also central to Floch's social semiotics. One of the most notable studies included in the work is the pioneering study of how people used the Parisian metro through the employment of a methodology that resembles Italian *ethnosemiotics* (Marsciani, 2007; Lancioni; Marsciani, 2007; Mazzarino, 2022).

Floch's emphasis on analytical practice is a relevant feature of his work: he proposes the opposition between *façon de faire* [way of doing] and *façon d'être* [way of being] to distinguish analytical practice of concrete cases from conceptual theory, respectively (Floch, 1990, p. 2), a duality also relevant within Italian social semiotics, as will be argued below. Since for Floch "there is no theory that is not tested in practice," in the six analyses that compose the book he explains some of Greimas' tools – the semiotic square, the narrative scheme, narrative syntax, and the generative path of signification – before using them for his analyses.

Like other social semioticians, Floch (1990, p. 4, my translation) argues in favour of interdisciplinarity and claims that "the position of semiotics is one that allows for real and effective interdisciplinarity, that is, a thoughtful articulation – based on a shared concern to make approaches and concepts explicit – between several disciplines, each of which has its own problematic and therefore its own object."[7]

In 2008, Jacques Fontanille, another semiotician formed in Greimas' group and a central figure of the Limoges group, published *Pratiques sémiotiques*. This is a crucial book since, also drawing on the principle of immanence, it proposes to organise semiotic enquiry in different levels of immanence for the study of meaning- and sense-making within the social realm: those of (1) signs, (2) texts and (3) practices, but also (4) objects, (5) strategies and (6) forms of life. In the book's preface and introduction, Fontanille mentions Greimas and the concept of *enunciative praxis* as those informing his work. Moreover, due to his interest in practices (in line with Landowski and Floch), he mentions the works of P. Bourdieu and R. Jakobson. When studying the principle of immanence, Fontanille refers to L. Hjelmslev. In recent years, the author has devoted more attention to the analytical category of *forms of life* (Fontanille, 2015; Perusset; Fontanille, 2021) and developed a sociosemiotic theory based on the study of collectives (Fontanille, 2021), which is closely related to anthropological theory. A growing interest for anthropology has been evidenced recently also in Italian semiotics.

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[6] "La sémiotique se définit par le domaine d'investigation qui est le sien : les langages – tous les langages – et les pratiques signifiantes, qui sont essentiellement des pratiques sociales."

[7] "La position de la sémiotique est celle qui permet une interdisciplinarité réelle et efficace, c'est-à-dire une articulation réfléchie – sur le partage d'un même souci d'explication des démarches et des concepts – entre plusieurs disciplines qui ont chacune leur problématique et par là même leur propre objet."

To sum up, French social semiotics, in its multiple streams and institutional settings, is a structuralist endeavour that sees semiotic analysis as textual analysis, where the concept of the text is used as a model to approach configurations of meaning that are not necessarily verbal (and, hence, "textual" in a restricted and traditional sense). Due to the textual premise, the principle of immanence is central to French social semiotics, as dictated by Greimas in his claim "Hors du text, point de salut!" However, even if the genesis of French social semiotics is shared – Greimas' structural and generative semiotics –, theoretical divergences between Landowski and Fontanille have led to the coexistence of two *sociosémiotiques*.

2.2 Italian social semiotics: *sociosemiotica*, ethnosemiotics, cultural semiotics, semiotics

Greimas' work has also been very influential in Italian semiotics (Broden, 2021, p. 8-9). To approach social semiotics in Italy, a good starting point is Ilaria Ventura Bordenca's chapter "Sociosemiotica: teorie, esplorazioni e prospettive", included in the volume *Cura del senso e critica sociale*, edited by Gianfranco Marrone and Tiziane Migliore (2022), published with the purpose of mapping contemporary semiotic research in the country.

In the chapter, Ventura Bordenca (2022) introduces the development of social semiotics in Italy and focuses mainly on Gianfranco Marrone's 2001 book *Corpi sociali* [Social Bodies], which she considers a key text in the development of social semiotics. Although Marrone is not the only semiotician dealing with social issues, he is one of the few that uses the label *sociosemiotica* to define his work. Ventura Bordenca (2022, p. 23, my translation) claims that, in its Italian version, social semiotics is "a specific mode that semiotics has of conceiving of social reality", as well as a "specific current of signification theory."[8] Ventura Bordenca (2022, p. 24) classifies Italian social semiotics as structural and generative – that is, as Greimassian – and claims that social semiotics began in the 1990s in France, with the works of Landowski. Nevertheless, she acknowledges the influence in Italian semiotics of pre-sociosemiotic studies of the social domain using semiotics already in the 1950s and 1960s, like those of R. Barthes, U. Eco, P. Fabbri and A. J. Greimas. According to Ventura Bordenca (2022, p. 29), more recent social semioticians are Landowski, Floch and A. Semprini. The chapter finalises with a discussion of how, in recent years, Italian social semiotics has come closer to anthropology, in particular to the works of P. Descola and B. Latour.

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[8] "Si tratta semmai, almeno nella sua versione italiana, di uno specifico modo che ha la semiotica di concepire la realtà sociale [...] [una] corrente specifica della teoria della significazione."

Let us begin our approach to Italian social semiotics examining Marrone's *Corpi sociali*, the book that Ventura Bordenca designates as a key text for the development of Italian social semiotics. The book has the subtitle *Processi comunicativi e semiotica del testo* [Communicational processes and semiotics of the text] and, like Floch's, is organized in six analytical chapters plus an introduction. The first author Marrone mentions in his introduction (excluding the footnotes) is C. S. Peirce (Marrone, 2001, p. 12). However, this reference is made only to abandon Peirce's interpretative approach and focus on the structural paradigm. Like Landowski's, Floch's and Fontanille's, Marrone's semiotics are structural. This theoretical affiliation can be evidenced in the references Marrone uses in the introduction: above all Landowski, from whom Marrone uses some quotations, and Paolo Fabbri, who also worked with Greimas in Paris.

With regards to the former, the works that Marrone quotes from are *La société réfléchie* (1989), *Presences de l'Autre* (1997) and the entry "sociosemiotics" in Greimas and Courtes' dictionary (1979). Regarding Fabbri, Marrone draws on the essay "La comunicazione di massa in Italia: sguardo semiotico e malocchio della sociologia" ["Mass communications in Italy: the semiotic outlook and sociology's evil eye"], which Italian semioticians tend to recognise as a founding text for contemporary Italian semiotics: according to Ventura Bordenca (2022, p. 25), this is a foundational essay. Marrone pays particular attention to the work of Fabbri, who, following Greimas, saw in social semiotics the "missing ring" (*anello mancante*) between general semiotics and concrete analyses of social phenomena, that is, a level that links semiotic theory and epistemology with textual work (Ventura Bordenca, 2022, p. 25). The two things that this missing ring would link seem to coincide with what Floch called semiotics' *way of doing* and *way of being*.

Marrone's introduction focuses on three main analytical categories: (1) text, (2) discourse and (3) body. In dealing with the category of *text*, Marrone includes references to the works of J. Lotman, a major figure in *cultural* semiotics, a research field that – in Italy and in other academic circles – overlaps with the interest of social semiotics. When explaining the concept of *discourse*, Marrone mentions R. Barthes to characterise it as something that encompasses both words and actions. When introducing the category of *enunciation*, the main theoretical reference is É. Benveniste. Other authors that Marrone mentions when arguing for the relationship between semiotics and the social sciences are C. Lévi-Strauss, R. Barthes, U. Eco and A. Greimas. According to Marrone, the work of these scholars shows how "since their origins, and in the thought of their

masters, semiotics is proposed as a study of society" (Marrone, 2001, p. 15, my translation).[9]

In Italian research circles, it is hard to disentangle social semiotics from general semiotics and, moreover, from other types of semiotics, like cultural semiotics and ethnosemiotics. Regarding cultural semiotics, these are normally related to the work of Estonia-based scholar Juri Lotman (Sorrentino, 2022), even if also including perspectives of other scholars like M. Foucault, C. Lévi-Strauss and U. Eco (Lorusso, 2010, 2015). Ethnosemiotics is a branch of semiotics created in the 2000s in Italy by Maurizio Del Ninno, Tarcisio Lancioni and Francesco Marschiani (Mazzarino, 2022). In line with the turn that semioticians have shown in recent decades towards anthropology, the research field of ethnosemiotics aims at making visible the anthropological foundations that are part of Greimas' semiotics, and tends to establish dialogues with the work of anthropologists like B. Latour and E. Viveiros de Castro (Mazzarino, 2022), with a focus on the concept of practice. Also the work of C. Lévi-Strauss is relevant for ethnosemioticians. In a nutshell, ethnosemiotics could be defined as a semiotics of practices that uses Greimas' generative semiotics as its foundation, and that has many similarities with the works of Floch, Fontanille and Landowski. However, researchers working in the field prefer the prefix *ethno-* rather than *socio-* to describe their work, in a move that probably tries to underline that the concept of practice cannot be encompassed in that of text. Is ethnosemiotics a type of social semiotics? If not, what are the differences between these two approaches to meaning, sense and signification that do not allow grouping them as a common project, even if they look at meaning beyond texts (in a traditional understanding)?

Mapping social semiotics in Italy is not an easy task. Almost every semiotician works with social phenomena and events, even if they do not refer to their work as 'social semiotics'. Thanks to Eco's and Fabbri's teachings, it is assumed that any semiotic research is necessarily social since sense, meaning and signification are social phenomena. The focus set here on Marrone's sociosemiotic account is based on the fact that he is one of the few scholars that specifically and explicitly used the label *sociosemiotica* to refer to his work – in fact, the first line of the book is the question "What is sociosemiotics?" (Marrone, 2001, p. 9). However, many other Italian researchers could be described as "implicit" social semioticians.

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[9] "Sin dalle sue origini, e nel pensiero dei suoi maestri, la semiotica si è proposta come uno studio della società."

2.3 Brazilian social semiotics: *sociossemiótica*

The influence of structuralist, Greimas-based social semiotics has been strong in Brazil (Broden, 2021, p. 10-13). In 1994, the Centre for Sociosemiotic Research [CPS] was founded at the Pontifícia Universidade Católica of São Paulo, among others by Eric Landowski. In its institutional website, the Centre is described as follows:

> The Centre for Sociosemiotic Research (CPS) aims to develop research and analysis to shed light on the contents, the functioning and the modes of production and apprehension of meaning in different social discourses and practices.[10]

This short definition evidences the alignment of the CPS with Landowski's social semiotics. However, in another passage of the webpage "Who are we", the filiation with French social semiotics is explicitly mentioned:

> The field of discursive semiotics, also called structural semiotics, French semiotics or socio-semiotics (as adopted in the Centre's denomination) had its origins in the postulations of Algirdas Julien Greimas, at the end of the 1960s, and was developed as a theoretical and methodological architecture by the joint action of a group of collaborators, among whom Eric Landowski, founder of this Brazilian grouping. From the initiative of Eric Landowski, José Luiz Fiorin and Ana Claudia de Oliveira the CPS was formed […].[11]

Landowski, Oliveira and Florin have been involved in the direction of the Centre since the 1990s. They have edited, in some cases with the collaboration of other researchers, books that reflect Landowski's interest in aesthesia, intersubjectivity, interactions and practices, like *O gosto da gente, o gosto das coisas. Abordagem semiótica* [People's taste, taste of things] (1997), edited by Landowski and J. L. Fiorin; *Semiótica, estesia, estética* [Semiotics, aesthesia, aesthetics] (1999), edited by Landowski, de Oliveira and R. Dorra; and *As interações sensíveis* [Sensitive interactions] (2004) and *Sentido e interação nas práticas* [Sense and interactions in practices] (2013), both edited by de Oliveira.

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[10] Source: https://www5.pucsp.br/cps/quem-somos.php, my translation. "O Centro de Pesquisas Sociossemióticas (CPS) tem como objetivo central desenvolver pesquisas e análises que clarifiquem os conteúdos, o funcionamento e os modos de produção e apreensão da significação nos diferentes discursos e práticas sociais."

[11] Source: https://www5.pucsp.br/cps/quem-somos.php, my translation. "No campo da semiótica discursiva, também chamada de semiótica estrutural, semiótica francesa ou sociossemiótica (como vai ser adotada na nomeação do Centro) - teve seu nascedouro nas postulações de Algirdas Julien Greimas, no final dos anos 60, e foi desenvolvida como uma arquitetura teórica e metodológica pela ação conjunta de um grupo de colaboradores, dentre os quais Eric Landowski, que alicerça esse agrupamento brasileiro. A partir da iniciativa de Eric Landowski, José Luiz Fiorin e Ana Claudia de Oliveira o CPS foi formado […]"

The CPS's sociosemiotic account is also structural, based in linguistics and anthropology, and studies a broad array of social phenomena, ranging from the media to lived experience, including politics, the arts, interactions and social norms, among others. These characteristics are clearly visible in the following text, where the structural basis is acknowledged through some of its major representatives:

> In all cases, it is about the construction of meaning (and also of the subjects and their identity) as it takes place in the game of discourses and social practices.
>
> To account for the diverse and complex nature of this object, a specifically operative theory of signification is required, one with a solid epistemological support and a method both rigorous and flexible. Discursive and narrative semiotics responds to this double demand.
>
> Originating from the work of linguists (Saussure, Hjelmslev, Benveniste, in the first place) and anthropologists (Mauss, Lévi-Strauss, Dumézil), it provides a general theory of language, verbal or otherwise, capable, in synthesis, of articulating the different levels of production and apprehension of meaning in its manifestations in social facts.[12]

So far, we have seen how Greimas' generative semiotics, informed by the structural ideas and works of F. de Saussure, L. Hjelmslev, C. Lévi-Strauss and other scholars, have influenced French, Italian and Brazilian social semiotics. We turn now away from social semiotics informed by structuralism and move on to the examination of two other social semiotic accounts whose departure point is precisely a criticism to structuralism.

2.4. English-speaking social semiotics

The first non-structuralist account of social semiotics that we will examine draws on Michael Halliday's functional linguistics. In 1988, Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress, two linguists interested in the study of the relationship between language and ideology, published the book *Social Semiotics*. Contrary to the accounts studied above, Greimas is not mentioned even once in the book. Hodge and Kress begin their book discussing K. Marx and introducing two analytical

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[12] Source: https://www5.pucsp.br/cps/sobre-o-cps.php, my translation. "Em todos os casos, trata-se da construção do sentido (e também dos sujeitos e de sua identidade) tal como ele se efetiva no jogo dos discursos e das práticas sociais. Para dar conta do caráter diverso e complexo desse objeto faz-se necessário uma teoria da significação especificamente operatória, que conte com um suporte epistemológico sólido e um método que seja, a um só tempo, rigoroso e flexível. A semiótica discursiva e narrativa responde a essa dupla exigência. Originada dos trabalhos de linguistas (Saussure, Hjelmslev, Benveniste, em primeiro lugar) e de antropólogos (Mauss, Lévi-Strauss, Dumézil), ela fornece uma teoria geral da linguagem, verbal ou não, capaz, em síntese, de articular os diferentes níveis de produção e apreensão da significação quando de suas manifestações nos fatos sociais."

categories that are alien to the structural tradition: those of *ideological complexes* and *logonomic systems*. Besides Marx, the authors also quote Gramsci when referring to hegemonic structures, what does not come as a surprise considering their interest in ideology and how this shapes semiotic production.

In *Corpi sociali,* Marrone introduced three key categories (text, discourse, body) for social semiotics. Hodge and Kress do the same, but replace the body with the category of *message*, which structural semiotics abandoned since it embraced the distinction between *communication* and *signification* (Eco, 1975). In line with structural semiotics' approach, the authors distinguish *text* from *discourse*, "keeping discourse to refer to the social process in which texts are embedded, while text is the concrete material object produced in discourse" (Hodge; Kress, 1988, p. 6).

However, instead of a plane of the expression and one of the content – a key tenet of structural semiotics –, they speak of a *semiosic* and a *mimetic* plane. According to the authors,

> the semiosic plane is the indispensable context for the mimetic plane, and the mimetic plane is an indispensable constituent of the semiosic plane. The interaction of both is necessary for the social production of meaning to occur. They are constituted by homologous structures and processes, through capable of producing conflicting or contradictory meanings (Hodge; Kress 1988, p. 262).

The book includes a chapter entitled "The Founding Fathers Revisited," where Hodge and Kress discuss and critic Saussure's work. In fact, they propose to use Saussure's work as "an antiguide" and to "invert his prohibitions and rewrite them as basic premises for an alternative semiotics (an alternative which is implicit in his work" (Hodge; Kress, 1988, p. 18). This alternative semiotics would include the following components:

1. Culture, society and politics as intrinsic to semiotics

2. Other semiotic systems alongside verbal language

3. *Parole*, the act of speaking, and concrete signifying practices in other codes

4. Diachrony, time, history, process and change

5. The processes of signification, the transactions between signifying systems and structures of reference

6. Structures of the signified

7. The material nature of signs (Hodge; Kress, 1988, p. 18).

For readers familiar with the structural semiotic tradition, these are all constitutive components of structural social semiotics as well. In fact,

semioticians, linguists and discourse analysts after Saussure developed a linguistics of *parole* based in the study of discourses and, in particular, of enunciation. Regarding the "structures of the signified," Hjelmslev theory of the articulation of the plane of the content is precisely an attempt to do that. It comes as a surprise that Hodge and Kress do not acknowledge these theoretical developments in the book.

Hodge and Kress also mention C. S. Peirce to argue that he did not build a semiotic school. Therefore, they opt to place him within the school of dialogism, together with Lev Vitogsky. Besides Saussure and Peirce, in the chapter on the founding fathers they mention two more relevant sources of their social semiotic account: Sigmund Freud, who they say was a "proto-semiotician" (Hodge; Kress, 1988, p. 15), and Valentin Voloshinov, together with the school of Bakhtin. Voloshinov is relevant for Hodge & Kress thanks to his interest in ideology: "as an outline, Voloshinov's sketch of the basis for a social semiotics is essentially sound. The task that remains is to build on this basis, and confront the difficulties of implementing the programme" (Hodge; Kress, 1988, p. 19).

The book includes a final annotated bibliography. There, the authors write that "other influential exponents of semiotics who have developed some of the themes of social semiotics include R. Barthes, especially in *Mythologies* (1973) and the essays in *Image-Music-Text* (1977), and U. Eco, especially in *The Role of the Reader* (1978)" (Hodge; Kress, 1988, p. 269). Surprisingly, in the book's index Eco is mentioned only once (on page 27) and Barthes does not figure at all. In the annotated bibliography, the authors claim that "much work in contemporary linguistic theory can be safely ignored by anyone interested in language or social semiotics", with the "major exception" of Michael Halliday's work (Hodge; Kress, 1988, p. 270). Finally, the authors argue that "anthropology has contributed many works that have been important for social semiotics" and mention B. Malinowski, C. Lévi-Strauss, G. Bateson, M. Douglas, E. Leach, C. Geertz and V. Turner (p. 270-271).

In a nutshell, Hodge and Kress' social semiotics differs from social semiotics accounts informed by structuralism in several points. To begin with, they do not take Saussure's work as the foundational cornerstone of the discipline. Moreover, they do not embrace the principle of immanence, but prefer to focus on external factors. In fact, they openly criticize Saussure's ideas about immanence and prefer to draw on Voloshinov due to his attention to the workings of ideology. However, there are some minor similarities, like identifying the work of scholars like Barthes as a type of *social* semiotics, and the convergence towards anthropology. In this sense, the reference to the work of Lévi-Strauss is common to structural and Hodge and Kress' social semiotics.

Another relevant name within English-speaking social semiotics is Theo van Leeuwen, who in 2005 published a book entitled *Introducing Social*

Semiotics. The book is organised in three parts – "Semiotic principles", "Dimensions of semiotic analysis" and "Multimodal cohesion" – and deals with social semiotics as "a new and distinctive approach to the practice and theory of semiotics" (van Leeuwen 2005, p. 1). Before beginning with his presentation of social semiotics, the author explains that "where necessary, social semiotic concepts and methods are contrasted and compared to concepts from structuralist semiotics." The strategy of using structural semiotics as a point of comparison to present and delimit the social semiotics he advocates for is interesting. However, when reading the book, it is not evident that the author is familiar with the developments of structuralist semiotics in the social field, namely with the works of Landowski and Floch, which had been published years before van Leeuwen's book.

In this sense, it comes as a surprise that, in the second paragraph of the preface, van Leeuwen writes that, "although strongly inspired by Paris School semiotics, and especially by the work of Roland Barthes […], social semiotics has long since moved beyond an exclusive interest in structure and system" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 11). What does van Leeuwen mean when writing "Paris School semiotics"? Isn't this denomination equivalent to "structuralist semiotics"? Or is he perhaps referring to the work of Barthes, and not that of Greimas and his collaborators? Neither Greimas nor Landowski – who, at the time of the publication of van Leeuwen's book, was already a major name in structural social semiotics – are mentioned in the book at all.

Like Hodge and Kress did, van Leeuwen explicitly mentions the work of Michael Halliday as a major source of social semiotics. In the book's first chapter, he claims that the analytical category of *semiotic resource*, "a key term in social semiotics", originates from Halliday's work (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 3). Van Leeuwen distances himself from Saussure's concept of sign, which in his view "was considered the fundamental concept of semiotics." According to van Leeuwen (2005, p. 3), "in social semiotics the term 'resource' is preferred, for it avoids the impression that 'what a sign stands for' is somehow pre-given, and not affected by its use." This criticism is the reason why, within structural semiotics, Hjelmslev proposed to speak of sign function instead of sign, and semioticians have adopted a vision of semiosis as a relationship between two planes – that of the content and that of the expression.

In the preface, van Leeuwen declares the influence of Critical Discourse Analysis in the social semiotics he proposes, in particular of the works of N. Fairclough, R. Wodak, T. van Dijk, L. Chouliaraki, L. Martín Rojo, M. Coulthard and C. Caldas-Coulthard. All these are fundamental names of the development of critical linguistics into CDA. In a reference to Hodge and Kress' book – which he says is "the book that put social semiotics on the map" (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 270) –, van Leeuwen (2005, p. 3) also mentions Voloshinov as "an important

precursor of social semiotics." The book closes with a "Recommended reading" chapter, which includes the following authors: R. Arnheim, R. Barthes, S. Eggins, N. Fairclough, M. Foucault, M. Halliday, R. Hodge and G. Kress, R. Iedema, G. Kress and T. van Leeuwen, G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, B. Laurel, A. Lomax, B. Malinowski, J. R. Martin, W. Nöth, M. O'Toole, V. Voloshinov and himself – a list of authors foreign to structural social semiotics, with the exception of Barthes and, in some cases, Foucault.

Like other authors presented in this article, van Leeuwen presents with detail four "dimensions of semiotic analysis" (this is the name of the second part of the book). These are *discourse*, *genre*, *style* and *modality*. On discourse, the only category shared by accounts presented above, the author writes:

> Discourses are resources for representation, knowledges about some aspect of reality which can be drawn upon when that aspect of reality has to be represented. There may be several discourses about a given aspect of reality, making sense of it in different ways, including and excluding different things, and serving different interests. Any given discourse may be realized by different genres and different combinations of semiotic resources. Discourses combine two kinds of elements, representations of social practices and evaluations of, purposes for, and legitimations of these social practices (van Leeuwen, 2005, p. 275).

It is evident that the use of the label 'social semiotics' in the English-speaking contexts differs from its uses in the French, Italian and Brazilian contexts. This semantic election by English-speaking scholars to expand their interest to resources other than linguistic ones is confusing, for it might give the idea of a unified field of social semiotics, also active in other national research circles, while in fact they are proposing a new, different type of approach to the production of meaning and sense in the social life, like the one underpinning multimodal text analysis, an approach that, according to two of its main referents, originates in "some of the groundbreaking tools and theories developed by Kress and Van Leeuwen" (Ledin; Machin, 2020, p. XI) and is "interested in the way that signs are used in combination, adding up to a whole" (Ledin; Machin, 2020, p. 5).

2.5 Argentinean social semiotics: *sociosemiótica*

Finally, another non-structuralist sociosemiotic approach is that of Argentinean semiotician Eliseo Verón. In the book *La semiosis social*, published in 1988 – the same year that Hodge and Kress published *Social Semiotics* –, Verón proposes a theory of social discourses or, as he calls it, a theory of *discursivity* based on identifying the relationship of discourses with their conditions of production and recognition. Although his theory also makes of the

category of social semiosis its main object of study, Verón does not conceive of semiosis as the link between two units in different planes – a signifier and a signified (Saussure) or a unit in the plane of the expression and one in the plane of the content (Hjelmslev) –. In fact, Verón criticizes what he terms "European dualism", with a particular focus on the work of Saussure and structuralist scholars. On the contrary, he prefers to ground his theory of social discursivity on triadic approaches, like those of German philosopher Gottlob Frege and C. S. Peirce.

Verón (1988, p. 42) acknowledges that the *Course de lingusitique générale* is a foundational text and dedicates several pages to read it through the lenses of positivism as an example of how a social semiotics focused on the moment of discursive production would look like. According to Verón (1988, p. 72, my translation), "the Saussurean notion of value [...] as one of the pillars on which contemporary linguistics could be built, is the result, through a complex and contradictory conceptual fabric, of the ideological path of positivism."[13] That is how he introduces Frege's and Peirce's triadic models of the sign to build his own approach to social discourse. As Verón claims,

> before the emergence of linguistics (or independently of it), some principles had been proposed that allowed the question of sense to be approached in a very different way. Erased by the consolidation and success of linguistics, these principles were, rather than forgotten, simply ignored (Verón, 1988, p. 100, my translation).[14]

In opposition to structural linguistics, which normally assumes a binary or dual model of semiosis, Verón proposes a ternary approach. According to the author,

> the core of this ternary model must be taken up again, the essentials of the hypotheses on which it rests must be elaborated: immediately, the subject rediscovers his world and his body, and sense, its social nature, of which linguistics, at the time of its birth, made an inconsequential proclamation (Verón, 1988, p. 100, my translation).[15]

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[13] "La noción saussureana de valor [...] uno de los pilares sobre los cuales se pudo construir la lingüística contemporánea, es el resultado, a través de un tejido conceptual complejo y contradictorio, del camino ideológico del positivismo."

[14] "Ahora bien, antes del surgimiento de la lingüística (o independientemente de ésta), se habían propuesto principios que permitían abordar la cuestión del sentido de una manera muy diferente. Borrados por la consolidación y el éxito de la lingüística, estos principios fueron, más que olvidados, simplemente ignorados."

[15] "Hay que retomar el núcleo de este modelo ternario, hay que elaborar lo esencial de la hipótesis sobre las cuales descansa: inmediatamente, el sujeto reencuentra su mundo y su cuerpo, y el sentido su naturaleza *social*, de la que la lingüística, en el momento de su nacimiento, hizo una proclamación sin consecuencias."

Verón sees a correspondence between some of Frege's and Peirce's notions and re-elaborates them to use them as the pillars of his social semiotic approach (Table 2):

Table 2: Correspondence between Frege, Peirce and Verón.

Frege	Peirce	Verón
Sinn (sense)	Interpretant	Operations
Zeichen (sign)	Sign	Discourse
Bedeutung (reference)	Object	Representations

Source: Verón (1988, p. 124, my translation).

The introduction of a third element evidences how Verón's approach is not interested in studying texts as the correspondence between two dimensions, but rather the circulation and life of social discourses as signifying conglomerates. Therefore, similarly to Hodge and Kress, Verón rejects the principle of immanence:

> an important consequence of this starting point is that a given signifying object, a discursive set, can never be analysed 'in itself': discursive analysis cannot claim any 'immanence'. The first condition for conducting any discursive analysis is relating a signifying set to particular aspects of its conditions of production. Discourse analysis is nothing other than the description of the traces that the productive conditions leave in discourses, be they those of their generation or those that account for their 'effects' (Verón, 1988, p. 127, my translation).[16]

Despite the differences, however, and in line with structural semiotics, Verón embraces a relational approach, although not between the units that compose the text as a unit that can be studied following the principle of immanence. Verón's relational approach is interested in identifying and examining the relations that exist between the text and its conditions of production and recognition. This is what social semiotics is about according to the Argentinean scholar.

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[16] "Una consecuencia importante de este punto de partida es que un objeto significante dado, un conjunto discursivo no puede jamás ser analizado 'en sí mismo': el análisis discursivo no puede reclamar 'inmanencia' alguna. La primera condición para poder hacer un análisis discursivo es la puesta en relación de un conjunto significante con aspectos determinados de esas condiciones productivas. El análisis de los discursos no es otra cosa que la descripción de las huellas de las condiciones productivas en los discursos, ya sean las de su generación o las que dan cuenta de sus 'efectos'."

Conclusions

The purpose of this article was to map the field of social semiotics. As it has been argued, the labels 'social semiotics' and its equivalents in other languages are used broadly and without a univocal sense. This is evident in the two last accounts presented here, which are attempts to establish a new social semiotics without acknowledging neither the pre-existing bibliography nor discussions within the field.

For scholars and students interested in stepping into the field of social semiotics, this divergence might suppose a challenge. This article seeks to function as a roadmap to understand the main differences between the existing accounts of social semiotics with a focus on their key concepts and central theoretical references. As such, it is only an introductory and incomplete work. More books and articles should be surveyed for a clearer picture of the differences between the sociosemiotic accounts presented here. Moreover, other research circles should also be taken into account. If they were not studied here, it is because they do not use the label *social semiotics* widely, even if they practice a type of social semiotics. In this sense, research in Bulgaria, Chile, Estonia, Greece, Peru and Romania, among other national-academic circles, should be taken into account for a more comprehensive state of the art of social semiotics.

The survey presented here might serve as an input for theoretical discussions within semioticians and other social scientists interested in meaning, sense and signification. A first discussion regards the nature of social semiotics and its place within general semiotics. Why did scholars feel the need to use the adjective 'social' or the prefix 'socio-' to refer to their research activity? Why did they find that semiotics was not enough, and that a modifier was necessary to produce a difference in meaning in what they do? A second discussion regards the commonalities of the different accounts and how common ground could be found among them with the purpose of making of social semiotics a unified research field, so that whenever we find the name 'social semiotics', we know what it is about, without a need to understand which of its various meanings is being used.

Finally, a note on why we nowadays have at least three different accounts of social semiotics – structural, English-speaking and Veronian – seems in order. Probably, the lack of translations – in particular, of French and Italian social semiotic studies – has led to a lack of knowledge by scholars working in other research circles of ideas that emerged in France in Italy during the 1970s-1980s and that constitute the grounds of structural social semiotics. In the late 1980s, several relevant books for social semiotics were published. How could we explain that their authors were not aware of the publication of the other books, or even

of the names of their authors? Questions like this remain open and requiring a study of academic activity and contacts between scholars and research groups.●

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É a semiótica social um campo de pesquisa unitário? Um mapeamento introdutório e comparativo dos estudos semióticos argentinos, brasileiros, franceses, italianos e de língua inglesa sobre o sentido social

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Resumo: Na década de 1980, pesquisadores de diferentes círculos acadêmicos em todo o mundo começaram a prestar atenção ao funcionamento da esfera social com foco na significação e na produção de sentido. Desde então, eles têm demonstrado interesse especial em ir além da linguagem verbal e estudar práticas, interações e o uso do espaço, entre outros, como atividades que carregam significados e produzem sentido. Foi assim que surgiu o campo da semiótica social dentro da semiótica geral. Mas o surgimento desse novo campo de pesquisa ocorreu de forma fragmentada: atualmente, uma semiótica social de língua inglesa coexiste com pelo menos duas tendências de uma sociossemiótica francesa, com uma sociossemiótica argentina, com uma sociossemiótica italiana e com uma sociossemiótica brasileira. Este artigo examina essas cinco abordagens da semiótica social de forma comparativa, com foco nas referências que elas apresentam como suas fontes teóricas e metodológicas. Portanto, o artigo deve funcionar como um roteiro introdutório para pesquisadores das ciências sociais e humanas interessados em abordar a semiótica social contemporânea e a pesquisa sociossemiótica.

Palavras-chave: semiótica social; teoria semiótica; semiótica cultural; etnossemiótica.

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