

The distribution of community newspapers: interactivity and participation in contemporary communications

Distribuição de jornais comunitários, interação e participação na comunicação contemporânea

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1. Introduction

Many authors, including Levy (2010), Jenkins (2008) and Rodrigues (2014), consider that mankind is now experiencing the dawn of a cognitive and epistemological revolution based on the emergence of new information technologies. The benefits of these new technologies for communication processes allegedly include the emancipation of senders and the advantages of increased *feedback* - an English expression that became frequent to the point of being practically incorporated into the Portuguese language.

But to what extent do the new technologies allow us to improve our communication capacities? To what extent are these new communication forms facilitating brotherliness, solidarity, the recognition of different identities or tolerance with human distinctions – that is, how far are they facilitating values that improve social integration among the individuals of our species? To which extent is such integration linked to the technological issues, and to which extent is it more related to the way we conceive communicative processes?

The vast majority of authors in the field of communication who are concerned and in search of answers to these questions rely on the analysis of the production and reception of information contents. This critical dimension of the theory of communications regarding the production and

reception of contents began in the days of the Frankfurt School and of the School of Cultural Studies. In the present article, we shift the focus to a forgotten dimension of the communications-process, namely the distribution of information. By analyzing some experiences in the distribution of community newspapers, we expect to contribute to the reflections on the recent transformations of communication processes.

But how could an analysis of the distribution of community newspapers shed light on the relations among new information technologies and the theory of communications? Our hypothesis is that since the distribution of community newspapers brings local residents and members of media teams into face-to-face contact, the moments of these interactions allow for possibilities of promoting interactions as significant as – or even more significant than – IT-based interactions. In other words, the horizontal character of communication processes would not hinge on the new technologies themselves but, instead, on the way these communication processes are perceived, independently of the technological means.

The first section of this paper will describe the evolution of the linkages among the distribution, production and reception of newspapers in the course of history, to clarify our hypothesis above. Next, we will characterize the community newspapers we have examined and the transformations that occurred in their distribution processes. We will also present the cases of newspaper distribution examined by our field researchers, by reproducing their field journals that narrate on the distribution of three newspapers in their respective areas. The aim of this reproduction is to capture specific “photos” of the process of distribution, to give readers a sample of the myriad possibilities involved in the delivery of community (or so-called “neighborhood”) newspapers. Finally, the third section of the article will analyze these episodes in the light of the debates of the first section, and examine to which extent these debates may contribute to the reflections on the issues addressed.

It must be pointed out that this is an exploratory study. Although we believe that our experience in the distribution of newspapers can illuminate some key issues of the theory of communications, we also realize the need to deepen the research on the theme, to improve the understanding of its distinct dimensions. In this regard, a long path of observations on newspaper distribution processes still lies ahead with the groups we are following up on, including the periodicals analyzed below, which characterize themselves as “community newspapers”.

2. Newspaper distribution in the theory of communications

Tarde depicts the public realm as a “a purely spiritual collectivity, as a dissemination of individuals physically apart from each other, whose cohesion is fully mental” (1992, p. 29), as opposed to multitudes – described, in turn, as a “bundle of psychic contagions essentially produced by physical contacts (1992, p. 30). For Tarde, the invention of the press in the 16th century enabled the emergence of distinct publics, and it was only from the moment when information could be distributed through long distances to large parts of the population that it became possible to develop the sensation that sustains the mental cohesion of publics: in his words, the “sensation of actuality”, which corresponds to the awareness each one has of particular ideas shared by a large number of individuals located in distinct points in space.

It is relevant to state that before the press, information used to circulate by means of letters, configuring what we may call the ‘epistolary model’. In this model, the authorities dealt with the problems that afflicted their localities by writing letters, which were initially transported by animal-powered vehicles and, later, starting with the Industrial Revolution, by steam trains, in an epoch when typographs were already being disseminated and, in their wake, the printed newspapers. It was only after the 18th century, with the circulation of the newspapers in coffee shops, that distinct political publics emerged and, based on them, the sensation of actuality identified by Tarde (1992, p. 153) was consolidated. According to the author

In short: a newspaper is a public letter, a public dialogue, which preceded private letters and private conversations to become their most abundant regulator and nurturer. It is uniform for all throughout the world and undergoes deep changes overnight for all (...). From a private telegraph to an editor-in-chief, a newspaper creates sensational and intensely actual news, which will instantly agitate crowds in all large cities of a continent. And from these scattered crowds, intimately touched from the distance by the consciousness that a newspaper simultaneously gives them, and from their mutual action born therefrom, a newspaper elicits a single, immense crowd; an abstract and sovereign crowd whom it will baptize with the name of opinion.

Such transition from epistolary to printed communications characterizes a transition from one type of communications that assumed dialogicity as an intrinsic feature – as it was marked by reciprocal exchanges among senders and receivers – to the conventional model of mass communications, guided by large-scale emissions of information to receivers who are scattered through vast territorial areas, lacking the ability to provide any feedback to their senders regarding the received messages. In other words, a model of communications characterized by the exchange

of information was substituted by another one, based on unidirectional communications. It must be pointed, therefore, that the first modalities of communication – conversation and letters – embedded the notion of dialogicity, whereas image-reproducing techniques (information) removed such dialogical character from the process of communications; as Benjamin (2000) remarks, they took away their very “soul”.

Under such new model, the circulation of information and debates on it take place outside the relations among senders and receivers. Communications occur among receivers as commentators of the information conveyed by a journalist who is no longer an active participant of the communications’ process – since there is no longer an exchange, but only a transmittal of information. For a long time, it was not yet clear for us that European coffee shops had become the places *par excellence* for shaping the public opinion, until we found out that it was in these coffee shops, in addition to guesthouses, that the first periodicals were distributed in Europe in the mid-19th century.

In Brazil, periodicals were initially distributed by subscription to the few persons who had the means to pay for them. And in the 1850s, newspapers also began being distributed in the streets by individual sellers. Chagas (2013, p. 33) shows that we cannot precisely state where and when the selling of individual newspaper copies became a new distribution form:

It is still nearly uncertain when these experiences [started]. What can be stated with full reliability is that they evolved from the streets to the boxes; from the boxes to wooden newsstands; and, today, in the form of metal newsstands, the activities of newspaper sellers in Brazil was deeply influenced by families of Italian immigrants.

In this citation, the author refers to young Italian immigrants who, lacking the ability to undertake other skilled activities, perceived that the distribution of newspapers was an opportunity to earn their subsistence. After participating in Italian anarcho-syndical movements and learning about the processes of labor organization, some families became active in this sector and created, in 1906, the *Società di Beneficienza e Mutuo Soccorso degli Ausiliari della Stampa*. [“Society for Beneficence and Mutual Aid to Assistants of the Press”]. The small newspaper sellers politically organized themselves and held, up to the 1920s, the practical monopoly of the distribution of newspapers in the federal capital. In 1932, with the aim of keeping the control of this activity in a context of new laws for the sector, a group of Italians linked to the *Stampa* founded the first Brazilian workers’ union, named *Sindacato de Distribuidores e Vendedores de Jornais e Revistas do Estado*

do Rio de Janeiro [“Syndicate of Distributors and Sellers of Newspapers and Magazines of the State of Rio de Janeiro”]. From that decade on – as was also happening in the USA with the so-called “newsboys”, mostly of Irish origin –, the “small newspaper sellers” in Brazil often slept in the streets, while waiting for the early morning newspapers, and intensely disputed with each other for the best sale spots, becoming known around the country as a social problem (CHAGAS, 2013, p. 124-136).

In the early 1940s, the Brazilian first lady Darcy Vargas founded in the federal capital the institution *Casa do Pequeno Jornaleiro* [“House of the Small Newspaper Sellers”], which became a model for similar initiatives in other cities. Over that decade, Italian immigrants had been severely persecuted as a result of the public image of small newspaper sellers in the eyes of nationalist movements, and as a consequence of the Italian positions linked to World War II. The situation was compounded by the episode of the murder of a distributor by an Italian who owned a selling spot at Praça Mauá. Even amidst such adversities, Italians were able to maintain the control of their activities based on a conciliation promoted by president Vargas. Although he started to demand the Brazilian nationality as a mandatory requirement for newcomers in the sector, he still allowed the foreigners who were already exercising the activity to continue their work (CHAGAS, 2013, p. 124-136).

The metal newspaper stands as we know them today were first standardized by the legislation approved by Jânio Quadros in the city of Sao Paulo in the mid-1950s. Since then, this standard has been reproduced in other states of the federation (CHAGAS, 2013, p. 153). One of Jânio Quadros’ main intentions with these laws was to curb the burning of wooden newspaper stands as a result of disputes for selling spots.

Chagas (2013) shows how political power has influenced the process of distribution of newspapers and, thereby, contributed to the very shaping of the consumers’ market. He also lists some key laws and political guidelines that confirm this assertion. One of them is the “Press Law”, which, since the Vargas-period has criminally equated journalists and news sellers by also holding the latter liable for the circulation of “clandestine” newspapers not authorized by the State. Vargas’ legislation established that seizures and fines be applied to newspaper sellers whenever the journalists were not found. The 1967 Press Law deepened such criminal status by providing for the arrest of offender newspaper sellers, leading to increased restrictions to the circulation of alternative

outlets (CHAGAS, 2013, p.150-153).

Another evident case in this sense was Chagas Freitas' interference in the legislation on the distribution of newspapers in the period when he was politically active (as federal representative in 1954-1970, and state governor of Rio de Janeiro in 1971-1975; and in his attempt to promote his successors in the state elections of 1982). As the owner of two of the main newspapers of the country (*O Dia* and *A Notícia*), and president of the Syndicate of Proprietor Companies of Newspapers and Magazines of the Federal District (later, the State of Guanabara), Freitas favored his allies not only through the published contents, but also through laws that prompted the distribution and circulation of his own outlets. One of them, the municipal legislation of 1976 (a moment when Chagas was no longer governor, but continued to exert a strong influence), conferring to the Syndicate of Proprietor Companies the power to determine which newspapers could be publicly displayed at the most visible spots of the selling stands. Further cases include Law 586/1982, which provided that the state government would be regulate the distribution of newspapers and magazines (a task previously entrusted to the municipal level); and the subsequent Law 596/1982, edited thirteen days later, which extended to the state of Rio de Janeiro the mandatory selling of all newspapers and magazines published by the companies affiliated to the Syndicate of Proprietor Companies of Newspapers and Magazines of Rio de Janeiro.

Another historical moment when the exercise of political influence on the processes of distribution and circulation of information became explicit was in the 1980s, still during the military dictatorship in Brazil, when many newsstands in twelve Brazilian states were either attacked with fire, blown with dynamite or threatened for selling printed materials against the then current regime. According to Chagas (2013, p. 167):

Described as a hard blow capable of “mortally wounding the pygmy press”, the wave of attacks forced some alternative newspapers to cut their number of copies by more than half. In most cases, the owners of the newsstands or their resellers were receiving typed letters with blackmailing or threatening messages, so they would drop the distribution of opposition periodicals such as *Pasquim*, *Coojornal*, *Repórter*, *A Hora do Povo*, *Voz da Unidade*, *Movimento*, *O Companheiro*, *O Trabalho*, *Convergência Socialista*, *Correio Sindical*, *Tribuna da Luta Operária*, *Em Tempo* and *Jornal da CBA*.

In some cities, task-force initiatives were carried out to compensate for the damage caused to newspaper sellers. But most newsstands stopped circulating the publications that were “indexed” as terrorists. Some of those periodicals started being distributed by systems of subscription, in an

effort that most of the times did not succeed to prevent their closure. In a still more recent past, there were cases of politicians who hampered the circulation of news by having henchmen threaten the newspaper sellers, or else by buying all the copies of the newspapers with news that would affect their activities.

It becomes thus clear how the political system – through laws, political guidelines or physical threats – influenced the distribution and circulation of information in Brazil and, consequently, steered the contents to be consumed. Even so, this dimension of the process of communication still remains obscure, while the focus of studies continues to be placed on the contents and forms of reception of information.

In addition to the relations between politics and distribution, one must observe the strategies involved in the selling of newspapers – in other words, the ways in which selling activities are structured. As we shall see below, such strategies can be based on distinct philosophies and models of communication, leading to fundamental consequences in terms of the circulation of periodicals. Based on the explanations above, we basically identify two types of distribution of newspapers: a static type and a dynamic type. In the first case, the readers reach out for the product by going to a pre-determined place where they will find it (a newsstand, store, coffee shop, among other places); while in the second, the opposite occurs: the product is taken to the place where its readers are. And there are two modalities of dynamic distribution: a first one, in which the product is taken to a pre-determined place (in most cases, the readers' homes – here, we are basically describing the model of distribution by subscription, or any other system of home delivery); and a second modality, in which the distributors circulate in a particular territory in search of interested readers.¹

This second modality of dynamic distribution is the one that most favors the interactions among distributors and readers, since it is the only in which physical contact directly occurs between them. A direct contact between a distributor and a reader allows the former to learn about the latter's perceptions of his product. Such perceptions may be communicated as complaints, compliments and suggestions regarding the distinct stages of the journalistic process. In this regard, the appreciations of this moment of direct contact may ascribe dialogicity to the communications' process, as they enable effective exchanges among senders and receivers of information (assuming

¹ See Machado, Elias (2008:29).

the interactions between producers and distributors of information of one and the same outlet).

On their turn, in the other two distribution forms – the static (at newsstands, stores and so on) and the dynamic, at a predetermined place (the subscription format) –, there is no direct interaction between senders and receivers. In these cases, no mediation occurs in the process of distribution that is capable of enabling such direct contact (and we refer here to the salesperson at the newsstand, who does not act as a representative of the periodicals he is selling;² or, in the case of subscriptions, one does not even know who operates such distribution, since a delivery man acts, most of the times, as a virtually invisible figure.

Although the dynamic distribution without a defined customer favors dialogicity, nothing guarantees that it will actually take place. A newspaper distributor may exercise his function as a salesperson (or at once as a delivery man and a donor, in the case of free-of-charge periodicals) without establishing any other type of relation with the readers besides the commercial relation. Dialogicity depends on efforts aimed at it; in other words, it hinges on the perception of its importance by the communication outlets. From then on, we may infer that it is not the technology used in the distribution of information that ensures the democratization of information. Either on a door-to-door basis, or from a traffic light to another, or a mobile phone to another, what determines communicational processes in this sense is much more linked to the philosophy of communications, the spirit of exchanges, the recognition of differences and the humility and curiosity in the interest of identifying the existing distinction.

Our hypothesis is that an important distinction sets conventional communications (aimed at profit) apart from community communications (aimed at social development). In the former case, the process of distribution is usually neglected as a source of exchanges of information on the produced contents. The distributor's feedback – when it actually occurs – is much more aimed at the optimization of the distribution itself and at the obtainment of profit. In community communications, in turn, whenever this moment is appreciated, there emerges the possibility of effective interactions between the readers and those responsible for the production of journalistic contents.

² Although the interference of newspaper sellers on the production of contents is minimal, as Chagas (2013) has shown, their role in the distribution and circulation of press products is essential. The periodicals they either accept or reject, the way they display products on their stands and the social relations they establish in their localities are aspects usually neglected by the field literature in general, which is more concerned with issues of emission and reception. But these aspects are decisive for the communications-process and the shaping of public opinion.

As one speaks about the distribution of newspapers, a distinction must also be made between distribution and circulation. As regards distribution, the issue or ‘run’ is linked to the number of printed copies; the allotment or apportionment, in turn, regards the number of copies distributed to each seller (in a system of consignment³); and the remaining unsold copies, which are collected on the next day, are a third key notion (CHAGAS, 2013, p. 84-100). What we call “circulation” measures the number of persons who effectively consumed the product. In the case of newspapers, this number is not identical to the number of sold copies, since a newspaper may be and generally is read by more than one person.

Even if it may not seem so, these distinctions are relevant not only to conventional journalism, but also to community journalism, which has distribution policies and processes quite distinct among themselves and vis-à-vis conventional journalism. Examples include the cases in which a community newspaper is not distributed, or is distributed with a delay due to difficulties of the distribution team; situations in which persons weakly committed with the newspaper simply throw away part of its edition; and, on the other, situations in which the distributors themselves read the newspaper for a local resident, since literacy levels in some localities are very low and such aid becomes important. In this latter case, we find again an example that confirms the hypothesis that dialogicity depends on the philosophy of communications exercised between a media outlet and its public.

In complementation to our arguments that seek to demonstrate the importance of distribution, Taussint (1979, p. 38-39) points that distribution costs can reach 50% of the total costs of a communication company, and explains the difficulties of assessing them, which include many variables, e.g. transportation, prospection services, selling, management of subscriptions, promotional aspects, verifications and collection of unsold copies.

In his analysis of market trends for newspapers in Brazil, Chagas (2013, p. 216-229) points to some relevant topics for our discussion. He identifies a trend of substitution of traditional newsstands by kiosks that sell not only periodicals, but several types of products; in addition to a

³ In general, newspaper distributors – i.e., distribution companies with various linkages with communication outlets – work with newsstands on a consignment-basis. Each newsstand receives an allotment according to the interests of the distributor and, day after day, a so-called “field assistant” visits the newsstands to charge for the sold copies, collect the unsold ones and, if necessary, adjust their apportionments.

trend of segmentation of outlets by social class, with the creation of specific outlets for each public by the large companies – for instance, *InfoGlobo*, which publishes the newspaper *O Globo* but created another newspaper, *Extra*, to compete with the newspaper *Meia Hora* – and the potential for expanding consumption among the classes C, D and E, as less than half of their present demand has been allegedly met.

3. Experiences in the distribution of newspapers⁴

3.1. Newspaper A

Newspaper A is one of the oldest community newspapers of Rio de Janeiro. It was founded in 1999 and covers the area of a cluster of favelas from the North Zone of the city, which include many favelas and almost 129 thousand inhabitants. The space used by the members of this newspaper as their office is a classroom at the NGO that maintains it. This is the space where its editorial meetings are held and its previous printed issues are stored.

The contents of Newspaper A aim at strengthening the local identity, contributing to a break with the negative stigmatization of the local territory, and at producing a sense of belongingness among local subjects and their neighborhoods. One of the ways of reinforcing the idea was by creating the expression “(name of neighborhood)ense”, to promote a sense of local pride among residents. In the 2010, the newspaper expanded its editorial focus to include the defense and guarantee of human rights.

Newspaper A is printed as a magazine and has visual strategies that facilitate the understanding of its articles even by illiterate residents. It also has a website and is available at the ISSUU platform.⁵ All activities of Newspaper A are performed on a volunteer-basis. There is not a definitive team for its tasks; its participants contribute as they can, distributing among themselves the necessary functions to attain a minimum level of organic synergy. After being in contact with the experience of a community newspaper, some of these volunteers pursue studies in the field of Social Communications, as it happened with volunteer Thamiris – who is currently the reporter of

⁴ The names of the cited newspapers and its members were changed to preserve their identities, in addition to those of its members and supporting institutions.

⁵ The ISSUU platform is a website for digital publications, where persons and publishing companies can share several types of digital contents, which are accessible to its users for free.

Newspaper A.

Its delivery places are mapped before the distribution activities occur. Many aspects are taken into consideration, such as the rotation of target homes (since the printed edition does not cover the entire territory). Copies are distributed according to the allotted routes, and whenever more than eight thousand copies are printed, distribution places also include schools, associations of residents and commercial spots.

A few years ago, Newspaper A was printing regular bimonthly issues. Its operations are not currently taking place, since it does not yet count on a minimal operational structure or on continuous partnerships that provide the permanent support in terms of running the necessary equipment. Thus, its team, which once had ten members, now has four members.

Field journal: distribution of Newspaper A on September 15, 2016

We met at 8:30am and walked up on Rua Matusalém until we reached the NGO that served as our meeting place with the members of the newspaper. There we met its graphic designer Antônio. He told us that despite currently living in the neighborhood of Irajá, he was born and raised in the neighborhood where Newspaper A operates. After nearly half an hour, all persons who do its distribution arrived: Divina, Patricia, Raquel and Michely – all of whom resided in the neighborhood. As we all met, we had to solve a situation involving the key to Newspaper A's room, where the prints are stored. A heated discussion took place between Antônio and a girl identified by Raquel as the wife of one of the newspaper's collaborators. The discussion occurred because Antônio wanted to distribute some old newspapers that were occupying space in the room. And she disagreed, saying that despite understanding his wish to make more room available, she did not agree with distributing old copies. Finally, she gave us the key and we entered the room.

The space used by the members of Newspaper A, which serves as its office, has the format of a classroom. The room is decorated with many posters on the "democratization of the media" and certificates of training courses in which members of the newspaper have participated. This is the place where its editorial meetings take place, and where its previous printed issues are stored. We noticed approximately ten boxes. According to Antônio, each of these boxes contained 360 newspaper copies of the newspaper.

He picked up a total of 200 copies to be distributed. Before we left, he explained us that on account of the date of the newspaper (most copies were issued in 2015), we would not take them to be distributed at commercial centers, but only in family homes. All agreed with him, and Raquel remarked that since their articles dealt with timeless issues, it would not be a big problem to distribute them to local residents.

We walked down the favela's hill and started distributing it in Neighborhood T., a place with many alleys and houses closely standing next to each other. We were there for nearly a half-hour and distributed the newspaper to homes and to the locals we met. Also in Neighborhood T., Antônio was stopped by a resident who wished to advertise his beauty salon in the newspaper, and they conversed for a few minutes. It is worth highlighting that in our path, we noticed the presence of some youngsters who were dealing drugs. They recognized the newspaper's team members and greeted them. We reached a broad street that separates Neighborhood T. from Neighborhood S. Team member Tainá was stopped there by a local resident who sought information on how to contact the newspaper, as she was looking for information on modelling competitions for her granddaughter.

In Neighborhood S., some people did not know Newspaper A. We were often asked, "Is this a community newspaper?" And they reacted to our positive reply approvingly. Most copies of the newspaper were distributed in Neighborhood S. From there, we followed to Neighborhood U. On the way, Antônio remarked that our group was good at distributing, and they had already had difficulties with previous groups. Raquel added that a boy once spoke of "setting fire on it, instead of distributing, as no one would even know it". Antônio was stopped many times in Neighborhood U. Divina confided to us, by means of WhatsApp audio recordings, that the volunteers of Newspaper A seek to hear the local residents, since by acting this way, they intensify the relationship between the newspaper and its readers, and this relationship is also useful for developing new editorial agendas.

As we finished the distribution of all copies, we talked for about 10 minutes at one of the exits of the cluster of favelas. The distribution work took us nearly one and a half hour.

3.2. Newspaper B

Newspaper B is located in the same cluster of favelas in the North Zone of Rio de Janeiro. The initiative of this community newspaper emerged three years ago at the local Community Council, after a course on community communication supported by Foundation K was taught to its members. The purpose of this course was to enable the creation of an information outlet covering the local needs, for instance, in connection with basic services, job opportunities and professional training courses.

The editorial orientation of the newspaper is one of fostering discussions on social policies aimed at the cluster of favelas where it is based, and to give visibility to the local entrepreneurial initiatives, to the networks that promote actions in connection with culture, sports and the fight against prejudices, thus affirming youth leadership and social equality. It also seeks to contribute to integration among the communication projects in the favelas of Rio de Janeiro.

The newspaper has circulated in printed version since 2014 with regular bimonthly issues. It is kept with the support of Foundation K by means of study grants and candidacies to opportunities under public notices, including a notice issued by the Government of the State of Rio de Janeiro in which it was recently selected. One of its ways in which this media relates with the population of the cluster of favelas is via its Facebook page, which contains daily updated information on activities, problems and conflicting issues in the community.

Newspaper B has a wide relationship with the local residents, aiming at the creation of a broad network of contacts at many points of their territory, where people may present relevant news and information. It holds open editorial meetings in which the local residents may participate, and promotes periodical training activities for community communicators willing to join the initiative.

The work is fully carried out by a team of ten people. Five of them are directly active in their online platforms, and the other five provide help by carrying out auxiliary tasks. Since this is not a commercial newspaper and does not produce an income for all of its members, some of them dedicate their time exclusively on a volunteer-basis.

Field journal: distribution of Newspaper B on August 20, 2016

We reached the train station by 2:30pm to meet Euclides, one of the members of the newspaper's team. After meeting him, we walked to the Youth Reference Center located next to the train station. There, we saw that Euclides personally knew many of the Center's employees, who authorized him to store nearly 1,500 copies of the newspaper, before being distributed in the neighboring housing complexes. Not long after, Bianca and Daiane – the other two collaborators who would participate in the distribution with us – arrived. Bianca had been a member of the newspaper team for over one year, and she was carrying out workshops on community journalism for the locals. And Daiane lived in a neighborhood near the cluster of favelas of Newspaper B. This was her first time distributing it.

In a brief conversation before we started distributing the copies, Euclides told us that the newspaper had existed for three years, and this was its 16th issue. He also said that the Facebook page of Newspaper B is the tool with the most intense interaction level with local residents. Via this outlet, with the help of an online network of community correspondence, many people who either lived or worked in that territory could inform the newspaper's team about daily events that could be reported on its page.

In a general way, the distribution strategy on that day was to prioritize the housing projects and, subsequently, to distribute the copies at other places within the community. Thus, Euclides split our group into pairs and guided us to which side each pair should follow. He stimulated the work by himself and warned us that we should not take long in dialogues with the locals, in order not to delay our delivery. There were a total of six apartment blocks with four floors each. Whereas one pair distributed the newspaper in one block, the other would deliver it to the next block, and thus we finished the first part of the work at the housing complex.

During the process of distribution, we approached some residents and explained that it was a community newspaper. Their reaction was visibly receptive. A young woman asked Tainá if she would participate of a round of female rap presentations, which would take place on the International Women's Day (March 8). The rap round was scheduled to be a protest by way of an occupation at the Women's Police Station of the neighborhood, which had been inoperative for one year. Tainá clarified that she was only participating in the delivery of the newspapers and the young woman

invited her to take part in the round.

As we finished the distribution at the first housing project, we returned to the Center to pick up more copies. There we met Elvira, a resident of the cluster of favelas for over 60 years and an active member both of the newspaper and of the community association. As she had lived in the community for so long, she talked with many residents along her way. In one of these dialogues, she approached an older man, who was accompanied by a child. While handing one copy to each of them, she said: “This newspaper is to be read, not to be trashed. Just letting you know, huh?” We continued towards the housing complex CPL2, where she also lived, to carry out the second part of the distribution-work. While Elvira was at the ground floor speaking with residents about the articles of the newspaper and reminding them of the activities carried out by the association, Euclides, Tainá, Bianca and Juliana visited the higher floors.

Most of the persons we approached already knew Newspaper B, but some were not yet familiarized with it. Elvira, in turn, patiently explained the purpose of the newspaper produced for the community, and presented its content. In one of these dialogues, a female resident asked whether the newspaper published recipes, and she replied in the affirmative. She even added that if the woman wished, she could be in contact with the newspaper to collaborate with ideas and suggestions. Soon after this dialogue, further on, another young woman came near Elvira and invited her to the baptism ceremony of her granddaughter. She happily replied that she would attend.

We finished delivering all copies at nearly 5:00pm. We sat on one of the benches close to the apartments and spoke among ourselves about the differences we had noticed in that area compared to the places where we live, and about Bruna’s experience in helping Newspaper B. Juliana and Tainá even found an aspect in common with Elvira, as they were born on the same day, and gladly admired the coincidence. Our conversation did not extend much, and we walked towards the train station. On the way there, some residents stopped to talk with Elvira and Euclides, to ask them information about the coming meeting of the community association, and letting them know about personal events, such as in the case of a resident who told them about the birth of her granddaughter. We bade farewell, walked on to the train station and left.

3.3. Newspaper C

Our contact with Newspaper C was first made through our scholarship holders and a North Zone resident who, bearing in mind the history of exclusion of the territory vis-à-vis other regions of Rio de Janeiro, and looking for local community newspapers, sought to contribute with this article.

Newspaper C was born in February 2009. It was first conceived by Rodrigo, a natural designer from the neighborhood of Campo Grande. After four years living outside Brazil, he had returned to the country with the intention of starting a newspaper. During the process of stabilizing the newspaper in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro, Rodrigo had difficulties in maintaining a periodical constancy in its printed editions. After participating in intensive courses on communications, where he improved his knowledge on mass communications, he found one of the necessary solutions to give visibility to the newspaper and increase the residents' knowledge about it: he invested in advertising and distributed outdoor panels to promote Newspaper C in the neighborhood.

This strategy was efficacious, since the newspaper was able to find good sponsors. One of them enabled to it the use of office facilities at the central part of the neighborhood where the newspaper is located. Therefrom, Newspaper C developed a long-term work with regular printed editions and active online platforms. Its team now has four persons who live in the West Zone and have been trained with the skills of the field. Its website currently receives 50,000 visits per month and its printed edition has a monthly run of 15,000 copies.

The editorial orientation of Newspaper C encompasses broad topics that refer not only to its neighborhood, but also to the state of Rio de Janeiro. Its contents range from issues such as the lack of security, sanitation and unemployment to topics such as fashion and beauty, gastronomy, entrepreneurial tips and current events. The distribution of its printed copies is carried out by three persons hired to deliver it at places with intense public activity, such as traffic lights, commercial centers and at a stand in front of its office, where people can pick up as many copies as they wish.

Field journal: distribution of Newspaper C on August 8, 2016

We picked up nearly 100 copies, bade farewell to the girls and walked down the area to begin our work. On our way, Rodrigo let us know that he would still go to the central area on that day, so the distribution activities had to be quick. We distributed the copies at three commercial centers. The first of them is where the newspaper's office is located, and the other two are located near a mall. Rodrigo already knew the doormen and asked whether we could leave a number of copies there. He left approximately 30 copies of the newspaper on a countertop, thanked them and we walked on to the next distribution spot. The entire distribution took us nearly 15 minutes. As we walked back from it, he met a friend and we bade farewell.

4. Dialogicity in the distribution of the studied community newspapers: an analysis of their distribution

Before analyzing the processes of distribution of the three newspapers, it is relevant to point the differences of profiles among them. On the one hand, Newspaper A may be described, in accordance with Paiva (2003) and Peruzzo (2009), as a community newspaper, since its content aims at raising political awareness⁶ and bringing information on the key problems that affect the local residents. On the other, Newspaper C is not committed at all with these types of issues and prioritizes what Bourdieu (1997, p. 23) would call as “bus news”, that is, the news in which all may “embark on”, as they do not contain any political conflict. Between the two, Newspaper B appears as a proposal more similar to that of Newspaper A, while still undergoing a stage of consolidation and search of an identity, and of recognition among the local residents.

The distinctions of profile among these newspapers are reflected on the structure of their distribution and on the way each distribution team perceives its task and carries it out. Newspaper A – the oldest of the three – seems to have internalized the importance of its distribution-process, which is carried out by the same members of its reporters' team. This is noticeable in the attention that the distributors pay to the local residents during the work of distributing the copies. A similar experience was identified in another newspaper from the same cluster of favelas A – Newspaper A –, which after checking the lack of zeal of previous distribution teams, who were not related to the

⁶ In the broadest sense of the expression, i.e., the awareness of issues linked to the *polis*, or the city.

reporters, decided to hire a team under the supervision of the reporters. It is relevant to point out that both newspapers had a plan previously to each issue, considering the places where it would be distributed, in such way that the largest possible number of residents may learn about the newspaper and have access to it, thus promoting their recognition within the community.

Newspaper B seems not yet to have had the opportunity to reflect more deeply on the planning and structuring of its distribution. Although such distribution is carried out with a relatively good measure of attentiveness, it lacks a careful planning activity both in terms of the composition of its team and of the places where its copies will be delivered. This is reflected in the recommendation of its coordinator Euclides, that in the distribution in which we participated, the deliverers should not stop for long to talk with local residents, to speed up the delivery. And on the other end of the spectrum, Newspaper C's distribution is done by its owner and processed at fixed spots, that is, at places where the readers are the ones who pass by and take the copies (instead of the cases in which the newspaper reaches out for readers). Similarly to the delivery of commercial newspapers, this process does not involve any relationship between the newspaper's team and its readers at the moment of delivery.

The differences of distribution process among these three newspapers show distinct ways of relating with the public. Newspaper A establishes a relationship-pattern of affective exchanges between its distribution team and the residents, in which there is the possibility that the latter may suggest topics, make complaints and request corrections, among other interactions. This dialogical type of relationship encourages the local residents to participate in the construction of the newspaper and to recognize it as something typical and valuable for the community.

Newspaper B, on its turn, seems to still oscillate between adopting a more or less participative perspective. On the one hand, it promotes participation by taking suggestions over the Internet and at many spots of its territory; on the other, it attempts to speed up the distribution-process and dedicates little attention to this precious moment of exchanges between its team and local residents. It seems that the provision of suggestions itself hinges on the newspaper's recognition by the residents, and could be facilitated by a more careful delivery process in which dialoguing prevails over expediency.

In the third case – Newspaper C –, there is no relationship between its team and the residents

during the process of distribution. Since there is no interest by its direction in the information regarding public issues that afflict the residents, there is also no readiness for exchanging information and taking suggestions during its distribution. These elements are seen as unimportant; there is no exchange, no dialogue or relationship with the public that could be even categorized as market-oriented, since not even the adequate handling of the copies seems to take place, inasmuch as its distribution is left to the doormen of commercial buildings lacking an obligation in regard to it. The distribution of this community newspaper is similar to those of many others around the city and largely resembles the delivery of conventional commercial newspapers either at the newsstands or via subscription, in which there is no contact between the producers of news and their public.

5. Final remarks

The analysis of the examples of distribution of these three newspapers, which refer to themselves as community publications, allows us to confirm the hypothesis presented in our introduction, namely that the dialogical nature of a communication-process does not depend on technological issues, but, instead, on the way the participant actors conceive it and carry it out. The new technologies doubtlessly favor interaction, facilitate the exchange of information and eliminate the barrier of physical distance. Yet, without the willingness to convert these interaction-facilitating elements into effective participation, information technologies do not suffice by themselves for developing communication models that may bring us together and improve the quality of our relations.

We believe this element must be pointed out, since many authors see the new information and communication technologies as a synonym for increased participation and democratic development. Even one of its greatest enthusiasts, Henry Jenkins, warns about the distinction between interaction and participation. In a recent research about video activism, Nunes (2016) shows and warns that effective participation in debates on topics of public interest based on news produced by alternative media is negligible. Thus, despite the fact that we still need further researches that prove this assertion, the possibility of interactivity *per se* does not lead, in all likelihood, to participation.

This reflection leads to a restatement of our issues: is the possibility of interactivity not serving, in reality, to accommodate accommodation, that is, to ease the consciousness of those who

are not really willing to participate and rest content with the 'likes' and jocular comments to social network postings? Or does this still new way of relating to others need to be learned by internet users as a new modality of responsible participation in the shaping of public affairs?

Whatever may be the answers to these questions, it seems clear that the relevance of the distribution of community newspapers as a process can certainly favor dialogicity in communications. For this reason, such distribution process must be taken into consideration in the theoretical developments of the field. At a time when the production and reception of cultural information and products are facilitated by the new technologies, the study of their distribution processes becomes particularly relevant and may shed light on many issues that are frequently perceived only based on their external appearance.

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Abstract

The theory of communication is almost entirely based on analysis of the production and reception of informational content. This article moves the focus to a forgotten dimension of communication: the distribution of information. From tours on the history of the distribution of newspapers and the analysis of some experiences of delivering community newspapers, tested, still in character exploratory, the hypothesis that horizontality in the communication does not depend on the new information technologies in themselves, contrary to claim various authors, but rather the way they value the dialogical communicative processes. Ultimately, we are stating the relevance of the study of the processes of distribution of information and reflecting on the recent transformations in the area.

Keywords: Distribution of newspapers. Dialogical. New information technologies. Community newspapers.

Resumo

A teoria da comunicação está quase toda baseada em análises sobre a produção e recepção de conteúdos informacionais. Este artigo desloca o foco para uma dimensão esquecida da comunicação: a distribuição das informações. A partir de digressões acerca da história da distribuição de jornais e da análise de algumas experiências de entrega de jornais comunitários, testamos, ainda em caráter exploratório, a hipótese de que a horizontalidade na comunicação não depende das novas tecnologias da informação em si mesmas, ao contrário do que afirmam diversos autores, mas sim do modo como se valoriza a dialogia nos processos comunicativos. Em última instância, estaremos afirmando a relevância do estudo dos processos de distribuição de informações e refletindo sobre as transformações recentes na área.

Palavras-chave: Distribuição de jornais. Dialogia. Novas tecnologias da informação. Jornais comunitários.

Resumen

La teoría de la comunicación se basa casi en su totalidad en el análisis de la producción y recepción de contenido informativo. Este artículo cambia el enfoque hacia una dimensión olvidada de la comunicación: la distribución de información. A partir de digresiones sobre la historia de la distribución de periódicos y del análisis de algunas experiencias de entrega de periódicos comunitarios, probamos, aún de manera exploratoria, la hipótesis de que la horizontalidad en la comunicación no depende de las nuevas tecnologías de la información, al contrario de lo que afirman varios autores, pero del dialogismo en los procesos comunicativos. En definitiva, estamos planteando la relevancia de estudiar los procesos de distribución de información y de reflexionar sobre las transformaciones recientes en el área.

Palabras clave: Distribución de periódicos. Dialogía. Nuevas tecnologías de la información. Periódicos comunitarios.