

# **Analysis of the conditions of production of *Cidade dos Homens* (City of Men): connections between Education and Communication**

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## **Abstract**

This article proposes connections between Communication and Education through the investigation of the conditions of production of a television program. Starting from the archeological thinking of Michel Foucault, and highlighting the inseparability of theory and method, it questions the notions of causality and linearity in search of an “origin” for the research object we intend to study. It seeks to signal to multiple conditions for the emergence of the miniseries *Cidade dos Homens* (City of Men). For that, it selects the programs broadcast in the period between 2002 and 2004 on Rede Globo, emphasizing the originality of their themes and the contemporaneity of their production. The article also searches the way in which the program presents truths about black youngsters and inhabitants of the city peripheries, characters until recently excluded from the leading roles in fiction shows. The study tries to take into account the strength that social movements have acquired in Brazilian society, movements admittedly political, characterized by controversy, and that begin to be part also of the sphere of television. It thus becomes important to consider the way in which the television incorporates the discourse of these movements, and transforms them before returning them to the public. The research work on the television medium, more specifically based on the analysis of images, by entailing an ethical and political stance, becomes a fundamental task for anyone interested in the creation of individuals committed to culture, ethics, and education.

## **Keywords**

Television – Education – Michel Foucault – *Cidade dos Homens*.

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Studying media means a risk (...). It implies, inevitably and necessarily, a process of de-familiarization. Questioning what is taken for granted. Diving beneath the surface of meanings. Refusing the obvious, the literal, the singular. In our work, very often and rightly, the simple things become complex, the obvious becomes obscure. Bright lights make shadows vanish. Everything is in the corners (SILVERSTONE, 2002, p. 35)

Studying the media. Linger on the images. Allowing oneself to be touched by them, to be surprised by new forms of language, by the sounding that invades the scenes. To wonder at the quotidian, at the routine, at the taken for granted of the discourse. Are these tasks not something also inherent in Education? We believe so, and it is from such problematization that this article attempts to bring to the foreground messages about images and education, assuming the possible risks that may appear on our way. The introduction that follows intends to deal with the choices we have made – and those that were made in us – and present the general ideas contained in the research work.

The images chosen for our analysis are not mere images, nor have they been chosen by chance. They are part of the history of our present, they lead us into action, be that because they touch and surprise us, be that because they shock us. We believe that the TV micro-series<sup>1</sup> *Cidade dos Homens*<sup>2</sup> causes these two kinds of feelings: it surprises with touching scenes, which address commitments of solidarity, sociability, a concern about the others. But it also shocks us by placing these sensitive aspects amidst urban violence, the drug traffic, the social and racial exclusion, poignant and urgent questions in contemporary Brazilian society.

The option for the work on images and the analysis of television programs is not neutral or insipid – as it is still fantasized by some researchers. Researching television means to investigate an event/happening of which we

are also a part: watching television is a habit, which we indulge, just like the majority of viewers. How can we problematize, from studies previously conducted, something that is part of our present and our routine? Firstly, we would say that this can be done through the study of theories, the analysis of researches, discussions in seminars, in congresses, in reception studies. In addition, we believe it is necessary to accept the partiality of such work, to trust the diving in the world of images, from which we never return unaffected. In no possible way can we detach ourselves from the researcher that is within us: the empirical subject we have chosen is part of us and also chooses us from the questions we make, from a feeling of indignation, the reason that leads us to search for answers to a feeling of uneasiness.

And our choice of the program *Cidade dos Homens* was not unintentional. In 2002, Globo TV started showing a fiction series based on the repercussion of the huge box-office success of the feature film *Cidade de Deus*<sup>3</sup> [*City of God*]. It was a singular program from its very conception: the protagonists, as well as most of the cast, were blacks and the fictional set of themes, narrated through the perspective of two children, drew our attention and rekindled the flame of uneasiness.

In a recent article, the film critic and Professor at Rio de Janeiro Federal University, Ivana Bentes, writes about innovative products in Brazilian television, which seem to free themselves from a *popularesque* set of elements and characteristics, in other words, a set which tries to imitate what is popular. They also seem to free themselves from a homogenization of the popular culture depicted by some representative characters. As examples of differentiation from those limited products, Bentes mentions the programs *Brasil Legal*, *Turma do Gueto* and *Cidade dos Homens* as

**1.** Name given by the TV station itself, information obtained on the program's website, [www.cidadedoshomens.globo.com](http://www.cidadedoshomens.globo.com).

**2.** An O2 Filmes Production, a production by Central Globo de Produções, run between 2002 and 2005 on Globo TV.

**3.** Directed by Fernando Meirelles, co-directed by Kátia Lund, co-produced by O2 Filmes, GloboFilmes and VideoFilmes, Brazil, 130 min, 2002.

“a sign of power of new products and a sign of de-massification” that becomes an object of social desire. The author stresses:

The social visibility and the political debate being around poverty, both television and the cinema have discovered new objects of discourse: the poor, the sub-employed, artists working under precarious conditions, rappers, people from the peripheral areas who have a discourse about themselves and their condition and demand not only visibility but real changes. Characters that people soap operas, institutional video clips, films, no longer so humble and resigned or as images of risk, but as holders of affirmative and demand discourses (BENTES, 2005).

In our view, it is these characters of discourse that the series *Cidade dos Homens* looks into: the inhabitants of peripheral areas, who go up the hillsides to complain to their “bosses” about not having enough money to buy medicines, the poor children who escape the fight between the police and drug dealers in *favelas*, the black youth who struggle to find their first job.

In the present article, we have tried to produce a presentation of the television material selected for the study. But this is not just a mere presentation: we have tried to bring into view the conditions of production of the program *Cidade dos Homens*. Following what has been taught by Foucault, we have searched not for the origin or causality of the events, but for the several ways through which the product may be visualized and made public in our times. We present brief comments with regard to the release of the program in its respective years of showing: 2002, 2003 and 2004, and conclude by stressing the importance of the research considering the conditions for its emergency in a field of studies that attempts to relate communication and education.

We also find it important to problematize television not only as a source of entertainment,

but also as an educative *locus*; not only as a place which produces low-quality programs, insignificances, alienation, but as a place for transgression. We wonder about the incisive criticism made about television, whether it is the television that afflicts us, annihilating any experiences, destroying critical thought, preventing reflection, or whether we are the ones who persecute television, thinking that this medium of communication cannot offer us anything new and revolutionary, and thereby shunning our responsibility towards this instrument of mediation, one of the most important media in our days?

### **Conditions for the appearance of the television product *Cidade dos Homens***

The conditions for the appearance of an object of discourse, the historical conditions that make it possible to “say anything” about it, and that enable several people to say different things about it, the conditions for the product to be brought into a state of kinship with other objects, that make it possible to establish with them relations of similarity, proximity, distance, difference, transformation – such conditions, as one can see, are numerous and important. That means one cannot just speak about anything at any time; it is not easy to say something new; it is not enough to open one’s eyes, to pay attention or become aware so that new objects are immediately illuminated and cast their first light from the ground. But such a difficulty is not only negative, one should not associate it to an obstacle whose sole power would be to blind, to disturb, to prevent discovery, to mask the purity of evidence or the mute obstinacy of the things themselves. The subject does not await in limbo the command which will set it free and allow it to incarnate in a visible and eloquent objectivity. It does not pre-exist itself, restrained by some obstacle to the first

contours of light, but it exists under the positive conditions of a complex group of relations (FOUCAULT, 2002, p.51).

In his book *Archaeology of Knowledge*, Michel Foucault presents us a new way to question the facts of the History of Sciences, more precisely of the so-called “Human” Sciences. In the polemical book – regarded by his commentators Dreyfuss and Rabinow as an arid text, of a higher complexity and elaboration –, the author seeks to demonstrate the inseparability between method and theory by exploring the way the objects and discourses are built and shaped. Beyond that, Foucault manages to suspend the unity and the essentiality of things, aiming – through arduous work – at the transitoriness of truths. Indeed, truths, in the plural, emphasizing them as ways to construct and explore the multiplicity of relations they bring with them: archaeological investigation of truths.

The excerpt selected for epigraph is in the third section of the second chapter of *Archaeology of Knowledge*, called “The formation of objects” and addresses the conditions of appearance of a object and to what extent it is shaped – and not only “found” – according to the discourse it is inserted in and to the period at which it is analyzed. Foucault shows us to what extent the relations that stand out in a discourse allow for the formation of certain objects. At the conclusion of the section “The formation of objects” lies Foucault’s famous sentence about discourse (maybe the constitutive element of this book), cited several times in works which deal with Discourse Analysis. The author innovates by problematizing

(...) an entirely different task, which consists in not taking discourses as a set of signs (signifying elements which refer to contents or to representations), but as practices that systematically form the objects they refer to. (FOUCAULT, 2002, p. 56)

The epigraph chosen contains some of the ideas constantly investigated by Foucault in his other works (such as *The order of things*, *The Discourse on Language* and even *What is an author?*). The question we intend to deepen in this first part of the article involves two main points of discussion: what we call the **paradox of the object** – in which the author highlights the object as something at the same time non-visible and non-hidden – and the **conditions of production** of a discourse, which involve the research object – and not a presumed origin previously given.

We shall now relate such ideas to questions concerning the object of research, concluding the article with some ideas about the release of the program *Cidade dos Homens* on Globo TV, in 2002, and its running in 2003 and 2004.

### **Paradox of the object: a place in-between**

Paradoxical ideas permeate the whole text of *Archaeology of Knowledge*, from the introduction to the conclusion. Among them, we may select the (not so) opposed pairs concealment and visibility, surface and depth, unity and difference. The paradoxes introduced by Foucault are stimulating, in that they produce a change in the way we look: how can one learn to research something which is not visible and at the same time is not hidden? It is interesting to note how the author uses expressions which lead us to think of the interdependence between the eye and the clarity revealed by this sight: “open one’s eyes”, objects that are “illuminated” and cast their “first light”, “contours of light”. When we think we have understood the relation in which he seems to give privilege to the sense of sight, Foucault proposes a new challenge: he shows us to what extent the act of looking may, simultaneously with a clairvoyance of sight, “blind”, “disturb” and even prevent one from seeing the object itself.

Thus, the author brings us into a game of compositions, into a game of looking and not-looking, a combination of looks, as in the movement of a kaleidoscope, which opens up our perception for several possibilities of images at sight. Paul Veyne, who studies Foucault's work, writes:

At each moment, this world is what it is: the fact that its practices and its objects are *rare*, and that there is a void around them does not mean that there exist around them truths still not learned by men: the kaleidoscope images are not more true or more false than the previous ones (VEYNE, 1982, p. 176, *author's emphasis*).

Foucault constantly instigates us to relinquish our traditional and fixed ways of thinking, placing us in a nomadic, transient and ephemeral place, defined as an in-between place: one which, when we think we have found it, we start searching for it again – for it is not that place any longer, but another: “...an interstitial place which is not determined *a priori*” (SCHÄFFER, 1999, p. 166).

Thus, Foucault situates the object as something that is not hidden by a discourse, which may be read between the lines of a text or that may be glimpsed behind a closed curtain. No, the object is definitely not that which is beyond and, for that reason, accessible only to a certain type of specialist. At the same time, the object of our research is not here, within our immediate reach and visible to the eye: it does not present itself at our feet, as a devoted liege.

The object is the paradox itself: not hidden and not visible, or invisible for being on the very surface. Surface that in our view is not characterized by complexity, since we are always searching for the truth in the most recondite places, at the bottom of the deepest precipices, behind the closed curtain. Foucault values the caution with the analysis of objects, so that we do not allow ourselves to be carried away by immediate interpretations:

Instead of interpreting the signifying elements from a presumed common ‘meaning’ to the words, the institutions and the techniques, archaeology studies the positive rarity of statements – and tracks the procedures of appropriation that it gives rise to, in other words, the exegesis, which compensates the poverty of the statements with the multiplication of meanings, and the ‘political struggle’ which aims at taking possession of this rare asset (BILLOUET, 2003, p. 111).

Studying what is on the surface but is, for this very reason, complex, immerse in an interplay of relations and brings to surface a number of multiplicities: here is the object of research, which does not cease to question us. Attentive to this object, to this paradoxical “in-between place”, we shall start to scrutinize the conditions of production of the program we have chosen.

### **Analysis of the conditions of appearance: denying origin**

In the aforementioned excerpt of Foucault's work, we also encounter a broad questioning of the concepts of causality and linearity which directly guide us towards an essence, an origin. In her study about discourse analysis in Foucault, Rosa Fischer (2001) reinforces the concept of discontinuity proposed by the archaeologist:

(...) the path is not to search, indefinitely, a point of origin, and to know where it all began. The dates and places we set do not mean departure points or definite data; rather, they are references connected to the conditions of production of a given discourse, which is stated differently, which is original in each one of such places and moments (FISCHER, 2001b, p. 220).

When studying an object of research, it is necessary, from the outset, to cease the

search for the absolute and incontestable origin, and to face the multiplicity of conditions of the appearance of this kind of object. Michel Foucault opposes, thus, the concept of **influence** (which would refer to a causality of facts, to linearity) to the concept of **conditions of production** – which has to do with history, with politics, with events and irruptions into these same events. These, in their turn, offer the opening to gaps in the discourse, to resistances.

It is fundamental, therefore, to refer not to an essential point, or to causalities that might render favorable the appearance of something, but to be interested in the infinity of relations which coexist in a specific historical time. Relations: this is the key-word when one speaks of conditions of production of a discourse or an object. In the epigraph above, Foucault distinguishes such relations into some types, such as similarity, proximity, distance, difference and transformation. Thinking about these relations, relating them to the object of analysis, to put into action the relations that clearly show multiplicities in the formation of the object: all of these are tasks which characterize the archaeological researcher.

Reflecting upon the empirical object of the research – the micro-series *Cidade dos Homens* – one has to pay attention to the different events that surround the release of such products for television. Foucault drew attention to the impossibility to “speak about anything at any time” (FOUCAULT, 2002, p. 51), to the need to consider the historical, political and social time in which the formation and manifestation of such discourses is made possible, of certain ways of acting and thinking. And also ways to make it visible: what leads a commercial television station to run, at prime time, a fictional program in which the protagonists are black and young characters, inhabitants of a *favela* in Rio de Janeiro? How was it possible to show this program in late 2002, on Globo TV Station and how was the program able to continue in the years that followed?

This does not mean that such subjects had never been “visible” or had never been present on Brazilian television before: youngsters, blacks, the poor, and *favela* inhabitants had already been on television at prime time, but the circumstance of their presence was the news program, news that put in evidence the inseparable triad poverty/drugs traffic/violence. Most of us certainly remember the reports on the slaughter of children at Candelária, which took place in 1992, in Rio de Janeiro. Or other innumerable news reports that portrayed urban violence, associating them directly to the blacks – very often to *favela* inhabitants. We may establish here the relations considered by Foucault as relations of difference: in the product *Cidade dos Homens* there is a change in genre – from a TV news program into a fictional program. What does this change of place bring about in terms of new forms of visibility?

Prior to anything, it is worth recalling that fictional programs particularity oriented to the youth began to multiply intensely in the early 1990s in Brazil, especially after the series *Confissões de Adolescente* [Confessions of a teenager], shown by Cultura Television in São Paulo. *Malhação*, a soap opera run by Globo TV since 1995, has been very successful (the program has been shown without interruption for ten years, from Monday through Friday). Fictional programs which attempt to rebuild the universe of the youth – of a specific type of youth, very often called adolescents – through the publicity of their private afflictions and happy moments (in the case of *Confissões de*

**4.** Hair style that appeared in the 1970s, in the USA, and which symbolized the pride of the movement “Black Power”, represented by Jimmi Hendrix and Diana Ross. In Brazil it was represented by the singer Tim Maia and the singer/actor Toni Tornado. Nowadays, it is successful on the hair of singer Lenny Kravitz. Taken from <http://www2.uol.com.br/tododia/ano2004/maio/210504/triboz.htm>, on 21/12/2004.

**5.** Adorn worn on hair, an influence from the Rastafari movement, also disseminated by the Black Power Movement, the plaits being a rather radical version of the movement. Bob Marley is the most important representative person of the movement, which was followed by Gilberto Gil and Milton Nascimento in Brazil. *Dreadlock* combines the words *dread* – scary, frightening, and *lock*. Taken from <http://www2.uol.com.br/tododia/ano2004/maio/210504/triboz.htm>, on 21/12/2004.



*Adolescente*, the events presented have been taken from records of a personal diary) and the life spent together in places particularly youth-oriented (the plot of *Malhação* initially took place in a fitness center and as time went by the location moved to a school).

*Cidade dos Homens*, however, appeared as a program different from the ones mentioned above, for showing as leading characters– indeed most of the cast – black and poor youngsters, and not teenagers from the middle upper classes, which are mostly represented by slim white young people, dressed in fashionable clothing and with straight hair. The protagonists in *Cidade dos Homens* dress in school jackets, t-shirts and beach sandals. Their hair is rebellious, ruffled, frizzled, *black power*<sup>4</sup> or adorned with *dreadlocks*<sup>5</sup>. The setting for the story also differs in a contrasting way: in *Cidade dos Homens*, the *favela* and the street itself, including the Presidential Palace and a funk party, are used as privileged places for the events to unfold. Journalist Renata Petrocelli (2004), in her review of the program, highlights:

The great merit of *Cidade dos Homens* lies precisely in the creation of two “heroes” who are far from being idealized; they are poor and marginalized, do not live up to the standards of beauty valued by the media and live under the pressure of drug traffic in the low-income communities (p. 01).

Furthermore, it is necessary to consider the strength the social movements have been building in Brazilian society, in particular the minority movements which fight for some equality in rights, such as the rural workers, the blacks, the handicapped, the women, the GLS (Gays, Lesbians and Sympathizers) Movement. Besides, movements recognized as political, founded many years ago, characterized by their protests and which fight for a fairer democracy, also begin now to be part of the television sphere. According to Bucci (2004), for one to acquire a status of citizen in our country, visibility through television screens is necessary. According to the author, the law of the audiovisual

era – the same one we live in – dictates that everything that is not shown on television did not actually happen: “Social visibility has become so entangled to the TV screen that, to reach the status of reality, things must be on TV” (BUCCI, 2004b, p. 228). And he mentions as an example the publicity for the Rural Landless Workers’ Movement in the soap opera *O Rei do Gado*, shown by Globo Television in 1996. The Black Movement – far from being composed by a minority in Brazil – also receives publicity insofar as a range of questions related to the quotas policy in universities and in public exams of admission and public posts is discussed. To what extent is television attentive to these social movements and in what way does it attempt to show and deal with these mobilizations? How are they transposed to this medium of communication?

As we cannot fail to recognize the legitimacy of such political and social movements, we also cannot fail to problematize the way of incorporating such mobilizations from their visibility through television (and through the media, generally speaking). At the same time that the visibility of their political struggle represents a conquest – of spaces, of civil rights, of respect, of debates in society – , it is necessary to pay attention to the way the media incorporates these movements and to the marketable appropriation of different/excluded people. According to Fischer (2001),

It is important to stress that all these questions around the way differences are dealt with are also related to ways of representation, to ways of stating, to ways of interpretation and communication. That is to say, the means of communication, the television in particular, have a huge responsibility with regard to the ways of naming the differences (p.42).

One also speaks here of ways of narrating, ways of showing and including visibilities of such excluded people. It is important to consider the way television incorporates the discourse of different people

and transforms it – as if it made this discourse suitable to the language of television, a sort of “domestication” – to be given back to the audience. And when giving it back, the product is often clothed in a marketable way. An interesting example on the marketable appropriation of the minorities can be presented here: in a production memo of a publicity agency sent to the production team responsible for the filming of a commercial for McDonald’s, we notice the insistence to include some “different” people in the advertisement – an ethnical requirement of our times, the “politically correct”. Here is a written excerpt of the mentioned memo, found in a book by Isleide Fontenelle (2002):

Vignettes of realism (...) We don’t want young people with a “sloppy” appearance, but we don’t want baby-faced young people, either. They should look mature, intelligent and with a personality. We don’t want red-haired people with freckled faces or blue-eyed blonds. We want to show what is real. For that reason, we have to meet the ethnical requirements: some blacks, some Latinos. It’s not meant to be a typical McDonald’s ad (p. 253).

What matters here is to think of such questions within the program analyzed: how can one establish the relations between the visibility of legitimacy of a social movement and the visibility of the domestication of this same movement? In other words, it is legitimate to present ways to make visible a political and social movement of our times, but at the same time we question the way in which this visibility takes place. Stuart Hall (2001), a theorist of contemporary culture, when speaking of post-modernism and the “margin” cultures, stresses:

Within culture, the margins, albeit still peripheral, have never been a space more productive than they are today, which does not happen simply due to the opening in

the dominating spaces which may be taken by the people from outside. This also results from cultural policies on the different, from struggles around the different, from the production of new identities and from the appearance of new subjects in the political and cultural arena (p. 150).

At the same time that the author considers extremely important the opening of new spaces for protesting, something made possible by post-modernism, he also criticizes the ambiguous opening for difference and for the “margins”, a kind of difference which ultimately makes no difference whatsoever, it is just “a touch of ethnicity”, “a flavor of the exotic”. But, still, Hall considers that the cultural life has been modified by this kind of statement.

We can proceed to analyze and problematize these conditions of visibility from some discussions on national cinema, from the times of *Cinema Novo* (New Cinema) to the present days, for it deals precisely with the “characters of margin” we are dealing with.

The *boom* in Brazilian cinema industry since the year 2000 has brought to surface questions concerning the “New *Cinema Novo*”, inspired in the movement that took place from 1960, in Brazil, the *Cinema Novo*, whose most representative film-maker was Glauber Rocha. The most important news in the recent production of Brazilian films is characterized by the whole production happening in Brazilian territory: from shooting to post-production, everything is being done in Brazil. In 2002 alone, 30 films were released nationwide, most of them with a large acceptance from the audience, among them the feature films *Cidade de Deus* (Fernando Meirelles), *Madame Satã* (Karin Aïmouz), *O Invasor* (Beto Brant), *Uma Onda no Ar* (Helvécio Ratton) and the documentaries *Edifício Master* (Eduardo Coutinho), *Janela da Alma* (João Jardim and Walter Carvalho) and *Ônibus 174*, by José Padilha (AVELLAR, 2003). In this new phase of film production, similarly to what happened to



*Cinema Novo*, characters that are representative of the minorities are again brought to scene: the *nordestino* (inhabitant of the North-East region of the country), the residents of the city outskirts, the poor and the blacks, in products which deal, among others, with questions such as the (im)possibility of national identity. Glauber Rocha, protagonist in the movement of *Cinema Novo*, suggests that Brazilian people's identity is far more complex than one can imagine – and this happened at the same time (around 1960/1970) that television in Brazil received the most important incentives from the military regime, in order to create an aura of national unification<sup>6</sup>. According to Leandro (2003), an author who analyses *Trilogia da Terra*, by Glauber Rocha (composed by the films *Deus e o Diabo na Terra do Sol*, *Terra em Transe* and *Idade da Terra*), it is

(...) through this path that Glauber's trilogy will destabilize one of the most powerful myths of Brazilian culture, that of a united and harmonious people; a myth of exotic dimensions to foreign eyes and which historically served the State's interests. A disconcerting diversity of Brazilian peoples, of singular minorities, of anonymous faces captured amidst the crowd is shown in the films of the trilogy as witnesses of a long process of exclusion (p.19).

The movement we observe in national contemporary cinema brings back to scene a "marginal" subject and his discourse, as well as the legitimacy of such discourse, terrifying though it may be – as it is highlighted by Ivana Bentes in an interview to Lilian Fontes (2003). The adaptation of such a discourse to cinema – differently from *Cinema Novo*, and here lies the main difference between them – took place through mass culture, through funk songs which thematize traffic, through MTV, through MV Bill and Racionais MCs' clips, through rappers and the hip hop culture, through television" (Bentes, 2003, p. 17). However, here

is also a problematization to be unfolded: running in parallel to the legitimacy of this new discourse – which brings minority into scene –, there is the concept of an aesthetics of poverty and marginality, which manages to find its place in the market, which makes the viewing rates rise, which makes proliferate the export of a different "type". As emphasized by Ivana Bentes (2003) when she criticizes what she defined as "the cosmetics of hunger", this is "a domestication of the most radical themes of culture and Brazilian cinema (and *Cinema Novo* itself), in a folklore for export. Poverty, *sertão* and *favela* as products for export" (p. 18).

We may support the opinion that there are different ways to portray and speak of what has rarely been visible: at the same time that the mentioned films bring denunciation about, and present what "does not work" in our country (acid criticism to the social inequality, to racial and sexual prejudice, to poverty), they also highlight the whole component of dream and fantasy which are part of this very universe. The huge success of national cinema is made evident by the large number of movie-goers in the theaters across the country (would that result simply from a glamorous aesthetics of hunger and poverty?). It might be possible to say that there are different ways to portray questions that afflict the country: one of them would be through a non-crystallization of meaning about the minority characters and through the legitimacy of the conquests achieved by certain social groups, which does comprehend a form of aesthetics. The other way would characterize itself by a "globalized" aesthetics in cinema (originated in television?), which ties up the senses completely, domesticating manifestations and bringing to a *grand finale* everything which does not have such aims.

For the sake of exemplification, we may mention the ending of the series *Cidade dos*

<sup>6</sup>. Recommended reading: articles by Eugênio Bucci in the book *Videologias*, particularly "A crítica de televisão" (pp. 27-42) and "Ainda sob o signo da Globo" (pp. 220-240).

*Homens* in late 2004, which may illustrate this process of “aestheticizing”. The last episode ends as a fairy tale: prince Acerola and his princess Cristiane dance adequately dressed up – it is the girl’s *debutante ball*, in the court of Mangueira’s *escola de samba* (Samba School) – and kiss each other passionately. The scene would indeed be romantic, as if it were not for a baby between their bodies, being breastfed. That is to say, there is a huge difference: the characters are different, the scenario is different, their social condition is different – which might produce a good story, with its particularities and singularities. But the ending has always to be the same, regardless of the differences presented and well-established during the episodes shown. The ending has to be adapted to the television language, to become “palatable” for television, for the melodrama.

When dealing more specifically with the blacks’ condition in Brazil, sociologist Jessé Souza (2003) puts forward a current question – intimately related to the conditions of production of the television product and object of this research – about the recognition of who is and who is not a citizen in our country. The issue of recognition, argues the author, involves respect and self-esteem and is fundamental for the formation of national identity, be that at an individual level, be that at a collective one. The author emphasizes the importance of understanding that “... we are formed through the recognition or through its absence, and the recognition has a cultural, communitarian and linguistic basis” (p. 37). From this idea, Souza signals as an urgent political objective the attention to minorities and to minority cultures. In what way could this protection take place? Can we consider the creation and showing of programs such as *Cidade dos Homens* and *Turma do Gueto* a way of protection?

Returning to questions of visibility in the media, in 2000 Record TV started showing a program starred exclusively by black actors in a fictional story: *Turma do Gueto* was aired in November, inaugurating a new type of

production. Shown on television at prime time, the program reached the highest viewing rates of IBOPE, becoming one of the most watched programs on that TV station, both in 2000 and in the following year<sup>7</sup>. *Cidade dos Homens* was initially shown on Globo TV in 2002; however, before it was first run, there were a series of experiments and ongoing proposals, coordinated by the same team responsible for the micro-series.

When analyzing the appearance of the micro-series, as well as some previous experiences, we may establish relations of similarity and proximity, such as highlighted by Michel Foucault. The short feature film *Palace II*<sup>8</sup>, shown within the especial Globo series named *Brava Gente Brasileira* was taken to air in December 2001, featuring Acerola and Laranjinha – black children and residents of a *favela* – as the leading characters. The film was shown in some international events, being awarded at the Berlin Festival in 2002. According to one of the directors, Fernando Meirelles (this film is directed by him and co-directed by Kátia Lund), this short feature film was used as an experiment for the feature film *Cidade de Deus*, taken to Brazilian cinemas in 2002 (directed by Fernando Meirelles and co-directed by Kátia Lund). A box-office record, successful in Brazil and abroad, *Cidade de Deus* received many awards and was internationally praised. The film innovated by narrating the appearance of the *favela Cidade de Deus*, in Rio de Janeiro, blending themes such as violence, drugs traffic and life in the *favela*. The film received four nominations to the Oscar prize in 2004 (under categories of direction, adapted screenplay, film edition and photography) but failed to win any award. In February 2004, after the nominations, movie theaters started rerunning the film all over the country.

One of the most important topics discussed by the film production team in the interviews to press relates to the film’s fictional

7. Information obtained from the program’s website: [www.turmadogueto.com.br](http://www.turmadogueto.com.br).

8. Directed by Fernando Meirelles and Kátia Lund, produced by O2 Filmes, 15 min, São Paulo (BR).

character: despite the fact that it is based on the story of the appearance of *favela Cidade de Deus*, in Rio de Janeiro, and that the protagonists were people who lived in the *favela*, the director made a point of stressing that the film belongs to the fictional genre. By the end of 2003, it had drawn over 3.5 million viewers to the movie theaters. It is in the wake of such a success that *Cidade dos Homens* is broadcast: it is no longer so innovating to show black characters as protagonists of a fictional program. In the directors' statement, available in the extras of the DVD *Cidade dos Homens* 2002, Fernando Meirelles (2003) discusses the relationship between the two productions as well as the differences between them:

*Cidade dos Homens* is an unfolding of *Cidade de Deus*. Same creators, same crew, same actors. But we can also say that this project is the opposite of the other: *Cidade de Deus* is a drama with a touch of comedy about drug dealers in Rio; the community appears in the background only. *Cidade dos Homens* is a comedy, with a touch of drama, about a community in Rio de Janeiro; the dealers are in the background. One project complements the other.

Nevertheless, what may be considered innovative is the portrayal of black and poor young people having fun in a funk party, on a Saturday evening, without any violence or sex appeal, as the television news programs show us. It is innovative to follow both young guys traveling by coach to Brasília, "a camera in their hands, an idea in their minds". Or the amusement on the beach sands and waters of Rio de Janeiro, where the people from the *favelas* arrive after taking a crowded bus and end up being victims of an *arrastão*, started by the "asphalt *playboys*". Here, we may recall the book by Micael Herschmann, in the chapter in which he briefly analyzes the *arrastões* on Rio de Janeiro beaches. An event that both the press and the television media made a lot of noise about,

the *arrastões* were soon connected to the funk and hip hop gangs, that is, connected to the youth in the peripheral areas and the *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro. Howeverb (2000), those who witnessed the scenes of "threat to the urban order", such as by-passers and even public security agents who were used as witnesses, questioned the event, considering it a criminal act. The author comments:

A mugging or not, the fact is that the images shown by the newspapers and television were imprinted in the urban minds of the *cariocas* (...) The local supplements (...) of the main newspapers in the country dedicated extensive reports (sometimes occupying nearly entire supplements) to thematizing funk, appearing, at that time, a profusion of reports with suggestive headlines, such as 'Arrastões bring terror to South End', 'Hordes on the beach', 'Funk gangs bring panic to beaches', 'Panic in paradise', 'Funk movement brings despair', which fueled the atmosphere of terror (p. 96).

In the episode named "It's got to be now", the *arrastão* is shown as being arranged by upper class boys, revolted with a "little nigger" who "stole" a *playboy's* wave, that is, the fight started in the sea. The playboys take along their pit-bull dogs, and unleash them onto the blacks, starting the confusion. The people on the beach start to collect their belongings and run away desperately, some of them shouting that it is an *arrastão*. Two older black men, put their things away and comment: "And look who's starting it: little whites, little *playboys*, all bandits. And tomorrow it'll be on the paper: Who started it? A *favelado*! Yeah, no way, buddy, 'cause he's black, 'cause he's poor!"

Still, one cannot disregard the fact that programs such as *Cidade dos Homens* seldom have a place among television programs: a production such as the one we are discussing is still something marginal on Brazilian television, be that regarding the frequency, be that regarding the

time it is shown. It is enough to compare a teenage program such as *Malhação*, mentioned above, to *Cidade dos Homens*, focus of our study. Whereas the former is shown five days a week, at around 5.30 p.m., the prime time of programs for the youth, the latter is shown once a year only, late in the evening. We obviously have to praise the importance of the inclusion of this type of products among TV programs and we can highlight the increase in the number of episodes shown (from four in 2002 to five in the years of 2003 and 2004) and the regularity of its scheduling – which contribute to create the habit of watching the program. We cannot fail to mention, though, that there is still some precariousness in this showing. We point out, along with Stuart Hall (2001), regarding the visibility of black popular culture in the media:

I recognize that the places that difference has 'gained' are few and scattered, meticulously watched and regulated. (...) I know that the invisibility is substituted by a type of segregated visibility, which is carefully regulated. But simply naming it 'the same' will be pointless. Despising it this way will merely reflect the specific model of cultural policies to which we are attached, precisely a game of inversion (p. 151).

### **Release of *Cidade dos Homens***

*Cidade dos Homens* is originally released on television in 2002, more precisely on the week from 15 to 18 October (Tuesday through Friday), the week in which Children's Day (12 October) is celebrated throughout the country. In the program announcements, which started a week before, the speaker said the program was "a gift for the children". But *Cidade dos Homens* was not a children-oriented program – it was a program starred by children, something essentially different. In the extras of the DVD *Cidade dos Homens* (2002), one of the program's authors, Jorge Furtado, remarks: "Our conception was for the micro-series to be a children's series, or rather, it is not

a series for children, but about children, portraying children, to be shown on children's week". It still has to be taken into account the time the series was shown – from 10.30 p.m. – which is much later than the time dedicated to children's programs.

It is important to recall that at that time the political temperature in Brazil was rising with the candidates' campaigns, as the presidential elections approached. Let us bear in mind that the contest pointed to the leadership of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who led the opinion polls and had high popular charisma. Relations of similarity may be highlighted here: the country was about to choose as its president a leader who used to be poor, a former metal-worker and Union member, uncultured and several times marginalized (also by Globo Television itself). Would that be one of the conditions for Globo TV to take the initiative to show, at (not very) prime time, a fictional production with marginalized and poor characters?

In 2003, the return of the program featured an important characteristic: the children had grown up and were now adolescents. Laranjinha and Acerola have grown and started to go to funk parties, traveled to Brasília and started dating girls. School is still the setting in which the stories develop, but new places now "take part" in the episodes, such as São Conrado Beach, in Rio de Janeiro. The program is also altered in the way it is shown: rather than being shown during a whole week, it is on now on Tuesday evenings, for five consecutive weeks. It is shown approximately between 10.30 and 11 p.m. It is worth noting that the day and time of the week (Tuesday, 10.30 p.m.) end up becoming a day on which experimental programs<sup>9</sup> are shown on Globo TV (it is enough to recall that the program *Cena Aberta*<sup>10</sup> replaces the micro-series *Cidade dos Homens* on the following

**9.** This is the way I refer to programs realized by independent producers with whom the TV station holds a partnership. In this case, O2 Filmes and Casa de Cinema, from Porto Alegre.

**10.** *Cena Aberta*, a program directed by Regina Casé, put forward a new formula of program, in which the stories of classical works of (Brazilian and foreign) literature were acted out by ordinary people, alongside with well-known actors from the TV station itself.

week). The experimental programs of the TV station are also developed by the nucleus Guel Arraes, responsible for the direction of programs such as *Os Normais* and *Sexo Frágil*.

It is 2004 now, and the stories lived by Acerola and Laranjinha are back to stage and shown on a completely different day: instead of Tuesdays, the program is shown on five consecutive Fridays, between September 24 and October 22. Due to the exhibition of the (compulsory) political program, the running of the two first episodes of the series is moved forward to later than 11 p.m. The three remaining episodes are shown at around 10.45 p.m. Two aspects are worth remarking: firstly, the massive advertisement involving the announcement of the program, two weeks prior to the running of the episodes; secondly, the “effects” of the return of the program at this time of the year – or the effects that may be established on other programs of Globo TV station.

The most significant example may be seen on the program *Domingão do Faustão* (shown by Globo TV on Sunday afternoons) of September 26, 2004: the program, which has the format of presenting fashionable musical singers and bands (such as Titãs, Jota Quest, Capital Inicial – representative of the national pop/rock music), on that day – let us recall this is the Sunday that follows the first episode of *Cidade dos Homens* in the 2004 running – brings as an outstanding music style, the funk, including DJ Marlboro (one of the protagonists in the episode about the funk party in 2003, in *Cidade dos Homens*) and the carioca duo Cidinho and Doca. The duo sings a widely-disseminated song in the previous 10 years, which was also a hit in the voice of TV presenter Xuxa – who is also on the program, dancing and singing along with the samba composer Jorge Aragão and actors of the casting of *Malhação* and *Senhora do Destino*. The chorus of the song (*Rap da Felicidade/Rap of Happiness*) says:

I just want to be happy  
Stroll around in peace in the *favela* where I  
was born

And be able to be proud  
And be aware that the poor person has his  
own place  
(Mc Cidinho and McDoca)

What matters here is not the contents of the lyrics, nor the questioning about Xuxa’s presence on the program, not even the *mélange* of guests timidly dancing funk on Faustão’s stage. What does matter is to question the presence, on Brazilian television, of a rather “marginal” rhythm such as funk, on a Sunday afternoon. We believe that the running of the program *Cidade dos Homens* which, to some extent, has its place guaranteed – albeit still small and insignificant in comparison to other programs in this TV station –, has much to do with this “permission” from Globo TV. We would return to the question: would this be a legitimate or a domesticated form of manifestation? We might be able to think of the coexistence of these two elements and accept that, at the same time that the existence of programs such as *Cidade dos Homens* on television legitimizes the discourse of a social movement, it also ends up fitting any type of manifestation into the same movement.

The main path followed in this study was traversed by the analysis of the conditions for the appearance of the television program *Cidade dos Homens*, in an attempt to understand the configuration of an era which seems to require a broader discussion with regard to the reality of our country. From this point, we may argue that television responds to an urgency of our times by building a web of visibilities and possibilities of manifestation about black and poor young people, inhabitants of peripheral areas. Here, too, the discourse from television is defined by the paradox of, simultaneously, creating room for the visibility of certain social movements, and of domesticating them and even destroying the manifestation of any revolutionary germ, characteristic of a political and social movement.

This article represents a mere outline which enables us to think of the conditions for

the appearance of a television product such as *Cidade dos Homens*. We have tried to establish, as highlighted by Foucault (2002), “a domain of kinship with other objects”, relations of similarity, of difference, of transformation, so that something might be said about the program: these are the “positive conditions of a complex group of relations”. This might be one of the ways to research the media in the educational field: to be aware of all possible relations that coexist with the media product, and from these relations, establish one or more points for the analysis. This proposal takes into account the importance of a study which prioritizes the questioning attitude from the

researcher (be this person an educator, a psychologist, a professional in Communications etc) which is willing to give priority to the media experience, to speak “from within” images, to analyze language and the effects of meaning produced in it. Only by doing so will we be able to conduct a study with an ethical and political commitment which “problematizes our ways of looking at things, articulating a dive into media images, into the discourses that it circulates and in the modes of subjectivation that they stimulate” (Fischer, 2002, p. 91).

**11.** Two Globo TV programs: the first one has already been mentioned; the second one was the prime-time soap opera on Globo TV in 2004/2005.

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