

Researching for public spheres (selective and subaltern): contributions of critical analysis of genres

Rosália Beber de Souza^{1 2}

Valderi de Castro Alcântara²

José Roberto Pereira²

¹ Universidade Federal de Viçosa / Department of Letters, Viçosa / MG — Brazil

² Universidade Federal de Lavras / Postgraduate Program in Administration, Lavras / MG — Brazil

This article presents a methodological perspective for the study of the public spheres (selective and subaltern) from the critical studies of discursive genres. Considering that research on discursive genres appears as a possibility to understand how language creates and re-contextualizes social interactions, this study proposes a dialogue with the concepts of the public sphere (Jürgen Habermas), subaltern public spheres (Nancy Fraser) and discursive genres from Mikhail Bakhtin and Norman Fairclough. In analytical terms, we present possibilities for the analysis of primary and secondary genres through the categories of activity, social relations and communicational technologies in order to highlight and understand public spheres in Brazil.

Keywords: subaltern public spheres; discursive genres; language; publics.

Pesquisando esferas públicas (seletiva e subalternas): contribuições da análise crítica de gêneros

Neste artigo apresentamos uma perspectiva metodológica para o estudo das esferas públicas (seletiva e subalternas) a partir dos estudos críticos dos gêneros discursivos. Considerando que as pesquisas sobre gêneros discursivos surgem como uma possibilidade de compreender como a linguagem cria e recontextualiza as interações sociais, propomos um diálogo com os conceitos de esfera pública (Jürgen Habermas), esferas públicas subalternas (Nancy Fraser) e gêneros discursivos a partir de Mikhail Bakhtin e de Norman Fairclough. Em termos analíticos, apresentamos possibilidades para as análises dos gêneros primários e secundários por meio das categorias atividade, relações sociais e tecnologias comunicacionais a fim de evidenciar e compreender as esferas públicas no Brasil.

Palavras-chave: esferas públicas subalternas; gêneros discursivos; linguagem; públicos.

Búsqueda de esferas públicas (selectiva y subalternas): contribuciones del análisis crítico de géneros

En este artículo presentamos una perspectiva metodológica para el estudio de las esferas públicas (selectiva y subalternas) a partir de los estudios críticos de los géneros discursivos. Considerando que las investigaciones sobre géneros discursivos surgen como una posibilidad de comprender cómo el lenguaje crea y recontextualiza las interacciones sociales, proponemos un diálogo con los conceptos de esfera pública (Jürgen Habermas), esferas públicas subalternas (Nancy Fraser) y géneros discursivos desde Mikhail Bakhtin y de Norman Fairclough. En términos analíticos, presentamos posibilidades para los análisis de los géneros primarios y secundarios por medio de las categorías actividad, relaciones sociales y tecnologías comunicacionales a fin de evidenciar y comprender las esferas públicas en Brasil.

Palabras clave: esferas públicas subalternas; géneros discursivos; lenguaje; públicos.

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1590/0034-7612166993>

Article received on July 23, 2016 and accepted on August 10, 2017.

[Translated version] Note: All quotes in English translated by this article's translator.

We thank the reviewers for the several appointments, pivotal in building the elements of the research agenda developed here as well as responsible for significant changes throughout the text. This dialogue has been fundamental to our work.



1 INTRODUCTION

The public sphere is a category that gathered prominence in the second half of the XX century and occupies, despite divergences, a central position in the contemporary theories regarding democracy, foremost as a reconstructive element of critical theory in the work of German philosopher Jürgen Habermas (Avritzer and Costa, 2004). As a replication to *The structural transformation of the public sphere*, from 1962, (Habermas, 2014), new concepts were dialogically built in relation to the concept of public sphere, such as strong and weak publics, subaltern counterpublics and subaltern public spheres, which brought greater analytical power and explanatory potential to unequal and stratified societies.

Despite the advancements of the habermasian reformulations (Habermas, 1997) and the discussions that stemmed from the concept of subaltern public spheres, the present study argues that the subject matter still faces several limitations regarding the possibility for theoretical-methodological empirical studies (Dahlberg, 2004; Garcia, 2016). As reminded by Dahlberg (2004), the translation of the concept of public sphere to empirical research is often deficient. In Brazil, where theoretical studies predominate and the few empirical researches often do not have a systematized methodological procedure (Garcia, 2016), this becomes even more fundamental, be it regarding the study locus or the procedures for the collection and analysis of data. Through the databases of the *Scientific Periodicals Electronic Library* (Spell) and the *Scientific Electronic Library Online* (SciELO), Garcia (2016) mapped national publications about “public sphere” and found a limited insertion in the debate over Public Administration. In the field of Social Management, which very often mentions the category, the author found that the absolute majority of the works were theoretical and did not harness means to perform empirical research (Garcia, 2016).

Another matter regarding the operationalization of empirical research is that from the 1990 decade, Habermas himself proceeded with a virtualization (Lavalle, 2002) of the concept of public sphere, which stripped it of its “sociologically richest components” (Lavalle, 2002:65). A form of operationalizing empirical research over the public sphere is through “public opinion surveys”, however, according to Habermas (1997b) and Warner (2016) those researches are limited. Other methodological procedures that do not take into consideration the plurality, multiplicity and dialogicity of/between the publics are also limited, because they are not able to capture the depth of the discursive and communicational dimensions involved in the constitution of the public spheres.

For Perlatto (2012, 2015), followed by Garcia (2016), the focus on the notion of strong and weak publics, subaltern counterpublics and public spheres (selective and subaltern) represents an important research agenda for Brazil. Currently prominent, the themes are relevant in the field of Public Administration, specially for understanding the plural relations between State-market-society in different moments and arenas, such as the formulation and implementation of public policy, social movements, political processes, participatory arrangements that involve state actors and civil society and also in public controversies that comprise those actors, discourses and discursive genres in circulation, dispute and deliberation.

Therefore, considering those research contexts and attempting to move forward in this direction, we present the methodological contributions from the critical studies of the discursive genres that may bring significant investigative advancements. Amidst the diverse possibilities, we opted for the contributions to the concept of discourse genres from Mikhail Bakhtin (1997, 2006) and Norman

Fairclough (2003). However, our purpose here is *to present a methodological perspective for the study of the public spheres (selective and subaltern) stemming from the critical analysis of discursive genres.*

In the present article we expand the debate over subaltern public spheres in Brazil (and its relationship with the selective public sphere in the terms of Perlatto, 2015) considering the discursive genres (Bakhtin, 1997, 2006) and the study categories proposed by Fairclough (2003), namely: activities, social relationships and communication technology. For that matter, we pluralized the concept of public sphere through arguments arising from several discourse genres that participate in a “tense” manner (Bakhtin, 2006) in the construction of meaning in the several spheres (selective public sphere, hegemonic, general, subaltern, among other analytical possibilities). Finally, from the concept of subaltern public spheres, we also observe the research possibilities that take into consideration expressions from popular culture and constitute cultural circularity (Ginzburg, 2002), contestation (Fraser, 1990) or even cooperation (Perlatto, 2015) with other spheres.

2. SUBALTERN PUBLIC SPHERES: FROM SINGLE TO MULTIPLE

Following the ample discussions regarding the public sphere in Habermas (Fraser, 1990; Gardiner, 2004; Avritzer and Costa, 2004; Calhoun 2010; Perlatto, 2012, 2015), we attempted to explore the critical debate over the subject in order to broaden the discussion, leadingly from the concept of subaltern public spheres (Fraser, 1990; Perlatto, 2015). According to Perlatto (2015), Nancy Fraser is responsible for greatest systematization of criticisms and for the expansion of the concept of public sphere through the notion of subaltern counterpublics.

Habermas’ (dialogic) answer to criticism becomes more systematic in the preface of the new edition of *Structural Transformation* (1990), and continues in *Law and Democracy*, from 1992. Habermas (1997) accepts the criticism regarding issues such as inequality, social conflicts, plebeian spheres; takes into consideration the differentiation between strong and weak publics (Fraser, 1990); recognizes the importance of popular culture and also conceives the existence of different public spheres (Habermas, 2008, 2014). His recent propositions are also targeted by criticism but they still contribute to reflecting over the relationship between society, law and democracy in plural societies (Avritzer and Costa, 2004; Perlatto, 2015).

Fraser (1990) reviews Habermas’ 1962 proposition. She considers the concept of the public sphere is important in expanding the view over social movements and democratic theories, overcoming several problematic issues. From the historiographical researches of Joana Landes (*Women and the public sphere in the age of the French Revolution*), Mary Ryan (*Women in public: between banners and ballots, 1825-1880*) and Geoff Eley (*Nations, publics, and political cultures: placing Habermas in the nineteenth century*) and other texts, Fraser (1990) demonstrates that the composition of the public sphere had as a fundamental element several exclusions, such as material wealth, culture, ethnics and genre; also, that the discourse of publicity, accessibility and rationality was also a strategy to distinguish the dominant classes.

Fraser (1990), searching for new pathways, proposes an alternative view, conceiving different relationships within the public spheres and with their socio-economic and cultural context. One of the considerations proposed by the author is the distinction between weak and strong publics. The first ones are those whose deliberative practice is restricted to opinion forming and does not involve

decision making, namely, judicially binding decisions (laws). The author highlights that important questions regarding the relationship between strong and weak publics remain, and that the first group is accountable to the latter in a democracy (Fraser, 1990). Habermas (1997b), inspired by Fraser, abandons the notion of public sphere and considers several of them as indications of the multiplicity of the unitary public spheres (subject matter) and relationship between strong and weak publics.

Fraser (1990) mentions that the expression “subaltern counterpublics” was built through the texts *Can the subaltern speak?* (Spivak), *Beyond feminist aesthetics* (Felski) and *Women and the public sphere in the age of the French Revolution* (Landes). The term presents how members of social groups of women, workers, blacks, homosexuals and others historically constituted alternative publics: “I propose to call these subaltern counterpublics in order to signal that they are parallel discursive arenas where members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Fraser, 1990:67). The importance of this concept is to capture the specificities of the publics, instead of choosing to name a “general” public, which homogenizes the differences and supports power relations, specially in stratified societies where the opposition to a plurality of competing publics is more prominent than in a single homogeneous sphere (Fraser, 1990; Perlatto, 2015; Garcia, 2016).

Other important matters regarding the publics that help understand the subaltern counterpublics are brought by Warner (2016:16), who established that the counterpublics are “formed through a contentious relationship with the dominant public”. Therefore, such publics “are structured through different protocols and dispositions from those found in other areas of culture, building different assumptions over what can be said and what is not necessary to say” (Warner, 2016:16). The author directly opens to our proposition over discourse genres by also citing them: “the conflict does not extend only to ideas or political issues, but also to the discourse genre and to the utterances that constitute the public, or the hierarchy between the different medias” (Warner, 2016:16).

Thinking about Latin America and Brazil, Avritzer and Costa (2004) state that the notion of subaltern counterpublics is relevant, because it exposes and clarifies the unequal relationships of access to the public sphere. Citing several historiographical studies performed in Brazil, Perlatto (2015) stresses that a selective public sphere (hegemonic) and several subaltern public spheres were created here. For the author, the subaltern refers to publics that seek for other forms of organization – therefore valuing manifestations other than “rational” arguments, such as different expressions, discourses, gestures and performances: “the popular sector attempted to establish discourse arenas alternative to those created by the elitist segments” (Perlatto, 2015:125).

According to Perlatto (2015), the proposition of the notion of subaltern public spheres comes from Nancy Fraser’s notion of subaltern counterpublics; however, it is “different by not emphasizing so strongly the idea that the subaltern counterpublics would *necessarily* be contrary to the selective public sphere” (Perlatto, 2015:125). Therefore broadening the notions from Fraser (1990) and Warner (2016), expressing a denial reduce the subaltern public spheres only to the notion of opposition, but considering diverse and complex dynamics between the spheres: the separation is analytical, because the spheres “are in permanent relationship, be it in a dialogic or in a conflictive way” (Perlatto, 2015:123).

For Perlatto (2015:132), inside this reality emerges the importance of popular culture and other forms that resist against dominant expressions by stating, since Spivak, that “it is possible to say, despite the subaltern seldom being heard, that they were capable of speaking, in different ways, against the

hegemonic discourses and the daily repressive practices”. Therefore, the subaltern counterpublics articulate spaces, speeches and manifestations through performances and “hidden speeches” — knowing and recognizing those publics requires an emphasis in diverse elements of human expression, such as the ludic, the emotional, humor and irony (such as parody), among others. Observing those issues evidences the importance of the discourse genres and the work of Bakhtin. As emphasized by Gardiner (2004), Bakhtin offers possibilities to reflect on the plural ways of expression, speech and communication, which were underexplored in the conception of the public sphere. Perlatto (2015:140-141) also reminds that:

[...] Bakhtin may be articulated with the debate over subaltern public spheres in Brazil, given his valuing of the plurality of voices in the public world which, despite combining consent and resistance, question and subvert the order at every given moment, through carnival strategies, marked by inventiveness and creativity.

Bakhtin (1987) studied the cultural forms from the Middle Ages connected to laughter, humor and the grotesque, which represented the opposition to the “official” culture: “In the pre-modern carnival theatre (Bakhtin, 1981), the nobles and the clergy were hated, degraded and ridiculed through vulgarity, farce, mummery and crudity” (Boje, 2002:15). Therefore, Bakhtin (1987) states that popular festivities placed themselves against “linguistic dogmatism”. The author shows the existence of a popular culture that placed itself in opposition to the official culture of the ruling classes and devised its own world view, its special forms and images” (Bakhtin, 1987:418).

However, Bakhtin does not start from tight categories. Similarly to Perlatto (2015), he does not congeal the relations between the selective and the subaltern spheres. Bakhtin (1987) also shows that “the popular comedic culture expressed the peculiar world view of the lower social stratum. Maintaining, however, a permanent, organic and dynamic contact with the official culture, influencing and being influenced by it [...]” (Domingues, 2011:404). Thereby, there is communicability, cultural circularity (Ginburg, 2002), mutual influences and “frontier zones” (Domingues, 2011:404).

All of this leads us to believe that, if culture itself is plural, there’s also plurality in the publics and counterpublics of the subaltern spheres and other variations. Avritzer and Costa (2004) and Perlatto (2015) mention other notions of publics, such as *new publics* (new actors of social movements), *diasporic publics* (actors of the African diaspora which formed a counterculture marked by performance, dance and music) and deliberative publics (broadening of the institutionalized participation mechanisms). Squires, in turn, states that the study of the multiple subaltern spheres (historically formed by different ethnicities, women, homosexuals, religious minorities, immigrants and others), also demands categories, in order to avoid generalizations. Through the study of the African-American public sphere, three notions of marginal publics are presented: *enclaves publics* (oppressed groups, without public voice who join enclaves, hidden and restricted spaces, and promote its resistance), *counterpublics publics* (publics with greater debate power and resources, they are more visible and organized into social movements, boycotts and civil disobedience) and *satellite publics* (publics that attempt to separate from other publics). Therefore, there are different characteristics, forms of action, interaction and expression in the various publics, even among the marginal ones, employing the terms from Squires (2002).

Finally, we attempt to demonstrate an understanding process of the public spheres (selective and subaltern) that emerged from the singular and extended into the multiple, plural, heterogenic, marked by the variety of publics, “silences”, voices (not always heard), speeches and speech genres. In order to do so, we state that the relations between the selective and the subaltern public spheres may be analyzed through speech genres, namely, its study (origin, background, reproduction, reorganization, cooperative and conflictive relationships, dispute and deliberation, etc.) and may be conducted, initially, through a critical analysis of the discursive genres.

3. CRITICAL ANALYSIS OF THE SPEECH GENRES

According to Motta-Roth (2008:341), “the concept of speech genre has emerged as a tool for the theorization and explanation of how language works to create and re-contextualize social interactions”. This happens through perspectives that take into consideration the relationship between text and context (Fairclough, 2001, 2003) and the language inserted in a socio-cultural and historic context (Bakhtin, 1997, 2003). Among the several scholars in the field of speech genres, we looked for the contributions of Mikhail Bakhtin and Norman Fairclough due to the current relevance of those authors for the development of the studies in “critical genre analysis” (Motta-Roth, 2008).

The contribution of the bakhtinian studies for the speech studies is primarily due to the understanding of the relationship between language and other social phenomena not as something abstract (Bakhtin, 1997). This point of view is antagonistic to what was being defended: instead of a mechanical and linear communication, in which the listener/recipient is passive, a dialogic conception is adopted. According to Bakhtin (1997, 2006), even written texts are a part of a dialogic chain. Therefore, the founding principle is the dialogism (Bakhtin, 1997, 2006). The author had a strong impact in the work of Norman Fairclough.

Fairclough (2001, 2003) employs discourse to refer to the use of language: “I will use the term ‘discourse’, traditionally used by linguists to write about the ‘use of language’, parole (speech) and ‘performance’ (Fairclough, 2001:90). Thereby, the author makes clear his choice, in disagreement with the classical conceptions of Ferdinand de Saussure. In *Analyzing Discourse*, Fairclough (2003) presents three types of meaning of discourse: (i) the action definition, which understands the text as an interaction – the discourse genres; (ii) the representation definition, which focuses on the representation in the texts and (iii) the identification definition, which deals with the reconstruction of the identities in the discourse (Fairclough, 2003; Resende and Ramalho, 2006).

It is worth observing that our proposition emphasizes the understanding of the critical genre analysis (through the dialogue between Bakhtin and Fairclough) and not the critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2003; Resende and Ramalho, 2006; Motta-Roth, 2008), which demands a focus on meanings, elements and moments of the speech and other social practices.

4 DISCOURSE GENRES IN THE PUBLIC SPHERES (SELECTIVE AND SUBALTERN)

Bakhtin (1997:279) considers that “every utterance taken separately is, of course, individual, but every sphere of the use of language devises its *relatively stable* types of utterances, what is referred to as *speech genres*”. Overall, according to Motta-Roth (2008:350), the “Genres are uses of language

associated with social activities” and have some degree of stability in form, content and style”. The genres are formed by three elements: content (theme), style and compositional construction — which are interdependent.

Bakhtin (1997) organizes the genres into secondary and primary. He considered the primary genres related to immediate daily life, informal and present in the intimate and daily spheres – private instances (spontaneous conversation, letters, etc.). On the other hand, the secondary discourse genres appear in more complex and formal communication, artistic, political, judicial, scientific and other public instances (Bakhtin, 1997). Those genres are not stagnant, given that the primary genres transform into part of the secondary ones. Furthermore, the genres (primary and secondary) “reflect even the smallest change in social life, they are the transmission chains that carry from the history of society to the history of the language” (Bakhtin, 1997:282).

Ancillary, Fairclough (2003:65) conveys, “[...] the genres are discursive aspects specific to ways of acting and interacting with the course of social events.” Therefore, when analyzing a text or an interaction in terms on genre, the question is how it fits and contributes to the social action and interaction. Starting the relation to the study of the public spheres, we understand that the discourse genres are interchangeable. This initially suggests the possibility of starting from this conception to study the public spheres, after all, languages in those spheres connect to other “semiosis” (Fairclough, 2003) and the texts perform intermediations (Habermas, 1997; Warner, 2016). Moreover, in this process the texts combine different genres in new ways (Fairclough, 2003).

Fairclough (2003) asserts that the genres are not rigid, meaning they may be combined and new ones invented. This perspective refers to the longitudinal character of the public spheres (selective and subaltern), namely, the need for a historic analysis of the constitution of opinions and intentions (hegemonic), of the convergences and divergences regarding certain themes — such as the plurality of meanings and the construction of tensions (Bakhtin 1997, 2006). This characteristic also refers to the possibility of identifying the plurality of arguments, reasons and emotions in the various forms of expression. Thus, revealing a fruitful dialogue with Bakhtin (1987, 1997, 2006) for the understanding of the subaltern forms of manifestation, lined by popular culture. Such considerations are, thereby, important to bound and evidence the subaltern public spheres in Brazil (Perlatto, 2015; Garcia, 2016).

From Habermas (2008) and Fraser (1990) we demonstrate that the public spheres are formed by diverse discursive genres, given they are rooted “[...] in flow networks of disorderly messages — news, reports, commentaries, talks, scenes and images, concerts and movies with informative, controversial, educational or entertaining content” (Habermas, 2008:14). The circulation of both primary and secondary genres becomes noticeable.

Henceforth, the relationship between the genres is not rigid — just as the relationship between the public spheres and the political system (Fraser, 1990; Habermas, 1997). For Bakhtin (1997:281), “during the process of their formation, [...] secondary genres absorb and transmute the primary genres (simple) of all sorts, which were devised in a spontaneous verbal communication”. Hence, in terms of the formation of the public spheres, this statement warns about the importance of the daily discussions, the ordinary language of men and women who seek to understand, convince and/or influence one another, inserted into socio-historic contexts and pervaded by ideologies — in view of Fairclough (2003) it becomes important to consider the effects of this constitution in the public spheres.

The understanding focused in discursive genres, the discourse moment (Fairclough, 2003) of the circulation of power in decision-making systems (Habermas, 1997; Mansbridge, 1999) may be understood through the study of the circulation of primary discursive genres (daily conversation; communication flows; informal, etc.) and secondary (formal decisions; laws; programs, etc.) and how hybrid genres and chains of genres are formed (Fairclough, 2003). In this sense, the study of the selective and subaltern public spheres (formation, reproduction and reorganization) might be initially performed through speech genres.

However, according to Bakhtin (1997:285), “each stage of development of the written language is marked by the speech genres”. In light of this, we are reminded that the research of public spheres cannot reproduce the work of Habermas, Fraser or other, but, as Avritzer and Costa (2004) stated, should develop a concept of public sphere (public spheres) according to its specificities, along with the various forms of texts, speeches and speech genres of concrete life. Thereby, it is possible to say that the changes in social practices and interactions imply changes in the discourse genres in a dialogic and dialectic relation (Fairclough, 2003; Bakhtin, 2006). Those changes occur, for instance, by the rearrangement of pre-existing genres.

Fairclough (2003) considers that the analysis of genres should operate in the following manner: a) analysis of the genre chain — the genres that relate to one another and transform into another genre; b) analysis of the mixture of genres — hybridity of genres in a specific text; a) analysis of an individual genre (primary or secondary). A genre chain refers to different genres that are regularly linked, involving systemic transformations (Fairclough, 2003). The author cites as an example: official documents — press releases — press reports. This genre chain is important for the constitution of public spheres. As an example, it is possible to imagine the genre chain of a decision-making process that was able to institutionalize a demand in terms of Habermas (1997): daily discussion — public protests (placards, messages, etc.) — petition — draft legislation — law. This process, which in concrete life does not appear linearly, is also marked by the hybridity, by the combination of different genres. After all, according to Fairclough (2003), a text is not simply positioned inside one genre. Thereupon, the combination of genres is an aspect of the inter-discourses of the texts and the analysis enables to locate texts inside the processes of social changes (Fairclough, 2003), which occur through the creativity of different publics and through the manifestations of popular culture that may be combined with other cultural forms (Fairclough, 2003).

Following Fairclough (2003), our proposal for the categories (activity, social relations and communication technologies) focuses mainly in the study of the individual genres. Consequently, the following categories offer an initial moment, which allows for the expansion of the study of chains and combinations of genres.

4.1 ANALYTICAL CATEGORIES: ACTIVITY, SOCIAL RELATIONS AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES

According to Fairclough (2003), building on Swales (1990), genre can be defined in terms of the purposes of the activity. Fairclough (2003) suggests that a single genre may have several communicative purposes, which can be ordered hierarchically. Analyzing the hierarchy is crucial to understand how a text is constituted within practice networks. Following Habermas (2012), we indicate that genres with clear instrumental and strategic purposes are typical of systems (such as administrative acts,

public bids, etc.) and other genres are related to the rationality of interpersonal relations. Fairclough (2003) warns, however, that although the genre's purpose is relevant for its identification, it is not the sole criterion.

Within the activity category we can analyze the purposes of different genres used by weak publics, strong publics and other publics belonging to subaltern public spheres, often silenced or having their purposes concealed by the hegemonic sphere (Perlatto, 2015). According to Squires (2002), Avritzer and Costa (2004) and Perlatto (2015), it is possible to infer, from the purposes of the genres, the publics to which they belong. Genres used by enclave spheres, for example, can be different from those used by satellite publics, given that the first group has more media attention, more material resources and do not bother to remain "invisible", having their purposes publicly established. Taking this aspect into consideration, it is also relevant to understand where are the systematic distortions in purposes or how they have causal ideological effects, as defined by Fairclough (2003).

The second category, *social relations*, refers to the relations between social actors, which can be organizations, groups or subjects. According to Fairclough (2003), discourse genres as forms of interaction are particular types of social relations formed by dimensions of power, solidarity, social hierarchy and social distance, and can be analyzed through which genres are mobilized by networks of practices.

Habermas (2008) highlights as relevant actors in the public spheres the media, lobbyists, lawyers, experts, moral and intellectual entrepreneurs. We add the subjects of popular and subaltern cultures (Fraser, 1990; Warner, 2016). In this sense, it is important to analyze the interactions between the different spheres (and actors), whether they are cooperative or conflictive (Avritzer and Costa, 2004; Perlatto, 2015). In light of the variety of social relations, we can regard public spheres (selective and subaltern) as instances of social struggles (Fraser, 1990; Calhoun, 2010), of conflicts of "ways of life" in times of (re)organization of hegemonic positions (Fairclough, 2003). It is the task of empirical research to delineate its historical contours.

With regard to *communicative technologies* we can classify the discourses starting from the technological mediations between the subjects and social actors. Fairclough (2003) argues that the growing complexity of the network of social practices is linked to new communication technologies - telephone, radio, television, Internet etc. This is relevant because technological change walks alongside the development of new genres (such as the email's multimodality) and new combinations of genres.

The immediate agenda here is to consider how different public spheres use communication technologies (currently highlighting the internet, especially blogs and social networks, but considering that several publics may be formed without access to the internet and/or social networks or with restricted access) and how the change in communication technologies changes the very structure of the public sphere and allow an opportunity for counterpublics to form. Zhang (2006), for example, studied the construction of subaltern public discourses in China in online discussion groups, showing that subaltern audiences used online spheres to exchange views and discuss issues of interest.

In order to synthesize the possible categories of analysis of the speech genres, considering Fairclough's (2003) approach, we have developed a didactic framework (box 1), which can be used to support empirical research.

BOX 1 **METHODOLOGICAL PROPOSAL FOR THE ANALYSIS OF PUBLIC SPHERES (SELECTIVE AND SUBALTERN)**

Activity	Social Relations	Communication Technologies
Communicative Purpose	Relations between publics: organizations, groups or subjects	Existing technology mediations
	Topics	
What are the different publics doing? What is (or what are) the communicative purpose(s) of the speech genre? Are the purposes separable or overlapping? What types of rationality predominate?	What are the social relations between publics? How are the “producers” and “consumers” of the speeches interacting? Does the genre allow an approximation between them? How do genres construct and/or resist power relations?	Does the new genre need any technological mediation to reach its audiences? If yes, how is this mediation? One way or two? How does the gender relate to recent technological changes?
	Observations	
It can be classified as: informative, propagandistic, informative, normative, etc. and according to the following criteria: deprecated genres, pre-genres and situated genres situated (Cf. Fairclough, 2003). It is possible to use Habermas’ (2012) action models: strategic, dramaturgical, normative and communicative.	Formal/informal language can be identified, for example, through the forms of treatment, punctuation and lexical choice used. It is relevant to observe how the interactions are occurring: in a cooperative or conflictive way. It is possible to understand how the different publics and spheres build relationships with the business sector and political power.	It is relevant to analyze whether these mediations allow, in fact, for an interaction. It is also relevant to identify narrative changes in mediations, and to analyze how new technologies relate to genres (how the internet provides new dynamics). Here, it is important to consider the compositional construction of the genre (Bakhtin, 1997).

Source: Adapted form Fairclough (2003).

In order to present the relevance of these categories, we synthesized some texts that bring relevant elements in terms of activity, social relations and communicational technologies. These researches also illustrate relations between language, discourse, discursive genres and public spheres. Fraser (1990) cites as an interesting case of subaltern counterpublics: the feminists of the late twentieth century. They built new terms to describe social reality, including “sexism”, “double journey”, “double day’s journey”, “sexual harassment”, “marital rape” and “acquaintance rape”.

Stemming from this language, identities and needs were reformulated even without the advantages of the dominant public spheres of the time. Mpofo (2015) shows how subaltern voices were built on Web 2.0 platforms from the notion of subaltern public spheres in Africa. Palacios (2015) studied participatory experiences in Porto Alegre, Brazil, showing how they restricted the participation of women. Kelly’s (2001) research on journalism indicates the existence of different publics, with unequal cultural styles and unequal access to the media. In short, all of these studies contain elements of activities, social relations and communication technologies, clearly showing their relevance, and the importance of including discourse genre analysis as part of public spheres.

After our analysis, we now propose a sequence of analysis and research organization.

4.2 RESEARCH ORGANIZATION

The sequence of analysis may be structured starting from the context and towards the text (Bakhtin, 1997, 2006; Motta-Roth, 2008). The sequence starts by (1) Identifying the forms and types of verbal interactions in connection with the concrete conditions where they take place”, namely, by the circumscription of the public spheres and its relations to other spheres of social life; (2) “The identification of the different utterances, of the isolated speech acts (or discourse acts) in strict connection to the interaction they belong” and (3), “The analysis of the forms of the language in their habitual linguistic interpretation” (Motta-Roth, 2008:356). In this process of analysis, the categories of activities, social relations and communication technologies are fundamental, as outlined by Fairclough (2003).

This suggests, according to Fairclough (2001, 2003), that it is essential to consider the relations between text and context, socio-historic conditions of “production”, “distribution” and “consumption” of the discourses. Consistently with this plural context, Habermas (2008) recognizes the diversity of the actors of the public spheres such as activists, participants of social movements, mass communication media and, nowadays, social networks. Throughout this process it is important to highlight the differences between weak and strong publics (Fraser, 1990), subaltern public spheres (Perlatto, 2015) and the diverse forms of popular expression, guided by emotion, performance and other “languages” (Perlatto, 2015), such as humor, irony, parody, among others. It is worth highlighting the current importance of manifestation through Internet “memes”.

Hirschkop (2004) and Gardiner (2004) also present that in the public spheres, specially in the subaltern ones, other forms of representation become important, such as signals, tone of voice, body movements, metaphors and facial expressions – the authors consider that the public sphere should restore the fluidity of popular culture. Therefore, this conception of public sphere (*novelistic public sphere*) does not exclude plural forms of argumentation, representation and expression (Gardiner, 2004) and aligns with the proposition of subaltern public spheres (Fraser, 1990; Perlatto, 2015) by considering different forms of expression.

Distinctly, in our plural societies (Habermas, 1997), the forms of humor, laughter, irony and parody are not necessarily opposed to the hegemonic forms, in fact, these expressions are often displayed as ways of domination (such as countless cases of jokes that reproduce discrimination, racism, homophobia and sexism), hence, the importance of Fairclough (2003) stating that the judgment of a semiotic form as an ideology (or not) should be operated contextually and taking into consideration its causal effects in other social practices. Similarly, the empirical research becomes important also for democracy, because, according to Fraser (1990), not every counterpublic is “virtuous” — many might be antidemocratic and generate practices of exclusion and discrimination.

In view of that, our initial proposition (and still generic) considers the discursive genres and the various publics that constitute the public spheres (selective and subaltern), where the process expands “[...] (from daily conversation within civil society, passing through public discourse and through communication mediated by weak publics, even in the discourse institutionalized in the center of the political system), [and] assumes different forms in different arenas” (Habermas, 2008:13) — forming a chain of genres in the terms of Fairclough (2003). The research organization is not rigid, but only a possible direction, because “[...] the selective and subaltern public spheres are not rigid, but remain in constant relationship, dialogically or contentiously” (Perlatto, 2014:93).

The categories of publics/spheres represent only possibilities, given that the speech genres and language are not abstract and universal, but built and builders of creative ways of social reproduction and change. The differentiations between the spheres are dynamic, allowing for layering, tensions and complementarity. Habermas (1997:107) also started to state that the spheres are “porous” and enable “a connection between them”. This connection might take place through the structuring of primary genres into secondary genres, through pre-genres (Fairclough, 2003), but always within the scope of the dialogic.

The texts of the public spheres (Habermas, 1997, 2008) prolong through time and space, in the memory of the speech and in its more or less stable forms (Bakhtin, 1997, 2006). Meanwhile, discussion and polemic “as overt dialogic genres, continue to have a privileged role in the self-understanding of publics” (Warner, 2016:11). Moreover, circulation is a fundamental moment given that: “A text, in order to have a public, must continue to circulate through time and therefore can only be confirmed through an environment of inter-textual citation and implication; all publics are inter-textual, even the inter-generic” (Warner, 2016:12).

The critical analysis of genre may reveal also how the circulation of communication flows takes place in the spheres – the relationship between informal and formal communication, debates in social network and mass media visibility; daily conversations and political decisions, demands from social movements and “answers” from the State, finally, the deliberative and disputed, cooperative and conflictive, which might involve protests and civil disobedience (Habermas, 1997). Interestingly, from the dialogue between Habermas, Fraser, Fairclough and Bakhtin emerges the need to take into consideration a diversity of human communication practices: spoken (said and unsaid), written and performances. Even silences, after all, which themes, debates and issues are silenced and removed from the selective public sphere? And how those silences constitute the subaltern sphere? Which genres (pre-genre, hybrid genres, etc.) are mobilized? Bakhtin (2006) finds that the genre analysis and its socio-ideological composition may reveal the existence of “[...] centripetal forces [that] tend to the unification and centralization of the languages — silencing other marginal languages —, to the canonizing of certain ideological systems and, therefore, linguistic systems, and the establishment of the belief in a single language” (Severo, 2007:65).

The data for the research might be collected through different primary and secondary genres, and it is essential to understand the relationship between both inside of the studied context. There is, therefore, a wide range of data (newspapers, magazines, articles, books, videos, films, documentaries, social network posts, internet texts, images, billboards, documents, minutes, laws, declarations, performative demonstrations, concerts, daily conversations, letter, music, interviews, questionnaire, among others), which are needed to understand the formation of the public spheres with their multiple primary and secondary genres, situated genres, pre-genres and hybrid genres. The “data” always need to be considered inside their socio-historic context, ideological conditions and means of production (Bakhtin, 2006), distribution and consumption — which power relations (class, gender, ethnicity, cultural groups, etc.) are present? Who is not included? Those important questions have been asked since Fraser (1990).

Finally, the proposition reviewed here might serve, in the way of Fairclough (2001, 2003), as an emancipatory procedure by “giving voice” to the actors, unveiling the ideological processes or,

according to Habermas (2012), understanding the effects of distorted forms of communication. The perspectives of Bakhtin and Fairclough are critical, because they examine the historic context of the production, consumption and distribution of the text, “inquire fixated structures of the linguistic practices” and are emancipatory when attempting to “unveil the elements of the system of social relations present in the discourse and trying to evaluate the effects of those elements over social relations” (Motta-Roth, 2008:362). Thereby, the present proposition may be used as a research process that also contributes to the debate over problematic issues in our society — with an important need for visibility also in academia. Moreover, we do not start from closed categories and other ones may emerge during the development of the research. The demand is that by the end of the study the public spheres (selective and subaltern) must be (re)drawn and (re)contemplated according to the results found, with the addition of other publics, speech genres, social actors and relationships, present in tangible life.

5 FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discussions over speech genres in Mikhail Bakhtin are a fruitful source to thinking the public spheres (Gardiner, 2004) from dialogism, that may contribute rebuilding the gaps left by Habermas and Fraser regarding the understanding of the subaltern public spheres — which, as already stated by Perlatto (2015), is coherent with investigating the formation of the public spheres in Brazil. Fairclough (2003), in turn, offers analytical potentials for the critical study of discursive genres. Our proposition looks, mainly, at the subaltern public spheres for considering other “ways of expression legitimate for the configuration of a public sphere” (Perlatto, 2012:86) — ways that might differ from the ones hegemonically built in Europe or in the United States (Avritzer e Costa, 2004; Perlatto, 2012, 2015). We understand that through the discourse genres, beyond the “rational” standard, other expressions become open, such as the carnival spirit, playfulness, popular culture, humor, irony, parody, among other “live” and concrete utterances, in the words of Bakhtin (1987, 1997, 2006).

Finally, the methodological perspective developed for the study of the public spheres (selective and subaltern) in its relationships with other spheres is focused on the discursive genres (primary and secondary) and takes into consideration three central analytical elements: activity, social relations and communication technology. Those elements may be utilized as categories to identify the purposes, the relationships between different publics and the forms of communication in the genres mobilized by different public spheres. Thus, we emphasize the importance of previously studying the discursive genres in their diversity in order to understand those spheres and the various forms of discourse and other social practices that compose them, knowing that the historic changes in the discourse genres are inextricable from the changes in other spheres of human life. Through such practices, following Calhoun (2010) and Bakhtin (1997, 2006), we are able to see the public spheres always in a plural way, influencing and being influenced, because they are the products of social relations, institutional and cultural developments.

The present study offers elements to the field of Public Administration when revealing the importance of the understanding of the public spheres (selective and subaltern) and offering theoretical-methodological pathways for it. Following the agenda presented by Fraser (1990) and the statements of Warner (2016), this perspective brings light into the inequalities that affect the decision-

making of different publics, understanding how publics are differentiated or segmented and how they build ways of expression from those “places of speech” and still allows for following how the genres are mobilized by strong and weak publics, with inter-discourse, cooperative and/or conflictive relations taking place between them. This path enables to direct research towards how the different arenas of political decision relate to elements of popular culture and to what extent circularity and dissent are observed between them. A research agenda left by Habermas, which involved protest potentials (environmentalism, feminism, resistance movements, among others) and by Fairclough about dialogue in the contemporary public sphere. There was also an attempt to overcome views that simplify the plurality of the civil society, the social movements, and the relationship State-society — reminding that movements, such as feminism, are also plural. Alongside, the movement of various publics in Brazil in events such as the Journeys of June of 2013, the impeachment process (2015-2016) (and the divergent feelings regarding the process) and, in general, movements and protests that have been marking Brazil and building different themed public spheres, with selective and subaltern publics, represent important contexts for study.

This agenda is important in Brazil, which has been formed by a selective public sphere and subaltern public spheres since the XIX century, with great diversity of publics, forms of expression and State-society relationships (Perlatto, 2012, 2015). Still inside the scope of Public Administration, the evident issue is the “need for connection between the political institutions and the subaltern public spheres, in order to convert its organizational potential into a true policy of transformation in the country” (Perlatto, 2015:141). Thus, in the scope of Public Administration, issues such as the development of public policy are pervaded by ideological and hegemonic disputes; granted that managing councils and other participative arrangements might constitute spaces of little “openness” to a plurality of publics and become elitist through strong publics and, furthermore, it is also possible to research how discourse genres from the private sector may “colonize” public administration, public arenas and civil society movements, in the way Fairclough (2001, 2003) criticizes the “entrance” of managerialism in British higher education.

The theoretical-methodological proposal attempts to bring a more comprehensive character to the study of the public spheres in their social, historic and political contexts. It is our hope that his theoretical framework may assist researcher in the pursuit of understanding the formation of the public spheres (selective and subaltern) and bring them and their various publics visibility as a part of the critical analysis of discourse genres. We look forward to seeing this proposal fed by new possibilities.

REFERENCES

- AVRITZER, Leonardo; COSTA, Sérgio. Teoria crítica, democracia e esfera pública: concepções e usos na América Latina. *Dados*, v. 47, n. 4, p. 703-728, 2004.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *A cultura popular na Idade Média e no Renascimento: o contexto de François Rabelais*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 1987.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhail. *Estética da criação verbal*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 1997.
- BAKHTIN, Mikhail; [VOLOCHINOV, Valentin Nikolaevich]. *Marxismo e filosofia da linguagem: problemas fundamentais do método sociológico da linguagem*. São Paulo: Hucitec, 2006.
- BOJE, David M. Resistência carnavalesca ao espetáculo global. *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, v. 42, n. 4, p. 1-18, 2002.
- CALHOUN, Craig. The public sphere in the field of power. *Social Science History*, v. 34, n. 3, p. 301-335, 2010.
- DAHLBERG, Lincoln. Net-public sphere research: beyond the “first phase”. *Javnost-The Public*, v. 11, n. 1, p. 27-43, 2004.
- DOMINGUES, Petrônio. Cultura popular: as construções de um conceito na produção historiográfica. *História*, v. 30, n. 2, p. 401-419, 2011.
- ELLEY, Geoff. Nations, publics and political cultures: placing Habermas in the nineteenth century. In: CALHOUN, Craig. *Habermas and the public sphere*. London: MIT Press, 1992. p. 289-339.
- FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. *Analysing discourse: textual analysis for social research*. London: Routledge, 2003.
- FAIRCLOUGH, Norman. *Discurso e mudança social*. Brasília: UnB, 2001.
- FRASER, Nancy. Rethinking the public sphere: a contribution to the critique of actually existing democracy. *Social Text*, n. 25/26, p. 56-80, 1990.
- GARCIA, André S. *Esferas públicas como uma categoria fundante da gestão social*. Dissertation (Master Degree) — Universidade Federal de Lavras, Lavras, 2016.
- GARDINER, Michael E. Wild publics and grotesque symposiums: Habermas and Bakhtin on dialogue, everyday life and the public sphere. *The Sociological Review*, v. 52, n. s1, p. 28-48, 2004.
- GINZBURG, Carlo. *O queijo e os vermes: o cotidiano e as ideias de um moleiro perseguido pela Inquisição*. 3. ed. São Paulo: Companhia das Letras, 2002.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen. Comunicação política na sociedade mediática: o impacto da teoria normativa na pesquisa empírica. *Líbero*, v. 11, n. 21, p. 9-22, 2008.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen. *Direito e democracia: entre facticidade e validade*. Rio de Janeiro: Tempo Brasileiro, 1997.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen. *Mudança estrutural da esfera pública: investigações sobre uma categoria da sociedade burguesa*. São Paulo: Unesp, 2014.
- HABERMAS, Jürgen. *Teoria do agir comunicativo: racionalidade da ação e racionalização social*. São Paulo: Martins Fontes, 2012.
- HIRSCHKOP, Ken. Justice and drama: on Bakhtin as a complement to Habermas. *The Sociological Review*, v. 52, n. s1, p. 49-66, 2004.
- KELLY, Deirdre M. The public policy pedagogy of corporate and alternative news media. *Studies in Philosophy and Education*, v. 30, n. 2, p. 185-198, 2011.
- LAVALLE, Adrián G. Jürgen Habermas e a virtualização da publicidade. *Margem*, n. 16, p. 65-82, 2002.
- MANSBRIDGE, Jane. Everyday talk in the deliberative system. In: MACEDO, S. *Deliberative politics: essays on democracy and disagreement*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999. p. 211-242.
- MOTTA-ROTH, Désirée. Análise crítica de gêneros: contribuições para o ensino e a pesquisa de linguagem. *Delta*, v. 24, n. 2, p. 341-383, 2008.
- MPOFU, Shepherd. When the subaltern speaks: citizen journalism and genocide ‘victims’ voices online. *African Journalism Studies*, v. 36, n. 4, p. 82-101, 2015.
- PALACIOS, Jone M. The sex of participatory democracy. An analysis of the theoretical approaches and experiences of participatory democracy from a feminist viewpoint. *Democratization*, v. 23, n. 5, p. 940-959, 2015.
- PERLATTO, Fernando. Habermas, a esfera pública e o Brasil. *Revista Estudos Políticos*, v. 4, n. 1, p. 78-94, 2012.

PERLATTO, Fernando. Seletividade da esfera pública e esferas públicas subalternas: disputas e possibilidades na modernização brasileira. *Revista de Sociologia e Política*, v. 23, n. 53, p. 121-145, 2015.

RESENDE, Viviane de M.; RAMALHO, Viviane. *Análise de discurso crítica*. São Paulo: Contexto, 2006.

SEVERO, Cristine G. Por uma aproximação entre Bakhtin e Hannah Arendt. *Revista de Ciências Humanas*, v. 41, n. 1-2, p. 59-81, 2007.

SILVA, Renata. Espacialidade em Bakhtin e Pêcheux: semelhanças e dessemelhanças. *Revista Brasileira de Linguística Aplicada*, v. 9, n. 1, p. 41-55, 2009.

SQUIRES, Catherine R. Rethinking the black public sphere: an alternative vocabulary for multiple publics. *Communication Theory*, v. 12, n. 4, p. 446-468, 2002.

SWALES, John. *Genre analysis*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990.

WARNER, Michael. Públicos e contrapúblicos (versão abreviada). *Periódico Permanente*, v. 4, n. 6, p. 1-17, 2016.

ZHANG, Weiyu. Constructing and disseminating subaltern public discourses in China. *Javnost-The Public*, v. 13, n. 2, p. 41-64, 2006.

Rosália Beber de Souza

Doctoral Student of Science in Administration by Universidade Federal de Lavras (Ufla), Lavras / MG — Brazil; Professor at Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV), Viçosa / MG — Brazil; Master of Language by Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV). E-mail: rosaliabeber@ufv.br.

Valderi de Castro Alcântara

Doctoral Student of Science in Administration by Universidade Federal de Lavras (Ufla), Lavras / MG — Brazil; Master of Science in Administration by Universidade Federal de Lavras (Ufla), Lavras / MG — Brazil. E-mail: valderidecastroalcantara@gmail.com.

José Roberto Pereira

Doctor of Sociology, PhD, by Universidade de Brasília (UnB) — Brasília. Full Professor at Universidade Federal de Lavras (Ufla) — Department of Administration and Economy, Lavras / MG — Brazil. E-mail: jrobertopereira2013@gmail.com.