

8th Brazilian Symposium on Health Surveillance, Guimarães Rosa and the possible *veredas*

Daniella Guimarães de Araújo* 

One thing is to place ideas arranged, other is to deal with country of people, of flesh and sanguine, of thousand-and-many miseries... S'many people—gives scare of to know—and notone so calms: all nascenting, crescendoing, so wedding, wanting collocation of employment, consumables, health, abundance...¹

Every time we think of writer Guimarães Rosa, the honoree of the 8th Brazilian Symposium on Health Surveillance (Simbravisa) of 2019, the words “crossing” and “backlands” come to mind.

From time to time, our real backlands become harsher and we have to face the challenges and problems of a world of uncertainty, vulnerability, inequality and misery.

Technological progress, scientific production and health surveillance cannot be dissociated from this world in which problems overlap and dualities are even more far apart.

The year of 2020 has barely started and we have already had: beer that did not cause pleasure or joy, but damage and death, in Minas Gerais; the environment and the lives of thousands of people destroyed by climate change in different parts of our country; irresponsible management of drinking water in Rio de Janeiro, with algae metabolites and banned detergents; the emergence of the coronavirus and the enormous challenges that ensued, including the communication of risks to the society. All these problems are somehow related to health surveillance.

In this way, we are all crossing the backlands and looking for some refreshment. Metaphorically, we are also part of the “*Corpo de Baile*” - title of a remarkable novel by Guimarães Rosa -, in constant transit, in pursuit of life, health and dignity.

The same idea leads to collective health. We have to join the efforts of organized society, workers, researchers and managers to discuss and improve health surveillance. It is somewhat of a search process.

With the theme of Democracy and Health - Paths to Success and Failure in Health Surveillance, the 8th Simbravisa took place in Belo Horizonte, Brazil, in November 2019. It was attended by 1,099 workers, researchers, professors, undergraduate and graduate students, managers, healthcare professionals, health counselors. Highlights to the presence of people from the backlands who came to represent the culture of the communities that Guimarães Rosa loved and described.

A symposium like this can give new meaning to the work done in a country in desperate need of solutions to issues that plague its everyday life. Especially for traditional health surveillance, which does not always have the means to think about democracy, social policies, health and the system within the big picture in which it is inserted. Our health surveillance does not always gather the conditions to establish a dialogue with human suffering and the inhospitable backlands that are scattered about our cities and their multiple urban systems today.

In this environment, the theme of the symposium pointed to the importance of contextualized thinking considering the times of democratic fragility and consequent fragility of the Brazilian Unified Health System (SUS).

Superintendência Regional de Saúde
de Sete Lagoas, Secretaria Estadual
de Saúde, Sete Lagoas, MG, Brasil

* E-mail: daniella.araujo@saude.mg.gov.br



It pointed to the vulnerability of the environment and life considering Brumadinho and Mariana, the power of the market versus that of the society.

The meeting included the discussion of the appalling health tragedies that occurred in the country, questions related to our daily work, and Marcelo Firpo's keynote speech at the end of the symposium: how to get to the heart of health surveillance².

At this point I make my contribution, inspired by the writer honored by the symposium. I find inspiration in his heart.

It was our heart that suggested bringing people from Rosa's backlands to the symposium. As a symbol of what we believe - the link between health and culture - which does not translate into something isolated, show-like, decorative objects or mere entertainment. Culture as the basis for founding our society.

Culture as the icon of a civilizing process that is fundamental for the construction of health in its broader concept.

To live democratically is also to encourage solidarity, to strengthen relationships between different parties and to respect unequal knowledge. It means to strike a balance between the action of the markets and the actions for life protection. The balance between regulation and emancipation, as Santos³ points out.

As Firpo said, "it is up to health surveillance to promote a type of regulation with bolder practices of social participation; not consumers or beneficiaries, but citizens and subjects with an active voice, linked to emancipatory social struggles"⁴.

This statement is connected with Rosa's work, for both shed light on a world that is not made by scientific rationality only. In his short stories and novels, the writer gives voice and turn to unequal characters. He includes, rather than segregates. He emphasizes his characters' dignity and ability to fight. They can be the rulers, not the subjects.

The way we think about health and life - and, therefore, health surveillance - must include this participation. We must be inclusive in every sense of the word. An initiative that is a "joint effort by everyone": State and society. Markets and consumers.

Daily life presents us with countless questions related to health surveillance. The herbalist with his roots, his herbs and his knowledge. The hot dog vendor on the corner and his regulars. Fishermen and farmers supplying school meals. Indigenous people and the cassava processed to be sold at a farmers' market, the cheese maker, the would-be beauty salon owner are in every city. Among the great owners of the capital, corporations that manufacture processed food and medicines, pharmaceutical megastores, mega-entrepreneurs of products that are purportedly for health. It is also about this culture, this economic and social system that we speak.

For this reason, we put an herbalist, a folk healer, a storyteller, a musician and embroiderers on the same floor as the scientific conferences. To pay homage to the differences, the invisible ones, the outcasts, those who are adrift. That's why we had Tico and Maria. Nuely, Uiara, Bárbara, Fátima. Clarinha. Maria dos Reis and Leidiane.

That is why Cordisburgo, Morro da Garça and Andrequicé, small towns in these vast backlands.

To talk about the necessary bonds, the essential dialogues, the one nature of all rationalities, to form spaces of coexistence and not entertainment.

To co-exist is also the role of health surveillance.

Not this bureaucratic, paperwork-oriented surveillance done by scripted inspections, but one that is concerned with the dynamics of the cities, with life in the cities in its civilizing and inclusive dimensions, as it were, the poetic dimension, capable of giving meaning to things.

That is why we paid tribute to intellectual and manual workers, combining scholar knowledge and folk culture. To what is, and what is not. To disease, to health. To the physical, to the metaphysical. To war, to love. Dualities, as Guimarães Rosa was so fond of.

In times when thought is threatened by censorship and the environment is undermined, that writer encourages us to read the world and to face a wide range of ways of life to which we owe respect.

Contemporary health surveillance with all its technical expertise must understand and recognize political and social factors, respecting and integrating knowledge to its primary function in the control and reduction of risks, as desired by those we serve. We are public servants.

We believe that the symposium highlighted the importance of going beyond the conservatism that is typical of health surveillance and seeking an understanding of what social justice is in times as harsh as those we are living today.

This fundamental field of action of the SUS should actually engage in the fight against the problems of our fastchanging world.

It should forsake this authoritarian approach that hoards administrative processes and often fails to prevent harm. It must find possible paths, a source of knowledge and a powerful intervention in the risk society.

It must also include the outcasts from the economy. From science. From politics. The provisional beings that Riobaldo talks about. Rosa's yokels and hillbillies.

The theme of the symposium and the tribute to the writer raised basic questions: will we be able to innovate technically and politically so as to aggregate, drive dialogue, and address the root causes or will we continue relentlessly performing the tasks imposed by the market?

Veredas, in Rosa's book, are places of water, plenty, palm trees. Places where life can thrive. Places of health amidst an inhospitable environment, where there is no harm in the crossing.

May the inspiring poetry of these palm trees reach our hearts and guide our work.



To the members and coordinators of the Theme Group on Health Surveillance/Brazilian Association of Collective Health⁴ who make us believe that a brighter future is possible. To the partners who could not attend this Symposium but who have always worked for its continuity: André Gemal, Agenor Silva, Alice Pequeno, Ediná Costa, Gisélia Souza, Vera Pepe.

Our thanks to every participant who came to Minas Gerais and found paths to open up their minds, refresh their spirits and tense their muscles for action.

Democracy and Health!

REFERENCES

1. Rosa JG. Grande sertão: veredas. São Paulo: José Olympio, 1956.
2. Porto MFS. Crise das utopias e as quatro justiças: ecologias, epistemologias e emancipação para reinventar a saúde coletiva. *Cienc Saude Coletiva*. 2019;24(12):4449-57. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1413-812320182412.25292019>
3. Santos BS. Renovar a teoria crítica, e reinventar a emancipação social. São Paulo: Boitempo; 2018.
4. Dias BC. Marcelo Firpo: coracionem a vigilância sanitária. Rio de Janeiro: Associação Brasileira de Saúde Coletiva; 2019.

Conflict of Interest

Authors have no potential conflict of interest to declare, related to this study's political or financial peers and institutions.



This publication is licensed under the Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 Unported license. To view a copy of this license, visit <http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/3.0/deed.pt>.