

DOSSIER

BRAZIL, FRANCE, BELGIUM AND OTHER FRANCOPHONE COUNTRIES:

research relations and knowledge
building in journalism¹

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Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo

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DOI: 10.25200/BJR.v15n2.2019.1236

ABSTRACT – This article describes the creation of the Journalism Studies Network (REJ) between the University of Brasilia and the University of Rennes 1 (Lannion), to which other French-language research centers such as the University of Laval, Quebec, and more recently the Free University of Brussels also joined. Joint research started in 2000 and is still active today in international cooperation involving dozens of teachers and students from different institutions. Periodic meetings are held at different institutions and countries to present and discuss topics related to ongoing research, from epistemological issues to comparative reports on field research.

Key words: Journalism Research. international cooperation. Brazil. France. Belgium.

BRASIL, FRANÇA, BÉLGICA E OUTRAS FRANCOFONIAS: relações de pesquisa e construção de conhecimento na área de jornalismo

RESUMO – O artigo a seguir trata de remontar às origens da criação da Rede de estudos sobre jornalismo – REJ, entre a Universidade de Brasília e a Universidade de Rennes 1 (Lannion) ao qual vieram se agregar outros centros de pesquisa em língua francesa tais como a Universidade de Laval, Quebec, e mais recentemente a Universidade Livre de Bruxelas. As pesquisas conjuntas, iniciadas a partir de 2000, se mantêm ativas atualmente dentro de um contexto de cooperação internacional que envolve dezenas de professores e alunos de diferentes instituições. Encontros periódicos são realizados em diferentes instituições e países a fim de apresentar e debater temas relativos a pesquisas em andamento, desde questões epistemológicas até relatos comparativos sobre pesquisas de campo.

Palavras-chave: Pesquisa em Jornalismo. Cooperação Internacional. Brasil. França. Bélgica.

BRASIL, FRANCIA, BÉLGICA Y OTRAS FRANCOFONÍAS: relaciones de investigación y construcción de conocimiento en el área de periodismo

RESUMEN – El siguiente artículo se remonta a los orígenes de la creación de la Red de Estudios de Periodismo – REJ –, entre la Universidad de Brasilia y la Universidad de Rennes 1 (Lannion), a la que se agregaron otros centros de investigación en lengua francesa como la Universidad Laval, Quebec, y más recientemente la Universidad Libre de Bruselas. La investigación conjunta iniciada desde 2000 sigue activa en la actualidad en un contexto de cooperación internacional que involucra a docenas de profesores y estudiantes de diferentes instituciones. Se realizan reuniones periódicas en diferentes instituciones y países para presentar y discutir temas relacionados con la investigación en curso, desde cuestiones epistemológicas hasta informes comparativos sobre investigación de campo.

Palabras clave: Investigación sobre Periodismo. Cooperación internacional. Brasil. Francia. Bélgica.

1 Historical ties

Our research experience in international cooperation in journalism in the wide area of francophone began around 2000 between the University of Brasilia (UnB) and the University of Rennes 1, in France, when I was undergoing my postdoctoral training under the guidance of Professors Denis Ruellan and Erik Neveu from the Institute of Political Sciences (Institut d'Études Politiques – IEP).

I would like to clarify, however, that much of my involvement and motivation for this work dates back to the 1970s. At that time, I was a young graduate journalist working under complex and unstable political circumstances, and I decided to leave Brazil. My destination was Lyon, France, where I lived for over ten years. I later worked in other places and countries as a correspondent journalist. During this time, I also completed my postgraduate studies (Master's and PhD) in Paris and Grenoble.

At that period in my life, I made contact with and was influenced by intellectuals who had an influence on my academic and journalistic career.

Once I moved back to Brazil in the 1990s, I became a professor at the Faculty of Communication, University of Brasilia, where I met friends and peers in communication and journalism research.

We were the first postgraduate program in the country to offer a specialized research line in Journalism and Society. We introduced the reflections and work of renowned authors from different francophone countries, from France to Belgium, and from Canada to certain French speaking African countries.

We organized meetings, conferences, publications and research papers on bilateral cooperation agreements. Undergraduate students were selected for university exchanges between French institutions and UnB.

The most beneficial cooperation was between the Faculty of Communication (FAC) and the Lannion University Institute of Technology (IUT) for undergraduate students as of 2001 where dozens of students crossed the Atlantic Ocean, in both directions, to study for one or two years.

The choice to cooperate with Lannion IUT, which specializes in journalism studies (University of Rennes 1) occurred by chance when a Brazilian student from the French School of Brasilia (Lycée François Mitterand) was selected to attend the Institute.

The following year, we contacted the IUT director, Professor Denis Ruellan, and we shortly signed the first international cooperation agreement between the two institutions.

I would like to state that Professor Ruellan was particularly interested in strengthening ties with Brazil, a country with which he had already developed a bond with since childhood. Denis was the grandson of geographer Francis Ruellan (one of the members of the expedition created to choose the site where the new capital of Brazil, Brasilia, would be built) and the son of Alain Ruellan, a researcher who worked in Brazil in the 1970s in the field of agronomy.

Denis, still a young journalist at the time, put together reports in the Amazon for a French television channel.

The bond he had created with Brazil was handed down from father to son. It was now time to extend this bond to new generations. This includes Denis's son, who studied geography at UnB as an exchange student.

Due to these historical ties of mutual interest, cooperative work has extended and remains active today in more advanced levels of scientific research.

2 The Journalism Studies Network

Our research network was officially created in 2002.

We started the partnership by founding the Journalism Studies Network (REJ), an interdisciplinary and international research group with the purpose of studying the production and mediation of journalistic information.

Studies organized around journalism and new technologies have existed since the late 1990s, but the group was only officially formed after holding many meetings and debates on the subject.

The initiative to unite and organize researchers from different backgrounds to study the transformations in the production and dissemination of information at local and regional levels linked to the development of the internet in the first phase came from the Lannion group (Cf. Ruellan & Thierry, 1998). As the group grew stronger, other researchers joined the network, and two new collective projects were launched, the first one on “Journalism as a permanent invention” (Ringoot & Utard, 2005; Augey et al., 2008) and the second on “Everyday Journalism”.

In Brazil, these projects were developed under the Post-Graduate Program for the Faculty of Communication, University of Brasilia (UnB), as part of the activities included in the Journalism and Society research line. The group was originally comprised of Professors Dione Moura and Luiz Martins da Silva, postgraduate students, including PhD students, Fábio Pereira and Francisco Sant’Anna.

The originality of the project comes from the fact that it is international and cooperative. Initially, the group was francophone, that is, the works were presented in French in the first meetings. Later, with the inclusion of new researchers from different countries, we started to adopt other languages into the works, including Portuguese and Spanish.

3 Circulation of knowledge

This intercultural and multilingual dynamic allowed for and encouraged the circulation of knowledge in this Franco-Brazilian space. The work of two Canadian researchers, Jean Charron and

Jean De Bonville, is of particular importance (See Brin et al., 2004; Charron & De Bonville, 2016). It was the Journalism and Society Research line at UnB's PPG Communication that introduced these Canadians and their research to Brazilian researchers. We used their book *Nature et Transformation du Journalisme, théorie et recherches empiriques* as a reference.

The authors breathed new breath into understanding the phenomenon of contemporary journalism by introducing more modern concepts and models in the field. Among the Canadians' main contributions is the concept of communication journalism being the fourth of the major stages of journalism which are: 1 – broadcast journalism; 2 – opinion journalism; 3 – information journalism; and lastly, 4 – communication journalism.

In addition to Charron and De Bonville, we introduced the book *Sociologie du Journalisme*, by Erik Neveu (2001), later translated and published by Loyola under the title *Sociology of Journalism* (2006). Loyola was invited to the opening of the 10th SBPJOR Meeting held in 2010, in São Paulo.

We also brought Denis Ruellan's work on the professional identity of journalists to the public's attention, who came to be recognized and disseminated throughout Brazil in articles and communications at congresses (Ruellan, 2004; 2006; 2017).

Brazilian researchers did not read Ruellan's original works in French, but thanks to our studies and citations, he became recognized and was ultimately invited to give lectures and short courses at several Brazilian universities. Study groups on Ruellan's work were formed in undergraduate and postgraduate journalism courses at the Federal University of Rio Grande do Sul, Porto Alegre, the Federal University of Santa Catarina, Florianópolis, and the Federal University of Bahia, Salvador.

The REJ experience was presented during the tenth SBPJor congress and later published in an article, co-authored by Fábio Pereira, in the BJR journal (Adghirni & Pereira, 2011). In addition, four International Conferences on Structural Changes in Journalism (Mejor, acronym in Portuguese) were held that brought together researchers from the Journalism Studies Network to discuss contemporary dynamics. The Mejor Conferences have been held in the following cities: Brasilia (2011), Natal (2013), Florianópolis (2015) and Quebec (2017). The next edition is due to take place in France in 2020.

In each one of the events, different topics were discussed such as research methodology, comparative studies, media culture, journalistic narratives, interviews, and others, approached by interdisciplinary views of participants from various countries.

The latest events were organized by Professors Fabio Pereira (UnB) and Florence Le Cam (the Free University of Brussels). Both of them are researchers trained in the spirit of the REJ that allow for the exchange of ideas, and work within a wide range of experiences not inhibited by closed and conservative research models.

The second initiative of discussions held by the network is the creation of the magazine *Sobre o Jornalismo / Sur le journalisme / About Journalism* in four countries: Belgium, Brazil, Canada and France, initiated by Professor Florence Le Cam in 2012, who currently works as one of the magazine's editors alongside Denis Ruellan, François Demers and Fábio Pereira.

The objective of the periodical is to serve as a starting point for publishing innovative works on journalism with transdisciplinary views and research conducted by graduate students. The magazine hopes to act as a place to encourage scientific production in the field.

The tradition of journalism studies is not new, but it remains fresh by reactivating challenges linked to the social, political, ideological, cultural and technological transformations that work within this social practice.

The constitution of an international and interdisciplinary experience such as the Journalism Studies Network has opened the way for investigating journalism and offers exciting challenges for future work in the field.

NOTES

- 1 This essay is adapted from the closing conference of the 1st Brazil-France-Francophone Belgium Journalism Research Conference: The Sociocultural Frontiers of Journalism in Brazil and in Francophone space. São Paulo: November 12–13, 2018.

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