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# A STUDY ON LOCAL AND REGIONAL JOURNALISM IN BRAZIL:

a survey of theses and dissertations (2010-2020)



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**ABSTRACT** – This article aims to provide an overview of local and regional journalism research in Brazil. To do this, we conducted a survey of theses and dissertations on local and/or regional journalism defended in postgraduate communication and journalism between 2010 and 2020. The data was collected from the Capes Catalog and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) and then analyzed for content analysis and bibliometrics. We identified and analyzed a total of 115 academic writings, comprising 102 dissertations and 13 theses. Our results showed a predominance of regional studies, a concentration of empirical studies in state capitals and cities, and a presence of “research deserts” in the country.

**Key words:** Local and regional journalism. Theses. Dissertations. Survey. Brazil.

## **A PESQUISA DE JORNALISMO LOCAL E REGIONAL NO BRASIL: levantamento das teses e dissertações (2010-2020)**

**RESUMO** – Este artigo tem por objetivo traçar um panorama das pesquisas de jornalismo local e regional no Brasil. Para isso, realizamos um levantamento das teses e dissertações sobre jornalismo local e/ou regional defendidas em programas de pós-graduação em

comunicação e jornalismo entre os anos de 2010 e 2020. Os dados foram coletados no Catálogo da Capes e na Biblioteca Digital Brasileira de Teses e Dissertações (BDTD) e analisados a partir dos parâmetros da análise de conteúdo e da bibliometria. Ao todo, identificamos e analisamos 115 produções, sendo 102 dissertações e 13 teses. Entre os resultados obtidos destaca-se a predominância de pesquisas classificadas tematicamente como regionais, a concentração dos estudos empíricos nas capitais estaduais e metrópoles e a presença de “desertos de pesquisa” no país.

**Palavras-chave:** Jornalismo local e regional. Teses. Dissertações. Levantamento. Brasil.

## **LA INVESTIGACIÓN DEL PERIODISMO LOCAL Y REGIONAL EN BRASIL: relevamiento de tesis y disertaciones (2010-2020)**

**RESUMEN** – Este artículo tiene como objetivo proporcionar una visión general de la investigación periodística local y regional en Brasil. Para ello, realizamos un relevamiento de tesis y disertaciones sobre periodismo local y/o regional defendidas en programas de posgrado en comunicación y periodismo entre 2010 y 2020. Los datos fueron recolectados en el Catálogo Capes y en la Biblioteca Digital Brasileña de Tesis y Disertaciones (BDTD) y analizados desde los parámetros de análisis de contenido y bibliometría. En total, identificamos y analizamos 115 producciones, de las cuales 102 fueron disertaciones y 13 tesis. Entre los resultados obtenidos, se destacan el predominio de investigaciones clasificadas temáticamente como regionales, la concentración de estudios empíricos en capitales de estado y metrópolis y la presencia de “desiertos de investigación” en el país.

**Palabras clave:** Periodismo local y regional. Tesis. Disertaciones. Relevamiento. Brasil.

### **1 Introduction**

There has been a rediscovery and appreciation of local and/or regional journalism in Brazil over the last few years. In the past, there was not much interest in journalistic activities outside the southern and central-western metropolitan regions of Brazil; however, today there is a growing interest in these activities and mapping and exploring them in more detail. One of the reasons for this recent interest is the number of cities that do not have any media outlets in the country, sometimes referred to as the “news deserts” (Projor, 2018).

The Atlas da Notícia 5.0<sup>1</sup>, published in February 2022, classifies 2.968 Brazilian municipalities (59%) as “news deserts”. This means that there are 29 million people who do not have access to

information about their own city, and the only information they do have access to is content produced by a national and/or regional network (Projor, 2022).

Due to these large areas in Brazil where news is in short supply, local and/or regional journalism (although not a recent area of study) is now drawing the attention of several researchers and gaining some forward momentum in academia. Even still, we know little about the studies and research on this theme, especially in a postgraduate context. For this reason, we consider it relevant to present an overview of local and/or regional journalism research in the country. The objective here is to locate and characterize the studies in order to identify thematic, methodological, media, and locational approaches currently being used in Brazilian research.

To achieve this goal we surveyed theses and dissertations on local and/or regional journalism defended in graduate programs in communication and journalism between the years 2010 and 2020. The data was collected from the Capes Catalog of Theses and Dissertations and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD)<sup>2</sup> based on the presence of the following keywords in the titles, abstracts and/or keywords: “regional journalism”, “regional media”, “local journalism”, “local media”, “interior press”, “interior journalism” and “interior media”.

After our data search was concluded, we had a corpus of 115 academic writings, comprising 102 dissertations and 13 theses. The works were analyzed based on the parameters of content analysis and bibliometrics (Macias-Chapula, 1998). The analytical categories we used were: 1) geographic distribution of PPGs with local and/or regional journalism research; 2) number of surveys on local and/or regional journalism by PPG; 3) media investigated in theses and dissertations of local and/or regional journalism; 4) cities studied in local and regional journalism theses and dissertations; 5) thematic classifications of local and/or regional journalism theses and dissertations and; 6) research techniques.

This paper will then move on to trace the trajectory of local and/or regional journalism studies in Brazil, highlighting pioneer works and reflections in the field. We shall then discuss the topic as it is today based on the results of the survey of theses and dissertations. Lastly, we shall present our final considerations on the subject.

## 2 Itinerary of Brazilian research on local and regional journalism

The first Brazilian studies dedicated to journalism began in the second half of the 19th century, but they did not focus much on news processes. The research was mostly documentary and historical on the means of dissemination, particularly books, newspapers, and magazines (Melo, 2008). Among these studies are the preliminary works of local and regional journalism which focused on the history of printed newspapers in different states throughout the country. The creation of journalism schools and the institutionalization of research in the 1970s led to academic records of communicational research in the regions (Melo, 2008; 2010). The first of these is the 1976 collection organized by José Marques de Melo, *Comunicação/InComunicação no Brasil*, which is comprised of a set of articles written on the relationship between regional media and popular culture, as well as a study on the crisis of newspapers in the interior of Minas Gerais.

Then, in 1977, Wilson da Costa Bueno, in his dissertation *Caracterização de um objeto conceitual para a análise da dicotomia imprensa industrial/imprensa artesanal no Brasil* (in English, Characterization of a conceptual object for the analysis of the industrial press/non-industrial press dichotomy in Brazil) presented a comparative analysis of the differences between the press in the state of São Paulo (classified as industrial) and the press from the interior of the state (classified as non-industrial), using the business model adopted by newspapers as a reference.

According to Bueno (1977), the industrial press consisted of a newsroom, administrative principles, and employees performing specific activities. It was not commonplace to have reporters 'doing everything'. However, there was no separation between the newsroom and other sectors of the media outlet for the non-industrial press. "There are fewer employees, and they also act as directors, as editors, as reporters, as proofreaders, as publicity contact, as graphic designers and as printers" (Bueno, 1977<sup>3</sup>, as cited in Oliveira, 2008, p. 21).

Based on these (and other) characteristics, the author argued that the two different types of press (industrial and non-industrial) complement one another in the Brazilian scenario. "Defined in national terms, the industrial press leaves holes in its local coverage that the non-industrial press can step in and fill" (Bueno, 1977, as cited in Oliveira, 2008, p. 24).

In the 1980s, we found research from Gastão Thomaz de Almeida (1983) entitled *A imprensa do interior: um estudo preliminar* (in English, *The interior press: a preliminary study*). His book presents an overview of the circulation of printed newspapers in the interior of the São Paulo state from 1875 (the year the Estado de São Paulo newspaper was created) to 1931. This allows us to pinpoint the number of articles printed in São Paulo in that year, the ones in circulation between 1979/80, and the city where their main office was located. Despite the historiographical nature of his work, Almeida (1983) gives thought toward future research involving geography and journalism, i.e., the correlation between the number of newspapers in a particular location and the job market for journalists. “Do a large number of newspapers in a city equate to a reasonable job market for professional journalists?” (Almeida, 1983, p. 19). In order to answer this question, the author believes a study on the economy and social life of cities would be required to observe how these factors influence and create job opportunities for journalists.

Another important work from this period is the book *Radiojornalismo no Brasil: dez estudos regionais* (1987) (in English, *Radio journalism in Brazil: ten regional studies*), edited by Gisela Ortriwano. Originally used in the 2nd Training Course for journalism professors<sup>4</sup>, this book presents an overview of radio journalism in the five regions of the country, represented by Belém (PA), Recife (PE), Maceió (AL), Vitória (ES), Goiânia (GO), Florianópolis (SC), Rio de Janeiro (RJ) and Vale do Paraíba, in the interior of São Paulo state. The texts in this book take on more of a historical approach, tracing the trajectory of radio journalism in cities, from stations to specific radio programs.

As of the 1990s, according to Peruzzo (2005), academia has had a greater interest in local and regional journalism due to the interiorization of mass communication in Brazil, motivated by the market conditions offered by cities outside the metropolitan regions. “Television, for example, explores local differentiation as a market niche, interested in capturing resources from advertising in the interior of the country” (Peruzzo, 2005, p. 71).

Additionally, Fadul (2006) states that economic decentralization in Brazil (caused by the displacement of industries from São Paulo state, agricultural development in the Midwest and Northern regions, and tourism in the Northeast) is responsible for the advance of media in other regions of the country, brought on by the displacement of advertising agencies, advertisers and media

outlets looking for new business opportunities beyond the South and Southeast of Brazil.

The dissertations by Dulce Cruz (1994) and Paulo Scarduelli (1996) highlight the expansion of Rede Brasil Sul (RBS) in Santa Catarina through television. According to Cruz (1994, p. 160), “[...] RBS is a pioneer in regional television using a network of stations spread throughout the interior of the states of Rio Grande do Sul and Santa Catarina”.

Another very important work developed in the late 1990s is the thesis by Beatriz Dornelles (1999) on the press in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul state. Her research, carried out between 1996 and 1998, analyzes the administrative, physical, financial, advertising, and editorial characteristics of 14 newspapers published in their representative municipalities in the interior of Rio Grande do Sul state.

It should also be noted that from 1996 to 2009 the Unesco/Methodist Chair in Communication for Regional Development<sup>5</sup> promoted the International Colloquium on Communication for Regional Development (Regiocom) intending to encourage research on regional media in Brazil. In the meetings topics were discussed such as a) regional and local flows; b) radio, citizenship, and public service; c) community television; d) local media; e) regional media in times of globalization; f) media and region in the digital age and; g) communication and regional inequalities (Gobbi, 2006; Pinto, 2015).

Even with these initiatives, the collection of scientific works on the subject today is still minimal when compared to works produced in the Rio-São Paulo area or other research themes in communication and journalism (Pinto, 2015; Nonato & Lago, 2017; Deolindo, 2019). In Capes, Pinto (2015) identified only 100 studies on regional media (21 theses and 79 dissertations) which were defended between 1993 and 2010, while studies on large media outlets and/or news products from the cities of Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo have been conducted since the early 1960s, marking these two city centers a reference for independent, modern media and representative of the country's media (Pinto, 2015). The survey we conducted for this study in the Capes bank and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) over the last 11 years (2010 to 2020) revealed few studies on local, regional, or interior journalistic activity. We shall comment further on this subject later.

After mapping the bibliography in recent decades on regional media, Pinto (2015) found two perspectives of analysis in studies in

the field: the asymmetric relation and the superlocation. Asymmetric relation is a comparative analysis of regional communication mediums to those in large urban centers (mainly São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasília), thus establishing a relationship of inferiority. According to Pinto (2015), this perspective is marked by four traits of asymmetry between media outlets and groups in the regional environment and this “idealized center”:

a) the technical inferiority concerning the media support from the companies that operate in the three cities mentioned above; b) the inability of regional media to sustain themselves economically; c) the occurrence of connections with politicians, especially through electronic *coronelismo*<sup>6</sup>; and d) media concentration in family businesses. These characteristics are often used in conjunction to describe a particular media or group. (Pinto, 2015, p. 36).

However, works that focus on superlocation value media productions in a particular and individual way and do not offer reflections on their role in the regional context. They still generalize regional media production considering the different levels of activities practiced in these spaces as a single segment, that is, the “small press”. This also contributes to the marginalization of the regional media in this research bias, considering it as “minor”.

Subdivisions such as “local”, “community”, and “from the interior” are used to separate a type of journalism from the media system with national coverage supports, functioning as self-explanatory terms for everything that is beyond a central circuit. Such negative adjectives isolate these “other journalisms” based on their geographic or identity essences and reinforce their limitations, nullifying the search for their particularities, mostly making it difficult to recognize that they make up part of the media subsystems that form the Brazilian media. (Pinto, 2015, p. 43).

The author considers both of these perspectives to be insufficient to explain the dynamics of regional media since they focus on the differences between the regions in the country. “In an asymmetric relation, differences take on a negative tone, one of inferiority, while the superlocation perspective overvalues and isolates regional media contexts” (Pinto, 2015, p. 45). Given these approaches, the researcher proposes a reading of regional media as part of the Brazilian media system, highlighting its diversity and connection with the national reference media (Pinto, 2015).

In a literature review of local and/or regional journalism studies, Deolindo (2019) found works on the operation, role, and

specialties of the media in several states such as São Paulo, Rio Grande do Sul, Mato Grosso, Tocantins, and Sergipe which contribute to the formation of a theoretical and methodological heritage for future generations of researchers in the field. Within this research tradition, the author identified the following approaches that were more prominent, to a lesser or greater extent, over the years:

[...] the historical perspective (in general, the trajectory of local and regional newspapers); social representations (for example, research that analyzes discourses, frameworks, and content that reinforce the regional/community identity); conceptual (on the specificities and nature of regional journalism, its distinction from community journalism and its approximations with the mainstream media); inventory (identifies, lists, and registers and analyzes media that are already extinct or still in operation in certain regions); criticism (deals with property relations and connections between regional media and other institutions, such as politics and economics). (Deolindo, 2019, p. 83).

In addition to these perspectives and the ones highlighted by Pinto (2015), Deolindo (2019) suggests the study of local and regional media from a geoeconomic approach, considering the media as a company, one that is constituted by a corporate, organizational, technological and economical dimension. From this perspective, we look at how the market affects the sustainability of journalistic companies in small and medium-sized cities outside the metropolitan region. We also look at how the news production logic works, how the organizational structure can limit work, at the standard of resource allocation, at competitive strategies (or the consequences of not having any), and at how risk is managed in this segment (Deolindo, 2019).

In terms of characterizing local and regional journalism research in Brazil, Aguiar (2016) identified the following four original proposals from a register of 908 scientific articles: 1) local journalism/local media/community television news; 2) interior journalism/interior press; 3) regional journalism/journalism from the region; 4) local-regional journalism/urban regional press (community)/community newspaper/frontier newspapers. For the first group, the term “community” is used to help build identities for small towns, corresponding to the coverage area of the station and its affiliates and/or rebroadcasters. For the second group, the main focus is the notion of “interior”, which does not correspond to a spatial scale, but is shaped as a relational category between urban and rural (Aguiar, 2016).

For the third group, which focuses on regional journalism, Aguiar (2016) found a lack of positioning or conceptual proposition

about the geographic notion of “region”. “Almost all of the articles are limited to qualifying ‘regional journalism’ as being limited to a certain spatial area empirically located based on case studies” (Aguar, 2016, p. 18). The last group (local-regional) contains the most complex qualifications as they involve variable or hybrid scales. This is the case for community newspapers or journalism along the frontiers of Brazil and other countries in South America.

Once having provided an overview of Brazilian research on local and regional journalism, we then surveyed theses and dissertations defended in graduate programs in communication and journalism.

### **3 Local and regional journalism in post-graduation (2010-2020)**

Our survey, conducted between August and September 2021, identified a total of 115 local and/or regional journalism studies recently produced in Brazil, comprising 13 theses and 102 dissertations. Data were analyzed from quantitative content analysis (Sampaio & Lycarião, 2021) using the six analytical categories presented in the introduction to this paper.

As shown in table 1, these are poorly developed in the field of communication, and researchers in the field even sometimes fail to produce them. On the other hand, dissertations are better developed and are produced at higher rates in the years we researched. This is probably related to the greater number and regional distribution of Master’s degree courses in communication and journalism available in the country as compared to doctorate degrees.

The predominance of dissertations shows that the issue of local and/or regional journalism has been approached by academia through a research model that systematizes, increases, and legitimizes already established knowledge in the field. These works are undoubtedly important and necessary as they offer specific information on journalistic practices in different regions of Brazil. However, it is also necessary to produce more theses on the subject that discuss “something about the object that has not yet been said or review it through a different lens than that which has already been used” (Eco, 1983, p. 22), that is, to offer unpublished and original contributions.

**Table 1***Number of academic works per year*

| Year  | Theses | Dissertations |
|-------|--------|---------------|
| 2010  | 1      | 5             |
| 2011  | -      | 6             |
| 2012  | -      | 3             |
| 2013  | -      | 9             |
| 2014  | 1      | 12            |
| 2015  | 1      | 13            |
| 2016  | 1      | 12            |
| 2017  | -      | 14            |
| 2018  | 4      | 12            |
| 2019  | 3      | 5             |
| 2020  | 2      | 11            |
| Total | 13     | 102           |

Source: prepared by the author based on Capes and BDTD

The dissertations and theses of local and/or regional journalism were present in 34 different graduate programs (PPGCOM and PPGJOR) in Brazil. Most of them come from the Southeast (13) and Southern (9) regions, particularly the Rio-São Paulo<sup>7</sup> area which has 11 PPGs that have produced studies on the subject. Seven of the existing 11 programs in the Northeast have produced studies on the subject. There are three PPGs in communication from the Midwest, and the Northern region had two dissertations on the theme during our analysis period (table 2). The data show that, even with the country's increased postgraduate studies in communication, local and regional journalism studies continue to lag behind as most of them come from the Southern and Southeastern regions of Brazil.

**Table 2**

*Geographic distribution of PPGs researching regional and/or local journalism*

| Region         | UF | PPGs   |
|----------------|----|--|
| Southeast (13) | SP | PPGCOM/UMESP; PPGCOM/UNESP; PPGCOM/UNISO; PPGCOM/USP; PEPGCOS/PUC-SP; PPGCOM/ CASPER LIBERO; PPGIS/UFSCAR; PPGCOM/UNIP |
|                | RJ | PPGCOM/UERJ; PPGCOM/UFF; PPGMC/UFF   |
|                | MG | PPGCOM/UFJF; PPGCOM/UFMG   |
| South (9)      | PR | PPGJOR/UEPG; PPGCOM/UTP; PPGCOM/UEL; PPGCOM/UFPR   |
|                | SC | PPGJOR/UFSC  |
|                | RS | PPGCOM/PUCRS; PPGCOM/UFGRS; PPGCOM/UFMS; PPGCOM/UNISINOS   |
| Northeast (7)  | PI | PPGCOM/UFPI  |
|                | CE | PPGCOM/UFC   |
|                | RN | PPGEM/UFRN   |
|                | PB | PPGJOR/UFPB; PPGC/UFPB   |
|                | PE | PPGCOM/UFPE  |
| Midwest (3)    | SE | PPGCOM/UFMS  |
|                | GO | PPGCOM/UFMS  |
|                | DF | PPGCOM/UFMS  |
| North (2)      | TO | PPGCOM/UFMS  |
|                | AM | PPGCOM/UFMS  |

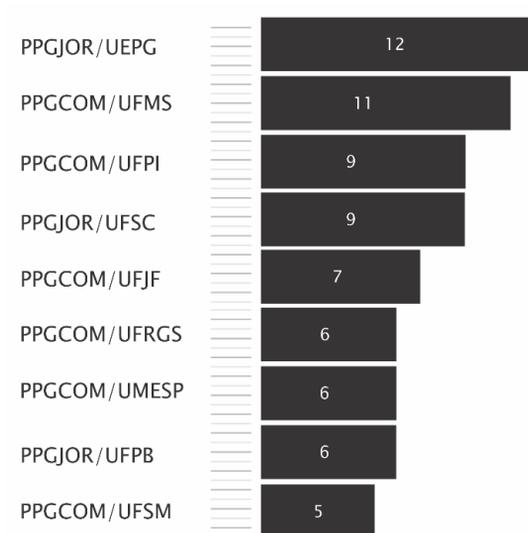
Source: prepared by the author based on Capes and BDTD

Nine of the programs from this list produced more studies on local and/or regional journalism, they are PPGJOR/UEPG (12); PPGCOM/UFMS (11); PPGCOM/UFPI (9); PPGJOR/UFSC (9); PPGCOM/UFJF (7); PPGCOM/UFGRS (6); PPGCOM/UMESP (6); PPGJOR/UFPB (6) and PPGCOM/UFMS (5) (chart 1). The graph shows a large contribution from graduate programs in journalism (27 studies in total) to understanding journalism in Brazilian capitals and the

countryside, whether in the form of historical records, cartography, market structure, professional performance, or specific modes of production, circulation, and news consumption.

### Chart 1

*Nº of studies on local and/or regional journalism per PPG*



Source: prepared by the author based on Capes and BDTD

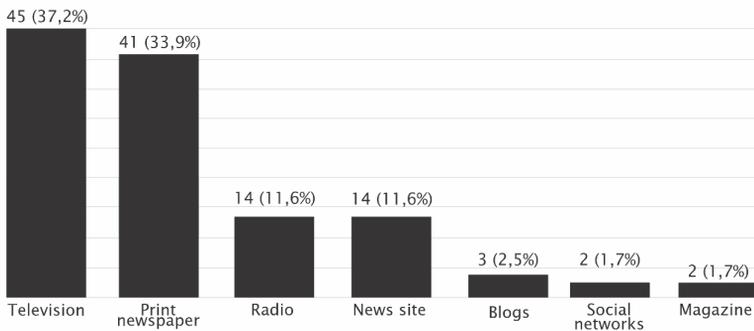
Also in this set, the performance of the Graduate Program in Communication at the Federal University of Mato Grosso do Sul (UFMS) stands out through the research line “Media, Identity and Regionality”, which studies the systems and structures of the means of communication in the regional and frontier areas, processes, products and languages of local and regional media and local, regional and international media flows). The program from the Federal University of Piauí (UFPI) also plays an important role in scientific research on local and/or regional journalism through its work on regionalization strategies for media outlets.

Television is the type of media most researched in theses and dissertations of local and/or regional journalism. We identified 45 works (37.2%) that approach television from different perspectives, such as production processes of television in the digital environment,

thematic schedules, popular figures in TV journalism, public participation in television news broadcasts, regionalization of stations, and media ownership. The print newspaper was researched in 41 studies (33.9%) and is the second most researched type of media (chart 2). These types of studies focus on topics such as the transition from paper to digital, the history of journals, social representations, consumption, production routines, editorial processes, the economic structure of companies, and more. It is worth pointing out that some studies analyze more than one type of media, which goes toward explaining the number of occurrences in this category and why they surpass the total number of mapped works.

**Chart 2**

*Type of media researched in local and/or regional journalism*



Source: prepared by the author based on Capes and BDTD

Radio and news sites, each with 14 studies (11.6%), are the third most researched type of media by researchers who study local and/or regional journalism in Brazilian PPGs. Research in radio focuses mainly on radio journalism on the internet, community radio, the transition from AM to FM radio, production routines, and radio productions. Studies on news sites investigate formats, languages, business models, and regionalization strategies. We also have three dissertations on blogs, two on social networks, and two on magazines, all of which represent the least researched types of media in postgraduate courses.

In addition to these media, we found two works that addressed press relations. The first work is a dissertation by Ana Eliza Ferreira



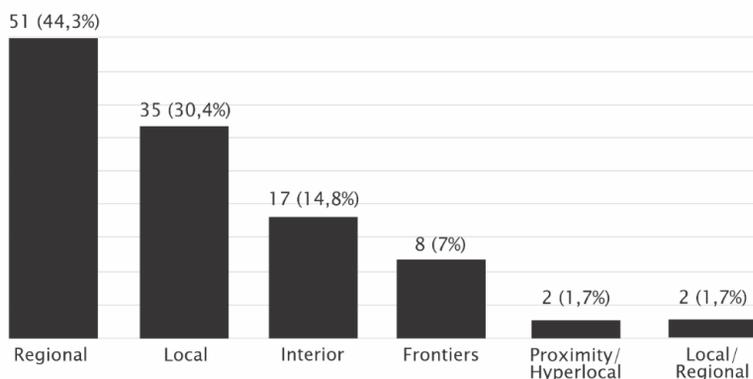
Conversely, the low number of Brazilian cities included in local and/or regional journalism studies could lead to two contrasting situations in the country: urban centers with a high concentration of scientific research and “research deserts”<sup>8</sup>, which are cities whose media infrastructures, local content, or information consumption have never been studied by academia.

We identified the following seven thematic categories in the theses and dissertations: “regional” (44.3%); “local” (30.4%), “interior”<sup>9</sup> (14.8%), “frontiers” (7%), “proximity/hyperlocal” (1.7%), and “local/regional” (1.7%) (chart 3). The strength of “regional” (regionalization and region) in the scientific production of communication/journalism is quite noticeable, either as a reference to urban centers outside the Rio-São Paulo and Brasília area or as an area of marketing for media companies. “Local” journalism is also quite prevalent among the works, evidenced by news content and news processes developed within the city and neighborhoods. Next are studies on “interior” media outlets (14.8%), that is, those installed in small and medium-sized cities outside metropolitan regions. This group includes two studies labeled as both local and interior. This is a way of differentiating them from the “local” research in state capitals. There is one thesis that works with “proximity” in the interior.

There is also a considerable number of studies on media along the border of Brazil (7%), especially in the border municipalities of Mato Grosso do Sul with Bolivia and Paraguay. We also identified studies that use the notions of “proximity/hyperlocal” (1.7%) and “local/regional” (1.7%) in order to understand their empirical objects. One proximity/hyperlocal study worth mentioning is the dissertation by Adriana Bagno Alves Pinto (2020) which applies the perspectives of “proximity journalism” and “hyperlocal journalism” toward understanding the impact that smartphones have on television news production in Paraíba. One local/regional study of note is the thesis by Ana Rosa Bandeira (2018) which observes the construction of the editorial and graphic identity of the *Diário Popular* newspaper from Pelotas based on the principles of local and regional journalism.

### Chart 3

#### *Thematic classifications in studies*



Source: prepared by the author based on Capes and BDTD

Apart from these aspects, we observed that the theses and dissertations of local and/or regional journalism use relational or comparative approaches between media outlets located in different places. We identified three different types of approaches for this group: 1) Inter-regional relation – studies conducted on media outlets from different regions, with or without national reference media, located in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, and Brasília; 2) Intraregional relation – studies on media outlets or groups from the same region; 3) State relation – comprised of studies on media outlets from the same state.

We identified more than 20 different techniques used in local and/or regional journalism. Content analysis (26.8%) and interviews (24.1%) were the two most-used techniques, followed by bibliographical research (15 %) and participant/direct observation (9.1%) (table 2). These techniques appear in most works as a complement to a multi-methodological strategy for data collection and analysis.

The techniques in the table below show how research in local and/or regional journalism is mostly focused on news production and message, which includes products, content, producers, and production processes in newsrooms. Studies on reception (which focus on people's perception of the media and journalism messages) are rarely conducted by researchers in the field due to the inadequate use of techniques for this type of research, such as focus groups and questionnaires.

The techniques classified as “Other” (7.7%) stand out in the survey. They are unusual methodological approaches and different from those found in books on methodology in communication and journalism, such as morphological analysis, textual analysis, cultural analysis, Fordist paradigm, in-depth hermeneutics (HP), analysis of radio programming, and descriptive analysis, among others. What we can observe here is an attempt by researchers to find new strategies for understanding the empirical objects of the area.

**Table 3**

*Research techniques used in dissertations and theses*

| Research Technique             | Frequency  | Percentage   |
|--------------------------------|------------|--------------|
| Content Analysis               | 59         | 26.8         |
| Interview                      | 53         | 24.1         |
| Bibliographic Research         | 33         | 15.0         |
| Participant/direct Observation | 20         | 9.1          |
| Others                         | 17         | 7.7          |
| Documentary Research           | 10         | 4.5          |
| Questionnaire                  | 6          | 2.7          |
| Mapping                        | 5          | 2.3          |
| Discourse Analysis             | 4          | 1.8          |
| Telejournalism Analysis (GPAT) | 3          | 1.4          |
| Narrative Analysis             | 2          | 0.9          |
| Non-participant Observation    | 2          | 0.9          |
| Framing Analysis               | 2          | 0.9          |
| Semiotic Analysis              | 1          | 0.5          |
| Focus Group                    | 1          | 0.5          |
| GJOL Hybrid Model              | 1          | 0.5          |
| Audiovisual Material Analysis  | 1          | 0.5          |
| <b>Total</b>                   | <b>220</b> | <b>100.0</b> |

Source: prepared by the author based on Capes and BDTD

Despite having been used in only five productions, the mapping technique stands out and demonstrates the interest in giving visibility to realities that are different from the large Brazilian urban centers and unknown to a large part of the population. In addition, it shows an approximation of geography when using maps to locate media outlets in the country.

#### 4 Final considerations

The survey presented in this paper offers an overview of local and/or regional journalism research in Brazil based on theses and dissertations produced between 2010 and 2020. Based on the data presented in this paper, we have not seen major advances in postgraduate research over the years. There were a total of 115 works over a span of 11 years, some of these years had fewer productions and slower developments than others, the theses being a case in point.

The postgraduate programs in communication and journalism in the south and southeast of the country are still responsible for most local and/or regional journalism productions, highlighting the PPGs in journalism. This represents a mismatch between the dissemination of PPGCOMs in the country and studies of local and regional journalism in the country.

Television and print newspapers are the media forms most researched in local and/or regional journalism studies. Radio, news sites, blogs, social networks, and magazines were hardly explored, which indicates relevant gaps to be filled by future studies. The fact that the “city borders, after the regional or state capitals, [...] are the most visible parts in the mapped production” (Fadul & Moreira, 2019, p. 7) demonstrates the presence of two distinct realities in the country: zones of concentration and a lack of scientific production (“research deserts”).

Other trends identified in the surveys we analyzed are: a) a high number of surveys classified as regional and related topics (regionalization and region); b) a predominance of analyses on the transformations, configurations, and convergences of local and/or regional online journalism; c) use of mapping to locate and characterize media outlets; d) a predominance of content analysis and interviews used as methodological procedures; e) centrality in the production

and content of journalism companies; f) lack of reception studies, aimed at understanding how people receive journalistic content; and g) few works on journalistic production in the Legal Amazon and specific regional formations.

Lastly, we noticed that discussions and theoretical perspectives of geography are not included in most of the theses and dissertations on local and/or regional Brazilian journalism. Many works use geographical concepts without addressing how others in the field think about them, which contributes to the existence of what Moreira (2009) called the 'invisibility' of geography in works of communication, and in this case, journalism. On the other hand, we are aware that some studies do not even mention the conceptual references of journalism when dealing with local and regional realities. This situation leads us to the conclusion that the words "local" and "regional" are more often used to identify the location of the empirical research and not a theoretical contribution used by the researchers.

## NOTES

- 1 Project developed by the Institute for the Development of Journalism (Projor) in partnership with Volt Data Lab with the objective of mapping the media outlets that produce journalistic content throughout Brazil.
- 2 The Capes Bank and the Brazilian Digital Library of Theses and Dissertations (BDTD) are Brazilian repositories used by researchers to search and consult the productions defended in postgraduate programs in the country.
- 3 Bueno, Wilson da Costa (1977). Characterization of a conceptual model object for the analysis of the industrial press/craft press dichotomy in Brazil. [master's thesis, School of Communication and Arts of the University of São Paulo].
- 4 The 2nd Training Course for journalism professors was held between July 7 and 18, 1986, by the Department of Journalism and Publishing at the School of Communication and Arts, University of São Paulo (ECA/USP), with support from the Coordination for the Improvement of Higher Education Personnel (CAPES). The main theme of this course was "The Methodology for Teaching Radio Journalism" and was attended by professors, professionals,

and researchers from eight Brazilian states who discussed, questioned, and reassessed radio at that time (Ortriwano, 1987).

- 5 The Unesco/Methodist Chair of Communication for Regional Development was created and installed at the Methodist University of São Paulo in 1996. It constitutes one of the main centers for studies on social, cultural, and communication phenomena in Brazil, Latin American countries, and other Portuguese-speaking countries.
- 6 Coronelism is an expression coined by Victor Nunes Leal (1978) to refer to the Brazilian political machine developed mainly during the Old Republic (1889-1930), where local agrarians (called “coronels”) used powers other than economic concentration (bossism, nepotism, electoral fraud) to dominate state structures. The Federal Government, in turn, used its patron powers to negotiate the newly created Brazilian Federative Republic. The term electronic coronelism has been used to refer to the unique situation in Brazil in which deputies and senators became owners of radio and television concessionary companies and, thus, participated in legislative commissions to grant services and regulate the means of communication in the country (Santos, 2006).
- 7 The cities of São Paulo (SP) and Rio de Janeiro (RJ) are currently the largest urban cities in Brazil (Greater National Metropolis and National Metropolis, respectively) (IBGE, 2020). This is where nationally renowned communication groups and media companies with the greatest technological and financial support are headquartered (Pinto, 2015). These two cities also have the highest number of long-established postgraduate programs in communication in the country.
- 8 Based on the concept of news deserts developed by Penelope (Penny) Muse Abernathy (2016).
- 9 The word ‘interior’ in Brazil is used to refer to medium and small cities located in the interior of the states, on the coast, and on the border between states (or provinces) or countries (Assis, 2013).

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