

JOURNALISM IN TRANSFORMATION

methodological and epistemological challenges

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THIS COMMEMORATIVE EDITION OF *BRAZILIAN JOURNALISM RESEARCH* BRINGS TOGETHER articles which reflect methodological and epistemological advances and challenges in Journalism research. These advances and challenges were systematized in representative texts from the VIII Encounter, held in 2009, whose theme was “Journalism Research in a World in Transformation”, and were also the subject of debates and lectures since the First Encounter of Journalism Researchers held in Brasília in 2003, which resulted in the creation of the Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers (SBPJor), and subsequently of *Brazilian Journalism Research (BJR)*. Many reflections have concentrated on the impacts of the social and cultural transformations we are undergoing today in journalism studies and journalistic practices. We understand that critical thought regarding the reshaping of journalism’s mediations in the life of society and regarding the uses and appropriations of technologies, supports and languages with different formats and journalistic contents in different production routines does not in itself constitute an independent theoretical field. But we suggest that the discipline requires conceptual and methodological foundations capable of promoting the building of knowledge within the field itself, based on the specificity of journalistic activity and of the norms which guide this social practice. This edition makes its contribution to filling a gap concerning the establishment of journalism as a scientific subject. It reveals in an expressive manner the consolidation of journalism research, offering visibility and apprehension of the state of the art of the research in its diverse forms of expression, which would not be possible without the collaboration of each one of the authors and of the careful work of the evaluators.

The five works which comprise this Dossier, in addition to the seven

papers which make up the Articles section and the four book reviews of Brazilian and foreign researchers not only seek to give continuity to the debates, but also to accentuate important issues for the qualification of the research works being developed associated with different journalistic practices and their inherent critical reflections nowadays. The epistemological and conceptual questioning characteristic of any discipline is complex and is not resolved just by means of methodological standardizations. But we must recognize that as a scientific area, Journalism suffers from the scarcity of specialized manuals for guidance on methodologies and procedures adopted in research practices. Elias Machado presents a consistent evaluation of this question and indicates aspects which he considers relevant for legitimizing the more systematic production of these guidance manuals for scientific practice and for the consolidation of Journalism research. As a social practice journalism is undergoing a series of transformations which are reshaping its mediations. Erik Neveu suggests that different trends challenge and redefine journalistic practice, questioning journalism's function and the journalists' role in the contemporary context, while Pamela Shoemaker, Johnson, Seo and Wang propose routes for our better understanding of the behavior of readers of the news on the web. In a comparative study of readers' news values in Brazil, in China and in the United States, the four researchers show that there is an increase in the normal process of gatekeeping when readers communicate with other readers, but their choices may not reflect the news values of the journalists who developed the sites. Ibrahim Saleh offers a critical reflection on one of the most contradictory media scenarios in the world, that of the Middle East and North Africa, pointing out the contrasts and the problems of societies that suffer the negative effects of imposed democracies, of poverty and of illiteracy. Based on the studies of Society and Culture and on the theoretical reference point of the Sociology of Knowledge, Eduardo Meditsch discusses the difficulties of the theoretical development of journalism in the specific academic area and the problems which this causes for the legitimizing of the profession as a scientific discipline, pointing to the need for investigating these causes by means of the study of the field's institutionalization and for increasing academic knowledge regarding the history of Journalism.

There is a real effort for the construction of theoretical and methodological reference points which make it possible to understand the complexity of journalism's current role. Kleber Mendonça's article is based on the analysis of the relation between journalism studies and

discourse analyses, not just questioning journalistic objectivity and transparency, but seeking to transcend the simple denunciations of impositions of meanings in order to investigate more profoundly real discursive effects. Luiz Motta and Liziane Guazina demonstrate that journalistic coverage does not only represent but delimits and institutes political reality. The two authors suggest that the meta-category “conflict” centralizes and structures television newscasts in a study of the coverage of the “*mensalão*” (monthly payments for bribing members of Congress) scandal by the *Jornal Nacional* newscast. José Luiz Aidar Prado also proposes a critical look at hegemonic media, suggesting that their systems of visibility separate the Same and the Other, that is to say, those who are established based on common cultural notions and those who are excluded or stigmatized, systematizing the results of research on journalism narratives with a view toward education for the media by means of the analysis of magazines and hypermedia. Journalism, however, does not fail to play simultaneously a decisive role in the construction and expansion of democracy and citizenship. Claudia Lago emphasizes that the social responsibility of journalistic practice can only be consolidated by the incorporation of otherness as a reference. And the author attempts to delve more deeply into the comprehension regarding the apprehension of the Other by the journalistic field, based on reflections on Anthropology, its specificity and field work. Felipe Simão Pontes and Gislene Silva have recourse to the theoretical-conceptual contributions of History and Journalism to reflect on the peculiarity of Journalism as a subject for study, and specifically in this research on theses of postgraduate courses in Communication in Brazil which deal with the history of journalism. Antonio Hohlfeldt and Fernanda Grabauska also investigate the history of journalism, but in another cross section of time and space, more precisely the second half of the XIX century in Mozambique, analyzing the contributions of the Albasini brothers, pioneer journalists in the history of the press in that country. The strategic social function of journalism is highlighted in the studies of different societies in different eras and different parts of the world in this edition. It is not by chance that researchers identify the need for local and global studies for a better comprehension of the journalism field’s singularities, especially in times of risk, disorder, uncertainties and social disasters – landmarks of contemporary life, as in the study by E. Maximiliano Korstanje. The article concerning the coverage of the Dengue epidemic in Argentina reveals the central role of the media and of journalism in social life and

in the construction of our perception of reality.

Four book reviews supplement this commemorative edition of *BJR* written by researchers from institutions of learning in different regions of Brazil. The first one concerns ***Jornalismo on-line: modos de fazer*** (Online Journalism: ways of doing it) (Sulina and PUC-Rio, 2009) organized by Carla Rodrigues and reviewed by Gerson Luiz Martins. The second is a review of the book ***40 anos de telejornalismo em Rede Nacional: olhares críticos*** (40 years of TV journalism in Brazilian Networks: critical views), organized by Alfredo Viseu, Faávio Porcello and Iluska Coutinho (Insular, 2009) made by Débora Lapa Gadret. Rogério Mozart Dy la Fuente Gonçalves reviews ***Mídia das Fontes, Um Novo Ator no Cenário Jornalístico Brasileiro: um olhar sobre a ação midiática do Senado Federal*** (Source Media, A New Actor on the Brazilian Journalistic Scene: a look at the media activity of the Federal Senate) (SEEP Senado Federal, 2009) by Francisco C. C. M. Sant´Anna. And finally, Ana Carolina Escosteguy and Nilda Jacks sign the review of the book ***Mídia e identidade gaúcha*** (Media and Gaúcho – southern Brazilian – Identity) (EDUNISC, 2009) organized by Ângela Felippi and Vitor Necchi. We are grateful to all of them for their contributions. We are also grateful for your attention, dear reader.