

BOOK
REVIEW

Sources Media
A New Actor on the
Brazilian Journalistic
Scene
a view of the media
activity of the Senate

FRANCISCO C. C. M. SANT'ANNA
 Brasília, DF: SEEP Senado Federal, 2009.

Reviewed by **ROGÉRIO MOZART DY LA FUENTE GONÇALVES**

The work of Francisco Sant'Anna has the chief merit of being a pioneer in the identification and conceptualization of the phenomena that characterizes the structural changes in contemporary Brazilian journalism since the mid-1990s. Included in the Sociology of Journalism analysis, it highlights the emergence of complex media structures, non-profitable, created with the aim of giving voice to social actors without the chance of a place in the conventional media space. It proposes that these media appear to influence and change the constitution of the public sphere and give rise to a practice called informative journalism influence. This is a proposition that complements the work begun by Philip Schlesinger when he demarcated the process of professionalization of the sources, and that in Brazil had Professor Carlos Chaparro as its initiator, in defining what he christened a "sources' revolution."

The book derives from the author's doctoral work at the Department of Information Sciences and Communication at the University of Rennes, France, completed in 2007. The survey portrayed is divided into three distinct parts: the first is the phenomenon of conceptualization and description of the construction of the Brazilian media scene. The second performs an initial mapping of the diversity of the source media in Brazil, and the contours of the journalism labor market in the country. In the third part is a deeper sociological analysis of the informative activity of the journalist member of the media structure assembled by the Federal Senate

of Brazil. This analysis includes a comparison with the activity of traditional media professionals accredited for news coverage of the Congress.

One of the greatest provocations to the reader is caused by pointing to the view that it is a phenomenon which represents the reaction to a scenario of the Brazilian media oligopoly, which keeps the public agenda focused on restricted topics and sources. Although set in the field of Communication, the study could have been undertaken in the fields of Sociology and Political Science, to which the subject is presented as relevant.

Although it establishes that the phenomenon of source media is more prominent in Brazil, the work explores the possibility that the appearance and development of this modality in the setting of media communication can happen in other countries even more intensely or more broadly. As a result of this, to seek better understanding of the subject studied, Sant'Anna makes an analytical description of its origins, of its field of action, of its reflexes and of the historical elements that he considers relevant to its formation. Those familiar with the history of the development of the Brazilian media and the journalist profession on reading the first two parts will encounter no novelties, but the book is extremely useful to those who do not know the Brazilian reality and its constraints, especially to foreign researchers.

A natural academic objection emerges, especially to the third part of Sant'Anna's work, from the fact that the media structure of the Senate has been chosen for the case study of professionals. It happens that the researcher is, as are the author of this review and most of the other researchers in this last decade and a half of the novelty represented by the creation of the Brazilian Congressional media, a journalist who works as a public servant in the Senate. This of course should not be regarded as compromising the results. The movement to promote academic studies within strict scientific standards should be understood as part of a wider process of the legitimizing of these media as a field of professional activity and their characterization as promoters of journalism of high quality. A key finding relevant to this third part is that despite it being shown that there is an *influential journalism*, the corresponding professional who would be an *influential journalist* does not materialize. The group serving the source media - because of the aforementioned legitimizing process - has more contact points than distention in relation to accredited media professionals.

Reading this book proves to be enriching, not only for the presentation of the concept of the source media, but also because of a more extended confirmation of the effect than would be expected with

the advent of these media. In addition to being a space for the airing of matters excluded from the public agenda, they influence the composition of the news in the traditional media, the groups of private enterprise, in two different dimensions. The first is the simple aggregation of topics on the agenda, the mere condition of agenda-setters. The second effect is noticed because of the unrestricted utilization of the information provided by these source media in the mainstream press and its use by the *gatekeepers* and *newsmakers*.

After finishing the book, the reader has in his hands all the elements that make it possible to recognize that the Brazilian media scene was definitely modified by other factors which are not limited to the technological developments that occurred in the late twentieth century. The book opens paths, sets the scene for further investigations. Among the outstanding new opportunities are research possibilities of this type of *newsmaking* and the promotion of studies on the reception of content provided by sources directly through their media.

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