

WEAVING JOURNALISM INTO NETWORKS

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On questioning the production of knowledge in the world that we call “modern”, Bruno Latour made a metaphor of the newspaper which seems to us provocative. Between the proliferation of hybrids – given the fact that nature and culture are constitutively interlaced aspects – and the work of elimination of these hybrids, what the author appears to suggest is that the newspaper, on striving to place in order our experiences in the living world, would make visible – or would serve as an example to be thought about – a certain crisis in the process of knowledge production. “If the reading of the daily newspaper is the praying of modern man, how strange is the man who prays today reading these confusing matters”, says Latour¹. The work of separating in order to organize – a gesture that beyond the newspaper is characteristic of modern thought – is directly linked to the effort to eliminate hybrids; an attitude that should be taken into consideration, that puts into operation knowledge remote from the world we experience. It is in this sense that knowledge, just like matters, appears confusing, since for this author, in the newspaper’s own space, as is also in the living world, “all culture and all nature are turned upside down daily [...]” (2009, p. 8).

It is thus that for Latour, facts, power and discourse only appear separable in the light of disciplines and methodological procedures that seek the explanation and the organization of the hybridisms of which we are all constituted. The recognition of the inseparable character of these three instances, which refer us directly to the real, to the social and to the narrated, also in Latour’s words, requires the conception of a thread which weaves them together. And it is from this perspective that, the author will say, “more flexible than the idea of system, more historical than that of structure, more empirical than that of complexity, the network is the thread of Ariadne of these confusing stories” (2009, p. 9). This broad interpretation of network as a thread which would help to weave together dispersed, separated parts, basically through epistemological biases, takes the shape of quite a challenge, if we take

into consideration the demands for explanations and categorizations for which we are all targets in our academic research and investigation.

For Latour, this questioning and conception give rise to a long, dense reflection on our ways of thinking about and being in the world. His idea of network – much more a set of relationships between people and things – serves for him to inquire, among other aspects, regarding its constitutive aspect and its purposes. Alert to the inseparability of the three groups – facts, power, discourse – he suggests that the networks could cross “the great personal estates of the critics”, since they “are neither objective, nor social nor effects of discourse, being at the same time real, collective and discursive” (2009, p. 12). In this way, going back to the metaphor of the newspaper and making reference to the matters that are generally dealt with in it, Latour reminds us: “The ozone hole is too social and too narrated to be really natural; the strategies of the companies and of the chiefs of state, too full of chemical reactions to be reduced to power and to interest; the discourse of the ecosphere is too real and social to be reduced to the effects of meaning” (2009, p. 12). A reminder which by itself alone provokes in us, as journalism researchers, a series of queries regarding our purposes and methods not only when we take the network-newspaper as our research subject, but also when we propose to challenge the thread which is woven there starting from the research networks that we form.

With the aim of continuing to contribute to a better comprehension of journalism as a political and cultural phenomenon nowadays, this edition of the BJR takes as a provocation the relation drawn between this comprehensive idea of network and the newspaper. In the light of the problem alluded to by Latour, we want to take into consideration that, on devoting ourselves to thinking and questioning this place in which we are allowed, in some way, to see the world, we intervene not only in the process for production of knowledge of journalism, but also in the very process of comprehension of the world with which we are familiar. If tied to the interpretation of network as a thread is the possibility of our weaving the means for comprehending production and the work of eliminating the hybrids, as Latour also suggests, we want to believe that the research networks could be one more means for making this thread somewhat alive, more accustomed to the particular dynamics of a life woven together.

Scientific development has been increasingly tied to the formation of research networks which bring together researchers concerned with common purposes in the research. Hypothetically, networks intensify the exchange of experiences between their members

and reinforce the use of available human, financial and infrastructure resources. With their potential, they also make possible advances resulting from a collaborative interaction among academic groups formed by researchers from different regions of Brazil and from countries on different continents. Accordingly, on bringing together articles in the Dossier that question the challenges for the carrying out of research works in networks, this edition of *Brazilian Journalism Research* seeks to question their operating conditions, making visible the strategies adopted in order to deal with the institutional and geographic distancing and pointing out the different theoretical-methodological perspectives adopted along these routes.

The article by Rosane da Silva Borges and Miguel Contani, for example, discusses, in its scope, the formation of networks, especially those concerned with the discussion of journalism and of visualities, based not only on the very idea of network but also on a questioning of the concept of communication and of that which has been understood to be its objective. Zelia Adghirni and Fábio Henrique Pereira offer us the experience of the Journalism Studies Network (REJ) founded more than ten years ago, which possesses researchers linked to universities in Germany, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, France, Mexico and Reunion Island. The article shows us this network as a space with relative autonomy in the proposing of subjects and methodologies of journalism studies, something which is reflected in the diversity of approaches and research interests which it welcomes. In Flávio Antônio Camargo Porcello's article, the emphasis is on the Telejournalism Researchers Network, linked to the Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers (SBPJor). In it we have a brief history of the network, highlighting the development of the research works, the courses adopted and also its plans for the future. In accordance with the macro and international perspective of this edition of the BJR, João Carlos Ferreira Correia, José Ricardo Pinto Carvalheiro, João Canavilhas, Ricardo Moraes and João Carlos Sousa present results of the research being developed with the focus on the regional newspapers spread throughout the Portuguese territory, a work which proposes a critical reflection of the relation between the regional press, the citizens and democratic policy.

In an effort to constitute a dialogue with the portuguese researches, the article by Ana Cabrera, Carla Martins and Teresa Mendes Flores reflects on the representations of the female members of parliament in the journalistic and photojournalistic discourse after the Portuguese Democratic Revolution of April 25, 1874; it is politics *in* the feminine,

as the authors say, that is presented to us in the light of the Portugal's experience. The comprehension of Journalism as a vital instrument for democratic societies sustains the article by John V. Pavlik. The author assumes that technology has brought radical changes for Journalism, which has historically played a major role in the USA, serving as the main source for the citizens of news and information regarding matters of public importance. And in his work he examines the implications of these transformations for democracy, questioning whether a more interactive form of journalism will produce a more participative and better informed electorate. Axel Bruns faces in his article the challenge of constructing an innovative, critical way of thinking about the reshaping of journalistic practices and mediations nowadays, discussing how the former monopoly of *gatekeeping* maintained by the mass media has been challenged by the new practice of *gatewatching*: performed by individual bloggers and by communities of commentators who may not be able to report the news first hand, but perform the *curation* and evaluate the news and other information furnished by official sources, rendering an important service in an increasingly agile way, utilizing the social networks for divulging, sharing, questioning and discrediting news stories. Other confrontations of Journalism in the Global world, research and teaching, are highlighted by Ramón Salaverría. In his article, the author suggests an investment in less descriptive and more analytical works capable of better serving both the academic community as well as the online media professionals. And in the learning processes he proposes the replacement of the current training model, which basically teaches how to handle the digital tools, by another more comprehensive model which teaches principles and abilities in an online environment. The work by Frederico de Mello Brandão Tavares also helps to weave and to unthread the dynamics of journalism nowadays. The author starts from the analysis of the editorials (letters to the reader) of *Vida Simples* in order to question the processes which involve the constitution of a specialized magazine concerned with a major topic, reflecting on how the configuration of a type of specialized journalism evolves from this context.

In all the articles which make up this edition, the effort of questioning is noted, based on the theory/practice relationship, which helps to reveal, as suggested by this edition of the BJR, how much we are provoked by the complexity inscribing the knowledge production process in contemporary society. And Edilson Cazeloto's review of an analysis of national magazines, which seeks to elucidate the communication contracts and the systems of visibility which emerge from the relations

between texts and images, also provokes a questioning of the academic area's resistance to evaluating and validating critical thinking constructed in formats which are not conventional like the printed text, even though e-books and electronic magazines have been conquering space and respectability in the era of convergence. The research works contained in this edition show how Journalism is perceived at the same time as a phenomenon and a socio-cultural practice, revealing in this particular field of knowledge the overlapping of nature/culture mentioned by Latour.

| NOTE

- 1 Latour, Bruno. **Jamais fomos modernos** (We were never modern) – essay of symmetrical anthropology. São Paulo: Ed. 34, 2009, p. 8.