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THE JOURNALIST IN RESEARCH AND ART

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ABSTRACT - The journalist has been the subject of arts and sciences. By this insertion in the theme of the panel "Settings and perspectives of journalism research in Brazil in dialogue with Latin American studies in journalism", held at the meeting of Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers, SBPjor (Curitiba, November 10th 2012) I recognized that the academic sphere outlines two types of action: network researching in different countries and regions of the world, with the participation of Latin American countries in collaborative research; and research projects with other collaboration bases. Both modalities dialog with the production of movies and literature - which makes visible the professional's great power for plots and tensions.

Keywords: Journalist. Art. Research. Interview.

O JORNALISTA NA PESQUISA E NA ARTE

RESUMO - O jornalista tem sido objeto das artes e das ciências. Nesta incisão no tema do painel "Configurações e perspectivas da pesquisa em jornalismo no Brasil em diálogo com os estudos latino-americanos em jornalismo", realizado no encontro da Associação Brasileira de Pesquisadores em Jornalismo, SBPjor, (Curitiba, 10/11/2012), reconheci que o âmbito acadêmico projeta dois tipos de ação: em rede de pesquisadores de diferentes países e regiões do mundo, com participação de países da América Latina, na pesquisa colaborativa e em projetos de investigação com outras bases de colaboração. Ambas as modalidades dialogam com a produção do cinema e da literatura - que visibiliza a grande potência do profissional para tramas e tensões.

Palavras-chave: Jornalista. Arte. Pesquisa. Entrevista.

EL PERIODISTA EN LA INVESTIGACIÓN Y EN EL ARTE

RESUMEN - El periodista ha sido objeto de las artes y de las ciencias. En este inciso en el tema del panel sobre "Configuraciones y perspectivas de la investigación en periodismo en Brasil en diálogo con los estudios latinoamericanos en periodismo", realizado en el encuentro de la Sociedad Brasileña de Investigadores en Periodismo (Curitiba, Brasil, 10/11/2012), reconocí que el ámbito académico proyecta dos tipos de acción: en red de investigadores de diferentes países y regiones del mundo, con participación de países de América Latina, en investigación colaborativa, y en proyectos de investigación con otras bases de colaboración. Ambas modalidades dialogan con la producción del cine y la literatura, lo cual visibiliza la gran potencia del profesional para tramas y tensiones.

Palabras clave: Periodista. Arte. Investigación. Entrevista.

At this present around us, the technological stage, which exposes society to an almost unmanageable pace of information about the present, turns into strategic the knowledge about the agent legitimated to work with information and interfere with the production process of the speakability / visibility regime of social discourses. Since Weber (1910 in MAROCCO; BERGER, 2006), the idea of listening to journalists has been considered as a strategic path to understanding journalism in a series of derivations: in the studies of professions sociology, in cultural studies, in journalism studies, in language studies, in movies and literature. Regarding this, much has been visualized, from different disciplines to the newsrooms operation. Countless reflections with or without pretension of scientificity were produced outside and even inside the newsroom, based on professional memory, literature research, discourse analysis, ethnography and participant observation internships in different durations, besides surveys and interviews with journalists.

We must also recognize that the professional reverberates (and often struggle with) an ambiguous and incomplete type of journalism, which denies the inheritance of the fullness and definitiveness that used to be stated in the search for truth inherited from the modernist project. A journalism faced to the immense fluidity of its borders before technological advance, which is farthest from the milestone of objectivity and closest to contemporary thought, although the discursive strategies that give invisibility to the production subject still dominate. It might be suggested that, beyond the conditions of kinship and rejection of literature that characterized the crossing rupture from the *threshold of epistemologization* to the scientificity of Brazilian journalism, there are paradoxical marks of reality and imagination in contemporary stories; with them, multiple tensions fall within the ambit of journalism and these show up clearly in the big story, *fait divers* and images.

1 DISCIPLINARY POROSITY

The interest in the figure of the journalist who belongs to the historical regimes of journalism is registered in a wide range of discontinuous, dispersed and non-disciplinary productions which we have no intention of giving out this essay. In the small inventory of productions selected, we can infer that the actions of journalists in the newsroom and beyond were subjects of arts and sciences, suggesting the permeability of the disciplinary field around such object, of the

prominence of transnational and historical traces of this figure and of its inseparability regarding to the forms of socialization and culture capable of creation.

Balzac, in *Lost Illusions*, written between 1835 and 1843, and Lima Barreto, in *Memories of the recorder Isaías Caminha* (1909), probably inaugurated the descriptions of a panoply of characters in the perfidious and corrupted environment of the newsroom. A decade ago, Carl Hiaasen, in *Basket Case* (2008), took up the source open in the literature, with the figure of veteran journalist forgotten in the obituary section, who simultaneously reflects and repels the traces the bored reporter who manipulates the rescue of a man trapped in a mountain, played by Kirk Douglas in the film *The mountain of the seven vultures* (BILLY WILDER, 1951). Both wish to return to the first team of journalists, but using simplifying and Manichaeian strategies of the “good” and “bad journalism”.

In the United States, there is a diversified literature in which researchers historically include the profession, or its developing into a “interpretive community”, in the “professionalism” and forms of control of newsrooms.

Robert Park, in his pioneering, didn't elaborate thoughts turned to the profession. In his articles about journalism, what appears are thoughts on his dual-path. Park realized the power of journalism from the positions he held, sometimes in the practice of journalism, sometimes as a teacher and researcher in the Chicago School of Sociology. Thus, he presented three features of this field. First, regarding to the time he worked in newsrooms, Park acknowledged his will to practice journalism in order to “shape public opinion”. Second: in the academy, Park compared the urban journalist to the sociologist, claiming that the journalist played the role of an informal and intuitive sociologist, who acted as the moral censor of an audience that was very dispersed and on which it was no longer possible to control in a direct way. Third: in 1923, Park said that a journalist should learn to look at the social and political life in an objective way and stop thinking only in moral terms (CONDE, 2000; PARK, 1923).

In the perspective of a sociology of professions, the American sociologist Gaye Tuchman (1983) has been dedicated to a long observation of a countless number of newsrooms for eleven years, to give consistency to the book *Making News*, which, in her words:

It is a study about compulsions of the informative work and resources available to informants. It is a study about informants

as professionals and about newspapers and TV information services as complex organizations. And it is a study about research methods: how informants determine the facts and demarcate the events, and discussions relevant to our shared civic life (TUCHMAN, 1983, p. 11).

In the article *Journalists as interpretive communities*, Barbie Zelizer (2000) stated that journalists create a community guided by the speeches about events that are hallmarks of press coverage. Watergate is an example of it. From the coverage made by Woodward and Bernstein in the late 1970s, guidelines arose on how to use non-identified sources. In a lasting perspective, the event was reframed to encompass something instrumental. In this perspective, Watergate was called “the most decisive event for the rise of investigative journalism”. Thus, “Watergate case”, initially a specific discussion about techniques of sources examination, became a speech about a broader continuum of practices around the investigative report.

In Brazil, recording of researches on journalist is newer. In the context of anthropological studies, we found the work of Isabel Travancas about the identity construction of the professional from different types of media in Rio de Janeiro. In *The world of journalists* – title of the book that approaches the place of journalists, in which a network of relations is constituted and the social organization of journalists is defined – Travancas heard, in interviews, a group of 50 professionals from two generations (young professionals and journalists for twenty or thirty years) and followed them in their workdays and holidays. The results achieved seem to be very close to images that circulate in literature and cinematography about the journalistic job: journalism demands of its “elected” such a dedication [...] that often prevents other activities or sectors of their lives to be larger; journalist is close to authority, but he associates authority to State, public authorities, politics and economic force; journalism gives a false sense of power; among others (TRAVANCAS, 1992, p.13, 96-97).

In consultation with the theses bank of Capes (Coordination for Enhancement of Higher Education Personnel), we can find in Brazil the research made by Fábio Henrique Pereira, from the University of Brasilia, which focus on the segment of intellectual journalists. In the thesis *Intellectual Journalists in Brazil – identity, practices and transformations in the social world* (2008), Pereira selected ten journalists by their intellectual notoriety and belonging to journalistic media, namely: Adísia Sá, Alberto Dines, Antônio Hohfeldt, Carlos Chagas, Carlos Heitor Cony, Flávio Tavares, Juremir Machado da Silva, Mino Carta, Raimundo Pereira

and Zuenir Ventura, in order to analyze how they deal with their practices and statutes in the social world of journalists.

2 GLOBAL CONSISTENCY

Some investigations gave global consistency to researches about journalists. The project *The Global Journalist* (1998) brought together the results of a research conducted in 21 countries and territories on the working conditions and professional values of 20,280 journalists interviewed between 1986 and 1996. Under such geographical diversity, according to David Weaver, coordinator of the project, there are data on the profession that can be compared, as well as basic characteristics related to age, gender, or education level of journalists. Among these data, may be mentioned the values around functions (give news quickly, analyze and interpret, and investigate governments), investigation methods (confidentiality of information sources or paid information), different aspects of the job (autonomy, public service) and the image of journalists about their audiences.

In relation to American journalists, the results obtained by Weaver in the summer of 1992 indicated that the statistical profile of the typical American journalist was quite the same from 1982 to 1983: a white male, Protestant, graduate, married, about 30 years old. Regarding gender, men are present in greater numbers than women in the newsrooms of 19 countries surveyed, although in some countries women are the majority. The average proportion of women in these countries was 33% and, in the United States, 34%.

Comparing journalists from different areas, there is a high level of agreement on not to reveal confidential sources. Other practices showed great differences of opinion: to pay for secret information, for example. About the use of government documents without permission, there was a variation between approval of 26% in Taiwan and 86% in Great Britain. Around the world, journalism is a job of youth. Most of them are between 25 and 44 years old, usually not graduated in Journalism. Only three countries have more than half of its journalists with journalism degree: Spain, Brazil and Chile. In Chile and Ecuador, between 80% and 90% of respondents had university degree; in Chile, 70% had fulfilled academic training in Journalism.

Regarding the characteristics of Brazilian journalists, Brazilian researchers Heloiza Herscovitz and Adalberto Cardoso, within this research, dedicated to the print media. Thus, according to the researchers,

this professional, mostly, is white, since only 1.7% identified himself as black and 4.8% as of mixed race. Also, most of the respondents were young reporters, between 25 and 36 years old, married, without children, with a bachelor's degree, nine or more years of experience, having worked for more than six years in the same organization. Furthermore, over 80% said they had no religion.

Another survey, *Worlds of Journalism*, coordinated by Thomas Hanitzsch, which also has a worldwide basis, emphasizes the identification of journalism culture and cultural variations depending on countries, organizations and professional environments. Under the project, started in 2007 by researchers from 19 countries, the notion of journalistic culture, enrolled in a dimensional approach, comprises three spheres: the domain of institutional function, epistemology and ethics. These three spheres were divided into seven basic dimensions: interventionism, distancing from government, market orientation, objectivity, empirical data, relativism and idealism (SMITH, 2009; Hanitzsch, 2007). The project starts from the hypothesis that these dimensions account for most variations in journalistic culture that, in turn, are manifested in three levels: macro, which shapes the national journalistic culture through political, economic, legal, social and cultural contexts; middle, organizations' intermediary instance, which influences the journalistic organizational culture; and micro, with regard to the education of the journalist and his personal characteristics.

In Brazil, the field research was conducted by Sônia Virginia Moreira and took place between 2007 and 2009, with consolidation and data analysis in 2010. The team interviewed 100 journalists in 20 newsrooms of media – print and electronic; national, regional and local wide; private and state sectors. Thus, it was found that the vast majority of journalists in activity in 2009 in the Brazilian media organizations had a degree in journalism. Moreover, there was consensus among journalists about the importance of “informing population right”. In the open question about essentials elements for professional performance, for example, the words that appeared most were: ethics, truth, impartiality and accuracy.

In its turn, the Study Group on the profession in Chile, nationally focused, researched four professional crops of communication: Chilean journalists working in newsrooms; those who do not work in newsrooms, but produce content for the media; educators and professionals working with corporate communications; and PR. For that, online questionnaires were applied between November and December of 2009 in four

geographical areas in which concentrates 70% of the population.

Thus, it was realized that the typical journalist of the first group is a professional under 40 years old, male, working exclusively in print media, with no specific news area and low-paid. In political-ideological terms, this professional considered himself liberal, closer to the left, relatively satisfied with his job. Furthermore, he gives more importance to labor aspects, such as salary, job security and reconciling work and familiar life, than career advancement. This journalist also has a very pluralistic conception of his professional roles. He rejects to promote and defend authorities and considers essential to monitor the government, as well as the behavior of society. In parallel, he considers fundamental to prioritize citizens education and he defends the importance to satisfy the business needs of journalism – for example, seeking high levels of audience and delivering entertainment and leisure to the public. In terms of academic background, there is a consensus on the need for formal studies of journalism, although they consider the training they are receiving is regular or poor. Their level of autonomy is moderately high: over 30% stated that their work is always edited by others.

In Brazil, a project is being developed to survey the national job profile. The research of the Center for Studies on Transformations in the World of Work (Federal University of Santa Catarina – UFSC) counts on the support of the Brazilian Federation of Journalists (Fenaj), the Brazilian Forum of Journalism Professors (FNPJ) and the Brazilian Association of Journalism Researchers (SBPJor). The results will be obtained with the spontaneous participation of professionals answering a detailed questionnaire available online, compared to a sample selected from more than 92,000 names registered in journalistic functions in the Ministry of Labor and Employment.

It is the first time that a survey with Brazilian journalists will compare data of websurvey to sample survey. It is coordinated by Professor Jacques Mick, from the Department of Sociology and Political Science at UFSC. Until last October, the survey Professional Profile of Brazilian Journalism had been answered by more than 2,500 journalists from all states (https://pt.surveymonkey.com/s/perfil_jornal_aberto).

3 THE JOURNALIST AND THE PRACTICE

The journalist is also at the center of my research, which focuses on the practice and discusses the knowledge circulating in newsrooms, as well as discursive controls and variations between journalism in

leading newspapers and in small cities. For two years, I drew another type of collaborative effort, different from research networks described so far. For this, I counted on undergraduate and graduate students and professors at Unisinos and, on two occasions, seminars were held with the presence of researchers from other institutions and professionals invited.

The project, with a universal edict, discussed journalistic practice from the journalist speech. Under this view, journalists spoke for themselves. It prevails, therefore, the researcher's theory action, in which theory is understood as local and regional practice, that admits the interference of the researcher, who is a journalist, and research assistants, also journalists.

This project also looks for traces of what Bourdieu treats as "biographical illusion" of respondents in order to contrast it to the epistemological vigilance. The thought of Bourdieu gave consistency to the doubt in the idea of biographical illusion, in which one can consider the propensity of journalist to become the ideologue of his own life, selecting, according to a global intention, certain significant events (BOURDIEU, 2006).

Giddens, on the other hand, considers that the margin of suspicion on the reliability of the elements discursively offered by the agents is relatively less interesting compared to what is not accessible to the knowledge of the actors and naturally practical, i.e., it is inherent in the ability to proceed within the routines of social life (GIDDENS, 2009).

Anthony Giddens calls this relationship journalist / researcher, from elsewhere, double hermeneutics: the intersection of two meanings networks as a logically necessary part of social science, the significant social world consisted of not expert actors and metalanguages invented by social scientists; there is a constant oscillation from one network to another engaged in the practice of social sciences, he says (GIDDENS, 2009).

During the research process, we conducted one survey, 17 interviews and the Open Seminar on Journalism, about interview in journalistic practice and research, with support from GPJor and resources from CNPq.

1. About the interviews

In the localization and analysis of findings from in-depth interviews with journalists, the first and most obvious of them was that the interviewees' statements would not fit in a "focus group", but

were appropriate for qualitative interview as a research method. In these interviews, there were a wide noncompliance of respondents to a script of questions and the almost “natural” adherence to five areas of understanding of the job: habit of reading, experiences of teaching / learning shared in the context of the newsroom, professional growth linked to concrete people of newsroom, theoretical understanding of the activity and distance from abstract theory.

2. About the seminars

Authors who attended the seminar had worked before *on* the interview and *with* the interview to account for different problems in scientific research and journalism. In the rich space of exchanges formed between us during those two days, we shared experiences, skills and knowledge accumulated throughout our academic and / or professional life, which influenced on the original texts prepared and presented at the seminar, published in the book *Interview in journalistic practice and research*. Therefore, this book contains, in its rethought and expanded version, the conferences of last November, i.e., in this work, the individual conferences of last year were added to the debates and criticism occurred between us, about the ways of thinking *the* interview and *with* the interview, when someone gets research questions or must meet a journalistic agenda. In all and each one of these instances, the project got some good and / or dedicated partners.

3. About the survey

In 2010, we conducted an email survey with 130 reporters from 51 newspapers in 49 cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, in addition to three leading newspapers – Folha de S. Paulo, O Estado de S. Paulo and Zero Hora. The results revealed newsrooms where the vast majority of professionals holds a degree in Journalism, besides highlighting the similarity between the newsrooms of the journalists heard.

An important fact to be considered is that reporters still in process of education correspond to 19.3% of respondents in the first group, and 8.2% in the second. In small cities, 52.6% are graduated in Social Communication-Journalism and 15.8% have a postgraduate in this field, compared to 1.8% with education in another course; in leading newspapers, we identified 60.3% of graduates and 16.4% of postgraduates in Social Communication-Journalism, while 8.2% are graduated in another area.

In general, the two groups of reporters that responded to

the questionnaire offered us a map of newsrooms and showed more regularities than differences between the universe formed by reporters of small cities in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, and professionals of the newspapers *Zero Hora*, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo*.

Particularly in relation to the question number 30 (as can be seen in the following table), “Do you consider yourself”, the alternatives offered were: “a writer”, “a watchman of government”, “a wage-earner” or “an underpaid intellectual”. In both phases, respondents indicated preferably the option “a wage-earner” (31.6% in the 1st phase; 42.5% in the 2nd phase), dialoguing with the results obtained by Hercovitz and Cardoso, in which the salary was mentioned by 91% of respondents as the most important factor in job satisfaction (HERCOVITZ; CARDOSO, 1998). Among the reporters from small cities, the second alternative chosen was “a writer”, with 29.8% of the preference, while professionals of leading newspapers indicated as second alternative “a watchman of government” with 28.8%.

Table 1 Answers of respondents to question 30. Do you consider yourself:

| | 1st phase small cities | 2nd phase leading newspapers |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| A writer | 29.8 | 14.5 |
| A watchman of government | 12.3 | 28.8 |
| A wage-earner | 31.6 | 44.9 |
| An underpaid intellectual | 23.6 | 10.1 |

Source: Researchers

The applying of questionnaire brought, to the research, quantitative data unfolded later, in a qualitative way, in open interviews conducted with Brazilian and foreign journalists (see other papers published as a result of the research).

FINAL REMARKS

At the end of these restricted insertions in reflections and researches devoted to journalist, it is possible to outline twofold considerations. In relation to the small inventory of global and regional researches, this inventory indicates job interest from different research movements in which some Brazilian and Latin Americans are enrolled. It draws attention the fact that, in Brazil, we still don't act in many networks or in groups from different universities, although this is an

ongoing process now. It may be necessary, as Sônia Virginia Moreira said at the meeting of SBPJor (2011, p. 9), “to encourage the development of compared researches of local and regional realities in collaborative studies, aiming to knowledge circulation and as means of identity construction”.

Moreover, it seems to me that a look turned to local aspects exposes diversities that should be already contemplated by Weber, when he thought of listening to journalists, in 1910. Also, in the sociology of professions, listening to journalist as a route to understanding journalism consolidated with the now classic *Making News*, of Gaye Tuchman (1983).

More particularly, in my researches, I met a journalist who thinks about the production process and who is recognized and followed in his *works of authorship*. I also met journalists formally made invisible due to discursive strategies of journalistic objectivity, whose produce reports that fold on multiple constraints and controls. In the interviews, for example, the journalists acknowledged this, but also revealed a resistant journalist profile and a kind of journalism farthest from the milestone of objectivity and closest to the contemporary thought.

Finally, I propose to keep open a question that came up during an interview of the project and which can only be conjectured as related to Brazilian journalist in the near future. In this perspective, to find answers, the research needs to address the job repercussions faced to government policies, new decisions on mandatory or not graduation in Journalism to pursue the career, the technological environments. In this historical context, a question may be raised: will the bloggers or the entry of disadvantaged groups in the federal universities change the profile of Brazilian journalist? Eliane Brum, interviewed in 2011 in the scope of my research project, believes so. She says that Brazilian newsrooms of white, young and middle class people have their days numbered.

There is almost the same worldview within newsrooms, resulting in a journalism that talks about one place only. There is no diversity within newsrooms, and it greatly impoverishes journalism. Today, on the Internet, it is possible to see another type of coverage, with another kind of concern, but if you are picking up the newspapers, the magazines, it is a vision of the middle class, the problems of the middle class, things that concern the middle class or things that middle class journalists think that middle class readers care about. We don't have a national press also. What is called national press is the press of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Brasília. Nobody knows what is happening on the periphery of Brazil, and a lot of things is happening. Then maybe journalism now starts to be enriched, expanded. The class C is coming, internet is changing relationships, I think it's starting to change. For example, today

there is a network of bloggers in the north of Brazil "getting scoops" and publishing, beyond the borders, absurd things that happen in that region. Because traditional press, especially in the North, depends almost exclusively on government advertising. So nothing used to come out. In the states of Acre or Amapá, the bloggers doing journalism are Altino Machado and Alcinea Cavalcante, and it messed with power relations. There is a lot of interesting things happening, changing, and it is wonderful. I don't know how much people realize the privilege it is to live in this historical moment (BRUM in MAROCCO, 2012, p. 91).

Thus, actions that occur on the Internet effectively indicate changes on the way of working with information. Structures, equipment and capital can be substituted by a personal computer and bloggers against the dominant discourse. But how far this redesign, in the historical conditions of possibility, affected and will affect the practice of journalism is what remains to be shown by the research. For now, the specific symptoms, as well evidenced by a reporter who specializes in collecting idiosyncrasies of others, globally coexist with scientific findings currently verifying obvious symptoms of job worsening, crisis in media and symptoms of oxygenation of the practices due to the outsiders that, until now, blasphemed but not shook system's structures.

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