CONTEMPORARY JOURNALISM

In search of a constructive theory

SÉRGIO LUIZ GADINI
Universidade Estadual de Ponta Grossa, Brazil

ABSTRACT

This essay discusses and explores some of the possible relationships between the perspective that includes journalism as a unique form of knowledge production (Adelmo Genro Filho, 1988) and the constructive approach to journalistic production (Gaye Tuchmann, 1983 and 1993; and Nelson Traquina, 1993 and 2001). In an articulate discussion including remarks, critiques and observations from several authors who deal with journalism, the author supports the idea that the potential of journalistic production lies in its singularity of everyday action and consequently in the established dimension of relationships and events that constitute contemporary social reality.

KEY-WORDS   Gatekeeper theory; structuralism; interactive theory; production routines; journalism discourse.

> "When I read the newspapers I think of the many events that occur in order to fill up the pages and to satisfy the readers."
> **Luiz Naue**

In a parallel way to the strengthening of the Brazilian journalism field, which has been recorded with more emphasis from the 80's on, the conception of journalism – perhaps a little bit closer to the conceptual variability that establishes the notions of communication – suffers from a confusing amplitude of possibilities that define its objective, which ranges from its restriction of technical procedures and broadcasting of information to (still in the ambit of this very restrictive view) its assertion as a mere professional practice, whose basic orientation would lie in its comprehension as a mirror for reality.

This scenario seems especially established in Brazil, where efforts to consider journalism in its historical and cultural dimensions, and

as a field characterized by dispute and tensions with other fields that are part of the public environment, are still relatively restricted.

A very meaningful example is the fact that the academic training in the area is still marked by a certain technical tradition, which insists on the continuous affirmation of the myth of objectivity and suffers from a kind of obliviousness of crucial issues for understanding the journalistic phenomenon, such as the questioning of relationships with the sources, the news criteria, the production routine and the multiplicity of actors and speeches that constitute the conditions of publication production.

In that sense, the debate involving the concept of journalism becomes particularly important, in the same proportion as the emergence of other social discourses, visibility and adhesion to the media field. A first reference of this paper concerns the other elements that constitute the social reality that is constructed every day by the very same individuals, groups, movements and institutions that establish a continuous dynamics of relationships.

This is why instead of talking about a given subject, the constructive perspective of the current theoretical approach to journalism considers social life as processes of institution of the senses and beliefs that orient actions and perceptions of human groups. This conception leads to the comprehension that reality is always a result of social action and consequently historical and cultural, even though – as Berger and Luckmann (1987) have noticed – individuals tend to internalize it as an exterior fact prior to their own experience; and this does not authorize an affirmation of reality, since the dialectic relationship between establishing and legitimating institutions – the two main levels of objectivity – definitely show reality as a construction.

In the complex contemporary societies, social reality is also constituted by a multiplicity of discourses and interests, by behavioral standards that are socially defined and accepted, by several forms of interaction that gain visibility and shape through technical devices, in which communication stands out.

The approach to journalism as a unique form of knowledge, the notions of social field and cultural production, as well as other conceptual references that run through this study are directly associated with the idea of reality, understood in the ambit that Philippe Corcuff (2001:26) defines as constructive perspective: "social realities are apprehended as historical and everyday constructions of collective and individual actors". This process, since it is neither deliberate nor intentionally planned, may occur in default of the actors involved. In other terms, human actions do

not (always) happen on a very unprecedented basis, but occur in historical situations, which are also gradually transformed by those very same actions, regardless of whether they come from individual or collective actors. That is why in this historical process "social realities are at the same time challenged and internalized" (CORCUFF, 2001: 27). Reality is, as a result, not only a (symbolic) representation, but also a simultaneous and continuous social construction.

It is, then, in this perspective – and, in a way, close to a constructive approach[1] – that we seek to consider reality as a continuous construction, a field of dispute, established by a range of forms of expression and materiality.

Just to situate the plurality of today's world, we take as a basis the notion of complex societies, which is discussed, among others, by the author Alberto Melucci (2001). For him, those societies assume "the existence of a logic system significantly diverse from the one of industrial capitalism…" In complex societies, "the conflicts develop in the system areas that are directly affected by more intense informative and symbolic flows and, at the same time, subjected to higher pressure for conformity. The actors of those conflicts are temporary and their action consists of revealing, announcing to society the crucial dilemma that it is going through" (MELUCCI, 2001:27).

Journalism especially does not only involve specific language technique and articulation, but also primarily credibility standards that are historically legitimated; it puts into motion a variety of meanings, forging processes and products that may involve and "seduce" the consumer, user or receptor. Journalistic information constitutes, in the process of sense production, some knowledge that will add to, question or deny the relationship and behavior that the user assumes in the collective arena of complex contemporary societies.

That is where the pertinence of understanding the way journalistic events will interact in the construction of social reality comes from. Adelmo Genro Filho (1988) defines the journalistic fact as being a construction, always interpretative, elaborated based on a phenomenon. In this way, in a discursive construction there is one "phenomenon and a plurality of facts", according to the basis of the interests, opinions and procedures in question. The oscillation of tension establishes the occurrence, journalism carries a conception of the world; a comprehension of phenomena and relationships assigned by the media. It is in those tensions that the senses, values, interests and intentions that constitute the dimension of the imaginary universe are negotiated, instituted and connected.

Constituted by the simultaneous overlaying of singular, universal and particular aspects that are present in all phenomenal situations, journalism always implies a thematic framing that represents the social world, based on a determined direction. In practice, journalistic discourse is structured around a collection of texts, images, quotations, titles, designs and a series of other editorial procedures that articulate unique styles, introducing their respective expressions and outlining and suggesting other configurations. In other terms, journalism connects a multiplicity of voices and different codes, which are, have been or will be part of the imaginary world in which it is constituted.

This way, journalistic discourse is comprehended as one more of the endless products that circulate in the social environment in which the notion of social reality construction is situated. The existence and publication, sometimes isolated, of discussions concerning the various theoretical proposals and tendencies of contemporary journalism have recently acquired a system proposed by Nelson Traquina (2001), who presents a map of the main approaches and concepts regarding journalistic production in the last century[2].

In this text, the author proposes a reading of journalism based on five orientations that have guided the history of news production: 'mirror' theory, personal social action theory or gatekeeper theory, organizational theory, political action theory and theory of news as social construction, from which emerge the perspectives of the structuralism theory and the interactive theory. Traquina sticks, however, to this last approach.

The paradigm that comprehends news as social reality construction emerged basically between the end of the 60's and beginning of 70's. Its basic notion is that the news, when making the event referred to present, also builds on it and in this way participates in the process of the institution of social reality. In the words of the author, "news is a result of a production process, defined as perception, selection and transformation of basic material, the events, into a product, the news itself" (TRAQUINA, 2001, p. 60).

Based on the reflection developed by Gaye Tuchman (1983), Traquina recalls that the interactive theory, also known as ethno-constructive by the conceptual approach, "sees the news production process as a constant negotiation" (TRAQUINA, 2001, p. 64).

According to the interactive theory of journalism, the professionals "confronted with the abundance of events and shortage of time, struggling in order to impose order on the space and order on time" (TRAQUINA, 2001:75), end up by creating a routine of 'foreseeing', just to be able to

cover the main facts considered newsworthy for the day's issue or the oncoming hours. That is where the pertinence of 'production routines', as well as the necessary 'order' in time and space, emerges.

The logic of the interactive theory lies in the hypothesis that in the same proportion in which a specific event, when dealt with by the journalistic field, originates the news in the form of a product that makes public or makes visible the same situation, "the news also builds the event because it is a manufactured product that cannot be prevented from reflecting various aspects of the production process". (TRAQUINA, 2001:88).

The reflection is in fact opportune and more than necessary. Besides, perhaps it would be more valid to discuss journalism – going beyond the functional and technical notion that most frequently establish the profession´s image – in a more consistent way, in order to justify that the 'establishment' of the imagination of millions of people through news built upon sources and interviews that are not always available and transparent is not something that cannot be limited to common sense or to half a dozen writing techniques.

If, on one hand, the essay mentioned above gives more reflexive and professional recognition to the field, on the other hand, there is no way to overlook the absence (intentional or not) of any reference to a conceptual hypothesis intended to comprehend journalism as a unique form of human knowledge, on an everyday basis, which is also going to interfere with the social relationships of reality (GENRO FILHO, 1988). Even by the proximity that this approach has with the interactive one, the lacuna in the discussion seems noteworthy. That is why this relationship will be examined in this text.

Journalism...representation and occurrence in the construction of a 'possible world'

Another researcher that shares, at least partially, similar orientations in the study of journalism is Miquel Rodrigo Alsina (1989), to whom news is a "representación social de la realidad cotidiana que se manifiesta en la construcción de un mundo posible" (ALSINA, 1989, p. 18).

If the news is a product of mediation of the communication institution; to which a social event has effective validity, the reporting of the event is a necessary condition, however, it is not enough. After all, it is not only a question of detecting the systemic alteration, it has to be constructed and

disseminated based on discourse. Otherwise, we would be simply facing a variation or a kind of secret event.

The variation in the functional system, the communication capability of the event, its perception and the implication of the involved individuals are presented by Miquel Alsina as "essential elements" of the event. In this way another characteristic of the event emerges here: the outstanding singularity or the spectacular character that typifies the systemic variation. Let us imagine one of those alterations; once the impact of immediate effects has passed, the system itself starts to assimilate the 'breakaway' initially recorded and advertised. This gradual redesigning of the normative order that has suffered a variation starts to either incorporate new elements or reject them, assuming the non-acceptance of the breakaway, in an attempt to defend the previous order.

It is, then, in the interstices of this alteration and the spectacular character that the potential for 'publication of events' is found. Of course, its extremes, namely the exaggerated exploitation of the singular aspects of the variation, tend to lead to what has been commonly called sensationalism or 'brown journalism'. From this comes the conceptual mediation that Genro Filho (1988) introduces into journalistic production theory: the structural discursive process involving the relationships of singular, universal, and particular aspects that permeate a specific phenomenon.

It is also Miquel Rodrigo Alsina (1989) who discusses journalism as an "atividad especializada en la construcción de la realidad social", which is presented as an "objetivización de segundo grado (de rutina cognitivas, de esquemas interpretativos y de significados)". In other terms, it is a question of one (other) construction of reality that will be added to the situations, facts and relationships already present in society and widely known (ALSINA, 1989:162).

However, the hypothesis that the journalistic discourse is an event is not always seen from the viewpoint of its singular construction in the social environment. An example of that are the reflections of Alsina himself. Even being aware that, when the media disseminate, by definition, they construct the event of the news, Alsina (1989:185) still considers the publication of the event, a bit restricted to the level of its representation in relation to the event, as a break in the systemic logic where the individuals are situated. Perhaps this is where the limits of his approach are found.

Although attributing to the publication of the event a gamma of characteristics that differentiate his work from other discourse

constructions, Miquel Alsina ends up by not working with the constitutive dimension of media production as a practice that, when framing a certain variation recorded, apprehends it and gives it another event structure, which even having a previous reference event, stands out in the world, has its own space and time, which are not and cannot be the same of the reported phenomenal variation and now communicated as a discursive event by the media.

Phenomena and events that are part of the daily world need to be observed as incomplete processes that are articulated and presented, always leaving a wedge of signification to be understood, to be constructed, exactly because it is assumed that, in the process of knowledge, what is real does not appear immediately in its concrete and essential facet. The construction of knowledge is achieved in the appropriation of its relationships with the world. This is how men transform things, making the world comprehensible. And, although the world is not extinguished by what it is apparently given, but this is always a possibility, the notion of the real world presented here refers to the way in which it is outlined in the present, as we experience it and how the situations of daily life are presented.

The same perspective of approach becomes more pertinent in order to guide conceptually the current study. Based on the sociologic interpretative perspective by Alfred Schütz (1979), and also with the contributions of Berger and Luckmann (1987), Gaye Tuchman (1983) deals with journalism as a form of institutive action of collective life; as a process of construction of daily social reality.

For Tuchman, the approaches of interpretative sociology

> sostienen que el mundo social proporciona normas que los actores invocan como recursos o compulsiones cuando trabajan activamente para realizar sus proyectos. Mediante esse trabajo, los actores dan forma al mundo social y sus instituciones como fenómenos compartidos y construidos. Se producen simultáneamente dos procesos. Por un lado, la sociedad ayuda a dar forma a la conciencia. Por el outro, mediante su aprehensión intencional de los fenómenos en el mundo social compartido – mediante su trabajo activo –, los hombres y las mujeres construyen y constituyen los fenómenos sociales colectivamente (TUCHMAN, 1983, p. 196).

In this way, the perspective of interpretative sociology in journalism emphasizes the activities of informers and information organizations more than the social patterns, once the criteria of news publishing are not clearly predetermined by relationships or social structures.

Alfred Schütz (1987), one of the main mentors of sociologic comprehension, deals with world phenomena, constituting a reference from which authors approach the social world. In this interpretative perspective "aunque un lector de periódico podría impugnar la veracidad de un relato informativo específico, él o ella no impugna la existência misma de la noticia como fenómeno social" (TUCHMAN, 1983:200).

It is in this manner that the world of daily life is seen or understood by those who share this same theoretical orientation, as 'reality by excellence' within the possible and the 'multiple realities' that Alfred Schütz talks about. It is worth remembering that, for this same approach, the social actors create meanings and, by doing this, also create a shared conscience of social order, which becomes the social order itself, considering the given proportions, depending on shared significations.

From that comes the pertinence of considering journalism and its daily creation of meanings, which attribute 'senses', values, view priorities, interests and, finally, participation in the institution of collective forms of human life organization. That is why Gaye Tuchman will question journalism in an already known double perspective: of reinforcing the order or social patterns and the possibility of creation of other senses equally shared by social actors. This still makes it possible to infer that

> Los relatos informativos no sólo prestan a los acontecimientos su existencia como sucesos públicos, sino que también les imparten carácter, puesto que los reportajes informativos ayudan a dar forma a la definición pública de los acontecimientos atribuyéndoles, de manera selectiva, detalles específicos o 'particulares'. Hacen accesibles a los consumidores de noticias estos detalles (TUCHMAN, 1983: 204).

This is because, says Tuchman (1983: 16), "la noticia coordina las actividades en el interior de una sociedad compleja al hacer disponible a todos la información que de otra manera sería inaccesible". Thus,

> Por impartir caráter público a los casos que ocurren, la noticia es primero y primordialmente una institución social. Em primer término, la noticia es un método institucional para hacer que la información esté disponible ante los consumidores... En segundo término, la noticia es una aliada de las instituciones legitimadas... En tercer término, la noticia es localizada, recogida y diseminada por profesionales que trabajan en organizaciones. De tal manera, la noticia es, inevitablemente, un producto de los informadores que actúan dentro de procesos institucionales y de conformidad com prácticas institucionales" (TUCHMAN, 1983: 16).

Nilson Lage (2003)[3] criticizes the perspective developed by Gaye Tuchman, based on the text "A objetividade como ritual estratégico" ("Objectivity as strategic ritual"), originally published in 1972 and subsequently translated and disseminated by Traquina.

> Por esse texto seminal, você verá que a autora, uma espécie de madrinha do newsmaking, admite uma série de virtudes nos jornalistas (contam o que viram com a precisão possível, ouvem várias versões etc), mas conclui que fazem isso porque têm medo de processos, de serem demitidos etc. Não é uma visão negativa do jornalismo, é uma visão negativa da natureza humana em geral (poderia aplicar-se a médicos, dentistas, advogados, engenheiros), inspirada, em última análise, no pessimismo da Human Nature, obra clássica do pensamento saxônico (LAGE, 2003).

Journalism from the perspective of the singularity of the event

In a courageous effort, Adelmo Genro Filho (1988) proposed a Marxist theory for journalism. Besides the consequences of the model presented by Genro Filho, what draws our interest here is the exploring of the differential that this proposal brings to journalism. It is about the notion of singularity as a starting point for the publication viewpoint. However, the idea of singularity just has meaning if it is related to other two fields that, from Hegel and the later discussion of Georg Lukacs, form a certain event: universality and particularity.

When elaborating his reflections, Genro Filho was concerned with comprehending the potentials and significance of journalism. The journalistic report of a singular fact already contains particular and universal dimensions itself, because a journalistic fact, given its proportions, expresses the internalization of social relations that involve it in the (inter) subjective construction of discourse meanings.

The author of *O Segredo da Pirâmide* (1988:49) (The Secret of the Pyramid) warns that journalistic activity is not limited to a mere collection and reproduction of phenomena as something full of purely objective significances. Rather, it includes the phenomenal reconstitution already 'filled with signification' by the subjective intermediation both for the one who prepares the news and for the receptor, who as a member of this social community – not necessarily local, but potentially global and present in the imagination – participates in the production of the sense of the respective enunciations. Talking about journalism is, then, talking about fragments of reality, resulting from a range of factors and codes of discourse production. Genro´s reflection illustrates well this complexity:

> A notícia jornalística reproduz o fenômeno enquanto tal, resguardando sua aparência e forma singular, ao mesmo tempo em que insinua a essência no próprio corpo da singularidade, enquanto particularidade delineada em maior ou menor grau e universalidade virtual. A informação jornalística sugere os universais que a pressupõem e que ela tende a projetar. É na face aguda do singular e nas feições pálidas do particular que o universal se mostra como alusões e imagens que se dissolvem antes de se formarem... O real aparece, então, não por meio da teoria, que vai apanhar o concreto pela sua reprodução lógica, mas recomposto pela abstração e pelas técnicas adequadas numa cristalização singular e fenomênica plena de significação, para então ser percebido como experiência vivida (GENRO FILHO, 1988:140).

When giving importance to the specifications of the singularity in journalistic discourse, Genro Filho says that

> As informações que circulam entre os indivíduos na comunicação cotidiana apresentam, normalmente, uma cristalização que oscila entre a singularidade e a particularidade. A singularidade se manifesta na atmosfera cultural de uma imediaticidade compartilhada, uma experiência vivida de modo mais ou menos direto. Somente o aparecimento histórico do jornalismo implica uma modalidade de conhecimento social que, a partir de um movimento lógico oposto ao movimento que anima a ciência, constrói-se deliberada e conscientemente na direção do singular, como ponto de cristalização que recolhe os movimentos, para si convergentes, de particularidade e da universalidade (1988:160).

There is obviously an interrelation among these three categories that represent objective aspects of the real world. The main issue in this debate seems to fundamentally lie in the fact that the journalistic approach tends to apprehend the real through its movement and this as a production of novelties, of that which motivates the preparation of a certain piece of news.

Genro Filho (1989:2) observes that the connection among those three fields of a given phenomenon is always relational. The particular, for instance, "is always particular in relation to the universal". There is no particular itself, as there is no fixed singular. "In each of the dimensions there are other categories, but also they are present in a subjacent, surpassed way, as if they have been dissolved". Since there is not just one singular, the singularity of a phenomenon depends on the angle and on the comprehension of the individual´s view during his attempt at comprehension.

If singularity is the main strength of the information, in the discursive construction of an event, "the characteristics will be the necessary details to build a frame with a certain similarity of immediate perception that individuals have of considerations that involve journalistic discourse". That is where the "hugeness and strength of journalism" comes from, believes Genro Filho (1988).

There is obviously a series of other bibliographical contributions that can be related to the way the authors mentioned handle journalism. Outstanding here, for example, is the discussion by Maurice Mouillaud, who sees newspapers as a polemic field that also acts in the daily institution of senses in the collective imagination. The discourse of the newspaper integrates a collection of relationships that involve devices and techniques that produce sense in a given context and moment (MOUILLAUD, 1997:29). Besides,

> O jornal diário tornou-se, na realidade, um substitutivo do espaço público, um fórum onde se escuta o eco de todas as vozes públicas, ao mesmo tempo em que tem sua própria voz. Esta dualidade está na origem das estratégias pelas quais o jornal manipula, seja por identificar-se com ele, seja por distanciar-se do mesmo, o discurso de outrem. Uma tipologia das 'estratégias da citação' é proposta em conclusão a essas análises (MOUILLAUD, 1997:27).

Rosa Nívea Pedroso (2003) discusses the informative character of journalism and, in a way, also takes up again this trajectory in which social reality is comprehended as a field open to symbolic disputes and where, on a daily basis, the journalistic proportions also act.

In the evaluation of Professor Pedroso (2003), journalism is an activity that "transforms the event into news (and the news into meta-occurrence, that is, the event happens again when told/narrated" and that it "happens again according to laws of the symbolic world)", whether it be in the form of a report, direct interviews, articles, photo description, notes, among other discourse variations.

When working with facts – theoretically unprecedented, exotic and singular – journalistic production takes advantage of the concrete and daily possibility of "interpreting" social reality, following editorial routines, technical conditions and selection procedures, hierarchy and publication of certain views that integrate and act on social life. Publication production becomes, in this way, a discourse that, when presented as 'spokesman' for certain views – marked by the search for plurality, proximity, universality, periodicity, collective interest, among other characteristics – participates

in the institution, maintenance or projection of relationships of the geographical, symbolic and cultural area in which journalistic products circulate

Time and space limitations; production conditions; professional qualification and entrepreneurial interference in the editorial orientation are some of the factors that may establish the process of production, circulation and reception of journalistic information. These factors may redirect the senses that will be detached and establish the presentation of the diverse products of contemporary journalism. In the same way, the political, economic and cultural developments of this perspective are directly associated with the ways of organizing, living, thinking and acting of individuals that participate in a given context and time.

These are the routine procedures – and considered "objective" – that Gaye Tuchman (1993:74) defines as "strategic rituals" of protection against errors, critiques and forgeries. In taking up again– indirectly and, in a way, subtly – the influences of sociological functioning, objectivity is comprehended by Tuchman as a strategy that would make possible a bigger, and supposedly necessary, distance between journalists and events, as well as between journalists and sources.

Without embracing exclusively one of those various approaches as the most convincing one, it is possible to consider some aspects presented by the authors mentioned, exploring the potential of journalism from the perspective of the singularity of the event, when considering it as one of the several mechanisms that participate in the processes and relationships that constitute reality. And this also contributes to the construction, agenda setting, theme selection and visibility that enable the consideration of selected events and on a journalistic basis assigned to the social field.

Besides the main characteristics that traditionally are references in journalism[4], it is possible to highlight agenda setting and productive routines as factors that make up publication production and, in a relational perspective among some of the concepts discussed here, to consider that journalism is an updated construction of relationships among daily events, operating in the historical and cultural imaginary of a given age.

In the (singular) agenda setting of newsmaking… the social institution of reality

In general media discourses (products) operate in the interstices, in the "empty" supporting bases of social relations that are negotiated,

imposed or even instituted by human groups. That is why the imaginary dimension that at a certain moment makes information more acceptable and self-projective in the social environment is recorded differently on other occasions. This same focus on and exploration of instituted-institutive dynamics makes journalistic discourse an intervention mechanism in the social-imaginary relations in the contemporary world.[5]

By this same logic, the meanings of media discourses are not triggered if not in an instituting dynamics, whether it be in the specter of negotiation, imposition, cultural residue or memorizations. Because this meaning is produced in relationships between things, events and individuals that occupy subject positions, the social space where this process of constructing values, senses and projected situations is initiated is, first, a possibility, an open indeterminate sphere. This is why it can be considered – in the social fields due to the structured relationships and at the same time to structural processes – a hegemonic process of dispute and construction. In this way, journalistic discourse configures and constitutes one form of possible comprehension and, consequently, of everyday (social) construction of reality. Without any doubt, in every case the production, circulation and recognition conditions (VERÓN, 1981:193) call for different mechanisms that require the use of specific strategies and analysis. However, this reasoning regarding the ways of saying things is a subject for another discussion.

In certain aspects, journalism brings about, then, a kind of "possible world" that is presented in the way of discourse representations that win social visibility by means of the production, circulation and consumption structures. Miquel Rodrigo Alsina (1989) says that three different interrelated worlds interfere in the journalistic production process: On one hand is the 'real world', understood to be the source of events that journalism makes use of to produce the news. The 'world of reference' involves all of those elements we can fit in the phenomenon of the questioned real world. This is justified by the fact that the fitting in of a model of an event of in the referential world is essential to its comprehension. In turn, the 'possible world' would be the one that the journalist constructs based on the 'real world' and the chosen 'world of reference'. It can be concluded therefore that the possible constructed and projected word in the discourse of information takes its features and traces from the world of reference.

This notion of the possible world presented by Alsina (1989) is associated with the historical and imaginary construction mechanisms of contemporary reality and societies. It is in this imaginary dimension

that journalistic discourse operates when formulated as the product of instituted-institutive dynamics, marked by its respective forms, mechanisms, editorial specialties, connection agents, technical resources among aspects that constitute journalistic production.

Let us ponder that if, on one hand, Miquel Alsina defies the meaning of professional practice as identifying in the news a logic of the event as a systemic daily breakaway, on the other hand, he seems to complicate things a little when he tries to identify what could be the specialties of publication discourse. Adelmo Genro Filho (1988), though only partially and within the limits of a sociologic model, seems to overcome this dilemma when he identifies the centrality of journalistic production in its singular relationship, in what is more specific and peculiar in a given designated phenomenon. Let us emphasize, however, that this singularity just has meaning for production, losing or acquiring signification from the interaction with social imagination.

The notion of power demonstrates here what would be the effects of the discourses within a specific context of social relationships, considering that those effects could not be a meaningful production. It is what Eliseo Verón explains:

> Todo reconhecimento engendra uma produção e, por sua vez, toda produção resulta de um sistema de reconhecimento. Desse modo, um tal tipo de 'mensagem' dos *media* tem efetivamente um poder sobre os 'receptores'; esse poder só existe sob a forma de sentido produzido: comportamentos, falas e gestos que definem relações sociais determinadas entretidas por esses mesmos 'receptores' e que se entrelaçam na infinita rede da semiose social. (VERÓN 1981: 197).

It is in this sense that journalism constructs and transports a "possible world" (ALSINA, 1989) that progresses and unfolds as a social, cultural and imaginary construction. Because individuals displace themselves, live and undergo their experiences in a specific social universe that is, *a priori*, shaped by a series of social and cultural variants, it could be said that the human being is 'presented' with a world structure in which he learns to live together and keeps constructing his social comprehension, his personality, his existential world and then is able to think and act on a collective basis.

In this (sociological) perspective, the way the development of journalistic discourse progresses can be better understood.. Adelmo Genro Filho (1988:81) says that it is from the need of individuals to

relate to the global world that there emerges "journalism as a form of knowledge that will play a role similar to the individual perception of the singularities phenomenon, but now it is as if we could relate ourselves to the immediatism of the world, of a global community".

Reality becomes present, projects and constructs itself (or it is constructed) by the discourses. The same thing happens with journalism, as it operates a series of elements and relationships that interact, direct or indirectly, with people's lives. Here, based on the global dimension of the media, it is not only the degree of proximity that determines the interest in a specific discourse. Besides, the problems and confrontations of reality pass through the whole process of elaboration of information, because it is a structuring of the continuous flow of occurrences.

Understood as the discourse of daily bases, journalism fulfills a social need for information: it disseminates, informs and conveys an approach to the (global) daily reality events, logically subject to identification by its respective target audience, since these are the same conditions and possibilities for production that makes a piece of news acceptable... as the receptor is the interlocutor that acts to "recognize" the meanings projected in the products that win form and visibility through journalistic action.

When 'crystallizing' the singularity of a given event (giving it form and expression through articulation of the discourse), journalism constructs events in a specific way; it sets relationships between the aspects of a particular order that involve presentation by the respective phenomenon – as a universal projection potential – of other ways to understand the situations of published reality. But this effect, as is known, is only one moment in the construction process of reality in which journalism participates as a mechanism for the production of meaning for the interlocutors (PÊCHEUX, 1988), users, readers or spectators.

Besides, it is not a matter of the reception that the target audience will have of the elaborated discourse, but fundamentally from the fact that the process of the assignment of definitions to the discourse construction itself presupposes a group of significant relationships that fills the moment in which it was outlined and strategically – whether it be due to the conceptual value, importance or impact from the marketing point of view – would be included or not in the published edition. As it has become currently considered that: the degree of innovation with which journalism operates is given by the possibility of acceptance that its potential audience presents. Although the receptor of the communication supports is also, in Antonio Fausto Neto's words (1991:17), "somebody

constructed in his own enunciated economy or in the imaginary production of the organizers and enunciators of the discourse".

It is appropriate to consider also that the procedures of meaning production in journalistic discourse operate in this constant discourse overlapping as well as the annulment or extinguishing of certain aspects comprising the triggering of the meaning. However, it is known that this juxtaposition of discourses and opinions is not something that occurs only in media discourse because it also characterizes each and every process of meaning production. The construction – order and logical coherence – that the discourse event assumes a status and conceptual dimension, establishing an order in the enunciated events in which even those referring to daily events do not have the same time and space, exactly because each construction constitutes another order of the world that the media discourse presents to its respective target audience.

It is also known that journalistic productions, not being absolutely, randomly casual, guide themselves, for example, through semantic paths, potential assignments, indicate signs that the events and rumors suggest, giving them a connection – not always as logical as the supposed 'bare events' could seem – that will, in some way, present itself as another structural comprehension of events and relationships of the social world.

Production 'routines' as professional references and limits

For beyond and parallel to social structures and to the communication company logic, journalism is established by professional 'routines', which can be defined as "a series of actions of communication means that regulate and determine professional practice based on factors that have nothing to do with the intrinsic importance of events or their currency" (FONTCUBERTA, 1999:106). As they make up the daily basis of the profession, in a way somewhat 'inherent', the routines "are seen as the price for the urgency imposed by working with current events and as imperatives of the process of media production itself". (FONTCUBERTA, 1999:106).

The study of Gaye Tuchman (1983), one of the first authors to question the subject in a constructive perspective[6], indicates that the ways of organization and functioning of journalism impose a pace of work based on or originating from three factors – space, time and sources – which, in a last instance determine the agenda of practicing journalism itself.

In this way, "the structuring of time in a newsroom also influences the evaluation of the facts as informative events", says Fontecuberta (1999:106). The principal time of the effective functioning of the structure of a daily publication, for example, is an indicator that the events, programmed or recorded in that period, have a degree of being newsworthy that is superior to the events that happen after or before that time of daily journalistic 'coverage'.

The professional routine of journalistic production, however, accompanies not only the process of agenda setting, but also the expectations of the public and the developments that the event may attain. In addition, it is fundamental to consider the routines that may facilitate or, in other cases, justify not covering the event. Underlying that is obviously a 'structure' of professional routines of journalistic production that needs to be considered and should not be ignored, whether it be by professional people from the area, cultural producers or readers that frequently claim the media does not give importance to certain events. Sometimes those remarks are true; at other times, however, it would be worthwhile to have the logic of journalism production routines.

The plurality of sources is another essential factor that involves the professional routines of the area and will set the strategies of editorial production. The priority, or in certain cases, centrality of official sources, for instance, is a practice that seems to be more and more habitual in Brazilian journalism. Such characteristics of the professional routine start to constitute, despite the 'facilitating' action of well-equipped press advisers, a professional 'habit' and at the same time, an excuse, from the administrative point of view, for the owners of the publications and consequently the editors-in-chief not betting on the traditional practice of journalistic fact-finding, checking, comparing and verifying the origin and interest of hundreds or thousands of pieces of information that editors receive by e-mail, telephone, mail or direct contact every day.

Anyway, facing a growing gamma of information, professional journalists need to 'practice' their duty of selecting, establishing hierarchies, excluding and including in the next day´s edition the subjects that, based on their point of view and according to the interests and expectations of readers and the 'pressure' game imposed by cultural industries, will be edited and will have more emphasis on the sections of each day´s edition. Gaye Tuchman (1983) discusses the subject when trying to comprehend how journalists decide what is news in the professional field and why these professional journalists are designated according to certain criteria and not others, for instance, to decide what

readers/listeners/spectators may receive through the respective means of communication.

For that reason, it is important to consider the production routines as integrating elements of the journalistic production strategies, where the news results in a socially produced work that involves having not only the context, but also the ways that constitute journalistic activity. It is with this research orientation (*newsmaking*) that we seek to comprehend and describe the work of informers as part of a process marked by routines, images – sometimes stereotypes -, expectations of readers, agenda setting instituted by the presence and action of other actors in the media field, limits and theme selections[7].

As a consequence, the process of journalistic selection – agenda setting, assigning and production – does not occur in an isolated way, under the sole responsibility of some professional journalists, but constitutes a process that is formulated and kept under the surveillance of civilian society (not very well organized!), consumers and current managers in governmental and administrative areas.

And this way the 'responsibility' for editing (publishing or not) certain events and subjects cannot be attributed only to what would be understood as criteria and 'subjective' options of the professional journalists themselves. Logically, considering those multiple mechanisms of intervention in the process is not equivalent to sparing journalism professionals from their respective reactions (adhesions, connivance or indifference) to the editorial policies of communication companies. This is because the virtual, discussed interests of civilian society will hardly seem similar to those that some companies insist on calling 'market interests'; regarding the latter, professional journalists do not seem to have the capability of claiming exemption or indifference.

Concluding Assertions

It is in this sense that it can be said that all journalistic production (regardless of whether it is concerned with the cultural, economic or political field) 'transits' and advertises images of social reality, as the latter is identified, consumed and accepted by the public. When establishing a(n) (inter) connection with the world, journalistic production presents the simultaneous character of a great variety of phenomena, drawing a map of the social universe from which the events reported by the media are taken. This act of imaginary social production (and, therefore, historical)

enables the individual to project new relationships and comprehensions, making possible – through the singular view of the designated event and discursive structure – other notions of reality, materialized in a form of singular production of human knowledge.

However, affirming that this perspective would be a Marxist theory of journalism, as Adelmo Genro Filho (in his important work on the subject!) has suggested, would perhaps be going a little too far. But this would be still another debate! The fact is that from the perspective discussed here, journalism brings – through the daily action of its discursive production – some knowledge that can participate in the daily construction of social reality... a constructive look at a theory of contemporary journalism.

NOTES

1   The book *As novas sociologias: construções da realidade social*, Philippe Corcuff (2001:89) points out some of the differences and, at the same time, proximities between "constructive structuralism", which emerges from social structures, advanced by Pierre Bourdieu" (1990 and 1998), and "phenomenology constructivism", to which the works of Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann (1987) are closer, based on Alfred SCHÜTZ (1979 and 1987). In this last perspective, "society is a human production; an objective reality and man is a social production" (BERGER and LUCKMANN, 1987:87).

2   Another Portuguese author, Jorge Pedro Sousa, proposes a system for the paradigms and journalism and news theories in the last century. It can be assured that the work of Souza, in a way, adds to and interacts with the text by Nelson Traquina, since he also accepts a constructive version of the news. (SOUSA, 2002:18).

3   According to discussions held in Lista Jornalismo Cultural on line, conducted on 03/30/2003, available at www.yahoogrupos.com.br/jncultural/. Accessed in 08/30/2003.

4   Otto Groth, for example, in the first decade of the 20th century (in Germany), speaks about universality, periodicity, currency and diffusion (BELAU, 1966, p. 43).

5   For a more dense and systematic discussion of journalism and construction of social imagination, see GADINI, Sérgio Luiz. *Jornalismo*

e Acontecimento: A Produção de Sentido no Discurso da Informação. Dissertação (Mestrado em Comunicação e Cultura Contemporâneas) – Faculdade de Comunicação, Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador, 1994.)

6   Robert Park and Walter Lipmann, in the first half of the 20th century, had already gone through the subject, based on the symbolic interaction without, however, going deeper into the developments of journalistic production, as Tuchman and other authors did later.

7   In relation to the selection process, it is important to emphasize here the notion of gatekeeper. Used in the journalism studies in the 50's primarily by David White, this concept of social psychology refers to the person who takes a decision in a systematic sequence. In the process of information production, "it is understood as a series of choices where the flow of news has to go through several gates, that is, places that are areas of decision in relation to what the journalist, namely the gatekeeper, has to decide if he is going to choose or not" (TRAQUINA, 2001:36).

BIBLIOGRAPHY

ALSINA, Miguel Rodrigo. *La construcción de la noticia.* Barcelona: Paidós, 1989.

BELAU, Angel Faus. *La ciencia periodística de Otto Groth.* Pamplona: Universidad de Navarra, 1966.

BERGER, P. & LUCKMANN, T. *A construção social da realidade.* Petrópolis: Vozes, 1987. 7. Ed.

BOURDIEU, Pierre. *O poder simbólico.* Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 1998. 2.ed.

CORCUFF, Philippe. *As novas sociologias: construções da realidade social.* Bauru: Edusc, 2001.

FAUSTO NETO, Antônio. *Mortes em derrapagem.* Rio de Janeiro: Rio Fundo, 1991.

FONTCUBERTA, Mar de. *A notícia: pistas para compreender o mundo.* Lisboa: Editorial Notícias, 1999.

GADINI, Sérgio Luiz. *Jornalismo e Acontecimento: A Produção de Sentido no Discurso da Informação.* Dissertação (Mestrado em Comunicação e Cultura Contemporâneas) – Faculdade de Comunicação, Universidade Federal da Bahia. Salvador, 1994.

GENRO FILHO, Adelmo. *O segrêdo da pirâmide: para uma teoria marxista do jornalismo.* Porto Alegre: Ortiz, 1988. 2. ed.

GENRO FILHO, Adelmo. "Jornalismo já tem sua teoria". In: *Jornal Zero.* Florianópolis: Universidade Federal de Santa Catarina, setembro de1989. Caderno especial, página 2.

LAGE, Nilson. Conforme discussões feitas na *Lista Jornalismo Cultural on line*, realizadas no período em 30/03/2003, disponíveis em www.yahoogrupos.com.br/jncultural/. Acesso em 30/08/2003.

MELUCCI, Alberto. *A invenção do presente: movimentos sociais nas sociedades complexas.* Petrópolis: Vozes, 2001.

MOUILLAUD, Maurice e PORTO, Sérgio Dayrell (org.). *O Jornal: da forma ao sentido.* Brasília: Paralelo 15, 1997.

PÊCHEUX, Michel. *Discurso, Estrutura ou acontecimento.* Campinas: Pontes, 1990.

PEDROSO, Rosa Nívea. "Elementos para compreender o jornalismo informativo". In: *Sala de Prensa* (Web para Profesionales de la Comunicacion Iberoamericanos). Numero 51, Enero 2003. Año IV, Vol. 2. Acesso em 21/10/2003.

SCHÜTZ, Alfred. *Fenomenologia e Relações Sociais.* Rio de Janeiro: Zahar, 1979.

SCHÜLTZ, Alfred. "Sur les realitès multiples". In: *Le chercheur et le quotidien.* Paris: Meridièns, 1987. Pp: 103-167.

SOUZA, Jorge Pedro. *Teorias da notícia e do jornalismo.* Chapecó/Florianópolis: Argos/Letras Contemporâneas, 2002.

TRAQUINA, Nelson (org.). *Jornalismo: Questões, Teorias e histórias.* Lisboa: Vega, 1993.

TRAQUINA, Nelson (org.). *Revista de Comunicação e Linguagens.* Jornalismo/2000. Lisboa: Relógio D'Água, 2000.

TRAQUINA, Nelson et alii. *O jornalismo português em análise de casos.* Lisboa: Caminho, 2001.

TUCHMAN, Gaye. *La producción de la noticia: estudio sobre la construcción de la realidad.* Barcelona: Gustavo Gilli, 1983.

TUCHMAN, Gaye. "A objetividade como ritual estratégico: uma análise das noções de objetividade dos jornalistas" in TRAQUINA, Nelson, org. *Jornalismo: questões, teorias e estórias.* Lisboa: Veja, 1993. Pp: 74-90.

VERÓN, Eliseo. *A produção de sentido.* São Paulo: Cultrix, 1981.

WOLF, Mauro. *Teorias da comunicação.* Lisboa: Presença, 1987.

Sérgio Luiz Gadini is a Professor at the Journalism Major and Applied Social Sciences Masters Course of the State University of Ponta Grossa (UEPG/PR), Brazil; journalist and doctor in social communication.