

DOSSIER

THE AGENDA OF THE DAY:

A study about the Brazilian Congress in editorials of *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo*¹

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ABSTRACT - Ao discutir conceitos e fenômenos associados ao agenda-setting jornalístico, o artigo examina os temas pautados pelos editoriais dos jornais *Folha de S. Paulo* e *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Como recorte, optou-se por estudar, empregando a Análise de Conteúdo, 164 textos publicados por ambos os periódicos entre 2011 e 2013 e que mencionam os termos “Congresso”, “Senado” e “Câmara”. Os resultados apontam que, dentre os assuntos considerados mais relevantes pelos jornais, estão as relações entre governo e base aliada e os escândalos políticos; também mereceram atenção questões de interesse social, como legislação trabalhista ou qualidade dos serviços de educação e saúde. Acredita-se que o fato de o editorial ser um texto institucional acaba por conferir um peso distinto às agendas por ele propostas. As diferentes ênfases temáticas verificadas nos editoriais de OESP e FSP evidenciam, ademais, que as instituições jornalísticas são dotadas de interesses próprios. Assim sendo, destaca-se a necessidade de que a literatura aprofunde a discussão sobre “critérios de editorialidade” com o intuito de se compreender em que medida as empresas não somente agendam determinadas pautas, mas ressaltam posições políticas específicas.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo político. Congresso Nacional. Agendamento. Editorial.

A PAUTA DO DIA: Um estudo sobre o agendamento do Congresso Nacional brasileiro nos editoriais da *Folha de S. Paulo* e de *O Estado de S. Paulo*

ABSTRACT - In order to update the debate about journalism and agenda-setting, the article examines the main issues discussed by *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo* in their editorials. By using Content Analysis, we analyze 164 texts published by both newspapers between 2011 and 2013. All editorials in our sample mention the terms “Brazilian Congress”, “Senate” or “Brazilian House of Representatives”. Our results point that, among the issues considered of relevance by the newspapers, there are relations between the government and its allies in Congress and political scandals; other issues of social interest were also addressed by the editorials, such as labor legislation and the quality of education and health services. The fact that editorial is an institutional genre gives a special relevance to the agendas adopted by it. The diverse emphases verified in OESP and FSP editorials also highlight that journalistic institutions have their own interests. Therefore, it is necessary that the literature deepens the debate about “editorialized criteria”, aiming to understand to which extent journalistic companies not only set some agendas as those that are more important, but also highlight particular political perspectives.

Key words: Political journalism. Brazilian Congress. Agenda-setting. Editorial.

LA ORDEN DEL DÍA: una investigación acerca de agenda-setting del Congreso Nacional Brasileño en editoriales de *Folha de S. Paulo* e de *O Estado de S. Paulo*

RESUMEN - Buscando la actualización del debate acerca de Periodismo y agenda-setting, el artículo examina los temas discutido en editoriales de los periódicos *Folha de S. Paulo* y *O Estado de S. Paulo*. Han sido examinados 164 textos publicados por los dos periódicos mientras 2011 y 2013, teniendo como método la Análisis de Contenido. Todos los editoriales analizados aluden a las palabras “Congreso Brasileño”, “Senado” o “Cámara de los Diputados”. Los resultados señalan que, entre las temáticas consideradas más relevantes por los periódicos, están relaciones mientras gobierno y sus aliados en Congreso y escándalos políticos; también han sido debatidos temas de interés social, como la legislación laboral o la calidad de los servicios de educación y salud. Por ser un género institucional, las agendas adoptadas por los editoriales tienen un peso diferenciado. Los diversos énfasis temáticos comprobados en los editoriales de FSP e OESP evidencian que los periódicos tienen intereses propios. Entonces, es necesario que la literatura profundice el debate acerca de “criterios de editorialidad”, en busca de comprender en qué medida las empresas periodísticas no solamente agendan determinadas cuestiones como significativas, pero también resaltan perspectivas políticas específicas.

Palabras clave: Periodismo político. Congreso Brasileño. Agenda-setting. Editorial.

1 Introduction

The development of mass communication has brought changes such as the chance of accessing diverse pieces of information without necessarily sharing the same time and space where they were produced; broadening the scope of messages once restricted to specific contexts; and offering distinct versions to a fact (THOMPSON, 1998; ENTMAN, 2004). Media’s relevance became clear to the extent that makes some agents of the journalistic field claim the role of public interest representatives (LIMA, 2001; MOTTA e GUAZINA, 2011; BUCCI, 2000; GOMES, 2004; KOVACH e ROSENSTIEL, 2004; ROTHBERG, 2011).

A few decades ago, researchers have shown interest in discussing how successful the press is in suggesting to readers which subjects deserve more attention – this is the main proposal of the *agenda-setting* theory, first developed by McCombs and Shaw (1972), and then updated and revised by McCombs (2009). These authors defend that there is a close association between the issues covered by the journalism and the subjects people discuss. In other words, the media not only inform society about public issues, but also suggest the level of importance that a topic should be given.

Seeking to deepen the discussion about journalism and *agenda-setting*, this article explores editorials published in two Brazilian newspapers, *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Estado de S. Paulo*. As a sample, we examine texts mentioning the Brazilian Congress, a bicameral institution composed by The Senate and The House of Representatives. Specifically, this article aims to understand editorials' agenda-setting process concerning the Congress and its issues.

We highlight that there are few Brazilian studies dedicated to examining editorials in an empirical approach (AZEVEDO, 2005; AZEVEDO, CHAIA, 2008; ITUASSU; 2011; MIGUEL; COUTINHO, 2007). Once it is an institutional genre, in which the newspaper exposes its opinion in order to convince the audience (BELTRÃO, 1980; MELO, 1985), the subjects that will be discussed seem to be carefully chosen. This happens because editorials have the role of socially positioning the journal, establishing a debate with economic and political elites (ALBRIGHT, 1995; HALLOCK, 2007; IZADI; SAGHAYE-BIRIA, 2007; MELO, 1985). To sum up, editorials are a journalism's attempt to have its own agenda adopted by the government and other political agents. In order to contribute to this debate, the investigation emphasizes how the Federal Legislative Branch was addressed in such texts.

The article's first section discusses the idea of journalistic agenda-setting, focusing on the role of editorials as one of the elements that draws our attention to the process of reality construction. Next, we present the research method and offer an empirical analysis about *Folha de S. Paulo's* and *O Estado de S. Paulo's* agenda directed to the Brazilian Congress. The following topic reflects about the findings and highlights a debate poorly explored in the literature, the idea of editorialized criteria. Last, we present our main conclusions.

2 Agenda-setting and journalistic editorials: brief conceptual notes

More than trying to learn the logic of mass communication, political agents seek to participate in media's agenda by suggesting to the press what they consider the main issues and frames to be addressed (GOMES, 2004; RODRIGUES, 1997; RUBIM, 2004; SELLERS, 2012). Keeping a good relationship with the media and its professionals became part of the political realm, mainly because visibility has become an essential tool to gain influence or to run for office (COOK, 1989;

BOURDIEU, 2011; GOMES, 2004; MIGUEL, 2003). We know, however, that the power of establishing journalism's agenda is unequally divided among political agents (as well as reporters belonging to reputed institutions have an easier access to authorities) (AZEVEDO, 2004). In the same way, newspapers and their editorials constrain political representatives in different manners. This process can be more or less successful depending on some elements such as credibility, prominence of the journal or the relevance it gives to editorials.

It is known that to be successful politicians must negotiate with journalistic institutions and professionals (GOMES, 2004; CARVALHO, 2013). Even if positive visibility is not the only reason sustaining a successful career, political agents do not ignore journalistic coverage. They tend to consider relevant issues most highlighted by news, presuming that the public cares most about the big stories of the day (SEVENANS *et al.*, 2016).

As journalism is an activity endowed with particular principles and rules, it basically does not offer visibility to political agents if there is no particular reason for doing so. In that sense, we find news values and criteria that guide journalistic production (GALTUNG; RUGE, 1999; MONT'ALVERNE; MARQUES, 2013; TRAQUINA, 2005; TUCHMAN, 1978; SILVA *et al.*, 2014; SELLERS, 2010).

Agenda setting is just one of the ways journalistic field agents exert their power. They can indicate which issues should receive attention while others remain outside the coverage (AZEVEDO, 2004). Naturally, such thematic "filter" considers the action of other actors and organizations, such as the work of the Judicial Branch.

It is necessary to highlight that the relationship between media agenda and public agenda had been suggested by Walter Lippman since 1922 (LIPPMANN, 2010; COLLING, 2001; TRAQUINA, 2000; MCCOMBS, 2009). However, it was only a few decades ago that, within an essential work to the Communication Studies, McCombs and Shaw (1972, p. 184) proposed to test agenda-setting hypothesis. They pointed out that "voters tend to share the media's composite definition of what is important". In a work published originally in 1975, McCombs *et al.* (2000, p. 64) argue that "media establishes public opinion agenda, without necessarily determining the direction this opinion will take".

After the seminal work by McCombs and Shaw (1972), agenda-setting hypothesis was tried out by several studies (BENNETT; MANHEIM, 2000; MCCOMBS *et al.*, 2000; MUDDIMAN *et*

al., 2014; VESA *et al.*, 2015). In the Brazilian context, we highlight the relevant research conducted by Rodrigues (1997), who debates the influence of mass communication in the Congress' agenda. In a similar approach, Máximo (2008) investigated the presence of media discourse in representatives' political discourses. Cervi *et al.* (2012) aimed to identify if there was any convergence of political, media and public agendas in Brazilian presidential elections of 2010.

In general, we can say that agenda-setting studies reach diverse goals and, by doing so, use different approaches. McCombs identifies five dimensions coexisting in the research about it:

a) Basic agenda-setting effects: works comparing focus of attention by the news media on key public issues with the public's focus of attention.

b) Attribute agenda-setting: studies about issues' and people's attributes debated by mass communication (the core proposition is that those elements prominent on the media agenda become prominent over time on the public agenda).

c) Psychology of agenda-setting effects: addresses the reasons why media effects are different among people.

d) Sources of the media agenda: dedicated to find out who is responsible for setting media's agenda.

e) Consequences of agenda-setting effects: investigate agenda-setting effects towards audience's attitudes and opinions.

Specifically about editorials, we can argue that they help to build journalistic agenda. We highlight that in the Brazilian case there are few studies dedicated to investigating (specially in an empirical approach) agenda-setting role in public issues played by journalistic editorials. Contrary to the idea that it would be possible "to mirror" reality through news, the argument that journalism is an active agent in building reality (including public agenda) by selecting and ranking different themes, sources and approaches (CORREIA, 2011; GAMSON; MODGLIANI, 1989; PENA, 2012; SCHLESINGER, 1999; TRAQUINA, 2005; TUCHMAN, 1972) remains strong since the 1970's. Nevertheless, as much as journalistic reports do not cut the risk of subjectivity of those involved in elaborating informative and opinionated content, it is required that they remain faithful to the facts, in order to avoid compromising company's credibility (GOMES, 2009). Therefore,

the demands to follow the rules of journalistic production process constrain editorials to respect the most relevant facts of reality, following an agenda that would come from their importance (ESPINOSA, 2002).

If opinionated section plays the role of presenting divergent perspectives to citizens (MARQUES; MIOLA, 2010), editorials go further, mainly when exerting one of the functions which journalism claims to perform: to set the public debate.

Along with candidates and parties, the press has the ability to help define the nation's problems and identify possible solutions. While the press may sometimes echo the discussions of political elites, at other times it acts as a dissenting or alternative voice in the political arena. (KAHN; KENNEY, 2002, p. 381-382).

Editorials present a version of reality by giving public relevance to issues and publishing their judgement about them. They constitute an attempt of representing public opinion itself (SÁNCHEZ; MEJÍA, 2003).

Regarding editorials' influence towards the audience, Chiang and Knight (2011) show that citizens tend to support the candidate endorsed by journalistic editorials. Kahn and Kenney (2002) also concluded that the public tends to evaluate positively candidates endorsed by newspapers although this only happens in certain elections and to certain citizens.

In the Brazilian context, the range of editorials is probably not the same verified in American cases, even because the amount of readers in Brazil is limited². This could also explain why there are few studies about the theme in Brazil³. Among the most recent researches on the subject – and that are close to article's proposition – we can indicate the article by Miguel and Coutinho (2007) about the coverage of a Brazilian scandal, known as “mensalão”, in quality papers' editorials; and the article by Ituassu (2011) regarding the analysis of editorials about 2010 electoral campaign. Azevedo (2005) and Azevedo and Chaia (2008) also bring a proposal similar to the one presented in this paper, analyzing editorials about the Brazilian Senate.

Once we discussed some of the most relevant issues about editorials as an element to integrate media's agenda, the article now examines empirically how OESP and FSP covered the Brazilian Congress in their editorials.

3 Empirical analysis

Research context:

Brazilian Congress in editorials of OESP and FSP

It is possible to say that the Worker's Party (PT) strengthened its representation in 2010 elections. Its candidate won the race for Presidency and the party increased its deputies in the House of Representatives to the 2011-2015 Legislature as well⁴. In Senate, the context was also favorable to PT with José Sarney (2011-2012) and Renan Calheiros (from 2013 until 2016) leading the institution (both belong to PMDB, an important ally of PT).

Federal Legislative's activity in the 2011-2013 period (an interval in which the editorials analyzed here are included) was marked by a certain acceptance of government's agenda: several bills interesting the Executive were approved⁵.

The difficulty presented to the government to pass some bills arose slowly. The June 2013 protests brought an "element of surprise" to the Legislative Branch, that had to show itself responsive to demonstrations. Naturally, the press gave importance to this and other issues. This article seeks to understand to what extent the Congress and the themes concerning the institution were highlighted by editorials of *Folha de S. Paulo* and of *O Estado de S. Paulo*.

Máximo (2008) points out that FSP and OESP, along with other Brazilian quality papers, are frequently mentioned in representatives' pronouncements. Instituto Máquina's research reveals that they are the favorite newspapers of Brazilian's businessmen (PORTAL IMPRENSA, 2014). Besides, FSP and OESP are also among the preferred journals by representatives⁶. We should also consider that such journals have received a significant amount of the advertisement budget from the Federal Government in the period between 2000 and 2014⁷. All the previous points help justifying the choice of an empirical study about the editorials published by both newspapers. Above all, they have decades of tradition in Brazilian journalism⁸.

Methodology

In order to investigate the agenda of FSP's and OESP's editorials, the *corpus* of our research is composed by 164 editorials published by

both newspapers between 2011 and 2013⁹. Since it is not possible to examine each editorial published in the period, we proposed to design an “artificial” semester: we collected editorials published in specific months of each of those years (January and February 2011; March and April 2012; and May and June 2013). The decision of creating an artificial semester is made because it gives the chance of reaching a broader period, providing more randomness to the construction of the *corpus* (allowing to understand the ordinary coverage, since, when there is a scandal, it is natural that newspapers’ agenda feel attracted by investigations). We did not choose the year of 2014 because it is an electoral one, what may cause a different coverage pattern¹⁰. Last, we only considered texts mentioning at least one of the three keywords selected to the research: “Congress”, “House of Representatives” or “Senate”¹¹.

The article’s methodology is Content Analysis. It deals with “linguistic materiality through text’s empirical conditions, establishing categories to its interpretation” (CAREGNATO; MUTTI, 2006, p. 683-684). The technique allows generating inferences from a text to its social context (BAUER, 2000).

In practice, the agenda-setting analysis of the issues debated in editorials followed two steps. First, we identified the general theme each of the 164 editorials address, categorizing them in one of the following four categories below, originally developed by Mont’Alverne and Marques (2013, p. 98-99) and adapted to this article:

- 1) Politics: “texts mentioning political disputes; party disputes; relationships between Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Branches; corruption scandals and investigation of crimes committed by political agents; parliamentary commission of inquiry”.
- 2) Economics: “texts referring to internal and external economic issues”; to the Brazilian economic reality; to the policies adopted – or that the newspapers suggest adopting – by the government or representatives; to the management of public companies.
- 3) Social Issues: texts directly linked to social issues, such as the approval of new laws on labor relationships, strikes, and civil sphere manifestations; access to and quality of public services.
- 4) Other: editorials that do not fit in any of the categories above.

The study of Espinosa (2002) contributed to the definition of the categories we use, once he argues that editorials can be classified generally in economics, politics or social issues oriented texts.

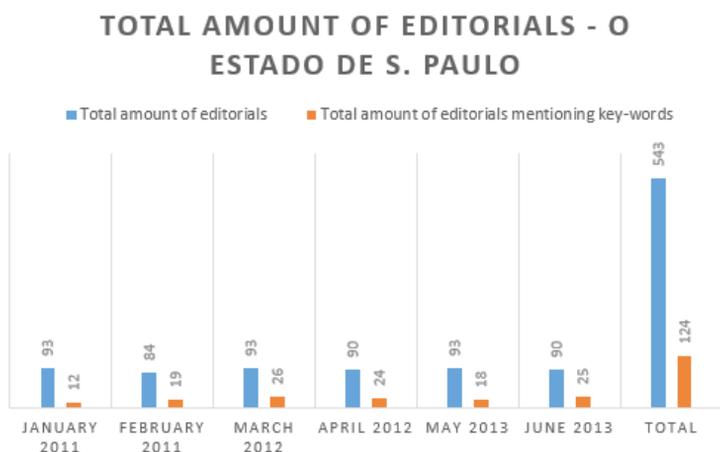
After coding the editorials in the main categories, we identified the specific theme of each text. For example, dealing only with “Politics”, there are editorials addressing negotiations between the government and its allies in Congress or the need of changes in specific laws. That pre-analysis was enough to code the themes since the literature points that editorials basically do not deal with more than one subject (BELTRÃO, 1980).

We used NVivo¹² software in order to establish the categories in which themes were sheltered. The recurrence of certain words, in addition to *corpus* qualitative analysis, allows us to identify more precisely the issues addressed by editorials. We also used Microsoft Excel to map the subjects that composed newspapers’ agenda in order to organize data.

Data analysis

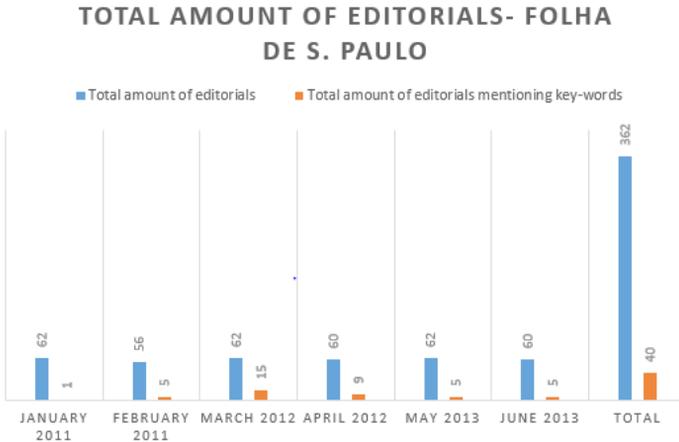
In order to show the proportion that the sample assumes in comparison to the whole material, we present, in the following two tables, the amount of editorials published by the two newspapers concerning the months chosen for this study. In the last column, we point out how representative the *corpus* is compared to the total of editorials published by the newspapers in the selected period.

Chart 1 – Total amount of editorials published by *O Estado de S. Paulo* and total number of editorials mentioning “Congress”; “House of Representatives” or “Senate” (absolute values)



Source: The authors (2016).

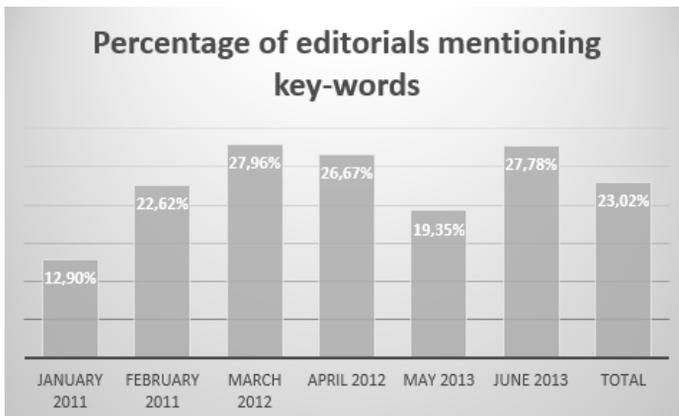
Chart 2 – Total amount of editorials published by *Folha de S. Paulo* and total number of editorials mentioning “Congress”; “House of Representatives” or “Senate” (absolute values)



Source: The authors (2016).

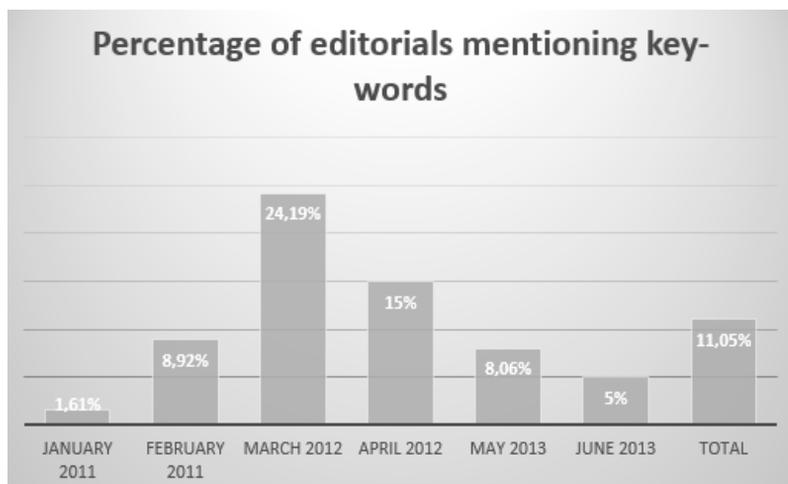
According to the data presented in the previous charts, in the case of OESP, 124 out of 543 editorials published mentioned “Congress”; “House of Representatives” or “Senate”. In FSP, only 40 out of 362 editorials brought the same keywords. This means that almost $\frac{1}{4}$ of OESP’s editorials addressed the Legislative, which evidences the high interest of this newspaper in the Brazilian Congress.

Chart 3 – Percentage of editorials published by *O Estado de S. Paulo* mentioning “Congress”; “House of Representatives” or “Senate”¹³



Source: The authors (2016).

Chart 4 – Percentage of editorials published by *Folha de S. Paulo* mentioning “Congress”; “House of Representatives” or “Senate”

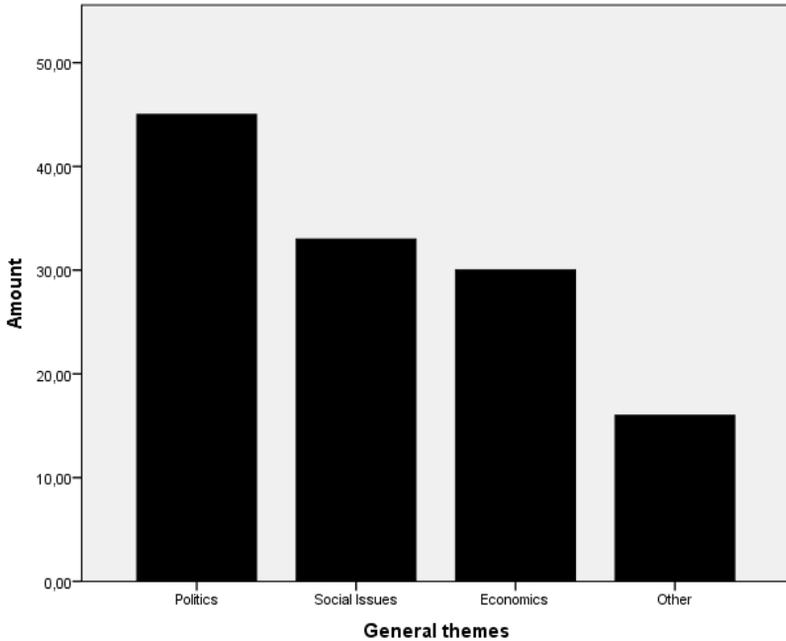


Source: The authors (2016).

The data reveals that the Brazilian Congress is more frequently addressed in OESP – even if we consider the total amount of editorials published by each newspaper in terms of percentage, O Estado de S. Paulo published twice as many texts than FSP.

Concerning the analysis of general themes addressed by editorials, we verified that Politics predominate in OESP coverage during the analyzed period, with 45 (out of 124) editorials classified in that category – which represents about 36,3% of total amount of editorials mentioning keywords. Next, 33 texts were coded as Social Issues (26,6%), followed by 30 (24,2%) in Economics and 16 (12,9%) in Other¹⁴.

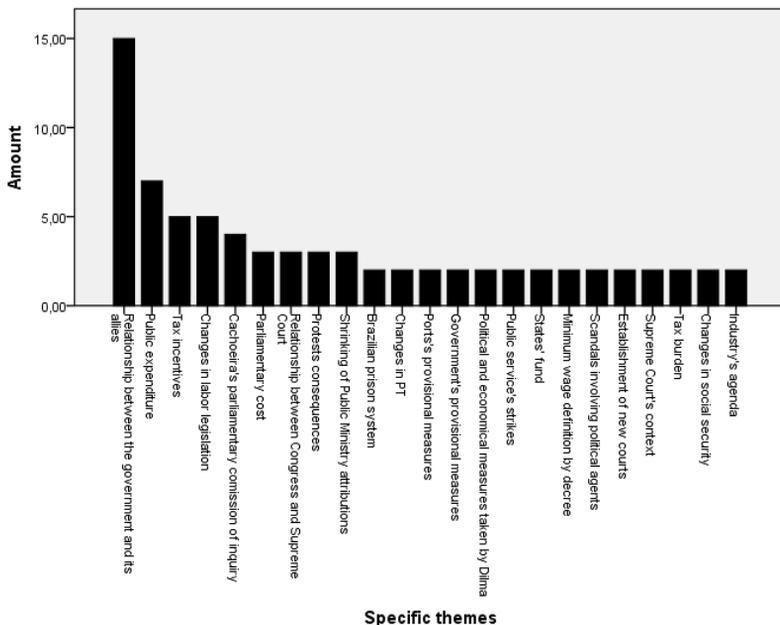
Chart 5 – General themes addressed by *O Estado de S. Paulo*'s editorials (absolute values)



Source: The authors (2016).

The next step was to map specific themes addressed by this newspaper. Within those four main axis, different issues were touched by the investigated editorials. As the following chart shows, the most debated specific theme in *O Estado de S. Paulo* editorials was “Relationship between the government and its allies” (n = 15). Next, “Public expenditure” was the main focus of 7 editorials, while “Tax incentives” and “Changes in labor legislation” appears in five ones. Four texts addressed “Cachoeira’s parliamentary commission of inquiry”. The following themes were present in three editorials each: “Protests consequences”; “Shrinking of Public Ministry attributions”; “Relationship between Congress and Supreme Court”; and “Parliamentary cost”. Another diverse issues – but also bringing one of the three keywords – were debated in fewer editorials¹⁵.

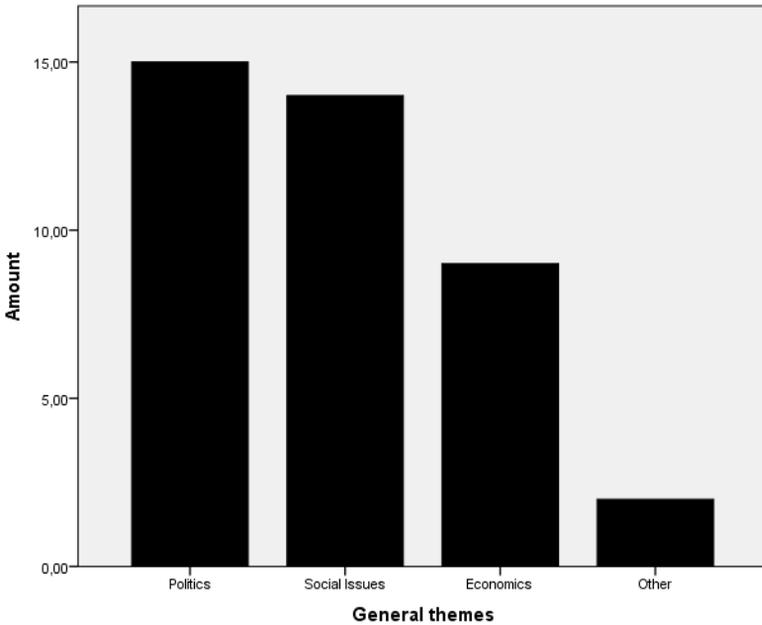
Chart 6 – Main specific themes debated by *O Estado de S. Paulo* (absolute values)



Source: The authors (2016).

The smaller amount of editorials published by *Folha de S. Paulo*, if compared to OESP, is directly tied to the smaller amount of texts coming from that newspaper. We realize that there is a similar prominence to the one founded on OESP, with more texts about Politics: FSP brings 15 editorials about this issue over the period, what means 37,5% of the total of texts in the sample. Close to Politics, the next axis is Social Issues, with 14 editorials about it (35% of total). Economics has 9 editorials (22,5%), while only two texts (5%) belong to Other.

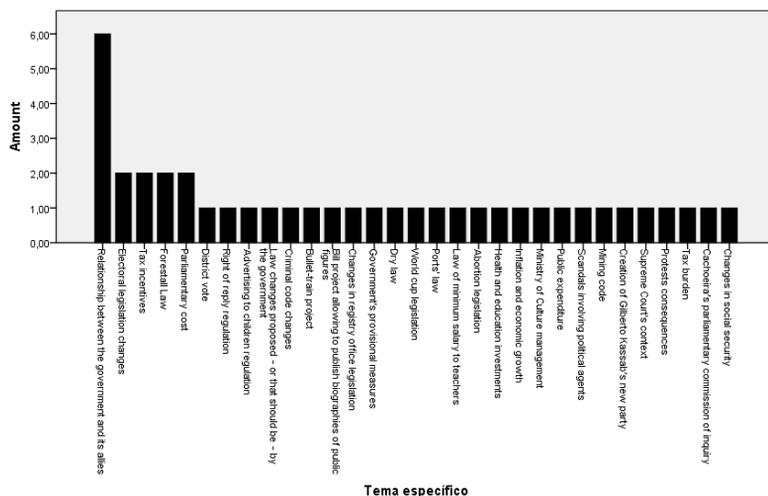
Chart 7 – General themes addressed by *Folha de S. Paulo*'s editorials (absolute values)



Source: The authors (2016).

The most recurrent specific theme in *Folha de S. Paulo* is “Relationship between the government and its allies”, present in six editorials (this was the most debated specific theme by OESP as well). Next, four issues were addressed in two texts each. They are: “Parliamentary cost”; “Electoral legislation changes”; “Forestall Law”; and “Tax incentives”. Part of specific themes were only discussed a single time in FSP’s texts. Among them are: “Law changes proposed – or that should be – by the government”; “Creation of Gilberto Kassab’s new party”; “Bill project allowing to publish biographies of public figures”; “Bullet-train project”; “District vote” and others.

Chart 8 – Specific themes debated by *Folha de S. Paulo* (absolute values)



Source: The authors (2016).

4. Discussion

The perception regarding the performance of institutions such as the House of Representatives or the Senate is tied to the journalistic coverage. This happens mainly because journalism makes visible what takes place inside those institutions and what their members do outside of them (ARNOLD, 2004; COOK, 1989; JORGE, 2003). In a certain way, the levels of confidence are also influenced by the exposure offered to Congress by mass communication – and, in the Brazilian case, Congress is among those institutions that citizens most distrust¹⁶.

In this context, we have to notice that journalistic editorials are a section in which newspapers can present their judgments without constraints regarding objectivity. The fact that it is an institutional genre, and therefore carries the newspaper company's credibility, results in other significances to the agendas, frames and claims revealed in the editorials. Editorials cannot be reduced to a simple opinion provided by the newspapers to their readers. In other words, despite the fact that the political influence of the editorials

does not determine the elections outcomes or assure popular support to some policies, those texts (specially those coming from quality papers) are essential to set the parameters of the political debate. Depending on the perspective and on the issue prioritized by the journalistic content, the journal achieves distinct levels of success in setting the concerns of political agents. They tend to react to the coverage mainly when it fits their cognitive needs and is related to their activities (SEVENANS *et al.*, 2016).

In particular concerning the cases analyzed, it is possible to say that is somehow expected that the editorials in our sample have “Politics” as their main general theme. After all, if keywords helping to define *corpus* are “Congress”, “Senate” and “House of Representatives”, the phenomena concerning political disputes will appear more clearly in that section. However, one of the interesting findings is the diverse emphasis to some agendas, verified in OESP’s and FSP’s editorials: the first shows itself as more willing to address the role of Federal Legislative, by mentioning the keywords more frequently than the second one. If we assume that journalistic institutions are endowed with their own interests and that the decision of what is addressed in editorials is influenced by criteria set by companies’ managers, we can say that OESP seems more concerned about maintaining some agents under vigilance – and, to some extent, in trying to make them adopt its agenda. On the other hand, FSP shows a slight difference between the amount of editorials emphasizing “Politics” and “Social Issues” – associating the Legislative Branch to those two topics more often than OESP does.

The recurrence of these general themes associated to Congress is also, as Eilders (1997) argues, a strategy to increase editorials’ political influence, by trying to make political agents attentive to their agenda. If the pressure exerted over political system depends on the convergence of diverse newspapers addressing similar issues in their editorials (EILDERS, 1997), the affinity of the agendas presented by both journals directs similar concerns to the same political agents – notwithstanding the diversity of emphasis detected.

The study about FSP’s and OESP’s editorials corroborates the argument of part of the recent literature that there are some peculiarities regarding political agenda-setting. It is said, for example, that the agenda-setter role of the media decreases in the same proportion in which political action shows itself more substantial. In other words, when political decisions become more

relevant (in the case of deposition of a President, for example), the press most accompanies political institutions debate than defines them (WALGRAVE et al., 2008). Another aspect refers to the idea that opposition parties tend to react to coverage in a more vehement way, reacting to bad news as a strategy to criticize the government (this is what happens when they bring newspapers to parliamentary tribunes) (VLIEGENTHART e WALGRAVE, 2011). Besides, the study conducted by Vesa *et al.* (2015) demonstrates that newspapers have stronger effects on symbolic agendas – mostly rhetoric ones and others that do not have direct policy consequences – towards parliamentarians rather than on substantial agendas.

Thus, based on the cases examined in this work, it is legitimate to complement the discussion about news values and criteria (SILVA, 2005; GALTUNG e RUGE, 1999). In other words, this article proposes the idea of “editorialized criteria”. We defend that, beyond being related to public interest’s issues and consider relevance, urgency and other principles taken since Peucer (2004), the elaboration of editorials has particularities such as (a) not to be related with news, but with opinion; (b) to represent, in a clear way, political judgments of newspapers; and (c) to dedicate extra visibility to the issue, denoting the importance devoted by the journal to the subject.

It should be said that, even if a fact is considered noticeable, there is no guarantee it will achieve journalistic coverage (it is not even possible to anticipate which prominence the event will have, having in mind that part of journalistic activity is to rank information). Specifically about the editorial genre, the issue has to “run over” several steps of filtering process controlled by journalism – those professionals responsible for writing editorials have a different status in newsrooms, and the space dedicated to the text is often larger than the one assigned to news. As Eilders (1997) argues, editorials give newspapers a chance to emphasize specific issues, indicating that they are relevant enough to be debated and to get a close attention.

Editorials take a favored position in agenda-setting process of priority issues, as well as they can set up – in a later moment – “acceptable” frames through which several topics achieve visibility. One thing is the theme’s agenda; another one is the judgement about it.

Besides, editorials may not only reverberate the informative coverage agenda-setting of other issues, but can also address issues

that have not been in the agenda of the day yet – but those the company assumes that deserve attention. The first movement is made by the two analyzed journals, when mentioning news and stories published by the companies referred to a certain subject. The second movement shows up when the newspapers take issues that initially were not on the agenda of the day and bring them to editorials – for example when OESP discusses if foreign doctors could exert medicine in Brazil, before the beginning of “Mais Médicos”, or when FSP asks for a plebiscite about the decriminalization of abortion.

Specifically about the issues that are often prioritized, Melo (1985, p. 83) identifies that Brazilian editorials tend to be dedicated to politics, economics and administration issues, “leaving aside problems connected to labor, health and education”. The agenda-setting analysis conducted here shows that this statement is partially corroborated. So, while editorials regarding “Politics” predominate in the newspapers, those editorials tied to “Social Issues” – in which discussions about work legislation and quality of health and education services are involved – comes next, before “Economics”. Thereby, the fact they dedicate part of the editorials to issues close to people’s daily life indicates that journals also consider those themes to be relevant and also guide demands of social issues to the Legislative Power.

However, the definition of the subjects to be discussed by editorials is not a free choice process. Sometimes, events are so relevant that they just cannot be ignored, independently of companies compromises and interests. Such process can be observed in a clearer way in editorials dealing with Cachoeira’s parliamentary commission of inquiry and in those about denounces involving former-senator Demóstenes Torres, to whom some texts were dedicated while the issue was a concern among the society and the political agents’ views.

However, it is possible to newspapers address inconvenient themes in a more “comfortable” approach. This seems to happen in the editorial “Diferentes, porém iguais”, in which OESP touches accusations about relations of Demóstenes Torres and Cachoeira. OESP also presents complaints against the then minister Fernando Pimentel, who belonged to a different party, concerning his involvement in another wrongdoing. It is an opportunity to the journal to attempt to show some balance, arguing that it criticizes opposition and government members as well¹⁷. It is also a chance to the newspaper to build its own public image.

5. Conclusion

The research findings indicate that editorials prioritize political issues when dealing with the Brazilian Congress. However, FSP's and OESP's emphasis are different, denoting the two companies' distinct preferences. It should be noticed that newspapers' agenda is associated with reality events, although not all facts reported by journals are to be commented on editorials.

The selection of the issues that are going to be addressed or not by the editorials is a process not fully explored. We already know that newspapers present an agenda towards the political field and towards society in the editorials, but we do not acknowledge exactly which demands those subjects have to fulfill in order to be discussed on the editorials. This reinforces the importance of the proposal briefly presented in this article, the editorialized criteria, and that should be deepened in following papers.

Moreover, it should be noticed that other issues are going to be explored from this research. We know that one thing is the agenda that the newspapers analyzed directed to Congress, Senate and House of Representatives in their editorials. Another question regards the representations that journalism creates and shares about political actors (including in what refers to "framing"). In this sense, we intend to deepen the investigation about framing in another article, starting from the same empirical horizon that generated this investigation.

In the end, we indicate that there are complementary questions raised by this debate, such as: would not editorials be a reaction of newspapers to themes already present in informative sections? We believe that only interviews could provide convincing answers to those questions, but our present research findings allow us to point to a more reciprocal process, in which editorials also mention themes that will be brought to news coverage afterwards. The interviews with editors, by the way, could allow us to move forward to a clearer definition of the idea of "editorialized criteria" – that can be better explored in a future research, as this article's main focus is on editorials' agenda.

NOTES

- 1 The authors are grateful to Alzira Harrison for her contribution in revising the article.
- 2 The 2015 Brazilian Media Research reveals that 76% of interviewed said not to read any newspaper, while only 7% said they do it on a daily basis. See <http://bit.ly/1FAvjZC>. Access on Jan. 15 2015.
- 3 Mont'Alverne (2015) mapped some of the main studies concerning journalistic editorials and found out that of 110 analyzed documents, only 29 (approximately 26% of them) dealt with Brazilian journals. This data indicates that literature about the subject in Brazil is scarce.
- 4 See <http://congressoemfoco.uol.com.br/noticias/manchetes-antiores/base-aliada-eleita-sobe-para-402-deputados/>. Access on September 28 2015.
- 5 See <http://g1.globo.com/politica/noticia/2011/02/dilma-sanciona-projeto-que-reajusta-minimo-para-r-545.html>. Access on December 13 2015.
- 6 See http://links.fsb.com.br/site_fsb/Midia_e_Politica_2015_pags_independentes.pdf. Access in August 31 2015.
- 7 See <http://fernandorodrigues.blogosfera.uol.com.br/2015/06/29/tv-globo-recebeu-r-62-bilhoes-de-publicidade-federal-com-pt-no-planalto/>. Access on September 29 2015.
- 8 To other references about FSP and OESP's history, see Capelato e Prado (1980), Pilgallo (2012), Sodré (1999).
- 9 *O Estado de S. Paulo* publishes, on page A3, three editorials per day. There is also an economical editorial, that does not have the same prominence of the others, published in Economics section, from Tuesday to Sunday. To this article, we only analyze those editorials published on page 3. *Folha de S. Paulo* brings two editorials in a daily basis, on page A2 – the amount of those texts only changes in exceptional cases.
- 10 Editorials were accessed through searches on the online archive of OESP and of FSP. See <http://acervo.estadao.com.br/> and in <http://acervo.folha.uol.com.br/>. Access on March 1 2016.

- 11 It is important to highlight that only editorials mentioning Brazilian Congress, Brazilian House of Representatives and Brazilian Federal Senate compose the *corpus*. Other kinds of congresses or legislative houses were not considered if they did not refer to one of those institutions.
- 12 NVivo is a qualitative content analysis software that allows examining huge amounts of text, creating categories and coding them. The tool allows to map frequently words and to examine the relation between data.
- 13 On this and on the next chart, the total was calculated from the total amount of editorials published in the period composing *corpus* in relation to the sum of total amount of texts mentioning keywords.
- 14 All percentages in this article are approximated. So, in some cases, their sum can surpass 100%.
- 15 To a better display, specific themes presented only in one editorial were not put on the chart.
- 16 See <http://www.ibope.com.br/pt-br/noticias/Paginas/Instituicees-politicas-perdem-ainda-mais-a-confianca-dos-brasileiros.aspx>. Access on May 18 2016.
- 17 Besides, it should be noticed that journalistic companies, in the extent they separate news from opinion and when they claim the role of public interest representatives, have been more and more urged to also show themselves transparent in what refers to their preferences and work methods – what includes more constraints to editorial postures adopted by journals, mainly in electoral periods.

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