

PRESENTATION: JOURNALISM AND ECONOMICS*

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With this dossier, the journal *Estudos de Sociologia* (RES) presents the first Brazilian dossier on journalism and economics. The international economic sociology literature has recognized and justified the importance of conducting research on the economic discourses of journalists, as norms and knowledge (Swedberg, 2003; Lebaron, 2013). Several works on these discourses are compiled in the book *Les discours de l'économie* (Temmar; Angermuller; Lebaron, 2013). Similarly, several works on the sources of Brazilian economic journalists are compiled in the book *Fontes e vozes no jornalismo econômico* (Pedroso Neto; Nascimento, 2020). However, we have not found a dossier or other books in Brazil or elsewhere that have focused on texts about the press and economics. Articles and book chapters exist, but in a scattered manner. Now, RES, which publishes its articles in Portuguese and English, enters the scene in a nascent circuit, considering the books cited.

The dossier contains two texts with a more epistemological and theoretical focus, based on a strong accumulation of empirical experience, as well as an interview in a similar vein. It also includes six texts that address empirical objects, producing data and detailed analyses. With this presentation, we aim to achieve three objectives: to minimally present the texts in terms of what they can foster in terms of new research, new ways of looking at empirical spaces, or new empirical spaces themselves; and to avoid classifying the research in a strict way, and even less so to anticipate results for the reader—we have included essayistic observations on the texts and the connections between them.

The first text is by Julien Duval. He conducted research on French economic journalism—coverage of social security deficits (Duval, 2000, 2002, 2013) and on economics journalists (Duval, 2000, 2004). In this dossier, he reflects on these experiences: how he constructed his perspective, his fieldwork, the possibilities,

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and strategies vis-à-vis data sources, the reasons for his engagement in the study of economic journalism at that time—among others, the affirmation of neoliberalism in the world—and his belonging and influences in terms of intellectual grouping*—he took journalism as a field and, in this sense, it is worth checking out an enlightening text on the use of the notion of the field of journalism as a heuristic tool (Duval, 2015).

In a detached synthesis, he explains that his engagement in the study of economic journalism was not so clear at the beginning, but that he was already questioning what the economic journalists' view of economics was and what constraints or incentives led them to develop it. His initial considerations, due to his sensitivity shaped by economic sociology, indicated that the predominant view in economic journalism was that the economy could be isolated from other human activities—social, cultural, political—without problems, contrary to the warnings of economic sociology that the economy cannot be explained solely by economic factors (Polanyi, 1980, 2012; Bourdieu, 2000, 2017; Swedberg, 2004; Steiner, 2006; Granovetter, 2007, 2017).

This separation dictated other distinctions in newspapers: editorials, specializations, sources, citizen and economic agent, etc. And it was due to the subordinate relationship of the field of journalism to the economic field, above all. But this subordination is not so simple, and reading his text will clarify the complexity, the devices, the relationships, and the pre-adapted ways of thinking of some segments of journalists. Here is a point where his texts, in our view, indicate possibilities for postulating and researching similarities and differences with Brazilian journalism, with support from complementary readings (Bourdieu, 1994, 1997; Benson, 2000, 2017; Duval, 2000, 2004) or already carried out on Brazil (Pedroso Neto, 2015; Undurraga, 2016; Pedroso Neto; Undurraga, 2017; Pedroso Neto; Nascimento, 2020).

Finally, we highlight a point of his ruptures with common sense and with erudite academic and journalistic common sense. Ruptures that, consequently, imply taking as an object of study both journalism and the representations it produces, instead of starting with already current representations. Starting from the notion of the field of journalism (Bourdieu, 1997; Duval, 2004, 2015; Marchetti, 2008) he managed to break with the obligatory or institutionalized problematic.

This problem focuses on the possible—and indeed existing—manipulations and false information that venal, corrupt journalists disseminate in order to satisfy corporate interests—those of the newspaper itself or of advertisers. The focus of this problem assumes that, without such manipulations, economic journalism would be independent, free, moralized, etc. Duval's analyses, especially the longer ones (Duval, 2000, 2004), allow us to see the limits of this view and the possibilities of a perspective anchored in manifest, practiced interindividual relationships, in relation

to a space of relationships that is more difficult to objectify. Following Bourdieu (1996), the relational perspective is the most realistic one. The real is relational (Bourdieu, 1989)—this is the most realistic principle for apprehending individual and collective behaviors. In short, instead of accepting the obligatory problem, he reconstructed its genesis and elaborated its social and political functions. For research in Brazil, it is important to keep this in mind.

The second article is by Thierry Guilbert. He has research and publications on economic discourses (Guilbert, 2011, 2013, 2017) and, based on them, offers an original reflection on the relationship between media and neoliberal discourse. Without ceremony, he presents the hypothesis that the entanglement of neoliberal discourse in mass media is not fortuitous, but constitutive of itself and strategic for itself; in an opportunistic and foreign way, it takes advantage of the symbolic authority of the media and exploits its own disposition to condition social actions and behaviors that it prescribes.

Thus, Guilbert conceives of neoliberal discourse as an ideological discourse that, omnipresent in the media, manages to pass itself off as media discourse, as evidence, as common sense. That is, natural because it presents itself as a discourse of communication and because it presents itself from a vertical conception of communication and democracy—leaders and those led, and communication as a means for the former.

In this sense, the research challenges would be to observe and analyze the constitutive relationships and correlations of media and neoliberal discourse over time and with mutual influences; from the beginning with print media to current social networks, passing through cinema, radio, and television. Each medium has a form of discourse, and the development of each medium is influenced by this form. For example, how much did propaganda, a variant of discourse, favorably influence the spread of cinema, certain genres, films, etc.? And what languages, images, enunciations, and arguments does the discourse mobilize to be present in cinema?

He clearly defines the concepts used—discourse, discourses, media, neoliberalism, etc.—to clarify that a discourse, simply by being present in the media—media as institutions—is already a media discourse with symbolic power. Then, he outlines the genesis of neoliberal discourse in the US, considering three main strands.

On one hand, this discourse originated from the then-nascent notion of public opinion as something to be produced, manufactured for consumption and persuasion—a factory of consent. On the other hand, it originated from a notion of vertical democracy with two types of citizens: the masses, incapable of understanding and directing, and the leaders, those capable of directing business and society. Thus, those who govern must and need to use the media, the means of shaping public opinion, to govern. Finally, neoliberal discourse originated as a reaction and

counter-attack to social advances—progressive governments, their social programs, the existence, and demonstrations of the masses, etc. It frames these advances as dangers, especially because they are associated with the masses, considered incapable and threatening. And its responses are variants of an austerity discourse. In short, directing the masses through communication and in hierarchical forms was the means of safeguarding economic liberalism, which had become quite discredited after 1929.

However, from the beginning of the 20th century to the present day, we have witnessed the emergence of various media and the mutual adaptation of neoliberal discourse and the media. This is an important point that deserves systematic observation. The hypothesis is strong. The use and adaptation by discourse are theoretically viable based on the notion of governability—M. Foucault—that is, how discourse adapts and uses the media to manufacture the acceptability, by so-called public opinion, of programs reacting to the dangers—constitutive of the discourse—existing vis-à-vis the fears of mass emancipation. Therefore, it is much less a proactive discourse and much more a reactive discourse, a vigilant counter-discourse in and with the media as apparatuses of governability.

Finally, and no less importantly, the author makes us aware of the agents. He starts from the principle that the media receive, produce, and, above all, disseminate discourses. To a large extent, their discourses are secondary; they are discourses that receive and disseminate primary discourses. These come from agents in the political sphere, government, financial institutions—especially international ones—, large companies, academics, markets, etc. Here we have a wide range of questions involving symbolic producers. How do the media receive and transform primary discourses? What are the relationships between the agents involved? How and what are the effects of primary discourses on secondary ones? In short, in addition to explaining his most current working hypothesis, the author offers explicit indications of objects and paths for research.

The third article falls within the quadrant of empirical work involving data production and detailed analysis. Allana Meirelles analyzes the tactics of economist-columnists and their editorial investments to understand the diffusion and legitimization of economic *doxa*. Using prosopographical data—university of education, doctorate, teaching experience, work in the public sector, in private companies (national, international, etc.)—she sought to objectify a space of agents who are simultaneously, but in different ways, in the field of power and in the market of opinions on the Brazilian economy and related issues—in the publishing market and in major general newspapers.

Thus, she researched and analyzed different trajectories and their correlations with their differentiated symbolic products; paratexts from 160 books that, to a large

extent, deal with Brazilian history and economic situation in general, with several recurring ramifications.

By scrutinizing the different oppositions between agents—e.g., between economist-columnists, between them and philosopher-columnists, social scientists, journalists, etc.—and their stances—e.g., technical, militant, polemical, communicative, easy to understand, etc.—she goes on to describe and explain the dynamics of their editorial investments – e.g., economic history, economics and its relations with literature and philosophy, investment tips, finance, career, etc.—which is also the dynamic of reproduction, diffusion, and legitimization of deep economic beliefs; the non-explicit beliefs, the economic *doxa*, that they share.

This research delves into the realm of intellectuals connected to the economy and finances of the state and society as a whole. These are intellectuals who do not shy away from the press, as they cannot exist with strength and distinction without it, nor are they preceded by it. The author also opens up the space of the institutions that recognize them, from universities to the Brazilian Academy of Letters, including positions and roles in companies, banks, and government agencies.

Finally, it is a work rich in data about the agents and their correlated symbolic products. A careful reading opens up possibilities for thinking about and proposing new research on an orchestra without an orchestrator—division of labor, hierarchies, dynamics, etc.—that legitimize dominant ways of seeing and prescribing the course of the economy.

In terms of viewing and prescribing the economy, the following text goes to the heart of a very current four-pronged approach to the market of symbolic goods: the State, which forgoes revenue but is the main orchestrator of the market; the sponsoring companies that provide the financial resources—banking, oil, agribusiness, technology sectors; the artists or proponents who provide the symbolic product; and the intermediaries or professional fundraisers—individuals or companies—who connect everyone due to their specific knowledge and social capital.

Rafaela Lopes and Bruno Barreiros examined articles from the *Folha de S. Paulo* newspaper as an empirical space to observe the market for incentivized cultural sponsorships—structured around financial and symbolic exchanges. They conduct a diachronic analysis—2013 to 2023—of the shifts in discursive trends that characterized controversies and disputes surrounding the Rouanet Law, and a variant of its applications: Rock in Rio.

After presenting the institutions and the genesis of the Brazilian market for incentivized cultural sponsorships, the text describes how the symbolic assets sought by sponsors have changed over time—from cultural marketing to sustainability—given the strength of these sponsors in interactions within the four pillars. On the other hand, the use and social representations of the use of financial assets by proponents – with less power in the relationships—have also changed; they

have shifted from conflictual relationships to alliances with intermediaries and the media company—with power in the public presentation of discourses and their transformations over time. The relationships and social transformations of the market are not simple. The text outlines some inflection points and the related negotiations, concessions, and impositions.

Although indirectly, analyzing the *corpus* of material is a way to understand the political orientations and discursive trends related to the Rouanet Law, especially those of social groups located in higher social conditions. One of the constants in the newspaper was the defense of the Law as a means of promoting projects without a commercial character, while at the same time publicizing projects of a commercial nature aimed at groups with high purchasing power. Reasons and explanations for this apparent contradiction? The authors explore this.

Another revelation of the research was the emergence of a conservative discursive trend that associated the Law with improprieties in its application: projects and artists with market potential, already established; and projects of more private and particular interest or nature than public, etc. This trend was prominent in the newspaper at first—around 2018—largely echoing the discursive motto of the then president of the republic—the rhetoric of cronyism.

Alongside and following this period of hostility towards the Law from the center of political power, the newspaper quickly changed direction, caught other winds, and began to defend both the Law and the sponsorship market format. However, the new direction was based on new foundations, that is, from a perspective of legitimization that mobilizes the discursive trend of sustainability and the creative economy.

Finally, by researching and explaining the various discursive trends of the newspaper in relation to the four pillars of the market for incentivized cultural sponsorships, the research is also, to a large extent, a work on the active role of journalism in the construction, dynamics, and changes of these markets—a contribution with seminal characteristics.

Following this work, which presents moments of contestation, acceptance, and support from the press regarding the institutional relations of various agents in a market—various moments of symbolic struggles—we have Nicolás Chuchco's text on indicators of institutional quality and governance, particularly of states, as disseminated in the neighboring press; the Argentine newspaper *La Nación*, notably its data journalism section, *La Nación Data*.

The author starts from the point that these indicators were generated within the realm of public policy experts and analyzes how they migrated to the broader public sphere via the press—for example, a term like governance was practically unknown in 1995, but became *vox populi* in 2017. He analyzes the newspaper *La*

Nación and journalists from other newspapers to observe intentions and political ideology—especially present in editorials.

On the one hand, the research presents the frequency of appearances of articles on governance, its subdivisions—such as public, governmental, etc.—and its distinct spheres—for example, global, regional, local, business, etc. This indicates the plasticity of the notion and what it favors in its dissemination. The dissemination has oscillated between moments of appearance, constancy, and recurrence, year after year, but in a vector of increasing presence in the newspaper. The presence is mainly in reference to the local sphere, that is, Argentina, or rather, the performance of the country or the government.

On the other hand, he also analyzed the frequency of presence of institutional quality indicators—rankings. This presence did not have the same growth trend as that of governance. It was of weaker and more intermittent growth with many fluctuations, somewhat following the political calendar—increases during election periods. However, the constant in this case is the diffusion of rankings and references to them, that is, the acceptance and expansion of the dissemination of their normative frameworks.

Finally, the author observed interviews with journalists and revealed an intentionality in data journalism to push the process forward; it collaborates in the construction of editorials and news items. And an intentionality in the journalists' sources; news agencies, but especially NGOs, since they have access to journalists and have databases that they share with them.

Finally, the study explores the normative action of segments of the press in relation to the State, especially data journalism with links to economic journalism. It was with a normative intention that these segments disseminated the principles or ideological views that became established in public discourse. Here we have yet another work that indicates the State as *the locus* of gravity of the action of the economic press. In this case, the action was based on quantitative principles coming from a segment of society; that is, this social segment had some success in advancing its ways of seeing, judging, and prescribing the economy and the State, via the press. And in Brazil?

Then we have the text of Diego Fraga's research, yet another that ends in the relationship between the press and the executive and legislative branches of the State. He investigated how the main Brazilian general-interest newspapers related to two significant institutional and legislative changes in economic life: the so-called 2017 labor reform and the 2019 pension reform—more broadly, the “A Bridge to the Future” (*Uma Ponte para o Futuro*) regime. The author analyzed the content of the articles and the journalists' sources—as sources of discursive authority.

From the perspective that these newspapers acted as hegemonic apparatuses, their data provide strong statistical evidence. That is, by cross-referencing the

frequency of framing with the frequency of the voices of the sources present in the articles, the author described and presented a final symbolic product that operated in the construction of consensus favorable to the reforms: on the one hand, the naturalization of the need for reforms and, on the other, the demobilization and disqualification of the framing and voices of social resistance.

After a series of works in which the State is the *locus* of the gravity of the press's actions and, in a way, linking other social agents—intellectuals, economists, journalists' sources, etc.—to it in a different way, we have a shift towards the quadrant of business publications, a shift towards the past, to a moment of changes in territorial dynamics due to the beginning of urban expansion and Brazilian industrialization, in its main initial region—Taubaté, SP, near São Paulo.

Mônica Carniello and Moacir dos Santos start from the notion that societies that already have a presence of media consider them influential or constitutive of their development processes and territorial dynamics. In other words, they recognize technical and information networks as transformers of geographic space and as vectors for the diffusion of social values and practices.

However, there are segments of society, and not all have the same access and power over the media. Thus, the authors clarify and utilize a perspective that should be emphasized and considered by researchers: the media also acts as a mediator of the strategic communication of public and private organizations to legitimize their development projects with both internal and external audiences. It is not society as a whole that has the power to expose and establish potential general benefits. It is social segments that, to some extent, drive both particular and general benefits.

The authors analyze a process of development and territorial dynamics that occurred in the wake of industrialization and urbanization during the 1930s and 1940s—particularly Taubaté in the Vale do Paraíba Paulista region. It is worth noting that this took place at a time when coffee farming was declining in prominence and companies from other economic sectors, especially textiles, were establishing themselves.

They analyzed a business newspaper, that is, a company's media outlet that, to a greater or lesser extent, had a particular perspective on industrialization and urbanization—crucial territorial changes—and sought to present itself and these changes as being of general interest. It was a business newspaper, the voice of the entrepreneur, of the nascent industrial business elite who were rising in the economy and politics on the same seesaw as the coffee-growing elite. But it was also a publication aimed at the workers—the nascent working class that also had its own press—and other citizens. And, also, a publication with the participation of union leaders.

Based on the analysis of a *corpus* of texts and images, intentionalities are revealed in the publication: vis-à-vis business figures, especially the owner of the

newspaper company; in relation to the creation and institutionalization of labor laws—a new, structural and controversial phenomenon at that time; and in relation to the marks of the processes, projects, and time of the territorial transformations of the city and its relations with the surrounding cities, with the development of the country, with political affiliations, mainly with the *Estado Novo* (New State), etc.

The research opens up a space of possibilities for raising questions about current similar publications. This applies not only to their actions related to their companies, but also to the economic, social, cultural, and political dynamics surrounding these companies—their roots—and their reach as more national spaces.

Finally, the section of the dossier on data production and detailed analysis takes another turn, now towards the Brazilian Amazon region. Silvio Candido, Julia Barbosa, and Gustavo Ferratti examine media coverage related to deforestation in the Brazilian Amazon during periods of fluctuating deforestation rates—which fell by as much as 80% between 2004 and 2012—and the corresponding implementation of public policies and private initiatives that contributed to a certain reduction, notably the federal government's Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Deforestation in the Legal Amazon and private agreements between companies in the soy and livestock production chain with environmental organizations and public authorities.

This is a diachronic study that spanned several government mandates—at all three levels—and various disputes such as the approval of the Forest Code, the Soy Moratorium, disputes with international institutions—Greenpeace, meatpacking companies, etc.—, the intensification of climate negotiations, etc. As an empirical space, it analyzed different media outlets—29 in total—over a long period; two decades. The work identified patterns in publication frequency, most used terms, topic modeling, and highlighted the named entities; people and organizations involved in the disputes.

The results could only be complex. Thus, in the analyses, by indicating the homogenizing and depoliticizing trends in the coverage, they present, side by side, a cartography of agents and organizations present in the articles, which is rich in diversity but unequal in presence; at one extreme are the over-represented governmental institutions and at the other the under-represented social movements, associations, and religious institutions—excellent critical results. The analyses also indicate the concentration of articles in three national generalist newspapers, and the fluctuations in frequency of coverage in different periods.

A key finding of the data analysis is that changes in media production are related to public conflicts between elites. In other words, the journalistic field is able to link social changes, according to the imposing logic of the field itself—the constraints of the pursuit of audience—and reflect decisive disputes that are changes in the hierarchies and power relations between social groups—such as those that

have called into question implicit support for the recurring expansion of agricultural production with deforestation. These changes gain prominence from the analysis of the most and least recurrent topics, their hierarchy; from global political and economic dynamics—the most present—to the topic that addresses the relationship between agricultural production, deforestation, and land exploitation in Brazil—the least present—, passing through others such as government actions against deforestation and deforestation monitoring.

Another strength of the research is that it presents an analysis of the topics by introducing the variable of time. This makes it more nuanced because it mobilizes, presents, and correlates, more precisely, agents, organizations, disputes, advances, and setbacks on issues, implementations, etc. Thus, in general, reading the text allows us to delve into one of the achievements of journalism: presenting the complexities of the relationships between the economic life of the Amazon—an economic life that is necessarily national and international—with institutional and non-institutional politics—equally national and international—and presenting the agents, organizations, and their respective strategies and forces in these relationships—even if the presentations are unequal in terms of frequency. In short, we infer from the study that the press, in a comprehensive manner, achieves heteronomous advances according to the situations of the political, economic, and, in this case, socio-environmental game.

Finally, the dossier includes an interview with Tiago Mata, professor and researcher at University College London (*Department of Science and Technology Studies*), London, England. He has experience in research and has several publications on the relationships between journalism, economics, and economists, particularly economists as public experts.

The interview is a good way to learn about his intellectual trajectory and, especially, a project he coordinated on the role of economic journalism in building an economic public sphere in several countries—*Economics in the Public Sphere: UK, US, France, Brazil, and Argentina since 1945*. It's worth checking out the interview and learning about his research and writings—see the bibliographic references in the interview—as they offer a fertile perspective for studying economic journalists and their output from the perspective of their mutual influences and interactions with their work tools, practices, expertise, and that of other professionals, etc.—through the lens of science and technology studies.

The interview was conducted by Tomás Undurraga, professor and researcher at the Universidad Alberto Hurtado (Department of Sociology), Santiago, Chile. He was a researcher on the project coordinated by Tiago Mata, more specifically the researcher in charge of Brazilian economic journalism. His research is published in several articles—see the bibliographic references for the interview.

In conclusion, this dossier was a collaborative effort. We thank the colleagues who submitted their texts, those who reviewed them, and the entire RES team for their support on several occasions, their professionalism in dealing with the reviewers, and the meticulous work of adjusting, formatting, translating, and publishing the articles. We hope that the texts will clarify any questions readers may have and encourage new research.

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