

The journalist and the discourses about his work

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FIGARO, Roseli (Org.). (2013). NONATO, Cláudia; GROHMANN, Rafael:
As mudanças no mundo do trabalho do jornalista.
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Abstract

As a result of a collective investigation of the researchers from the Communication and Work Research Center of ECA-USP, the book *As mudanças no mundo do trabalho do jornalista* offers meaningful reflections of the professional profile of the journalist because of the current settings of their work activity. By privileging the viewpoint of the journalist, the route of the theoretical and methodological research exposed to the book presents the construction of a scenario which shows the analytical conditions, the conflicts, contradictions and resistances experienced by a professional class who is confronted with the appropriation of their know how by the reinvented capitalism.

Keywords: Journalist, professional profile, communication, work, discourse analysis.

How does communication emerge from the working world, considering its ongoing transformations? Which aspects does communication acquire when conceived as an essentially human activity in the execution of work? What elements generate communication when it is inherently related to the conformation of current and past work relationships? What relationships are established between the communication workers and their work activity? These and other questions are part of the issues discussed by the members of the Communication and Work Research Group of ECA-USP and therefore are concerns that guide the pillars of their latest work, entitled *As mudanças no mundo do trabalho do jornalista*.

Organized by Roseli Figaro, professor at ECA-USP and coordinator of the Research Group, the book presents the development of an extensive research conducted

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between 2009 and 2012 with the support of FAPESP (Foundation for Research Support at São Paulo). This is an investigation that aims to indicate the aspects of the profile of the professional journalist, outlined amidst the transformations of their work activities, due by the modernization of production processes.

As it is already known to the reader, the capitalism is constantly searching for new ways to maintain its hegemony. Among the strategies, it creates and updates forms of management, organization and execution of the work that maintain the exploitation of men's and women's workforce. In this sense, the professional activities simultaneously lose and gain functions, receive new demands and are forced to forget other ones; they incorporate skills responding to the capitalist mode of production which continually reinvent itself.

The work of journalists cannot escape from this logic. And that is exactly what the authors of the book show from their theoretical-methodological approach and their analytical effort presented in the three acute chapters of the book. The authors, Roseli Figaro, Cláudia Nonato and Rafael Grohmann, discuss the aspects of the transformations occurred in the working world of the journalists, focusing on what seems to be the most original element: the point of view of the workers themselves.

At all stages of the research, it was decided to encourage the journalists to express the challenges they face daily in their professional lives, whether in public or private corporations and in communication groups, whether in big newsrooms, communication agencies, press agencies or working as freelance journalists. The reader will notice that the research was set on the purpose of listening to what the journalists, with different employment contracts, had to say about their work in various scopes of their professional activities. Especially in the in-depth interviews and in the focus groups, the research put the journalists (subjects of the research) in confrontation with their know-how and with their work conditions imposed by their employers and by society. In these moments, their discourses reveal and hide problems which constitute the conflicts and contradictions of the working world of the journalist, because, as Figaro states, "the entire strategy of the research has focused on the construction of the meanings of work through the knowledge of the worker as subject. His professional profile. The communication *on* his work. The discussion between professionals *on*

work" (p. 131).

Right in the first chapter of the book, the professor brings to the reader a very detailed panorama of all the steps of the investigation: their assumptions, their methods of data collection and their forms of results analysis. Additionally, she develops some essential considerations to understand the following chapters. It is possible to observe the major concern in stating clearly the methodological rigor of the empirical research, which was constituted by a combination of methods. As the author announces in the introduction of the book, it is about a methodological option required to respond "to the complexity and to the interdisciplinarity of the objects in the field of Communication" (p. 14).

Figaro engages herself to show the data and the findings involving both biases of the investigation: the quantitative and the qualitative perspectives. In relation to that, it is discussed, at first, the cross-analysis of the samples of the research, bringing out similarities and differences between the journalists interviewed. In this case, it is presented a map of constitutive aspects of the socioeconomic and cultural profile of the journalists. Then, the interviewees' discourses are discussed with the support of Discourse Analysis (the French perspective of the theory).

We know, therefore, the treatment of the qualitative material. Above all, it is at this point of the book that the voices of the workers appear in the strongest terms. The statements of the journalists in the in-depth interviews and in the focus groups show their conflicts, their agreements and disagreements with their profession, with the ways of doing journalism nowadays and with the conditions to perform their work activity. And the ability of the researchers to question and discuss the meanings of these discourses, through an adequate theoretical and conceptual and knowledge about the configuration of the working world and its continuous changes, raises a number of essential issues to understand the profession of journalist today:

There are controversial discourses. There are life stories that reveal experiences that contextualize problems intrinsic to the profession in the current context of business relationships of media and the discourse of journalism. Different perspectives are contextualized when their enunciators reveal their speech placements. These are people, with their worldviews, which give personality to the

journalism that is practiced today (p. 110).

In the two other chapters of the book, Cláudia Nonato and Rafael Grohmann, PhD students and members of Communication and Work Research Group from ECA - USP, complement the analytical discussion of the research providing more details, respectively, on the work of journalists members of the Journalists' Union of São Paulo and on the work of freelance journalists.

By assuming that the current configuration of the work activity of the journalist, regardless of the employment relationship, has incorporated several elements of the new capitalist modes of production, such as: flexibility, versatility and individualization, we can say that there is a set of features that constitutes the professional profile of the journalist based on intense employment insecurity, term used by sociologist Ricardo Antunes.

On the other hand, it is interesting to observe that the discussion on the work of the journalists that are members of the Union, presented by Cláudia Nonato, shows that these journalists have some peculiarities that distinguish them from the other samples of research - they are a group with a longer life and career. Keeping this in view, they have a different perspective on the changes that have affected their work activities, apprehending more clearly the cruel logic of exclusion imposed by the contemporary modes of production.

Above all, the research with unionized journalists can arouse great curiosity of the reader as he faces with another research - less deep, but no less valuable - developed in the early 1970s with journalists members of the Union of the State of São Paulo, under the coordination of the professor and researcher Jair Borin and published in his book. The researcher and professor José Marques de Melo, author of the preface and the afterword of the book presented here, encourages us to establish comparisons between the profile of the journalist from those times and from modern times. And indeed, when we discovered that most of the journalists interviewed in the 1970's research began their careers in the newsroom, either as a reporter or as an editor, it becomes more obvious the distances between old and new generations of journalists.

By focusing on the group of freelance journalists, Rafael Grohmann shows, in

the third and final chapter of the book, the perspectives of the younger journalists on their work. Through the analysis of the material collected from subjects who work on their own, this point of the research presents a profile of the journalists who have no employment relationship and, therefore, are more susceptible to the bad consequences of the precarious working world: most of them are usually women with an average of 31 years old, which work at home.

In this case, the professional profile of the journalist is analyzed with the support of the reception studies. The worker, in this sense, is understood as a journalist-receiver, who questions the work of their peers, becoming aware of the "reality" of his activity face to the prescription that guides the organization and realization of the journalistic work. That is, the research assumes that the analysis of the reception of the journalistic know-how by the interviewees and the uses they make of news genres brings out the values that constitute the discourse on the work of freelance journalists.

Again the journalists are placed face to their working world - which merges with their personal lives - and, in the exposure of their dramas and in the perception of their conflicts, they help us to assemble the mosaic of their professional profiles. The freelance journalists' discourses declare their contradictions, they explicit and cover up fundamental issues that surpass the relations of power and strength of their real working world.

Considering the scenario of Brazilian journalism and communication educational institutions, which frequently fail to provide critical reflections on the students' professional world and on the working conditions they are going to face - often naturalizing its most perverse aspects - the book *As mudanças no mundo do trabalho do jornalista* undoubtedly comes as a valuable reading for those searching for concrete ways of thinking about the work of communicators.

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