

MATRIZes

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DOSSIER:

*New Perspectives
on Communication Theories*

Lev Manovich

John B. Thompson

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INTERVIEW:

José Luis Fernández

by Clotilde Perez

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Novelties and developments in communication research

Research in the social sciences and humanities, in particular, strongly dialogues with the reality and concerns of its current historical moment. In addition, it is also able to influence central issues that societies face. The temporal aspect is often more conjunctural or unforeseen in a discipline or a field of knowledge. With relevant social justification, many investigations in the field of Communication have addressed and are currently studying aspects of the COVID-19 pandemic from this perspective. However, social mutations are also deeply associated with the development of the discipline, in cases that are perhaps rarer and therefore less perceptible and discussed. In this type of situations, it is possible to draw a continuity line between a seemingly “new” issue and its research and reflection developments that have been consolidated in social products and practices.

The article that opens this issue *Dossier*, “Separate and Reassemble: Generative AI through the lens of art and media histories,” by Lev Manovich, concerning the current topic of social discussion, show precisely the significant history throughout decades of the relation between *data* and *knowledge*, from the web and, therefore, from digital media studies. Coming from a prominent scholar in this field that founded the cultural analysis approach (Cultural Analytics), the discussion is marked by thought-provoking questions: what is the difference between Artificial Intelligence (AI) and human beings in the position of cultural analysts? Can AI be creative? How should a young artist behave in the face of AI? The answers are reflective and authorial, offering paths to new questions that generate connections between communicational studies and art studies, from aesthetic perspectives suggested by AI.

The second article of the section, a Portuguese version of “Separate and Reassemble: Generative AI through the lens of art and media histories,” by John B. Thompson, represents a development of the studies carried out by the author in recent years on the book industry and the impacts of technology on this sector.

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The article object and approach extend previous analyses. Thus, it highlights the role of relations between technology start-ups in the book segment and venture capital. With the support of a financial insider and discussions about the antagonistic cases of the companies Scribd and Oyster, which respectively succeeded and failed, Thompson seeks to understand the perspectives of both sides of the relation. From this point of view, it develops theoretical-methodological strategies that allow us to escape the limitations of studies on “technological innovation” that focus only on technologies. Noting that this type of innovation always occurs in a broader social context, Thompson elaborates and uses his own version of Bourdieu’s field theory as a framework for the study. This theoretical aspect is significant since it may inspire other works. In summary, in addition to results that are themselves enlightening, such as the need for entrepreneurs to adjust to their funders’ expectations regarding the rapid capital return, the article also offers subsidies for new research developments.

The section continues with two articles “The dramaturgy of Flusser,” by Lucrecia D’Alessio Ferrara, and “The Memory of the future as a phenomenon of unpredictability in Iuri Lotman,” by Mônica Rebecca Ferrari, in which the titles demonstrate the dialogue with important researchers in the field. In the first work, the author delves into the study of *The History of the Devil*, by Vilém Flusser, perceived as a possible synthesis of the author’s whole work, discussed under different dimensions. Ferrari’s work, on the other hand, based on the proposals of Juri Lotman, seeks to investigate the conceptualization and logics that operate the “memory of the future” in culture. The study is enriched by an analysis of the semiotic translations of the photograph by Régis Bossu, “The Kiss.”

Concluding this issue *Dossier*, Sheila Schvarzman, in the article “Black protagonism is finally a hit: self-representation in *Executive Order* and *Mars One*,” discusses the two films in the title, which were directed and acted by Black people. Both were successful films in the year of their releases, 2022, with the first one reaching a significant audience and the second one receiving critical prestige, being Brazilian nominee for the Oscars. This situation, in the context of an ethnically diverse country like Brazil, should be praised, as well as the article that discusses the theme.

Moving forward in the edition, this issue *Interview* is with the researcher José Luis Fernández, from the University of Buenos Aires, who, instigated by Clotilde Perez and Maurício Gomes de Faria, exposes his motivations and aspects of his research trajectory. Thus, he discusses how recent contributions from perspectives regarding the mediatization of sound/audio allow a better understanding of the phenomenon of podcasts.

The section *Agenda* begins with the article “Youth political practices: foundations and precepts,” by Silvia Borelli, in which the author presents a critical review of research trajectories on the political practices of Brazilian youth since the 2000s. The study emphasizes the cultural and communicational dimension related to the theme, showing how aesthetic and political aspects are intertwined in the processes of youth resistance. It concludes with the importance of reflecting on the communicational expressiveness or enunciative potential linked to the youth political practices that occur in cities and networks.

The following article, by Paulo Martins, “News coverage of children and young people in ethics codes,” presents the results of a broad study with content analysis of codes of journalistic ethics, with the concern of verifying what are the values and principles exposed regarding the coverage of events involving minors and, thus, the professional conducts recommended by such codes. The author concluded that, among the 200 documents analyzed, 128 (64%) present direct references to the theme, including respect for the child’s interest, protection of privacy, and prior consent for contact or interviews. In addition, the main concern is about the assessment of possible harm to children and young people, with the frequent recommendation of hiding their identities to ensure protection.

The third work in this section is the essay “The challenges of public communication of sciences in climate mutation,” by Thaís Brianezi, which seeks to question the challenges of public communication of science in climate change, based on Bruno Latour’s contributions. From this perspective, the text discusses the intrinsic relation between science, discourse, and representation, presenting educational-communication practices that offer clues to face the general challenges epistemologically and empirically.

In continuity, two articles focus on different dimensions of the issue of memory. The first, “Journalism as a tool of ‘psychological action’: *Folha de S. Paulo* and the struggle against ‘subversion’ in the dictatorship” by André Bonsanto, analyzes the newspaper role in the so-called “anti-subversive” struggle of the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, focusing on a campaign of “psychological action” entitled “Union Against Violence”, carried out in July 1969. The second article, “Object of memory as an analytical category of album covers” by Herom Vargas, seeks to discuss, from authors linked to the studies of memory, communication, and culture, the notion of *Memory object* as a category in the analysis of album covers, within the relations that involve cultural practices, music, and materialities.

A study of advertising reception, “Suicide prevention campaigns and their reception by young university students” by Rômulo Tondo, Elisa Reinhardt Piedras, and Pedro Vieira da Silva Magalhães, is the sixth article of the section *Agenda*. The article reports qualitative research, involving documentary analysis

and interviews, on the theme of the title. It concludes that the campaigns have little repercussion among the young people studied, and that their communication often addresses the promotion of mental health instead of suicide prevention, reinforcing the taboo on the subject. Next, the article “A discursive approach to the legitimation strategies of television journalism,” by Clarissa Schwartz and Eugenia Mariano da Rocha Barichello, identifies and analyzes discursive strategies used by *Jornal Nacional*, from Rede Globo, in the coverage of three events. The study makes use of Charaudeau’s theoretical-methodological proposals to understand the legitimation processes used in Brazilian television journalism.

The following article, “Sabotage: Torquato Neto’s football in *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*,” by Helcio Herbert Neto, analyzes a little-explored facet of the poet and lyricist: his relationship with soccer. By studying a script for a TV Globo program project that was never broadcast and examining the audiovisual strategies of the screenwriter and director for this broadcast piece, the article aims to broaden the research horizon on the writer.

The article that closes the section is “The women of the dictatorship represented in *Cova 312*”, by Laísa Bisol, in which the author investigates the representation of women in Brazilian literary journalism, especially considering the theme of violence, carrying out an analysis of the work *Cova 312*, by journalist Daniela Arbex, which highlights women’s possibilities for fighting and confrontation in the historical period of the dictatorship.

This edition of the Journal ends with the section *Review*, with David Costa’s text on the book *The Crisis of Narration*, by Byung-Chul Han. It is consistent with the theme introduced at the beginning of the Editorial: how social transformations and communicative practices suggest new developments for research in the area. Thus, in the book reviewed, digital communication is pointed out as a central factor in the disappearance of authentic narratives in modernity. This happens because the proliferation of information on digital platforms generates an excessive consumption of “narratives” that makes people lose their sense of community and mutual empathy.

At the end of another *MATRIZES* edition, we hope that this issue reading favors the elaboration of new developments and questions by the Communication research. ■

Richard Romancini

DOSSIER

News Perspectives on Communication Theories



Separate and Reassemble: Generative AI through the lens of art and media histories

*Separar e remontar: IA generativa
através das lentes das histórias da arte e da mídia*

LEV MANOVICH^a

City University of New York, New York, United States of America

ABSTRACT

AI image generation represents a logical evolution from early digital media algorithms, starting with basic paint programs in the 1970s and advancing to sophisticated 3D graphics and media creation software by the 1990s. Early algorithms struggled to simulate materials and effects, but advances in the 1970s and 1980s led to realistic simulations of natural phenomena and artistic techniques. Generative AI continues this trend, using neural networks to combine and interpolate visual patterns from extensive datasets. This method of digital media creation underscores the modular and discrete nature of computer-generated imagery, distinguishing it from traditional optical media.

Keywords: AI image generation, digital media, neural networks, computer graphics, generative AI

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RESUMO

A geração de imagens por IA representa uma evolução lógica dos primeiros algoritmos de mídia digital, começando com programas básicos de pintura na década de 1970 e avançando para sofisticados gráficos 3D e softwares de criação de mídia na década de 1990. Os primeiros algoritmos tinham dificuldade para simular materiais e efeitos, mas os avanços nas décadas de 1970 e 1980 levaram a simulações realistas de fenômenos naturais e técnicas artísticas. A IA generativa continua essa tendência, usando redes neurais para combinar e interpolar padrões visuais de conjuntos de dados extensos. Esse método de criação de mídia digital ressalta a natureza modular e distinta das imagens geradas por computador, distinguindo-as da mídia óptica tradicional.

Palavras-chave: Geração de imagens por IA, mídia digital, redes neurais, computação gráfica, IA generativa

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¹The terms generative media, synthetic media, or generative AI refer to the process of synthesizing media objects with artificial neural networks. The examples of such objects include text, voice, music, 3D models, datasets, and computer code. The terms generative image, AI Image or visual AI refer to specially synthesized visual objects. These objects can be still images that imitate the appearance and structure of all types of visual media, from photographs to drawings, and also moving images that imitate appearances of animation and video.

A *I IMAGE*¹ REPRESENTS a further logical evolution of the process that begins with digital media algorithms in the 1970s and continues in the following decades. The first computer paint programs were created in the 1970s, but could not yet simulate different paint types, brushes, and textured surfaces like canvas (Smith, 2001, 2021). But in the 1990s, software such as Corel Painter (1991–) started to offer these features (“Corel Painter”, 2024). Similarly, the first 3D computer graphics algorithms for rendering solid shapes, Gouraud shading (1971), and Phong shading (1973), could not yet simulate the looks of different materials. Later, in the 1970s and 1980s, computer graphics researchers created numerous algorithms to simulate the appearance of various materials and textures, such as cloth, hair, and skin, as well as shadows, transparency, translucency, depth of field, lens flares, motion blur, reflections, water, smoke, fireworks, explosions, and other natural phenomena and cinematography techniques and effects.

Simulating many of these phenomena and techniques requires multiple separate algorithms that were developed over time. Thus, we find distinct sessions devoted to such algorithms with names like Volumes and Materials, Fluid Simulation, or Cloth and Shells in the annual proceedings of Special Interest Group on Computer Graphics and Interactive Techniques (SIGGRAPH), the main conference in computer graphics (CG) field (ACM SIGGRAPH, 2022). As an example, the paper “Predicting Loose-Fitting Garment Deformations Using Bone-Driven Motion Networks” presented in the 2023 conference describes “a learning algorithm that uses bone-driven motion networks to predict the deformation of loose-fitting garment meshes at interactive rates.” Another conference paper “Rendering Iridescent Rock Dove Neck Feathers” describes a new approach for modeling and rendering bird feathers; and so on.

In my 1992 article “Assembling Reality: Myths of Computer Graphics” (Manovich, 1992)², I have analyzed this fundamental aspect of computer graphics, explaining that “synthetic photorealism is fundamentally different from the realism of the optical media, being partial and uneven, rather than analog”:

Digital recreation of any object involves solving three separate problems: the representation of an object’s shape, the effects of light, and the pattern of movement. To have a general solution for each problem requires the exact simulation of underlying physical properties and processes. This is impossible because of the extreme mathematical complexity. . . In practice, computer graphics researchers have resorted to solving particular local cases, developing a number

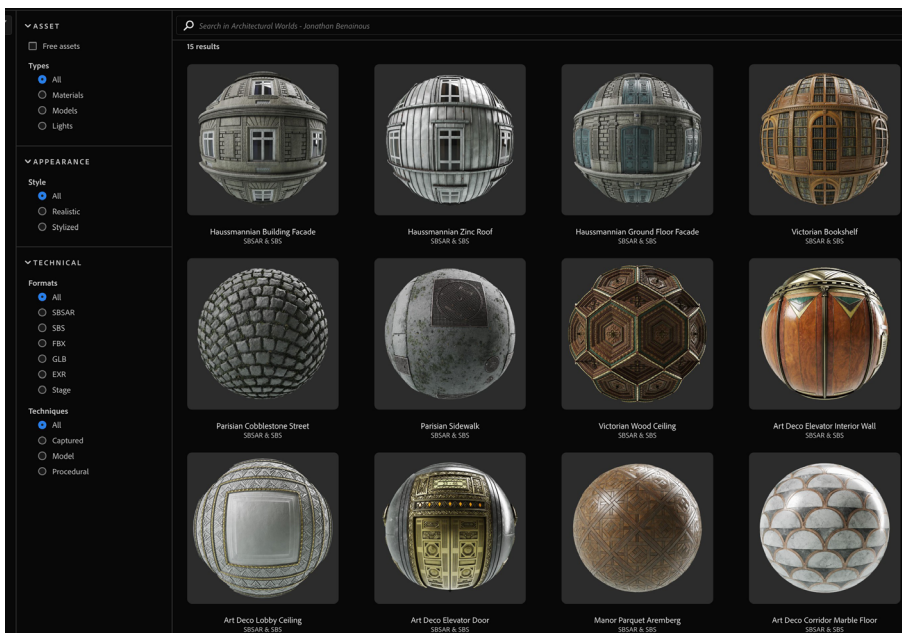
²See also “Part 4: The Illusions” (Manovich, 2002).

of unrelated models for simulation of some kinds of shapes, materials and movements. (Manovich, 1992, pp. 12-14)

In other words, 3D CG disassembles the world, separating objects, shapes, materials, light reflections, textures, movements, and behaviors (Figure 1). During rendering, the effects of multiple algorithms simulating all these aspects are combined together. Thus, *visual representations created using CG are discrete and modular, rather than continuous and “monistic.”* This is one of the most important characteristics of CG medium, distinguishing it from lens-based optical image media.

Figure 1

A few from the thousands of materials available in Adobe 3D content creation software



Note. Adapted from author

This logic of separation and recombination also defines next stage of digital media: PC software for media creation and editing. Following its initial release in 1990, Photoshop gradually began to include simulated effects and techniques from various artistic mediums, ranging from darkroom photography to oil painting, within a single program. These effects can be combined in a single digital image. Music software similarly allows users to combine many

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Separate and Reassemble

simulated instruments and multiple effects such as reverb and echo in one composition. Word processing and desktop publishing software separate the physical process of print composition into its basic parts that also can be now recombined—for example, you can take any font and arbitrarily change its size or generate your own font³.

³For the detailed analysis of media software and its conceptual origins, see Manovich (2013).

All of these media software capabilities were first proposed in the 1970s and later realized in the 1980s and 1990s, eventually becoming ubiquitous. AI generative media follows that same logic, although its underlying technical implementation is different. During training, neural networks learn visual patterns characteristic of hundreds of different types of art media, lighting techniques and effects from history of photography and cinematography, and visual signatures of many thousands of historical and contemporary artists, architects, fashion designers, and other creators. A reference website Midlibrary currently lists 367 “artistic techniques” that the Midjourney AI image generator tool can reliably simulate according to the tests conducted by this website team⁴. They range from “albumen print” and “anaglyph” to “wood carving” and “wireframe rendering.”

⁴Retrieved February 25, 2024, from <https://midlibrary.io/>

Importantly, a user can include references to multiple techniques and/or multiple creators in a single prompt, potentially generating new types of media effects that did not exist before. Here are examples of such prompts from my own experiments:

- Using multiple artists in one prompt: “18th century very big and detailed panoramic etching showing landscape in the style of *Michael Kaluta*, *Kawanabe Kyosai*, *Pieter Bruegel the Elder*, insane detail, cinematic”
- Using multiple artistic media in one prompt: “18th century futuristic infinite museum storage space with art objected on the shelves, snow fall inside the space and fog, wide angle view looking down, 7pm soft evening light, detailed intricate *drawing and etching* with very fine shading, subtle nuanced sombre *color pencils* and *fine pens*”

Figure 2 shows screenshot from midlibrary.io showing a few of artistic techniques, art genres, and “styles” of painters, illustrators, architects, photographers, and fashion designers that Midjourney can simulate. At the moment of this writing, the library contains nearly 5000 references. (Captured March 24, 2024).

Figure 2

Screenshot from *midlibrary.io*

Note. Adapted from author

The pioneering digital media theorist of 1990s and 2000s William J. Mitchell called this key characteristic of digital media “separate and recombine.” In his 1996 book *City of Bits*, he described this process in relation to urban planning:

Classical architects of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries handled the task of putting spaces together by creating hierarchies of great and small spaces around axial, symmetrical circulation systems connected to grand, formal entries and public open spaces...functionalist modernists of the twentieth century have often derived their less regular layouts directly from empirically established requirements of adjacency

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and proximity among the necessary spatial elements. But when telecommunication through lickety-split bits on the infobahn supplements or replaces movement of bodies along circulation paths, and when telepresence substitutes for face-to-face contact among the participants in activities, the spatial linkages that we have come to expect are loosened. The constituent elements of hitherto tightly packaged architectural and urban compositions can begin to float free from one another, and they can potentially relocate and recombine according to new logics. (Mitchell, 1996, p. 104)

Mitchell's lectures in the 2000s expanded on this formulation, demonstrating how the logic of separation and recombination can be seen in digital media in a variety of ways. Generative AI continues the same logic. A neural network extracts elements and structures from hundreds of millions or billions of images in its training set. They include distinct color palettes, compositions, lighting effects, artifacts of historical photography processes, and so on. When you ask AI image tool to generate new images with specified visual attributes, it does its best to combine (or more precisely, *interpolate* between) appropriate art patterns and effects.

No human historian, theorist, or practitioners of visual art, photography, cinema, or design were ever able to describe all those patterns. In the early 20th century pioneering art historians Aby Warburg and Erwin Panofsky developed the study of iconology. Warburg defines this concept as visual motives that (re)appear in various civilizations and media.

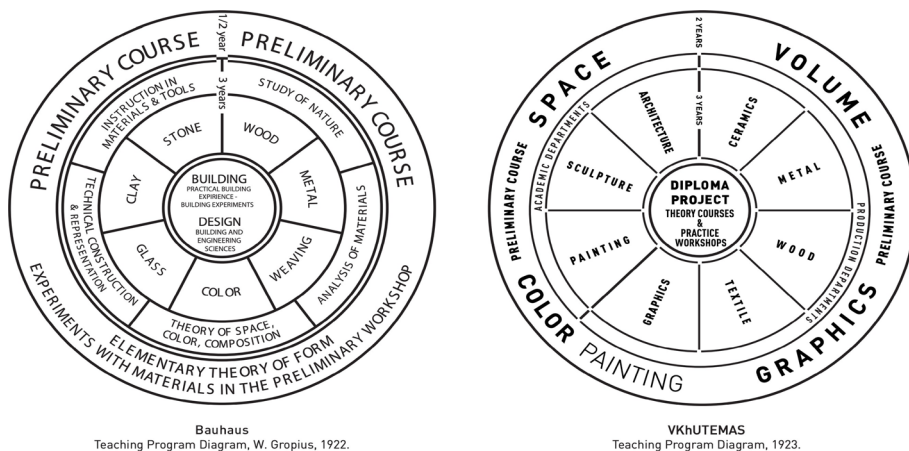
Panofsky used it somewhat differently, referring to symbols and motifs that have existed throughout the history of art. During the same period visual artists and architects disassembled visual arts in a different way, breaking down an image into its basic components and dimensions such as points, lines, planes, two-dimensional forms, color, space, texture, pattern, balance, and equilibrium, among others. While this project of methodical dismantling and creation of new visual languages from these components is central to modernist art and its many-isms, it finds its most methodical development in the curricula of two new schools of art and design. VKHUTEMAS in Moscow (1920–1930) and Bauhaus in Germany (1919–1933) introduced around the same time their Basic Course, in which students were taught how to systematically work with all those elements and dimensions. Instead of drawing from life, painting portraits, or making historical compositions, the students started training by completing exercises with image primitives such as basic shapes, forms, and colors. At VKHUTEMAS, the Basic Course was created in 1920 by Rodchenko, Popova, Ekster, Vesnin, and other faculty members from painting, architecture, and other school areas. In its first iteration, it consisted of a number of workshops such as “Discipline of Synchronized Shapes and Colors,” “Plane, Color, and Spatial Design,” “Graphic Construction on

a Plane Surface,” and “Color.” It was further transformed during VKHUTEMAS existence. Eventually, four learning sequences were approved for all VKHUTEMAS students: Graphics, Color, Volume, and Space⁵ (Figure 3 and 4).

⁵See Bokov (2021) and Vkhutemas (2020). The Basic Course at this school was more systematic and comprehensive than a similar course at Bauhaus; it was taught by many different faculty members and lasted two years. Note that VKHUTEMAS was ten times larger than Bauhaus, with 100 faculty and 5000 students during the ten years of its existence versus only 500 students at Bauhaus.

Figure 3

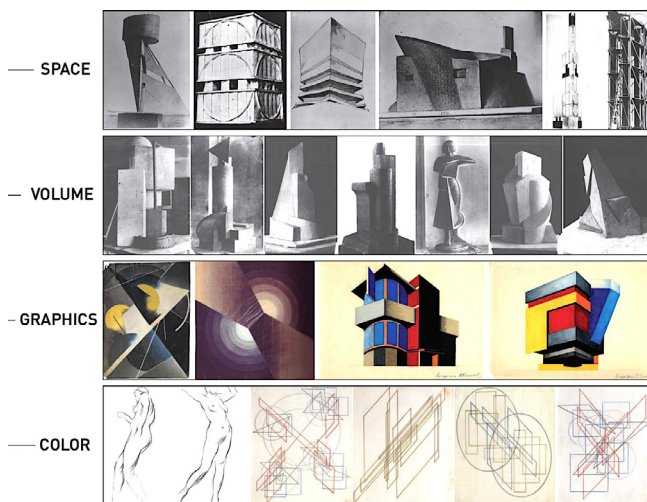
The structures of courses in Bauhaus and VKHUTEMAS. Both curricula begun with the basic course



Note. Adapted from author

Figure 4

Examples of student exercises at VKHUTEMAS



Note. Adapted from Bokov (2014)

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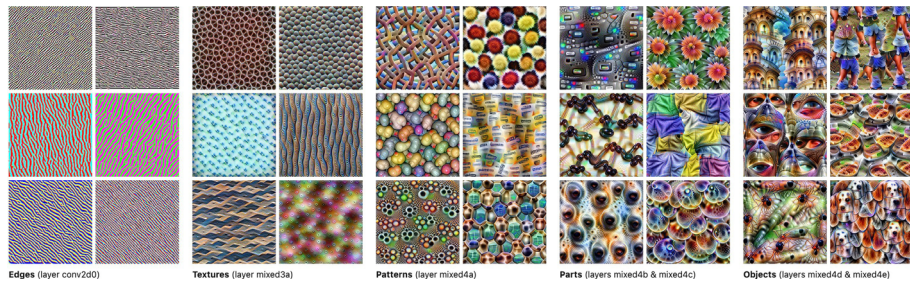
Separate and Reassemble

In a certain sense, generative AI models can be said to continue these programs of decomposition and analysis of visual arts that begun in the early twentieth century. Artificial intelligence algorithms extract patterns (or “features”) from training data. However, at the moment, we cannot look at billions of parameters in a gigantic generative network and get a neat catalog of all the patterns the network learnt (Podell et al., 2023). In the 2010s when neural networks were simpler and smaller, scientists were able to visualize what their neurons learn. For example, the following visualization shows the features learned by a network trained to recognize objects in photographs (Figure 5): Google Research visualization showing the features learned by progressive layers of a network trained for image recognition. The first layers learn basic features such as edges and textures (see previous page), and subsequent layers learn the appearance of partial and whole objects. A network first learns how to recognize basic features before progressing to object recognition. Unfortunately, the architecture of generative networks that synthesize images prevents us from “looking inside” these networks and visualizing them in the same manner⁶.

⁶For the overview of available deep networks visualization methods, see Barla (2024).

Figure 5

Google Research visualization by progressive layers of image recognition



Note. Adapted from Olah et al. (2017)

I want to conclude with a relevant quote from my 2018 book *AI Aesthetics* (Manovich, 2018). While at that time deep neural networks were mostly used for media classification and recommendations, with generative AI revolution still four years away, the analysis I developed in the book section called “AI as a Culture Theorist” has become even more relevant today:

[There is] a crucial difference between an “AI culture theorist” and a human theorist/historian. The latter comes up with explicit principles that describe how a cultural area function... a neural net can be trained to distinguish between works

of different artists, fashion designers, or film directors. And it can also generate new objects in the same style. But often we don't know what exactly the computer has learned... Will the expanding use of machine learning to create new cultural objects make explicit the patterns in many existing cultural fields that we may not be aware of? (Manovich, 2018, p. 23)

This theoretical potential to me is one of the most interesting and valuable thing about generative AI—however we will have to wait to see if it may be realized in the future. Visual AI is the fourth significant *data <-> knowledge* effect of the web—a global accumulation of networked hyperlinked cultural content that began to grow quickly after 1993. Although people have been sharing texts and images on the internet since the 1970s, this process has accelerated after 1993, when the first visual browser, Mosaic, was introduced on January 23 of that year.

I have observed several repercussions of the growth of information on the web over the following 30 years. If we wish to situate the development of Visual AI in the early 2020s in this timeline, here are four such effects. Certainly, others can be also named, so this is only one list of techno-cultural development technologies enabled by the web that I am particularly interested in:

1. The first effect is the switch from categorical, hierarchical, and structured organization of information (exemplified by library catalogs and early web directories) to search engines in the late 1990s. There was so much content that organizing it in conventional ways was no longer practical, and search become the new default. Note that *web search is based on a prediction of what will be most relevant to the user* as opposed to giving you a precise and definite answer. Note that generative AI is also predictive—it predicts possible text, images, animation, or music in response to your question or prompt. The regime of absolute certainty, i.e., a truth vs. a lie that is typical for human civilization, is replaced by predictions, as statistics becomes foundation of human sciences in the 20th century, and data science and AI in recent decades.
2. The second major effect is the rise in popularity of data visualization during the 2000s. The field thrives around 2005. As a part of this development, the new field “artistic data visualization” develops in the same decade, along with other new cultural fields: data art and data design. (In our lab we created *Phototrails*, *Selfiecity*, and *On Broadway* in 2012–2014. These were first interactive visualizations of millions

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of Instagram images.) If search attempts to find the most relevant items in the giant data universe, visualization tries to show parts of this universe in one image, revealing patterns and connections.

3. The third effect is the emergence of “data science” as the master discipline of the new big data era at the end of the 2000s. While many methods employed in data science have already been available for decades, the rapid increase in unstructured data in the 2000s motivated the development of a separate data science field — the key new profession of the data society. My own version of this stage is “cultural analytics,” the idea I came up with in 2005 and worked on for the next 15 years in our lab. Our main method was data visualization, but now applied to large media collections of photos, video, film, manga, magazine covers, Instagram images, etc. I named this method *media visualization*⁷
4. The next, but certainly not the last, effect of the growth of online visual digital content is Generative AI which becomes popular in early 2020s. Dalle-e is released in 2020, MidJourney in 2022, ChatGPT and Photoshop generative fill in 2023, and hundreds of other tools exist today. A bit earlier around 2017, a particular AI method for media generation called GAN became already popular with digital artists.

⁷ See projects at <http://lab.culturalanalytics.info>.

It is relevant to mention that both Visual AI and Generative AI in general builds on 20 years of work, with the first relevant papers published in 2001. The key idea is to use web content universe as a source of data for machine learning (ML), without labeling it, already appears in the research paper published around that time.

When investigating what kind of pattern is established by these four effects: search is the first method to deal with the new scale of content on the web. Data science focuses on finding patterns, relations, clusters, and outliers in big data, and also predicting future data. Data visualization tries to summarize datasets visually. And now Generative AI explores “big content,” yet in another way, by generating new content which combines many patterns from existing media.

To put this differently: Generative AI synthesizes new content that has statistical properties similar to existing content. But it is not a copy of what already exists. AI generates new content (texts, images, animation, 3D models, music, singing, etc.) by interpolating between existing points in the latent space.

This space contains numerous patterns and structures extracted by artificial networks from billions of image-text pairs, trillions of text pages, and other large collections of existing human cultural artifacts. AI predicts what could exist between these points in space of patterns. For example, it can predict a “painting” made by artists A, B, C, using techniques D and E, with content F, G, and E, with mood, colors M-N, proportion W, composition K, etc.

Note that the three earlier developments all approach big data by summarizing it. Web search reduces billions of web pages to the top results. Data visualization reduces it to a diagram. Data science reduces it by using summary statistics, cluster analysis, regression, or latent space projection. But Visual AI is doing something new. It also first reduces big data during learning, and then generates new data points.

One way to sum up all this is to say that we moved from probabilistic search to probabilistic media generation: 1999 to 2022. But certainly, generative AI is not the last effect of the existence of web data; others will likely emerge in the future. ■

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A Peregrinação a *Sand Hill Road*: Investimento de capital de risco em startups de tecnologia relacionadas ao setor editorial^a

The pilgrimage to Sand Hill Road: Venture capital investment in publishing-related tech startups

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RESUMO

Muitos empreendedores no mundo das startups de tecnologia buscam financiamento de capital de risco para estabelecer e expandir seus negócios, mas esse pode ser um processo repleto de desafios e carregado de consequências a longo prazo. A maioria das tentativas de obter financiamento de capital de risco falhará, e a maioria das startups financiadas por capital de risco não terá sucesso. Além disso, as startups que conseguirem esse tipo de financiamento tenderão a seguir uma trajetória de desenvolvimento muito diferente da de muitas empresas tradicionais. Este artigo busca esclarecer a relação única e especial entre o capital de risco e as startups de tecnologia, com foco em um subconjunto específico: aquelas relacionadas à indústria editorial de livros. A análise abrange tanto a perspectiva de um capitalista de risco bem estabelecido no Vale do Silício e financiador de startups de tecnologia, quanto a perspectiva dos empreendedores que buscam garantir financiamento de capital de risco. Ao examinar essa relação sob ambas as óticas, podemos entender por que alguns empreendedores conseguem captar recursos enquanto outros não. Também podemos compreender por que as trajetórias de desenvolvimento das startups financiadas por capital de risco são significativamente diferentes das de muitas empresas tradicionais e explicar por que algumas dessas empresas financiadas por capital de risco falham, enquanto outras, competindo em um mercado semelhante e em condições aparentemente equivalentes, sobrevivem e prosperam.

Palavras-chave: startups de tecnologia, capital de risco, publicação, Silicon Valley, Sand Hill Road

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ABSTRACT

Many entrepreneurs in the world of tech start-ups seek venture capital funding to establish and grow their businesses, but this can be a process fraught with difficulties and laden with long-term consequences. Most attempts to secure VC funding will fail, and most start-ups that are VC funded will not succeed. Moreover, start-ups that do secure VC funding will tend to find themselves on a developmental trajectory that is very different from that of many traditional businesses. This paper seeks to shed light on the unique and special relationship between venture capital and tech start-ups by focusing on a particular subset of tech start-ups: those that are related to the book publishing industry. It examines this relationship both from the viewpoint of a well-established venture capitalist in Silicon Valley who funds tech start-ups and from the viewpoint of entrepreneurs who are trying to secure VC funding. By examining this relationship from both points of view, we can understand why some entrepreneurs succeed in raising funds and others don't. We can also understand why the developmental trajectories of VC-funded start-ups are very different from those of many traditional businesses and we can explain why some VC-funded businesses fail while others, competing in a similar space in seemingly similar conditions, survive and flourish.

Keywords: Tech start-ups, venture capital, publishing, Silicon Valley, Sand Hill Road

A MEDIDA QUE A revolução digital ganhava força na década de 1990 e no início dos anos 2000, seu impacto sobre as empresas de mídia tradicionais e os ambientes mais amplos em que essas empresas operavam tornou-se cada vez mais evidente. As empresas de mídia foram particularmente vulneráveis aos efeitos da revolução digital, uma vez que lidavam principalmente com conteúdos simbólicos que podiam ser digitalizados. Consequentemente, seu principal ativo – o conteúdo simbólico – foi rapidamente capturado pelas novas formas de processamento e transmissão de informação desenvolvidas pelas tecnologias baseadas em computador. O impacto da digitalização variou significativamente de uma indústria de mídia para outra, e mesmo dentro de diferentes setores de uma mesma indústria, dependendo de uma série de fatores e condições muitas vezes específicos de certas indústrias e setores. Seria um equívoco presumir que o impacto da digitalização foi uniforme, ou mesmo semelhante, entre as diversas indústrias e setores de mídia¹. Além de seu efeito nas indústrias de mídia tradicionais, a revolução digital também criou oportunidades para novos *players* ingressarem em campos que as organizações de mídia tradicionais há muito consideravam conquistados. As barreiras à entrada, que anteriormente ofereciam certa proteção às organizações de mídia tradicionais, estavam se

¹ Lotz (2021) destaca bem esse ponto.

desgastando ou sendo eliminadas. Essas organizações depararam-se com uma infinidade de novas startups, algumas buscando colaboração, enquanto outras se posicionavam como concorrentes. O mundo delas estava mudando rapidamente, e muitas vezes era difícil distinguir entre amigos e inimigos – e, em alguns casos, esses papéis se confundiam.

Enquanto a indústria musical e a indústria jornalística foram rapidamente e dramaticamente perturbadas pela revolução digital, a indústria editorial de livros também foi profundamente impactada, embora de maneiras complexas e específicas a esse setor. No final da década de 1990 e início dos anos 2000, o ambiente de varejo na indústria editorial de livros foi transformado por uma startup tecnológica que utilizou a tecnologia digital e a Internet para revolucionar a cadeia de abastecimento de livros. Com um início modesto em uma garagem de Seattle, a Amazon rapidamente se tornaria o maior varejista do mundo e a organização mais poderosa que a indústria editorial de livros já conheceu. De repente, a mais antiga das indústrias de mídia havia sido invadida por uma gigante tecnológica e as editoras lutavam para lidar com as reverberações. No entanto, a Amazon não era a única empresa de tecnologia perturbando a indústria editorial de livros: dezenas de startups de tecnologia emergiam dentro e fora do setor editorial, experimentando com novas tecnologias e buscando maneiras de criar novos produtos e serviços em uma indústria que permaneceu praticamente inalterada, em termos de estruturas básicas e modelos de receita, por vários séculos. As atividades dessas startups variavam de hardware a software, de e-books a aplicativos, de autopublicação e *crowdfunding* a serviços de assinatura, de marketing online a mídias sociais. Em uma indústria onde o valor estava atrelado a conteúdo baseado em texto que poderia ser transformado em 0s e 1s, as oportunidades para desenvolver novas formas de criação, produção e distribuição de conteúdo eram consideráveis. A indústria editorial de livros estava se preparando para uma ou duas décadas de interferência digital que poderiam ser tão radicais quanto as que transformavam outros setores de mídia e indústrias criativas.

Foi neste contexto que comecei a trabalhar na revolução digital na indústria editorial de livros. Eu já havia analisado as estruturas da publicação comercial anglo-americana e sua transformação nos cinquenta anos entre 1960 e 2010 (Thompson, 2012), e queria me concentrar mais claramente no impacto da revolução digital neste setor. No meu trabalho anterior, dediquei muita atenção ao impacto da revolução digital na publicação – essa foi uma questão fundamental na indústria editorial a partir de meados da década de 1990, por isso nenhum estudo sério desse setor poderia ignorá-la. Compreender o impacto da revolução digital na indústria editorial, no entanto, não foi minha principal preocupação no

estudo anterior, no qual me concentrei em entender as principais características estruturais da indústria da publicação comercial anglo-americana e analisar a dinâmica que moldou a evolução desse campo ao longo do tempo. Um pressuposto fundamental da abordagem da teoria dos campos para as indústrias de mídia, que desenvolvi em meu trabalho inspirado nas ideias de Bourdieu, é que todas as organizações de mídia – incluindo as editoriais – estão inseridas em contextos sociais específicos ou campos estruturados de maneiras específicas, incluindo a distribuição de diferentes tipos de recursos ou formas de capital, que indivíduos e organizações acumulam e utilizam na busca de seus interesses e objetivos². Ao estudarmos a inovação tecnológica a partir dessa perspectiva, focaremos menos nas tecnologias em si e mais nos contextos sociais em que são desenvolvidas e implementadas, enxergando a inovação tecnológica como ela realmente é – ou seja, um conjunto de atividades realizadas por determinados indivíduos e organizações situados em determinados campos, utilizando os materiais, formas de conhecimento e recursos à sua disposição (econômicos, técnicos e sociais) para atingir determinados fins. Em outras palavras, veremos a inovação tecnológica como algo inevitavelmente ligado às realidades da motivação humana e das relações sociais, com interesses, recursos e poder. A inovação tecnológica nunca acontece no vácuo: ela está sempre inserida na realidade confusa da vida social.

² Consulte Bourdieu (1993a, 1993b, 1996) para uma explicação de como adapto a teoria dos campos de Bourdieu para a análise da indústria editorial de livros, consulte Thompson (2005).

Embora a teoria dos campos seja uma ferramenta útil para refletir sobre a organização social dos contextos em que a inovação tecnológica ocorre, eu estava ciente de que precisava ir além da teoria dos campos desenvolvida por Bourdieu para abordar a natureza e a dinâmica da inovação tecnológica em um setor como o editorial – e precisei fazê-lo por vários motivos. Em primeiro lugar, a tecnologia nunca ocupou um lugar de destaque no trabalho de Bourdieu. Embora ele escrevesse com perspicácia sobre literatura, jornalismo e televisão, nunca deu muita atenção aos meios específicos pelos quais essas formas culturais eram incorporadas e transmitidas. Eu precisava inserir a questão da tecnologia na teoria dos campos e analisar detalhadamente o que a inovação tecnológica representa na prática, como ela possibilita diferentes formas de prática em campos específicos, como ela impulsiona as práticas tanto dos participantes estabelecidos quanto dos novos, e como ela altera a própria natureza e os limites do campo, em alguns casos, reduzindo as barreiras à entrada e permitindo que recém-chegados entrem em um campo que havia sido amplamente fechado a pessoas de fora. Também precisava manter em aberto a possibilidade de que a inovação tecnológica possa facilitar o surgimento de novos campos ou subcampos que desenvolveriam seus próprios códigos e convenções e suas próprias economias culturais, em alguns casos, sobrepondo-se a campos há muito estabelecidos e,

em outros casos, desmembrando-se deles para formar seus próprios espaços semiautônomos.

Mas não eram apenas as tecnologias que precisavam ser integradas à teoria dos campos: também precisamos inserir as organizações no centro da teoria de campos e analisar suas trajetórias ao longo do tempo – isto é, desenvolver uma análise longitudinal das organizações e das mudanças organizacionais relacionadas à tecnologia, para que possamos pintar um retrato dinâmico de campos em movimento, campos em que as organizações estão em constante evolução, tentando lidar com as interrupções e a incerteza causadas pela inovação tecnológica. A análise dessas questões ao longo do tempo é crucial, uma vez que a inovação tecnológica nunca acontece instantaneamente: é frequentemente um processo longo e demorado, um processo de experimentação, de tentativa e erro, no qual indivíduos, geralmente trabalhando em equipes ou em colaboração com outros, tentam descobrir o que vai “funcionar” e o que não vai. Eles podem ter uma ótima ideia, mas fazê-la funcionar na prática, muitas vezes, depende de sua capacidade de desenvolver uma organização, como uma empresa, que possa levá-la adiante – e, para fazer isso, eles dependerão da sua capacidade de arrecadar recursos suficientes para empregar pessoal, adquirir instalações e realizar outras atividades típicas das organizações. Assim como as tecnologias, as organizações que as impulsionam também evoluem, e o grau em que essas tecnologias se tornam características estáveis e contínuas em nossas vidas pode estar sujeito à capacidade dessas organizações de sobreviver e prosperar. Portanto, compreender o destino da inovação tecnológica é fundamental para a compreensão das trajetórias das organizações que a sustentam.

Por fim, também precisamos garantir que nossas análises da inovação tecnológica se concentrem não apenas em campos, tecnologias e organizações, mas também sejam povoadas por seres humanos reais, de carne e osso – ou seja, precisamos reinserir as pessoas na história, ou melhor, garantir que as pessoas e suas ideias estejam presentes desde o início e constituam uma parte essencial da narrativa. Em alguns trabalhos acadêmicos sobre tecnologia, percebe-se uma tendência de concentração em processos e artefatos, como se estes, por si só, fossem suficientes para impulsionar a inovação e a mudança. No entanto, a inovação tecnológica está intrinsecamente ligada às pessoas e às suas ideias, motivações, ambições e desejos: elas não podem ser extraídas da história nem incluídas nela posteriormente, como se fossem um acessório incidental. Os objetivos e ambições delas precisam estar presentes desde o início. É claro que os indivíduos não agem no vazio: eles estão sempre situados em contextos específicos em que algumas coisas são possíveis e outras não, suas percepções e ambições são moldadas por suas trajetórias pessoais através do espaço social, e mesmo os

mais determinados falharão se não tiverem acesso a oportunidades justas. Mas, como costuma ser o caso, a história da inovação tecnológica é construída tanto por pessoas quanto por processos, por indivíduos e também por organizações, tecnologias e os contextos em que estão inseridos. Deixar as pessoas fora dessa narrativa seria tão parcial e unilateral quanto recontar essa história focando apenas nas tecnologias. Campos, tecnologias, organizações, indivíduos: estes são os componentes-chave da abordagem teórica que desenvolvi na tentativa de compreender a mudança tecnológica na indústria editorial de livros, atribuindo o valor devido a cada componente e não privilegiando nenhum.

Além de estudar o impacto das tecnologias digitais sobre as organizações já consideradas atores estabelecidos no campo da publicação comercial anglo-americana, eu queria estudar as maneiras pelas quais os novos atores estavam usando as tecnologias digitais para desenvolver novas formas de criar, produzir, comercializar e distribuir livros e outros tipos de leitura e escrita de formato longo, tanto dentro do campo da publicação comercial quanto em campos adjacentes (ou completamente não relacionados). Eu estava plenamente ciente de que, às vezes, a barreira mais radical em uma indústria estabelecida não vem dos atores incumbentes, que podem ter interesse em manter as estruturas existentes que os beneficiaram, mas sim de startups que não tinham nenhuma presença anterior no campo³. Por isso, comecei a estudar uma variedade de startups que procuravam utilizar tecnologias digitais para inovar na indústria da publicação comercial anglo-americana. Em alguns casos, essas startups procuravam desenvolver novos produtos, como novos tipos de livros e outras formas e formatos de textos que pudessem ser lidos em diferentes mídias e em vários dispositivos; em outros casos, as startups procuravam desenvolver novos serviços para autores ou leitores ou outros intervenientes estabelecidos na área, com vista a capacitá-los a fazer o que queriam – fosse escrever, ler ou adquirir livros, ou fazer outra coisa com os livros – de maneiras novas e possivelmente melhores ou mais eficientes. O grande número de startups de tecnologia que surgiram dentro e em torno do campo editorial e a variedade de produtos e serviços que ofereciam eram impressionantes. Muitas destas startups estavam sediadas no Vale do Silício e na área metropolitana de São Francisco, mas outras estavam instaladas em outros locais, como Nova Iorque, Boston, Filadélfia, Toronto e Londres⁴.

Quando trabalhamos em startups de tecnologia, rapidamente percebemos que um fator crucial para determinar se uma startup terá sucesso e será capaz de se sustentar ao longo do tempo é o dinheiro – isto é, a natureza e a quantidade de um recurso específico, o capital financeiro, que ela tem à sua disposição. Também descobrimos rapidamente que a trajetória de uma startup

³ Um ponto bem abordado por Christensen (1997).

⁴ Realizei esta pesquisa ao longo de um período de seis anos, entre 2013 e 2019, período durante o qual conduzi cerca de 180 entrevistas com CEOs, empreendedores e outros, tanto em editoras tradicionais quanto em diversas startups de tecnologia; a pesquisa foi financiada por meio de uma bolsa da Fundação Andrew W. Mellon. Alguns resultados dessa pesquisa são apresentados em Thompson (2021). Este artigo se baseia nessa investigação, mas a questão do financiamento de capital de risco para startups de tecnologia e suas consequências não é abordada em *Book Wars*.

e as questões que ela prioriza no desenvolvimento de sua estratégia de negócios são fortemente moldadas pela natureza do financiamento do qual ela depende para atender às suas necessidades comerciais diárias. Assim como outras startups, as startups de tecnologia que surgiram no setor editorial ou em torno dele foram financiadas de diversas formas – algumas conseguiram financiamento de “investidores anjo”, outras dependiam de poupanças pessoais ou de fundos fornecidos por familiares ou amigos. Mas o capital de risco também desempenhou um papel importante. A disponibilidade de financiamento de capital de risco foi frequentemente crucial para determinar a capacidade de muitas dessas startups de iniciar suas operações e, também, para moldar suas trajetórias de desenvolvimento ao longo do tempo.

Três aspectos sobre o financiamento de startups de tecnologia relacionadas ao setor editorial foram particularmente surpreendentes. Em primeiro lugar, em muitos casos, os fundadores/CEOs dessas startups decidiram angariar financiamento junto a capitalistas de risco em uma fase inicial do processo de desenvolvimento: como disse um fundador/CEO, eles fizeram “a peregrinação a *Sand Hill Road*”. A escolha dessa terminologia foi precisa: essa era uma parte zelosa e quase obrigatória do lançamento de uma startup de tecnologia em São Francisco e no Vale do Silício, e todos os empreendedores (que, em minha amostra específica, eram em sua maioria jovens brancos recém-saídos da faculdade) sabiam que, em algum momento, teriam que fazer a jornada até *Menlo Park* e apresentar suas ideias a uma ou mais empresas de capital de risco em *Sand Hill Road*. Eles eram como suplicantes em busca de financiamento e, de alguma forma, precisavam descobrir como maximizar suas chances de desbloquear alguns recursos dos guardiões do capital. Alguns teriam sucesso, outros fracassariam – “Fomos rejeitados 168 vezes”, disse um cofundador. O sucesso na peregrinação a *Sand Hill Road* estava longe de ser garantido. Mas por que alguns desses empreendedores tiveram sucesso enquanto outros não? Por que alguns obtiveram sucesso imediato e outros tentaram repetidamente sem conseguir angariar quaisquer fundos?

A segunda coisa surpreendente sobre essas startups de tecnologia financiadas por capital de risco foi que, como empresas, elas operavam de uma maneira muito diferente de uma editora tradicional, fossem grandes nomes como a Penguin Random House ou pequenas empresas independentes como a Akashic Books e a Casa Melville. As editoras, sejam grandes ou pequenas, normalmente buscam gerar receita suficiente por meio da venda de livros e outras fontes de renda para cobrir seus custos e, com sorte, produzir um pequeno excedente ou lucro – em outras palavras, eles operam de acordo com um cálculo de lucros e perdas bastante padrão e têm como objetivo garantir a geração de receita

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A Peregrinação a *Sand Hill Road*

suficiente para cumprir suas obrigações e evitar ficar sem dinheiro. Muitas das startups de tecnologia, por outro lado, não estavam realmente preocupadas em gerar receitas e ser lucrativas como negócios. Elas estavam focadas em algo completamente diferente: crescimento. Embora não estivessem completamente alheias às questões de geração de receita e rentabilidade, essas não eram suas principais preocupações. Ficava claro que elas estavam em uma trajetória empresarial radicalmente diferente daquela das editoras com quem colaboravam e, por vezes, competiam: operavam no mesmo setor ou segmento, mas jogavam com regras muito diferentes. Quais são as regras de acordo com as quais essas startups estão jogando? Por que seus objetivos de negócios são tão diferentes das preocupações das editoras tradicionais? E o que elas procuram alcançar se não pretendem se tornar empresas viáveis e lucrativas?

A terceira coisa surpreendente foi que as trajetórias destas startups variaram enormemente e o seu destino estava muitas vezes intimamente ligado à sua dependência, e à extensão dessa dependência, do financiamento de capital de risco. Isso foi ilustrado de forma clara pelas diferentes trajetórias de duas startups de tecnologia relacionadas ao setor editorial que competiam diretamente entre si: a Oyster e a Scribd. Ambas lançaram seus serviços de assinatura de e-books quase simultaneamente, entre setembro e novembro de 2013, uma em Nova York (Oyster) e outra em San Francisco (Scribd). Ambas conseguiram levantar um financiamento substancial de capital de risco junto a grandes empresas de investimento. A maioria dos observadores concordava que a Oyster tinha uma plataforma e interface de usuário melhores – eles investiram muito nisso, e se tratava de uma oferta muito elegante e atraente. Esses serviços de assinatura competiam diretamente e, do ponto de vista do usuário, parecia que a Oyster levava vantagem. Então, de repente, apenas dois anos após o lançamento, a Oyster faliu, enquanto o Scribd sobreviveu e continuou a crescer. Por que esses resultados tão diferentes em uma disputa que a Oyster parecia destinada a vencer?

Foi, em parte, para esclarecer essas e outras questões que decidi observar não apenas as próprias startups de tecnologia, mas também os capitalistas de risco que as financiaram. Como exatamente aqueles que controlam o acesso ao capital de risco decidem em quais startups investir e quanto investir? Quais critérios utilizam para tomar suas decisões e como suas prioridades como investidores moldam as prioridades e trajetórias das startups nas quais investem? Por que alguns empreendedores encontram portas abertas para recebê-los em *Sand Hill Road*, enquanto, para outros, essas mesmas portas estão firmemente fechadas? E, se os capitalistas de risco decidem encerrar uma startup na qual já investiram fundos, por que fazem isso? Por que eles estão dispostos a apoiar algumas startups em uma rodada de financiamento das Séries B ou C, enquanto

outras startups com ofertas aparentemente semelhantes não conseguem obter apoio? Ao investigar mais profundamente os interesses, prioridades e objetivos dos capitalistas de risco que controlam o acesso ao capital, talvez possamos esclarecer alguns aspectos do comportamento e das trajetórias das startups de tecnologia que são intrigantes ou difíceis de compreender.

Graças ao excelente trabalho de Tom Nicholas (2019), temos acesso à história da ascensão do capital de risco nos Estados Unidos, desde suas origens no século XIX na indústria baleeira da Nova Inglaterra até seu florescimento no final do século XX no Vale do Silício. De acordo com Nicholas, o que distingue o capital de risco como modo de financiamento é seu caráter de alto risco: é um negócio de “sucessos”, onde os retornos excepcionais de um pequeno número de investimentos altamente bem-sucedidos compensam a grande maioria dos investimentos que geram pouco retorno ou simplesmente fracassam. Essa distribuição de retornos em “cauda longa” tende a seguir a curva da lei de potência, onde uma pequena porcentagem dos investimentos representa uma grande porcentagem dos lucros. O modelo de investimento de cauda longa com capital de risco provou-se particularmente adequado ao mundo das startups de alta tecnologia que começaram a se instalar no Vale do Silício nas décadas de 1970 e 1980, facilitado pela combinação única de instituições educacionais de alta qualidade, empresas locais de alta tecnologia, uma força de trabalho altamente qualificada e décadas de investimento governamental em tecnologias de base militar⁵. Os capitalistas de risco migraram para o Vale do Silício para estarem perto das startups que iriam financiar e *Sand Hill Road*, em *Menlo Park*, logo se tornou o agrupamento mais significativo de empresas de capital de risco em qualquer lugar do mundo (Nicholas, 2019, p. 212).

⁵Sobre as condições que facilitaram a ascensão do Vale do Silício, veja Saxenian (1994), Kenney (2000) e Lécuyer (2006).

Embora o trabalho de Nicholas nos proporcione uma excelente visão da história da indústria de capital de risco e de como ela se entrelaçou com o mundo de alta tecnologia do Vale do Silício, ele não nos fornece uma análise detalhada das práticas de trabalho dos capitalistas de risco no Vale do Silício hoje, como eles fazem o que fazem no dia a dia e como decidem quais startups de tecnologia apoiar e quais rejeitar. Quais são os critérios que eles utilizam para avaliar as startups propostas, e como decidem se devem financiá-las? Como um capitalista de risco vê o mundo, e quais princípios práticos ou regras gerais (sendo que a maioria deles são homens) ele usa para decidir se deve ou não investir em uma startup? Se víssemos o mundo do ponto de vista de um capitalista de risco, isso nos ajudaria a responder algumas das questões levantadas anteriormente sobre startups de tecnologia financiadas dessa maneira? Isso nos ajudaria a entender por que alguns empreendedores são bem-sucedidos em sua peregrinação a *Sand Hill Road*, enquanto outros retornam de mãos vazias?

O MUNDO SOB A PERSPECTIVA DE TOM

Tom é um capitalista de risco bem estabelecido e conhecido no Vale do Silício, especializado em financiar startups de tecnologia (“Tom” é um pseudônimo). Fui apresentado a ele pelo CEO de uma das empresas em que eu estava trabalhando: como ele havia financiado a empresa, eu sabia que ele estava familiarizado com startups relacionadas ao setor editorial, mas seu portfólio incluía muitas empresas de tecnologia que não tinham nada a ver com publicação. Tom atua no Vale do Silício desde o início dos anos 1980, quando a maior parte da paisagem local era composta por pomares e laranjais. Ele conseguiu um emprego em uma startup como designer de chips semicondutores e, a partir de 1991, começou a trabalhar como capitalista de risco. Atualmente, ele é sócio de uma das grandes empresas de capital de risco em *Menlo Park* e também investe seus próprios (nada modestos) fundos pessoais. Além de investir, ele fundou várias empresas de tecnologia próprias e ganhou muito dinheiro quando foram vendidas ou abriram capital na bolsa de valores. Sua perspectiva é, sem dúvida, única, refletindo (como qualquer ponto de vista) a especificidade de sua própria experiência de vida e carreira, mas não há razão para pensar que seja atípica. Tom já trabalhava no Vale do Silício por trinta e cinco anos e estava no coração do mundo do capital de risco por vinte e cinco quando o entrevistei em março de 2016, e, embora algumas de suas opiniões possam ser idiossincráticas, muitas de suas ideias sobre estratégia e prática de investimento são compartilhadas por outros capitalistas de risco do Vale do Silício⁶.

⁶ Os elementos básicos da perspectiva de Tom também estão refletidos no guia prático de Scott Kupor para empreendedores sobre como obter capital de risco, *Secrets of Sand Hill Road: Venture Capital and How to Get It* (2019), esp. cap. 2. Scott Kupor é sócio da Andreessen Horowitz, uma empresa de capital de risco.

Na visão de Tom, a indústria de tecnologia do Vale do Silício passou por cinco ondas – Tom costumava surfar quando jovem, e sua visão de mundo (e, em particular, do mundo da alta tecnologia) é moldada por metáforas de surfe. A primeira onda foram os chips de silício (ponto de partida para Tom); a segunda foram os componentes – ou seja, hardware: switches, roteadores, hubs, equipamentos de comunicação; a terceira onda foram as redes – a capacidade de conectar esses componentes à internet; a quarta foram as interfaces de usuário (Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, Uber, etc.); e a quinta onda, a que estamos “surfando” neste momento, é a de dados e ciência de dados. A próxima onda, a sexta, será, na visão de Tom, uma continuação e desenvolvimento da quinta: a ciência de dados aplicada. Tom busca oportunidades de investimento como um surfista procura ondas: “Eu trabalho procurando ondas e, quando acredito que uma onda é viável, começo a buscar pessoas ou empresas que eu acho que poderiam ter sucesso surfando essa onda”.

Além da metáfora da onda, que fornece a Tom uma estrutura teórica para sua estratégia de investimento, dois outros fatores também são fundamentais na definição de suas decisões de investimento. Um deles é o *timing* – isso é crucial.

Estar no lugar certo na hora certa. Ele se tornou especialmente importante a partir da terceira onda, devido aos efeitos de rede. As redes adquirem uma escala e uma aderência que são difíceis de substituir, independentemente da quantidade de capital investido em um concorrente. Graças aos efeitos de rede, este é um mercado onde o vencedor leva tudo, e se o *timing* estiver errado – se entrarmos muito cedo ou muito tarde –, assim como um surfista que perde uma grande onda, provavelmente será muito difícil alcançar a escala e a aderência necessárias para alcançarmos o sucesso.

O segundo fator é a equipe – novamente, isso é crucial. Quem são eles? Eles têm o que é preciso para transformar essa ideia em um sucesso? Qual foi o desempenho acadêmico deles na escola e na faculdade? O que eles fizeram depois de se formarem na faculdade? Tom tem uma visão clara e profunda sobre isso: algumas pessoas são vencedoras e outras não, e parte do trabalho é escolher os vencedores e garantir que a equipe, o *timing* e a onda trabalhem em sintonia. Foi assim que ele resumiu esse conceito:

As pessoas não mudam, e certas pessoas são vencedoras. Precisamos identificar quem são esses vencedores – não necessariamente de forma independente da área, porque é preciso combinar um vencedor com uma onda onde há espaço para crescimento. Se pegarmos um vencedor e o colocarmos em um mercado ruim, teremos uma ótima empresa trabalhando em um mercado ruim, e isso não vai funcionar. Por outro lado, se conseguirmos uma onda favorável e tivermos um bom surfista, vamos crescer pelo menos tão rápido quanto a onda. Então, precisamos pegar uma onda que esteja se movendo, ter um bom surfista e não gastar demais nem nos esgotarmos. Evite atrasos e gastos excessivos. Se cada fator estiver certo, se sentirmos o *timing* e nos prepararmos, tudo o que é preciso é uma remada e tudo sai como o esperado.

Onda, *timing* e equipe: esses são os três elementos-chave por meio dos quais Tom decide se deve investir capital em uma startup.

Mas Tom não está apenas decidindo se deve apoiar uma startup desde o início: às vezes, ele avalia se deve financiar uma startup que já está em andamento e precisa de mais capital, talvez para refinanciá-la em uma rodada de financiamento Série B ou C. O que ele busca nesse caso? Os mesmos três elementos se aplicam neste caso, mas agora um outro elemento crucial entra em jogo: tração. O desafio agora, do ponto de vista do capitalista de risco, é descobrir se, dentro do seu setor, a empresa pode ser aquela que conquista os efeitos de rede e, idealmente, se torna a vencedora nessa categoria. Aqui, é vital garantir que a

escolha da categoria foi a melhor possível: a empresa não precisa competir com Facebook ou Twitter se estiver em uma categoria diferente. Então, como escolher o vencedor em uma categoria? “Evidência de tração”, disse Tom. Por “tração” ele se refere a crescimento mais engajamento: Quão rapidamente uma plataforma, seja qual for seu negócio, está adicionando novos usuários? A retenção desses usuários é boa ou eles não passam da fase de testes? Alta taxa de crescimento, alto engajamento – esses são os fatores-chave.

Importa se a empresa está gerando receita ou é lucrativa, ou seja, esse é um fator relevante ou importante? “É melhor se estiverem, mas não em detrimento de aumentar sua base de usuários ao máximo,” disse Tom. Gerar receita é importante, mas não no início. Se estamos convencidos de que a categoria terá valor e se assumirmos que o maior *player* da categoria terá um valor exponencialmente maior do que o segundo colocado, então sempre vale a pena nos tornarmos o maior *player* no setor. Portanto, se for preciso adiar a geração de receita para adquirir usuários e chegar ao ponto de nos tornarmos o maior *player* no espaço, esse é o caminho a ser seguido.

Se conseguirmos sobreviver ao período inicial de financiamento e adquirir clientes suficientes e fiéis para nos tornarmos o *player* dominante no setor, poderemos descobrir como monetizar mais tarde. Isso é o que Marc Andreessen, cofundador da Netscape, guru do Vale do Silício e cofundador da influente firma de capital de risco Andreessen Horowitz, chamou de “lição da Microsoft”: “Uma das lições fundamentais é que participação de mercado no presente equivale a receita no futuro e, se você não tem participação de mercado agora, não terá receita mais tarde. Outra lição fundamental é que quem obtém volume vence no final. Vence. Pura e simplesmente”⁷.

⁷ Marc Andreessen, citado em Reid (1997, p. 31).

Embora expandir a base de usuários o mais rápido possível seja crucial, há uma qualificação importante aqui, explicou Tom: também precisamos garantir que o valor vitalício de um cliente seja muito maior do que o custo para adquiri-lo – muitas vezes maior do que o investimento para conquistar o cliente. Se o custo de adquirir e entregar um serviço para um cliente for tão alto em relação a qualquer valor vitalício concebível desse cliente, teríamos um negócio com margem bruta negativa: custaria mais para entregar seu serviço do que jamais poderíamos receber por cliente. Então, isso dá a Tom um conjunto bastante direto de critérios para decidir se deve apoiar uma startup que precisa de mais capital: primeiro, estamos falando de um grande mercado? A categoria tem valor? Segundo, esse *player* pode se tornar o mais dominante nesse setor? Qual é a evidência de tração? Os dados mostram alta taxa de crescimento e alto engajamento ou fidelidade? Terceiro, o valor vitalício do cliente é muito maior do que o custo de adquirir o cliente e entregar o serviço? É muitas vezes maior?

Então, apesar da complexidade dos diferentes projetos que Tom se vê avaliando e da grande variedade de projetos, a fórmula que ele utiliza é surpreendentemente simples: onda, *timing*, equipe: WTT (do inglês, Wave-Timing-Team). Quando se trata de decidir se vale a pena investir mais dinheiro em uma startup que já está em andamento, ele acrescenta um quarto elemento à sua fórmula: onda, *timing*, equipe, tração, simplificada como W3T (do inglês, Wave-Timing-Team-Traction), com a qualificação importante de que o crescimento deve ser tal que o valor vitalício do cliente seja muito maior do que o custo de adquiri-lo (chamaremos isso de tração+). Consequentemente, a fórmula para determinarmos se devemos investir mais dinheiro em uma startup é W3T+. É claro que, em qualquer situação específica, a decisão raramente é simples e há muito espaço para diferentes avaliações em casos particulares – é fácil cometer erros e o simples fato de que a maioria dos investimentos não dá certo é uma prova da incerteza intrínseca das decisões de investimento desse tipo. Ainda assim, os critérios de avaliação são notavelmente simples e diretos.

Então, qual é o objetivo final ao investir em uma startup? Como capitalista de risco, o que Tom está tentando alcançar? Ganhar dinheiro, é claro! Mas como fazer isso? Essencialmente, um capitalista de risco ganha dinheiro para si e outros sócios limitados que investem em um fundo ao sair do investimento em termos que garantam um múltiplo sobre o investimento, e quanto maior o múltiplo, melhor a saída. Basicamente, existem duas estratégias de saída desejáveis do ponto de vista de um capitalista de risco: vender a empresa para outra companhia ou abrir o capital com uma oferta pública inicial (IPO). “Não há um plano tático de execução”, explicou Tom, “mas ninguém investiria em um negócio se não achasse que poderia se tornar grande o suficiente para abrir o capital ou valioso o suficiente para ser adquirido”. Então, ao fazer um investimento, temos um mapa do mercado e estamos pensando sobre quais *players* (Google ou Amazon ou Facebook, por exemplo) podem querer ingressar nesse setor, mas ainda não ingressaram. Estamos pensando, que se essa startup conseguir resultados rápido o suficiente, talvez ela seja adquirida para preencher essa lacuna.

Mas, vender a empresa ou abrir o capital são as únicas estratégias de saída viáveis do ponto de vista do capitalista de risco? E quanto a simplesmente ajudar a startup a se estabilizar, tornar-se um negócio viável, crescer modestamente e se tornar lucrativa? Esse poderia ser um bom resultado? “Na verdade, não”, disse Tom. “Os funcionários também não querem isso. Eles não querem ficar por aí sendo assalariados a vida toda, lutando. Todos vão querer liquidez, e eles podem continuar recebendo seus salários e ter liquidez ao mesmo tempo. Se alguém adquirir a empresa, eles ainda receberão um salário, mas todos receberão um valor significativo para comprar suas casas ou o que quiserem”. A ideia de

financiar uma startup para que ela se torne uma empresa independente e autosustentável sem ser adquirida ou abrir o capital não faz parte da mentalidade dos capitalistas de risco. Esse não é o tipo de resultado que qualquer capitalista de risco almejaria como objetivo. A ironia é que uma empresa precisa ter essa possibilidade para proporcionar uma saída bem-sucedida. “As melhores saídas ocorrem quando temos uma empresa que pode se sustentar sozinha, continuar crescendo e se tornar grande”, continuou Tom. Uma empresa será mais atraente como aquisição ou IPO se for vista como um negócio com potencial para se sustentar sozinho, mesmo que não consiga isso imediatamente. Isso é relevante, mas não como um fim em si mesmo. É algo importante porque permitirá que os capitalistas de risco saiam nas condições mais favoráveis.

Assim, o capitalista de risco investe com o objetivo de sair e multiplicar seu investimento. O múltiplo que o capitalista de risco pode esperar depende do estágio em que o investimento é feito, mas, se estamos investindo em um estágio inicial, como Tom costuma fazer, deveríamos estar buscando um múltiplo de pelo menos dez vezes esse investimento. O capital de risco sempre foi um negócio de acertos, onde retornos excepcionalmente altos de um pequeno número de investimentos compensam a maioria que fracassa, mas as probabilidades para os investimentos no Vale do Silício mudaram ao longo do tempo. Tom explicou da seguinte forma:

Quando entrei no negócio de capital de risco, a regra geral era que, se você fosse bom e fizesse dez investimentos de um milhão de dólares cada, poderia esperar que pelo menos dois deles fossem a zero, onde você perderia 100% do seu dinheiro. Você poderia esperar que seis deles se tornassem empresas “zumbis” (empresas ativas que não chegam a fechar, mas também nunca se tornam líquidas). E poderia esperar que dois rendessem dez vezes o valor do seu dinheiro. Então, segundo essa métrica, você investiria 10 milhões e ganharia 20, perderia dois com certeza e, o restante, você não teria como saber. Assim, talvez você conseguisse um retorno de 23, 24 milhões a cada 10 investidos, se tivesse sorte. Era assim no começo. O que aconteceu com os efeitos de rede é que, agora, se você fizer vinte ou mais investimentos e tiver muita sorte, um deles se tornará um Uber, Facebook ou algo parecido, com um retorno de cem ou mil vezes o valor do seu investimento, mas todo o restante dará em nada.

Assim, a regra de 80/20, típica de quando Tom começou como capitalista de risco no início dos anos 1990 (na qual 80% dos seus investimentos fracassavam e 20% rendiam dez vezes o valor investido), evoluiu para algo mais parecido com uma regra de 90/10 ou 95/5, ou até mesmo algo mais próximo

de 99/1, onde 90% ou mais dos investimentos fracassam (ou sobrevivem como empresas zumbis), mas o pequeno número que consegue sucesso rende múltiplos muito superiores a dez vezes. A cauda ficou mais longa. O fracasso é a norma – agora, mais do que nunca. Embora gostemos de focar nos sucessos, como Facebook, Twitter e Uber, a grande maioria das startups fracassa. “Você falha 90, talvez 99 por cento das vezes”, disse Tom. Ele tenta preparar seus empreendedores para a possibilidade, na verdade, a probabilidade, de fracasso. “Eu digo aos meus empreendedores que, se você vai falhar, deve falhar de forma espetacular. Você não quer ser apenas um fracasso que desaparece no desconhecido, onde ninguém sabe que você existe e ninguém sabe que você falhou. Se for para cair, caia em grande estilo. Você quer cair fazendo algo visionário e impactante. Se não funcionou, que seja, mas você tentou fazer algo fenomenal e sempre poderá se reerguer depois disso. As pessoas sempre dirão: “Sabe de uma coisa, eu me lembro desse cara. Ele estava tentando fazer algo que importava”.

SUPPLICANTES NA SAND HILL ROAD

Se olharmos o mundo a partir da perspectiva de Tom, não é surpreendente que algumas startups no setor editorial, ou em torno desse campo, tenham descoberto que suas tentativas de levantar financiamento de capital de risco no Vale do Silício resultaram em nada. Apresentar propostas para captação de recursos é um tipo particular de ritual social e ato de fala performativo que exige a capacidade de contar uma boa história que ressoe com as prioridades, preconceitos e preocupações dos guardiões do capital. Aqueles que estão apresentando propostas para captação de recursos são como suplicantes na corte do capital, e precisam ser capazes de contar uma história sobre si mesmos e sua empresa, sobre suas habilidades e objetivos, que convença aqueles que controlam os recursos a apoiá-los. Um capitalista de risco como Tom é abordado todos os dias com várias novas propostas, ele é bem conectado, e muitas pessoas o recomendam para empreendedores que buscam fundos; ele precisa decidir diariamente com quais propostas seguir adiante e quais deixar passar. Como ele faz isso? Na prática, ele usa os critérios embutidos em sua fórmula (WTT) para decidir se vale a pena levar uma proposta adiante. Somente se a proposta se alinhar com sua visão de mundo, sua maneira de pensar sobre o que é provável que tenha sucesso no estágio atual de desenvolvimento tecnológico e o que não é, ele considerará a proposta cuidadosamente. Nesse caso, “sucesso” significa ter alguma chance, por mais remota que seja, de se tornar uma daquelas empresas que terão uma saída com um retorno de dez vezes ou

mais. Se ele não conseguir ver nenhuma maneira de a proposta se alinhar com essas condições, ele a rejeitará.

Sob o ponto de vista de Tom, não é surpreendente que os fundadores da Inkshares tenham sido mal sucedidos em suas tentativas de levantar financiamento de capital de risco. A Inkshares é uma startup relacionada ao setor editorial, sediada em Oakland, do outro lado da baía de São Francisco, nos Estados Unidos. Ela começou como uma boa ideia, concebida por Thad Woodman, um jovem e inteligente formado em filosofia pelo Reed College, como uma empresa de publicação inovadora que se basearia em princípios de *crowdfunding*. Ela usaria uma plataforma de *crowdfunding* para levantar o capital necessário para financiar projetos de livros e, em seguida, forneceria os serviços de produção e distribuição de livros para que as obras financiadas fossem produzidas e distribuídas por meio da cadeia tradicional de abastecimento de livros. Ao usar uma plataforma de *crowdfunding*, a empresa poderia contornar os *gatekeepers* tradicionais da indústria editorial, como agentes e editores, e colocar a decisão sobre quais livros publicar nas mãos dos leitores – o público. Mas, ao contrário das plataformas de *crowdfunding* existentes como Indiegogo e Kickstarter, ela também forneceria a infraestrutura de publicação que a maioria dos autores precisa para que um livro seja produzido e distribuído. Era uma ideia inteligente: certamente, a empresa poderia levantar algum financiamento de capital de risco para colocar esse projeto inovador em funcionamento. Thad se mudou para São Francisco com outro cofundador, Larry Levitsky, para dar início ao negócio, e eles começaram a apresentar sua ideia aos capitalistas de risco.

Eles não chegaram a lugar nenhum. Eles fizeram a peregrinação a *Sand Hill Road* várias vezes e, em todas elas, bateram de frente com uma parede. “Foi brutal”, lembrou Jeremy, outro membro da equipe que havia se juntado à empresa como Diretor de tecnologia. “A ideia de publicar livros, e fazê-lo com cópias físicas de livros, era execrável de acordo com a tese dos capitalistas de risco do Vale do Silício.” O colega de Jeremy explicou: “Ninguém no Vale do Silício acredita em livros. Para eles, parecia algo super antiquado e, simplesmente... sem atrativos. Eles nos disseram algo como: “E se vocês fizessem isso sem usar livros?”. E nós pensamos, então o que estaríamos fazendo?” A resposta deles foi: “Apenas o *front end*”. Era como estar em um show. Você ficava sentado lá pensando: “O que diabos eles acabaram de nos dizer?”

Os diretores da Inkshares e os capitalistas de risco de *Sand Hill Road* enxergavam o mundo de pontos de vista muito diferentes, e seus encontros eram ocasiões em que as duas partes falavam sem se entender, como uma dança em que os movimentos dos dançarinos estavam completamente fora de sincronia. Embora as respostas dos capitalistas de risco no Vale do Silício parecessem

ridículas para Jeremy e seus colegas, elas não eram irracionais: estavam apenas enraizadas em um tipo diferente de racionalidade que fazia parte de uma visão de mundo e de um conjunto de crenças que Jeremy e seus colegas nem compartilhavam nem compreendiam. Para os capitalistas de risco que estavam procurando obter pelo menos dez vezes seu investimento inicial, a publicação de livros era desinteressante. A ideia de uma plataforma de *crowdfunding* para livros despertou sua curiosidade, mas, assim que perceberam que os livros seriam objetos físicos que teriam que ser produzidos, armazenados em depósitos e distribuídos por veículos através do país, seu interesse rapidamente desapareceu. O “*front end*” era atraente, mas não o “*back end*”. A indústria editorial é pequena, não é conectada e sem atritos, além de ser difícil de expandir. “Não há como essa indústria crescer dez vezes nos próximos dez anos”, disse Thad, resumindo o que foi dito a eles, de uma forma ou de outra, pelos capitalistas de risco. Tom nem sequer teria arranjado tempo para vê-los e ouvir sua proposta: Tom estava focado na quarta e quinta ondas, e a Inkshares não se encaixava em seu esquema. Outros 168 potenciais investidores concordaram com a visão de Tom de que a Inkshares não valia o investimento (“fomos rejeitados 168 vezes”). Apesar disso, os fundadores da Inkshares conseguiram arrecadar US\$ 350.000 de amigos e mais US\$ 860.000 de uma variedade de investidores-anjo – quantias pequenas para os padrões do Vale do Silício, mas suficientes para colocar sua startup em funcionamento. O fracasso em obter financiamento de capital de risco não foi fatal para a Inkshares. A empresa seguiu em frente sem ele, embora continue sendo um pequeno *player* de nicho no ecossistema editorial, sem o capital necessário para expandir o negócio de maneira significativa. Mas seu fracasso, apesar das repetidas tentativas, destaca o descompasso entre a perspectiva dos capitalistas de risco e a desses empreendedores, e demonstra o quão pouco esses empreendedores entendiam dos interesses e prioridades dos guardiões do capital.

Nem todas as startups relacionadas ao setor editorial tiveram experiências tão ruins ao tentar levantar financiamento de capital de risco. A Wattpad, por exemplo, conseguiu levantar várias rodadas de financiamento de capital de risco, e novamente podemos entender o porquê se olharmos o mundo a partir da perspectiva de Tom. A Wattpad é uma plataforma de mídia social baseada em Toronto, na qual leitores e escritores interagem em torno da atividade compartilhada de escrever e ler histórias. Foi uma ideia concebida por dois engenheiros de software especialistas em comunicação móvel. Eles a conceituaram como um YouTube para contar histórias, que ocorreria em um ambiente móvel, principalmente em telefones celulares. Eles levantaram um pequeno financiamento inicial em 2010, o suficiente para contratar alguns desenvolvedores e dar início ao processo, e

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em 2011 estavam prontos para apresentar sua proposta aos capitalistas de risco. Sua proposta era ao mesmo tempo simples e surpreendentemente ambiciosa:

Cerca de 5 bilhões de pessoas no mundo sabem ler e escrever, e mais de 3 bilhões de pessoas com acesso à internet. E ler e escrever estão entre as atividades humanas essenciais – entre elas estão assistir a vídeos, ouvir música, ver fotos e imagens, e também a palavra escrita. Trata-se de um mercado grande, imenso, e ninguém estava construindo redes para esse tipo de mídia. As pessoas dedicam redes para vídeos, como o YouTube, ou para fotos, como o Instagram. Ninguém estava trabalhando com a palavra escrita. Ninguém estava construindo uma rede voltada para a narrativa – nós éramos os únicos, e ainda somos. Por isso, queremos construir a maior rede global para leitura e escrita.

Era uma boa história e os capitalistas de risco a levaram a sério. Eles levantaram US\$ 3,5 milhões da Union Square Ventures em 2011 e mais US\$ 17 milhões da Khosla Ventures e de Jerry Yang, cofundador do Yahoo, no ano seguinte. Esses capitalistas de risco usaram suas próprias métricas, mas a proposta da Wattpad também teria ressoado com muitas das prioridades e preocupações de Tom. Ela, definitivamente, estava surfando a quarta onda: a Wattpad estava construindo uma interface de usuário baseada em rede. Eles identificaram uma categoria subdesenvolvida – escrita e leitura em um ambiente online – e usaram habilmente a experiência do YouTube para apresentar um argumento plausível para o potencial de crescimento. Era uma proposta ambiciosa (“queremos construir a maior rede global para leitura e escrita”) e, quem a ouvisse não veria razão para pensar que ela não poderia ser bem-sucedida. Tratava-se de uma boa equipe com um *background* técnico respeitável. Onda, *timing*, equipe – eles preenchiam todos os requisitos. Além disso, em 2015, a Wattpad havia aumentado sua base de usuários de 3 milhões (onde estava em 2011) para 45 milhões, ou seja, um aumento de quinze vezes em apenas quatro anos. Além de tudo, eles estavam conseguindo uma tração forte, crescendo rapidamente com o alto engajamento dos usuários. Era uma empresa W3T. Em 2014, eles levantaram mais US\$ 46 milhões em uma rodada de financiamento liderada pela OMERS Ventures, e em 2018, arrecadaram mais US\$ 51 milhões da Tencent Holdings e outros investidores. Essa era uma startup financiada por capital de risco em uma trajetória clara de crescimento. Do ponto de vista de Tom, a Wattpad era tudo o que se poderia querer. Portanto, não é surpreendente que, em 2021, a Wattpad tenha sido adquirida pelo conglomerado de internet coreano Naver, proprietário da plataforma de quadrinhos digitais Webtoon, em um acordo avaliado em mais de US\$ 600 milhões. Essa não foi uma saída na escala de um

YouTube ou um Instagram – foi mais como o clássico múltiplo de dez vezes do que um retorno de cem ou mil vezes. Ainda assim, foi uma saída bem-sucedida.

POR QUE A SCRIBD TEVE SUCESSO E A OYSTER FRACASSOU

Ver o mundo a partir da perspectiva de Tom também nos ajuda a entender por que duas startups relacionadas ao setor editorial fundadas quase exatamente ao mesmo tempo e que competiam entre si no mesmo setor tiveram destinos tão diferentes. A Scribd, sediada em São Francisco, e a Oyster, sediada em Nova York, eram ambas serviços de assinatura de e-books que pretendiam fazer pelo mercado editorial o que a Netflix fez pelos filmes e o Spotify fez pela música: oferecer aos assinantes acesso online a um grande volume de conteúdo atraente por uma modesta taxa de assinatura mensal. No entanto, ao contrário de outros serviços de assinatura nas indústrias de mídia, esses serviços de assinatura de e-books foram obrigados a usar um modelo de limite ou de pagamento por uso, no qual pagariam às editoras como se o livro tivesse sido comprado integralmente assim que o usuário ultrapassasse um determinado limiar; isso era fundamentalmente diferente do modelo de licenciamento antecipado usado pela Netflix ou do modelo de *pool* de *royalties* usado pelo Spotify⁸, e colocava os serviços de assinatura de e-books em uma posição muito mais desfavorável. Eles foram obrigados a usar esse modelo porque nenhuma grande editora estava disposta a licenciar seu conteúdo de e-book em quaisquer outros termos e, ao contrário das gravadoras, que haviam experimentado uma forte queda nas receitas no início dos anos 2000, as editoras estavam em uma posição forte para resistir à pressão dos serviços de assinatura de e-books e adotar um modelo diferente. Na prática, a forma como o modelo de limite ou pagamento por uso funcionava era que o provedor de serviços de assinatura pagaria ao editor 80% do preço do livro sempre que 20% do livro fosse lido: assim que o leitor alcançava o ponto de 20%, o pagamento era acionado. O próprio limite era variável, podendo mudar de editora para editora, mas 20% era a norma. Esse modelo fornecia atrativos óbvios para as editoras ao transferir o risco da editora para o provedor de serviços, garantindo que as editoras recebessem como se o livro tivesse sido vendido assim que um usuário lesse 20% da obra. Mas o modelo acarretava grandes riscos para o fornecedor de serviços porque presumia que os assinantes do serviço leriam, em média, poucos livros. Se todos ou a maioria dos assinantes lessem vários livros todos os meses, ou mesmo lessem apenas 20% de vários livros todos os meses, os pagamentos às editoras excederiam em muito as receitas geradas pela taxa de assinatura, que foi inicialmente fixada em US\$ 8,99 por mês para a Scribd e US\$ 9,95 para a Oyster. Em outras palavras,

⁸Sobre os modelos de assinatura usados por outros serviços de streaming, veja Herbert et al. (2019).

era o modelo de academia aplicado aos livros: alguns usuários assíduos vão à academia todos os dias, mas a maioria das pessoas que faz uma assinatura de academia raramente – ou nunca – vai. Ter uma assinatura de academia faz com que elas se sintam bem, mas a verdade é que elas não frequentam a academia com frequência. A viabilidade do modelo depende do fato de que a maioria dos assinantes são usuários infrequentes – frequentadores de academia em espírito, mas não em prática. Se a maioria dos seus assinantes forem fanáticos por manter a forma, você terá grandes problemas.

Tanto a Oyster quanto a Scribd lançaram seus serviços de assinatura de e-books no outono de 2013 (a Oyster em 5 de setembro e a Scribd três semanas depois). Ambas levantaram financiamento de capital de risco de grandes firmas de investimento, incluindo US\$ 14 milhões da Highland Capital Partners no caso da Oyster, e US\$ 9 milhões em uma rodada de financiamento liderada pela Charles River Ventures, seguida por US\$ 13 milhões em uma rodada liderada pela MLC Investments e SVB Capital no caso da Scribd. Oyster e Scribd estavam competindo diretamente na mesma categoria, e sabiam que seria difícil para ambas terem sucesso. Quando me encontrei com Eric Stromberg, o jovem CEO da Oyster, no loft em Midtown Manhattan que servia como sede da empresa em março de 2015, ele parecia confiante de que a Oyster estava em vantagem: a interface da plataforma estava sendo elogiada na imprensa de tecnologia por seu estilo e facilidade de uso, eles haviam assinado contrato com três das cinco grandes editoras no mercado, e acabavam de fechar um acordo para disponibilizar a série *Harry Potter* na plataforma. Eric estava confiante e a Oyster parecia ser uma startup promissora.

Mas, em 21 de setembro de 2015, apenas seis meses após nossa conversa e dois anos após seu lançamento, a Oyster anunciou que estava encerrando suas atividades. As informações foram de que Eric e alguns outros membros da equipe da Oyster estariam se juntando ao Google, que pagaria aos investidores entre US\$ 15 e 20 milhões pelo direito de contratar alguns dos funcionários da plataforma. Não se tratava de uma aquisição, mas sim uma “*acquire*”, onde o Google compraria a propriedade intelectual da Oyster e contrataria parte de sua equipe, que seria integrada ao negócio do Google (Kafka & Bergen, 2015). Esse não foi o tipo de saída que permitiu aos investidores da Oyster obter um múltiplo de dez vezes o valor do investimento inicial, muito menos cem ou mil vezes; foi uma liquidação imediata que permitiu que eles saíssem do negócio e minimizassem suas perdas.

Então, o que deu errado? Por que uma startup que parecia destinada ao sucesso de repente se encontra em uma trajetória descendente e irreversível? Quando ouvi a notícia de que a Oyster estava encerrando suas atividades, pensei

imediatamente em uma razão: certamente havia sido o modelo de limite ou pagamento por uso que afundou a empresa. Ao concordar em pagar às editoras 80% do preço do livro sempre que 20% fossem lidos, a Oyster se vinculou a um modelo de negócios que a obrigaria a pagar mais às editoras do que conseguiria arrecadar em taxas de assinatura, drenando suas reservas de caixa e destruindo qualquer esperança de se tornar lucrativa – essa parecia ser a explicação mais óbvia. Mas havia um problema óbvio com essa explicação: A Scribd estava usando o mesmo modelo e ainda estava funcionando, de fato, estava crescendo em um ritmo acelerado. Se um modelo não lucrativo de assinatura pudesse explicar o fim da empresa, por que a Oyster afundou enquanto a Scribd continuava a crescer? E, se não fosse o modelo de assinatura, como poderíamos explicar por que a Scribd teve sucesso e a Oyster fracassou?

Foi só quando eu estava entrevistando Tom seis meses depois e observando o mundo das startups sob o ponto de vista dele que percebi por que minha teoria inicial estava errada, e descobri qual havia sido o verdadeiro problema da Oyster. A Oyster não acabou por causa do modelo de pagamento por uso. Na verdade, a empresa era lucrativa – talvez não enormemente, mas até certo ponto. A Oyster fracassou porque o custo de aquisição de novos clientes estava desalinhado em relação ao valor vitalício desses clientes, e foi por isso que seus financiadores de capital de risco decidiram abandonar o negócio. Tom deixou isso perfeitamente claro: do ponto de vista dos capitalistas de risco, quando se trata de investir mais dinheiro em uma startup que já está em andamento, é preciso garantir que o valor vitalício de um cliente seja muito maior do que o custo para adquiri-lo, muitas vezes maior do que custou para adquiri-lo. Essa é a qualificação relevante para a tração – o “+” em tração+.

Investidores em um negócio de assinatura como a Oyster geralmente procuram uma proporção de 1:3 ou 1:4 entre o custo por aquisição (Cost per Acquisition, CPA) de um cliente e o valor vitalício (Lifetime Value, LTV) desse cliente, o que significa que para cada dólar gasto na aquisição de um novo assinante, é preciso gerar três ou quatro dólares de valor vitalício. A Oyster estava, na verdade, obtendo um pequeno lucro bruto por usuário: para cada US\$ 10 que recebia em taxas de assinatura, cerca de US\$ 8 eram pagos às editoras, deixando um pequeno excedente de cerca de US\$ 2. Mas a Oyster estava gastando muito dinheiro tentando aumentar sua base e adquirir novos assinantes. Ela estava investindo quantias substanciais em anúncios online, principalmente no Facebook e no Google. O resultado foi que a proporção de CPA para LTV estava longe dos esperados 1:3 ou 1:4 – na verdade, era ligeiramente negativa. Nos termos de Tom, a Oyster era um negócio de margem bruta negativa: custava mais para entregar o serviço do que conseguiria recuperar por cliente. Se

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a Oyster tivesse sido capaz de demonstrar que estava expandindo sua base de assinantes a um ritmo aceitável e com uma proporção de CPA para LTV alinhada com as expectativas da indústria, poderia ter encontrado investidores dispostos a participar de outra rodada de financiamento. No final das contas, não foi possível arrecadar mais fundos e não estava em condições financeiras de continuar sem outra rodada de investimento. Daí o encerramento.

Isso explica não apenas por que a Oyster fracassou, mas também porque a Scribd sobreviveu e, de fato, prosperou. Antes de a Scribd começar a oferecer seu serviço de assinatura de e-books no outono de 2013, ela já existia há vários anos como um negócio de documentos; por isso, ela já tinha uma fonte de receita preexistente e, o mais importante, já mantinha uma base significativa de usuários existente com cerca de 150 milhões de visitantes mensais. Então, quando decidiu lançar um serviço de assinatura de e-books, ela pôde comercializar esse novo serviço diretamente para sua base de usuários existente. Custou muito pouco para a Scribd adquirir cada novo assinante porque ela podia concentrar seus esforços em converter uma fração de seus usuários e visitantes existentes em assinantes pagantes. A Oyster, por outro lado, estava usando publicidade paga para alcançar e adquirir novos assinantes, e isso estava custando entre US\$ 40 e US\$ 50 para adquirir cada novo assinante. A maioria dos serviços de assinatura bem-sucedidos conta com algo que lhes dá uma vantagem inicial: A Netflix fez acordos com fabricantes de eletrônicos para colocar cupons de adesão gratuita em aparelhos de DVD, e fez um contrato com o Walmart que direcionava os clientes da rede de lojas para a Netflix. Por sua vez, o Spotify fez um acordo com o Facebook, que lhe permitiu alcançar milhões de usuários potenciais, enquanto a Scribd já tinha seu negócio de documentos existente. A Oyster estava começando do zero. Quando analisamos essas startups do ponto de vista de um capitalista de risco, vemos que foi o alto custo de aquisição da Oyster e o baixo custo de aquisição da Scribd que afundaram a primeira e permitiram que a segunda sobrevivesse e prosperasse. Tom capturou isso de maneira muito apropriada com uma metáfora de surfe: “A Oyster estava gastando muito dinheiro tentando nadar contra a corrente da onda, enquanto a Scribd já tinha milhões de clientes para alavancar”.

CONCLUSÃO

Neste artigo, desenvolvi uma abordagem particular para a inovação tecnológica e busquei demonstrar seu valor e eficácia em relação a um estudo de caso específico: o financiamento de startups de tecnologia que emergem dentro ou em torno do mercado editorial. Muitas vezes, estudos sobre inovação tecnológica

focam as tecnologias em si, enfatizando suas propriedades técnicas e possibilidades. No entanto, a inovação tecnológica sempre ocorre em um contexto social mais amplo e, se quisermos entender quais tecnologias têm sucesso e quais fracassam, quais acabam se tornando características constitutivas de nossos mundos sociais e quais caem no esquecimento, precisamos ampliar nossa perspectiva e considerar aqueles aspectos do contexto social que sustentam e possibilitam o processo de inovação tecnológica. Busquei fazer isso ao desenvolver uma versão da teoria dos campos que enfatiza quatro componentes principais: campos, tecnologias, organizações e indivíduos. Tecnologias são indiscutivelmente importantes, mas são apenas um elemento em um conjunto de fatores que moldam o processo de inovação tecnológica. Ao estudar a inovação tecnológica a partir dessa perspectiva, a examinamos como um conjunto de atividades realizadas por indivíduos e organizações específicas situadas em campos particulares, utilizando os recursos disponíveis para perseguir determinados objetivos; em outras palavras, como um conjunto de atividades inevitavelmente envoltas nas realidades da motivação humana, das relações sociais e do poder.

Entre os recursos particularmente importantes para a inovação tecnológica está o capital financeiro. Sem ele, é muito difícil para indivíduos transformarem ideias, por melhores que sejam, em tecnologias que possam ser desenvolvidas, testadas, ampliadas e implementadas. Se a inovação ocorre dentro de uma organização existente, então o capital financeiro necessário para transformar ideias em realidades pode ser fornecido pela organização como parte de sua P&D. Mas como um empreendedor com uma boa ideia consegue o financiamento necessário para lançar uma startup que possa ter alguma chance de sobreviver, alguma chance de transformar a ideia em uma realidade sustentável? E, assumindo que ele ou ela seja bem-sucedido em conseguir o financiamento, como esse financiamento molda o processo de inovação e a organização que o sustenta?

Existem várias fontes de financiamento disponíveis para empreendedores, mas o capital de risco desempenha um papel fundamental para aqueles que trabalham no universo da tecnologia e TI. Do ponto de vista da teoria dos campos, um empreendedor que está tentando obter financiamento é um *player* que persegue um objetivo específico dentro de um campo particular em relação a outros *players*, e, nesse cenário, são esses outros *players* – os capitalistas de risco – que têm o poder de decidir se os fundos devem ser concedidos e, em caso afirmativo, sob quais condições. Apresentar uma proposta de captação de recursos é um tipo específico de ritual social ou jogo em que os empreendedores precisam ser capazes de contar uma boa história sobre o que querem fazer e por que é uma boa ideia, e essa história precisa ser contada de uma maneira que seja suficientemente persuasiva aos olhos dos guardiões do capital, para que esses

guardiões decidam apoiá-los. Como os empreendedores podem fazer isso se não sabem o que os capitalistas de risco estão procurando? Como eles sabem como estruturar sua proposta de forma que ressoe com as prioridades, preconceitos e interesses dos capitalistas de risco, se não sabem quais são essas prioridades, preconceitos e interesses? Na prática, muitos empreendedores fracassam nesse cenário. Eles não veem o mundo do ponto de vista dos capitalistas de risco, e não sabem quais princípios e critérios os capitalistas de risco estão usando para tomar suas decisões de financiamento, e, em parte como resultado disso, suas propostas falham. Suas ideias podem nunca sair do papel – não porque sejam intrinsecamente ruins, mas simplesmente porque os empreendedores que buscam desenvolvê-las não entendem as regras do jogo de captação de recursos.

Com a ajuda de Tom, um membro bem estabelecido da comunidade de capital de risco do Vale do Silício, reconstruí alguns dos princípios e prioridades que moldam a visão de mundo de um típico capitalista de risco especializado no financiamento de startups de tecnologia. Mostrei que, embora as decisões individuais sejam sempre influenciadas por uma variedade de fatores circunstanciais, os princípios usados por Tom para decidir se deve apoiar uma startup com capital são surpreendentemente simples: *onda*, *timing*, *equipe*, ou *WTT*, na sigla em inglês. E, quando se trata de decidir se deve investir mais dinheiro em uma startup que já está em andamento, Tom adiciona um quarto fator: *tração*, ou seja, crescimento mais engajamento, especialmente quando o crescimento é tal que o valor vitalício do cliente é muito maior do que o custo de aquisição desse cliente, o que chamei de *tração+*.

Ao reconstruir os princípios e prioridades dos guardiões do capital, podemos desenvolver um conjunto poderoso de ferramentas explicativas que podem ser usadas para ilustrar, entre outras coisas, por que algumas startups conseguem financiamento de capital de risco e alcançam o sucesso, enquanto outras não chegam a lugar nenhum. A Wattpad teve sucesso em suas atividades de captação de recursos porque, nas interações sociais cruciais onde as decisões de financiamento estavam sendo consideradas, seus fundadores contaram uma história convincente sobre o que estavam fazendo e o que pretendiam alcançar, uma história que ressoou muito bem com os princípios e prioridades dos capitalistas de risco; além disso, quando os fundadores precisaram embarcar em outra rodada de financiamento, eles também tinham evidências sólidas de crescimento e tração para apoiar seu argumento. O desenvolvimento da Wattpad, desde sua proposta inicial em 2011 até sua aquisição pela Naver uma década depois, foi uma ilustração quase perfeita da trajetória de investimento para saída que os capitalistas de risco geralmente procuram (mesmo que possam desejar um múltiplo mais expressivo na saída). Por outro lado, quando os fundadores da

Inkshares fizeram sua peregrinação a *Sand Hill Road*, sua proposta foi barrada por muros intransponíveis. Eles tinham uma boa ideia: um plano inovador para uma plataforma de *crowdfunding* para livros, algo que ninguém mais havia desenvolvido dessa forma; mas sua proposta foi completamente incompatível com os princípios e prioridades dos capitalistas de risco. Todos os capitalistas de risco que eles abordaram recusaram suas propostas, um resultado que eles não esperavam de forma alguma. Eles simplesmente não tinham ideia de que sua tentativa de levantar fundos seria tão inútil e iniciaram suas interações com os capitalistas de risco sem um entendimento real das regras pelas quais o jogo de captação de recursos era jogado.

Levar em consideração os princípios e prioridades dos capitalistas de risco também pode nos ajudar a explicar por que algumas startups conseguem garantir novas rodadas de financiamento e continuam a prosperar, enquanto outras veem suas vidas interrompidas precocemente. Se quisermos explicar por que a Oyster e a Scribd – duas startups muito semelhantes, competindo no mesmo mercado – tiveram destinos tão diferentes, nunca poderíamos explicar isso apenas com base em suas tecnologias: o consenso geral era que a Oyster tinha a melhor tecnologia, e sua plataforma era amplamente elogiada por sua interface elegante e fácil de usar. Também não poderíamos explicar isso invocando o modelo de assinatura por uso, que colocava a maior parte do risco sobre o provedor de serviços, porque tanto a Oyster quanto a Scribd usavam o mesmo modelo. Somente podemos explicar por que a Scribd teve sucesso e a Oyster fracassou levando em consideração os princípios e prioridades dos capitalistas de risco que estavam financiando essas organizações: eles cortaram o financiamento da Oyster porque o custo de aquisição de novos clientes era muito alto em relação ao valor vitalício desses clientes e, portanto, ela falhou no teste de tração+. Por outro lado, para a Scribd, custava muito pouco adquirir cada novo cliente porque ela já tinha uma grande base de usuários existente e podia concentrar seus esforços em converter alguns desses usuários existentes em assinantes pagantes, então a proporção de CPA para LTV estava muito mais alinhada com as expectativas da indústria.

Compreender os interesses e prioridades dos capitalistas de risco também pode nos ajudar a explicar por que as práticas de negócios das startups financiadas por capital de risco são tão diferentes das práticas das empresas tradicionais. Quando as startups garantem financiamento de capital de risco, o capital vem com condições: o capital de risco tem condições e consequências. As startups acabam atreladas aos interesses e prioridades dos capitalistas de risco que as financiam, e suas trajetórias e sobrevivência como negócios são moldadas por esses interesses e prioridades. Para os capitalistas de risco que investiram em

uma startup, existem apenas duas estratégias de saída desejáveis: ou o negócio é vendido para outra empresa ou abre capital com um IPO, e em ambos os casos o capitalista de risco busca alcançar um múltiplo de dez vezes ou mais sobre o valor do investimento. Isso significa que, do ponto de vista do capitalista de risco, o desenvolvimento de um negócio que eles estão financiando precisa ser direcionado para uma estratégia de saída adequada, o que implica crescimento rápido e tração, especialmente o tipo de tração em que o valor vitalício do cliente é muito maior do que o custo de adquiri-lo. As startups se encontram presas em um pacto faustiano com seus financiadores de capital de risco. Elas são impulsionadas por um caminho de desenvolvimento que as obriga a focar em crescimento rápido acima de tudo, direcionado para uma saída bem-sucedida em termos que priorizam os interesses dos capitalistas de risco. As condições associadas ao capital de risco explicam por que as práticas de negócios das startups financiadas por capitalistas de risco são tão diferentes das práticas de negócios da maioria das empresas tradicionais e por que elas são capazes e estão dispostas a queimar tanto dinheiro tão rapidamente, e por que prestam tão pouca atenção a preocupações empresariais tradicionais, como geração de receita e lucratividade. Mas essas condições também destacam a precariedade de muitas startups e como elas são tão vulneráveis ao colapso: as coisas podem estar bem enquanto os fundos estão fluindo, mas se uma startup não estiver crescendo suficientemente rápido e alcançando o tipo de tração esperado, o fluxo de caixa pode ser cortado muito rapidamente e, ao contrário de um negócio tradicional com suas próprias fontes de receita, ela geralmente terá pouco para se sustentar.

Para os empreendedores que buscam inovar no Vale do Silício e em outras regiões de alta tecnologia, garantir financiamento de capital de risco é uma parte atraente, quase obrigatória, da cultura de startups. Adquirir instalações e contratar funcionários (especialmente programadores altamente qualificados e outros profissionais técnicos) é um negócio caro, e uma grande injeção de capital de risco pode fornecer a uma startup a liquidez necessária para acelerar o processo de desenvolvimento. Ao permitir que um empreendedor construa uma organização rapidamente e desenvolva e implemente novas tecnologias em velocidade e escala, o capital de risco pode ser um grande impulsionador da inovação tecnológica – e sem uma organização para sustentá-lo e apoiá-lo, o processo de inovação pode nem sequer sair do papel. No entanto, as condições associadas ao capital de risco têm consequências significativas para o processo de inovação. Elas estabelecem um caminho de desenvolvimento para as startups que é, ao mesmo tempo, constrangedor e habilitador, prendendo-as a uma trajetória de desenvolvimento sobre a qual os fundadores ou empreendedores podem ter muito pouco controle. O interesse dos capitalistas de risco

é ver a empresa crescer o mais rápido possível, ganhar tração e se tornar a líder dominante no mercado: desenvolver-se dessa forma maximizará as chances de a empresa alcançar o objetivo final dos capitalistas de risco, que é sair do negócio com um retorno de dez vezes ou mais. Para os empreendedores que estão dispostos a alinhar seus objetivos com os interesses e metas dos capitalistas de risco e aceitar os riscos envolvidos, incluindo ter seu fluxo de recursos cortado repentinamente, as condições associadas ao capital de risco podem ser um preço aceitável a pagar pelos benefícios que essas startups recebem. Mas para outras startups, especialmente aquelas que estão trabalhando em tecnologias ou outros projetos que provavelmente não alcançarão o tipo de crescimento rápido e tração que os capitalistas de risco geralmente buscam, pode ser melhor a longo prazo se conseguirem se estabelecer e sobreviver sem o apoio dos capitalistas de risco, contando com outras fontes de financiamento que não estejam tão orientadas para o conceito de saída bem-sucedida dos capitalistas de risco e focando mais na geração de fluxos de receita que lhes permitam se tornar lucrativas e se sustentarem como negócios independentes. Elas não se beneficiarão das grandes injeções de capital financeiro desfrutadas pelas startups financiadas por capitalistas de risco, mas também estarão menos restritas pelos interesses e prioridades dos capitalistas de risco; terão mais liberdade para definir seus próprios objetivos e inovar da maneira que considerarem adequada e, a longo prazo, poderão ter mais controle sobre seu próprio destino. ■

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The Dramaturgy of Flusser

A Dramaturgia de Flusser

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ABSTRACT

This study examines *The History of the Devil* and analyzes how the text unfolds as a dramatic scene, depicting a peculiar connection with reality, seemingly orchestrated by sin under the guidance of the devil. This study is structured into three sections titled “Ways of Thinking,” “Ways of Saying,” and “Ways of Understanding.” It aims to analyze how Flusser employs analogies and allegories to establish a connection between fiction and the contemporary world in its exercises of power and trivialization of all states of exception.

Keywords: Dramaturgy, analogy, allegory, communication, politics

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RESUMO

Este trabalho está voltado para o estudo de *A História do Diabo* e observa que o texto se desenvolve como cena dramática, em estranha relação com a realidade, supostamente encenada pelo pecado sob a direção do diabo. O artigo divide-se em três partes nomeadas como: Formas de Pensar, Formas de Dizer e Formas de Entender, e tem em vista estudar o modo como Flusser utiliza analogias e alegorias para aproximar a ficção da obra e o próprio contemporâneo nos seus exercícios de poder e de banalização de todos os estados de exceção.

Palavras-chave: Dramaturgia, analogia, alegoria, comunicação, política



WAYS OF THINKING

The devil created the heavens to create the earth. And he created Earth, to create life. He created life, to create humanity. He created humanity, to create the human spirit; words: the Earth is the stage for sin. (Flusser, 2005, p. 45)

So, let us muster all our courage as we raise the curtain on the scene of life, the scene in which our personal drama unfolds. (Flusser, 2005, p. 52)

Nothing further needs to be added to these brief notes... other than my opinion on the issue at hand: I believe that the contemporary world can be replicated, even in the theater, provided it is perceived as a world susceptible to change. (Brecht, 1978, p. 7)

MANY CLAIM THAT we will not be able to transcend our time or its scenic structure without substantial changes. However, our maladies are not that of health; but of the soul, which requires that we present ourselves to the world in a different manner. Overcoming the illness of the soul requires producing reflections, or by any other name, something which means knowledge through experience: in this sense, every illness is a category of analysis. It requires, for example, surpassing the mere description and lack of commitment to an author's work. This demands overcoming the monograph on an author, which is solely focused on their ideas and suggestions. In order to transcend the author, it is necessary to explore the work and its way of production. This can be a gruesome task whereby, in dialogue, but not without confrontation, the author questions the reader and makes them pause to review or reevaluate what seems routine and ordinary. All illness supposes displacement of the seemingly ordinary, a disruption in the routine or a need to stop, in order to observe the before and after; every illness implies a before and an after, a conference of time in time. Temporality is inherent to every illness.

However, I recommend prudence in this task. To this end, I endeavor to comprehend the ideas of Flusser by focusing on a specific piece of his writing, which potentially encapsulates the essence of his entire body of work. It is *The History of the Devil*, studied, not only in terms of its exclusive ways of knowing how to think, say and understand. Conversely, in the course of this study, I am confronted with passages from *Dúvida* (Doubt) and a text from a conference entitled *Artificio, Artefato, Artimanha* (Artifice, Artifact, Gambit).

In *The History of the Devil*, the essential concept of the text is the history set in motion by the devil; just as science is through doubt; and life, by the

way of thinking. Thinking is a perilous endeavor which requires audacity, an adventurous spirit and, above all, a sense of humor. In a joyful manner, Flusser introduces us to his fundamental concept of history, accompanied by other equally intriguing concepts: science; life; philosophy, as a method contemplating the need to dominate the world; art, as a surface abstracted from volume, or the other technical surface that replaces the volumetric weight of three-dimensional space, replacing it with the technical two-dimensional one, comprised of programmed surfaces marked by points and numbers. Among all these concepts, the most dangerous is philosophy, which posits it is possible to dominate life through the illusion of intellectual creation. However, these elaborations are nothing more than concepts, often detached from the actual learning experience.

Nevertheless, these findings are abstract concepts that occupy Flusser's reflections. Deleuze & Guattari (1992, p. 25) argue that concepts are abstractions, agitated by unconventional actions intended for giving physical form to intellectual labor. In doing so, they convert it into a scene that, similar to theatrical fiction, transcends the abstraction and provides a framework for comprehending history, life, art, technique, and philosophy. The two aforementioned philosophers offer insights into Flusser's thought and, most importantly, his methodology. Flusser's essays subtly conceal his fear or contempt for academia and, to some extent, philosophy. He presents philosophy as a provocative act, a fictional performance which offers an alternative perspective on reality. This perspective may come from someone detached from the constraints of time, or one overwhelmed by an excessive amount of time. This fictional approach disrupts the monotonous rhythm of everyday life, mirroring our attempts to make it possible to engage with the contemporary world.

Thus, *The History of the Devil* is a provocative piece which invites us to revisit the concept of history that consistently emerges in the author's work, albeit with fresh connotations. To fully grasp the contents of *The History of the Devil*, one must comprehend Flusser's approach to constructing the concept of history, as well as his method for transcending abstraction. This understanding is crucial to reexamine history in its concrete form and implications. It is imperative to comprehend the process by which a thought is translated into action, rendering it tangible and capable of being present and actively developed. It is necessary to understand how history transforms into a fictitious character that may be believed, and how such character, laden with ideological significance, masquerades as a mode of thinking. The author's use of irony and cheerfulness in his writing allows him to playfully engage with philosophy, while evading the hermetic nature of the concept. It is conceivable that Flusser is attempting to play the

role of a philosopher; however, he acquired this skill by engaging in a fictional game with the devil, his significant collaborator.

This playful approach to thinking eliminates the temptation of contemplating the tone of the narrative presented in *The History of the Devil*; rather, it suffices to understand the fundamental basis of the fictional story crafted by the devil, as seen by Flusser. Hence, the cardinal premise of the game is that we can either have fiction taken inside out, as a narrative that resembles reality, or we can have reality disguised as fiction. This prompts us to consider philosophy from a fictitious standpoint, and we come to the realization that the devil is a character (Deleuze & Guattari, 1992, p. 81) who manipulates concepts. The devil is an angel who toys with the terminology used by philosophers. Consequently, his initial historical action involves attempting to deconstruct concepts.

The History of the Devil comprises a set of concepts that are neither self-explanatory nor self-referential. These notions do not present themselves to us directly; rather, we must carefully consider the specific elements that constitute them as fictional concepts, yet presented as if they were real. Flusser proposes a philosophical perspective that can be understood by examining its causes and consequences. Nevertheless, this is not the position chosen by this author. In order to transcend this cause-and-effect linearity, it is imperative to learn, with Flusser, how to navigate transversal paths that stem from the arts of the devil, while encompassing historical writing. The central argument of this passage is referred to as *sin*. The devil and sins serve as characters that dramatize the history and are featured in a chapter written by Flusser, the dramaturgist.

History, as a concept, is fundamentally inquiry. It requires a response, yet its solution can be found in the interplay of ideas and concepts. Concepts interact and the devil hones and refines our play, enabling us to joyfully engage with concepts. *The History of the Devil* teaches us to play with history; the initial lesson consists of learning to manipulate concepts.

Once formulated, concepts are self-contained and hermetic, therefore, they present themselves as enigmas to be deciphered. This process of unraveling them becomes another aspect of the endeavor we are encouraged to undertake, until we realize that we can learn to construct concepts and engage in playful exploration with them. However, this can occasionally lead to confusion and misunderstandings, as concepts are not inherently peaceful and orderly. On the contrary, they tend to be contentious and thought-provoking, as they are pandemic and challenging. *The History of the Devil* jests with concepts which involve all the principles created and explored by Flusser, and enumerating, adopting and employing such notions is not an easy task. Let us examine the concepts created and selected by Flusser, but which were inspired by the devil.

The core concept is that of history, which, being linear, is subjugated by time: “I will refer to anything that strives to transcend time as divine influence. I will call diabolical influence anything that contributes to the preservation of the world in time” (Flusser, 2005, p. 23)

This exercise examines the opposition between the historical concept of linear time and the idea of eternity as the transcendence of time. It also highlights the opposition between the temporal nature of the devil and the eternal nature of God. These oppositions establish a parameter that distinguishes and defines different concepts, providing the domain of ideas its vital axis: polarization, which will serve as the foundation of the cultural division of time into before and after. Time and eternity are thus separated, linear history and the story that is told, man and beast, God and the devil.

The first lesson in this game laid out by Flusser involves closely examining the disconnection that condemned Adam and Eve to sin. This condemnation implies that sin influences reasoning, dictated by a historical perspective that associates guilt with sin in the Western world. Despite not being academic in nature, Flusser explores a vital concept that is relevant to the Western world, which is heavily influenced by linear time. Through this exploration, the author assumes his philosophical stance. However, due to his aversion to academia, he playfully engages in this practice, thus granting himself the freedom to convert history into fiction, a setting devoid of temporal or spatial constraints. This is the game Flusser learns from the devil, and both of them educate us on how to engage in sinful activities.

In the game with linear history, traditional sins, counted as seven, change names:

Pride is self-awareness, Avarice is economy. Lust is the innate drive/affirmation of life. Gluttony is an improvement in the standard of living, Envy is the pursuit of social justice and political freedom, Anger is the refusal to accept the limitations imposed to human volition; therefore, dignity. Sloth or sadness is the stage reached by the serene contemplation of philosophy. (Flusser, 2005, p. 25)

This is the first lesson taught by the devil; that changing a name means translating what seems obscure and abstract. By changing the name meaning is trivialized and ultimately becomes common and, in this simplified iteration; states everything, without conceptualizing anything. Changing a name renders sin trivial and, as such, its acceptance is irrelevant. When translated, sin is devoid of guilt and transcends the original sin of Adam and Eve, as well as the deadly sins that are analogous to it. Translating, seen as altering names,

results in the transformation of sin into routine and diminishes its abstract and conceptual significance. This process, known as transduction, reverses the intended meaning of the translated term and renders the original meaning trivial. Moreover, altering a name entails altering historic circumstances, resulting in the conversion of real life into a work of fiction which, through the act of recording history, turns it into a dramatic spectacle. It portrays sin as a trivialized counterpart of the devil. Therefore, Flusser is a dramaturgist who transforms sin into a matrix concept, playing a crucial role in shaping the history of the west, a history authored by the devil.

In this sense, Flusser challenges us to deal with concepts, yet he also leads us to believe that we are actively involved with history, time, God and the devil. We learn the diabolical art of being quasi-gods and come to believe that we are the creators of nature, technology, art, history and steer the destiny of the world. This suggests that humans are free from sin, as we possess the ability to create like deities. This is the first lesson of the devil, teaching us how to manipulate concepts, through wickedness. For the devil, sin is the main concept and path of history.

WAYS OF SAYING

When translating, one might consider that the devil is not as hideous as often believed. In fact, the devil can be seen as similar to his counterpart in the process of creating nature, the planet, and humanity. The devil can be seen as similar to God in that both are creators. However, the devil's approach to creation is characterized by making it seem trivial and comical, deviating from its historical significance. The devil is portrayed as the force that operates within the phenomenal world to sustain it; and prevent it from dissolution and being saved; "from the perspective of the pure Being, the "divine" is a creative force while the "devil" represents annihilation. (Flusser, 2005, p. 23)

Amidst this movement of ideas, Flusser's inclination towards a theological perspective that aligns closely with scholasticism becomes evident. However, there is a distinction in Flusser's view, as he sees all theology as an ironic expression of the belief in absolute certainty. Consequently, theology is open to playful interpretations and may even entertain the notion that the relationship between God and the devil can be understood as a narrative that spans Western history, starting from prehistory with Adam and Eve, and culminating in the concept of original sin and guilt.

The devil and his counterpart are characters in a scene who perform dramatically in roles that are mistaken for sins, as they are false. However, these

roles are merely part of the theatrical performance and should not be mistaken for actual misdeeds: 'ordered, the sins portrayed on stage serve as a platform for depicting diabolical activities.' (Flusser, 2005, p. 45). In this dramatic scene, we find ourselves immersed in the territory of make-believe, and we embark in a journey to hell. This journey is constructed through various expressions that not only convey meaning, but also serve as actions in themselves. The devil communicates and acts.

Nevertheless, this movement is perplexing and conveys no explicit message, yet implies a multitude of possibilities. This concept of expressing ideas through suggestions is based on the reciprocal relationship between divine creation and that of the devil: these two actions appear to be intertwined, and there is no evidence to suggest any distinct differences. In other words, both God and the devil possess the power of creation, which serves as a defining characteristic for both entities. The common bond between the two main characters resides in their shared capacity to create things that possess an indistinguishable resemblance. However, when it comes to their purpose, there is a distinct contrast between these two identities. Divine creation involves fashioning humanity in the image and likeness of divine perfection (Gên 1,26-28). On the other hand, the devil, in the form of a serpent, does not directly create but rather incites wrongdoing, despite God's warnings to his creatures (Gên 1,14-18). The devil creates sin which, as an anathema, accompanies men. If we consider that God's intention in creating man was to make him in his image and likeness, it might be said that the devil, in turn, introduced sin as a deliberate creation with the ability to corrupt humanity, when man populated the earth with his corporations.

This narrative adherence places *The History of the Devil* and the author on the Judeo-Christian theology axis, which constitutes a theme developed by one of the most cultivated cognitive manifestations in the west scholasticism. Through the transversality of the dramatic scene, the author explores the path that he strongly wishes to avoid, namely philosophy. Disguised in ways of saying, philosophy seems to become silent or, at most, translates as the signature of an inference that presents itself as fiction and, therefore, constitutes a mask of the reflective plane, but gives it communicative immanence and peculiar consistency. It is this mask that allows the author to assert and, jokingly, provoke the reader: *My dear, you didn't understand anything!* (Flusser, 2005, p. 29).

Therefore, it is evident that the magic of that dramatic strategy lies in the uncovering an identity that constitutes both an attribute of the dramatic action developed and demonstrates that the ability to create is shared by both the devil and God, while also emphasizing a vector that distinguishes the two characters. Polarization is the result of the establishment of dichotomies,

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which restricts identity to the logical nature of what is opposed and must be depolarized in order to be understood. Tension then arises between sin and virtue, between God and the devil, good and evil, right and wrong, time and space, between the knowledge of men and history. Identity is unique; however, when confronted with constraints or polarizations it facilitates the emergence of what is distinctive: difference.

Conflict and antagonism arise between God and the devil as a result of indecision that reduces difference to opposition. Man does not accept consensus, which, when interpreted as nonsense, demonstrates the most eloquent aspect of man's conciliatory action. In this context, the devil is unaware of the distinction and substitutes it with antagonism in order to attain the sole feasible redemption: the formation of an alternative construct that enables us to entertain the notion of disregarding sin. In this manner, sin is portrayed as being redeemed, as it manifests as an ordeal or a pedagogical wickedness, instructing us about the potential of attaining, once more, the paradise that, constructed by advancement, emerges as a counterforce to sin. Man does not realize that true learning can only occur through experiences that seem challenging or different from a comfortable and perpetually content life. Another misconception propagated by the devil is the belief that it is feasible to recreate a modern version of the lost paradise on earth by using technology:

Throughout history, there have been continuous efforts to surpass binary logic. However, the challenge of these endeavors may have stemmed from the need to conceive a novel kind of reasoning that may systematically supersede the traditional binary logic in its role of regulating cognition. Nevertheless, the analogy method diverges. It disrupts logical dichotomies at their external and paralyzing points of variation, not to create a superior synthesis, but to convert them into a dynamic field of opposing forces, where they lose their distinct identities. The principle of excluded middle, which encompasses the fundamental principles of bivalent logic centered on identity and non-contradiction is embraced¹. (Agamben, 2004, p. XVII)

Seeming to transcend the previous polarity between God and the devil, the analogy presents another recognition of history that, transversal to the oppositions generated by identity dichotomies, enables us to identify the ambivalence of what is undeniably contradictory and undecidable between the dichotomous poles previously observed:

However, this indifference is creative and fruitful, as it neutralizes dichotomies, thereby creating a path, bridging the gap between the two extremes. It serves as a

¹ Original: "Tentativi di superare la logica binaria sono stati fatti in ogni época . . . Ma forse il vizio di questi tentativi era di voler pensare una nuova logica, che doveva sostituire punto per punto la vecchia logica binaria nella sua funzione di governo della conoscenza. La strategia dell' anaalogia è affatto diversa. Essa interviene nelle dicotomie logiche nel puno della loro più estrema e paralizzante divaricazione, non per comporle in una sintesi superiore, ma per trasformarle in un campo di forza percorso de tensioni polari, in cui esse perdono la loro identità sostanziali. Si prenda il principio del terzo escluso, che definisce l' essenza delle logiche bivalente fondaate sull'identità o la non-contraddizione".

form of immanent solution that establishes as a new starting point². (Agamben, 2004, p. XVII)

Flusser's work proposes the idea of portraying the devil in a new light, gradually distancing him from his traditional identity. The devil is depicted as alluring and captivating to humans, who, as God's ultimate creation, are susceptible to sin. This sin erodes their original divine likeness and compels them on a wicked journey. In contrast to God, the devil acts as an opponent to humanity and tempts them with sin, which goes against their true nature. However, sin also offers a tangible opportunity for individuals to discover alternative paths to conquer it.

Flusser's perspective challenges the conventional cognitive framework that relies on the binary relationship between virtue and sin. He enables us to comprehend the diversity of God and the devil. In order to accomplish this, he establishes a fictionalized dramatic scenario reminiscent of the idyllic garden of Eden. This strategy enables Flusser to transcend the philosophical canons established since the Middle Ages and, in a subtle manner, highlight the distinction between the previous reality lost and the one that is still within his reach, provided that he can identify a way to transcend sin. The devil is not as ugly as we perceive him to be:

. . . the evolution of the devil and the evolution of life are at least parallel. . . In essence, one of the theses of this book will be the assertion that the evolution of life is merely the embodiment of the evolution of the devil. (Flusser, 2005, p. 24)

The ways of saying are superior to written or mental expressions because, instead of merely explaining, they create tangible representations that, analogous to what is intended, highlight possible consequences, through unconventional semantic caesuras. Thus, the manner in which one expresses nothing elucidates the why nearly anything can be articulated in an inconclusive and imprecise manner, resulting in a sense of disorientation from speaking solely for the sake of speaking. There are distinctions between the affirmation and the way of saying it, the opposition and the antagonistic; the concept and the inference; the abstract and the concrete; the logical and the analogical.

Reiterating the previously highlighted diabolical journey, it is evident that The History of the Devil aims to depict the path of the devil in several dimensions in order to create a comprehensive portrayal of the devil. Flusser compels us to adopt this comprehensive vision by means of his statements and interpretation of the modern world as a potentially fictitious reality that opposes falsehood.

² Original: "Ma questa indifferenza è creatrice e produttiva, nel senso che, neutralizzando la dicotomia, apre fra i due estremi una via di uscita, una sorta di sorpasso immanente che costituisce un nuovo punto di partenza".

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He emphasizes the importance of resistance as an activity that “should evoke both admiration and astonishment” (Flusser, 2005, p. 24).

The dramatic action of fortuity is established, and its suitable backdrop is the earth through multiple, through ways of saying:

. . . we can assert that the confluence of circumstances and the constellation of influences that made life on Earth possible is a monumental happenstance. . . The “chance” that facilitated life on Earth is entirely fortuitous and devoid of purpose from the perspective of the celestial machine. Consequently, it is not “chance” but rather one of millions of potential constellations. Consequently, the fundamental purpose of the heavens is to provide a vast “opportunity”. (Flusser, 2005, p. 44)

Within this peculiar journey of similarities or false oppositions, it is not surprising that “chance weaves the earth like crochet,” (Flusser, 2005, p. 48) and, in the sense of a possible but not definitive fabric, it is unsurprising that he envisions, or rather, reshapes it into a “stage of transgressions, and the setting of another age of diabolical drama:

We must therefore forsake the devil’s infancy. We will follow his footsteps to enter the green meadows of life. We have limited knowledge of him, but solely on an intellectual level. He provoked neither fear nor anger. . . . Then, he must unveil the ethical side of his character. Therefore, let us muster all our courage, as we lift the curtain of the stage of existence in which our personal drama unfolds. (Flusser, 2005, p. 52)

Drama as a form of fiction that challenges the notion that sin, and guilt are intrinsic aspects of human nature and portrays life as make-believe performance. If the earth is considered the domain of the devil, it might be seen as a theatrical setting where he assumes a prominent role. In this context, he can be compared to God, with whom he is often confused as a creative figure. However, analogy does not imply identity. The devil, while not identical to God, is analogous to Him in that he too produces, albeit in his own unique manner.

In contrast to God, the devil makes humans in his own likeness and image, not with the intention of dwelling in a heavenly paradise, but rather to understand the process of creating monsters. Through this, humans are able to collaborate with the devil and learn how to produce diabolical distinctions:

. . . we can produce atomic monsters such as Thorium and Plutonium, whose very names demonstrate their origin. Thor and Pluto are archetypal forms of the devil. (Flusser, 2005, p. 47)

The devil is analogous to God, and, through sin, man is capable of creating and becoming analogous to the devil, therefore god-like via sin. This is the other Genesis Judeo-Christian scripture that constitutes the basis for *The History of the Devil*. The synthesis of this text replaces the creative action of God with the devil's interpretation and man's execution. However, in this scenario, the devil takes on a different approach. Instead of banishing man from paradise, he cunningly deceives him into believing that through technological advancements, man will have the ability to populate and dominate the earth. "But linear progress is the work of the devil" (Flusser, 2005, p. 23).

By drawing a parallel between deeds, the devil manipulates humankind into perceiving themselves as godlike. This diminishes the earlier conflict and turns Eden into a theatrical setting, revealing that the devil's influence on earth is really a work of fiction that can be disregarded. The opening scene of this peculiar narrative establishes that while God and the devil may seem similar, they are not identical. It suggests that the devil influences human activities, but that men are not identical to the devil. Flusser, the author of *The History of the Devil*, shares a deep connection with his character/man, although it is important to note that the author is not exactly the same as his character:

Why fear the devil? Why run away from the devil? These are the types of existential questions that this book will pose explicitly and implicitly. Who can predict the answers? Who knows the end of a book, when starting to write it? The reader is now aware of the doubts and inner tensions that motivated this book. (Flusser, 2005, p. 29)

Flusser's subtle outburst announces his doubts when assuming the position of author of *The History of the Devil*: recognizing the nuanced analogy that, while similar, does not preserve complete identity and therefore disregards the integrity of the distinguishing characteristics that define creations of nature. The loss of the proper name that enables the rejection of knowledge as a domain of reality, resulting in the need to seek shelter within the confines of a persona that can solely be acknowledged within the context of life; to transcend the need to renounce sin as its most tangible attribute; to overcome the need to embrace simulacra of sin that, while shaping human history, can be diluted within the frail progression of time and eventually be forgotten.

The loss of identity compels both the devil and humankind to seek alternative pathways and establish fresh foundations. It is important to recognize that the analogy does not provide any explanation, as it is reduced to mere description which is limited to our basic understanding. Such understanding is centered

on the present moment and cannot examine the unfathomable future, which always seems distant and potentially adversarial. The following are the attributes that the devil assigns to humanity, his rightful heirs:

Amidst the purity of life and the uncomplicated nature of death, dreams, ailments, raptures, and other seemingly unattainable conditions emerge, introducing imprecise values, illogical or transcendent resolutions into the realm of understanding, accompanied by peculiar progressions, fluctuations, and indescribable phrases. – as we have no names for the things in the midst of which we are completely alone³. (Valéry, 1924, p. 192)

³Original: « Entre la netteté de la vie et la simplicité de la mort, les rêves, les malaises, les extases, tous ses états à demi impossibles, qui introduisent, dirait-on, des valeurs approchées, des solutions irrationnelles ou transcendentes dans l'équation de la connaissance, placent d'étranges degrés, des variétés et des phases ineffables, - car il n'est point de noms pour des choses parmi lesquelles on est bien seul ».

This way, the peculiar logic of analogy leads to the misinterpretation of that which reaches no conclusion, as it simultaneously affirms and denies everything, giving rise to an illusory sense of intellectual freedom.

Illusory as manifested through uncertainty and marked by the incompleteness of knowledge: “The gesture that demonstrates the meaninglessness of binary logic does not display a superior logical principle. But, most importantly, the lack of sense” (Agamben, 2004, p. XVII).

The creation of this irrational and therefore fictional meaning is achieved by transcending or resolving the dichotomy or opposition, resulting in the emergence of an unforeseen third element: “The third element persists by disidentifying and neutralizing the first two, which then serve as opposing forces in a field of vector tensions”⁴ (Agamben, 2004, p. XVII).

⁴Original: « Il gesto che mostra il non-senso della logica binaria, non esibisce un principio logico superiore, ma piuttosto anche il proprio non-senso ».

WAYS OF UNDERSTANDING AS THE TRICKERY OF HUMANKIND

Analogy serves as a vivid portrayal of an nameless angel who, positioned as a powerless figure caught in the conflict between identity and opposition, represents the ultimate historical deception. This deception is formed by the third and ultimate illusion: the potential interpretations of sin. Alternative expressions, currently created using unoriginal structures, consist of phrases derived from mundane aspects of daily existence. These expressions, formed as a consequence of human actions tainted by sin, have lost their significance and are now perceived as trivial and insignificant occurrences in our everyday lives. The manifestations of the seven deadly sins now take on ordinary disguises, employing allegories strategically to convey their intended message. By trivializing and discrediting the all-encompassing and discredited dogmatism from the outset, these allegories can generate a new type of captivating interpretation. Learning from the devil, man is able to play tricks and create disguises:

The celestial and terrestrial realms coalesced to generate the life-giving river that meanders in pursuit of the spiritual ocean. We employ the allegory of water circulation to describe the phenomena of life deliberately and for pragmatic purposes. This allegory simplifies all facets of existence into a singular representation... highlighting the indeterminate nature of life where seemingly disparate individuals are a mere illusion, like drops in a river or rain. Several further elements remain hidden in this allegory, elements that allude to the devil and the Divine, which we have no intention of implying, let alone expressing clearly. . . . We are currently prohibited from fully comprehending the profound implications of this parallel with water. . . . To fully grasp its significance, we must adopt a different mindset. In this chapter, we will focus solely on the Western perspective of the concept of the fluidity of life. Specifically, we will explore the literal definition of the word “fluidity of processes of life.” (Flusser, 2005, p. 53-54)

In the allegory of the fluidity of life as water, sins lose the aura that made them vernacular, original, and become commonplace, everyday transgressions that are virtualized. Sin, which appeared as an intruder while dismantling the orderly logic of paradise, becomes commonplace and now takes on the disguise of a quasi-human production: sin presents itself as the devil’s sphinx. Human creations are symbolic representations of evil, but also serve as means of communication: “Life is one of the topics of conversation, possibly the only topic” (Flusser, 2005, p. 71).

But what is a conversation? ‘Conversation is the intellectual aspect of time. The progress of conversation, which represents ‘our’ intellectual growth, is akin to the passage of time in our perception. The past is ‘talked about’, the present is ‘talking’, and the future is ‘to be talked’. From this perspective ‘progress’ and ‘decadence’, ‘development’ and ‘exhaustion’ become synonymous. (Flusser, 1999, p. 69)

The creative impulse of sinful productions is trivialized, invalidated, and disqualified as sin: humanity’s connection with nature is reduced to sexual frustration (lust); the materialization of the symbolic in the range of meanings of linguistics becomes an alibi for justifying the creation of the technology as a necessity (anger); the civilizational path transforms the natural processes of organic metabolism into industrial products of inconsequential pleasurable consumption (gluttony); the search for ascension and maintenance of social positions makes all means ethically justifiable and all states of exception become normalized and necessary (envy and avarice); in the ethical leisure that is conferred by conquered positions, mankind is absent and silent in the soliloquy of its own self and everyone

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is perceived as enemies usurping man's conquest (pride); isolating, man is finally alone again, but sad and lazy, he is absent from the fight, and finally he resigns himself, because he cannot have everything (sloth). Man conforms to this fate and history is something that unfolds without having happened (post-history). This is the scripture that marks the transition from analogy to allegory serving as the last tool found by Flusser to help humans understand that their surroundings require historical responses; which, despite appearing immoral, are fundamentally human, profoundly human:

. . . so we could affirm that our attempt to escape the devil is another aspect of our attempt to emerge from temporality and enter the kingdom of the immutable Mothers.. (Flusser, 2004, p. 21)

Flusser's rendition of sin imbues his dramaturgy with a less pretentious and more whimsical quality, presenting sin as an allegory for idle chatter. He eliminates the assertion of being a third opposing element from the logical framework established as binary polarization. On the contrary, he assigns a different role to analogy, more modest and natural; more human: transforming analogy into allegory, which, being polysensitive, is mostly incomprehensible. Allegory, as a linguistic process, originates from analogy. However, it requires a dramatic setting to fully express its potential for imitation, allowing the imagination to run wild and transform rational thinking into a form of language and expression that deviates from the norm. Allegory emerges from a residual form of logical reflection, a cognitive error. In this sense, all allegory is analogical, but not all analogy is allegorical (Melandri, 2004, p. 76).

Allegory, despite its dramatic nature, is not a sign conventionality. To truly grasp its essence, one must establish peculiar and very sensitive resemblances that are created by the imagination, guided by mimesis and similarity. It is imperative to go beyond the confines of logical reasoning and delve into the anti-paralyzing underlying essence of the analogy, specifically, to uncover the concealed meanings inside allegories. What lies beneath ways of saying and poses a challenge to our comprehension? What does sin conceal or obscure? How can we comprehend Flusser's ideas as presented in *The History of the Devil*? How can one comprehend the counter-narrative of post-history?

In the preface to *The History of the Devil* published in 1965, Flusser states that these are meditations and clarifies:

The meditations were, in essence, divided into two distinct phases. The initial phase began with my forced departure from a realm known as "Prague" at the hands of the

Nazis, culminating in the creation of unpublished notes in German. The second phase started with my assimilation into the actuality known as “Brazil” and culminated in the publication of this book. Two individuals significantly influenced the first phase: Alexandre Bloch and Helmut Wolff, both residing in São Paulo. I was caught in the crossfire between these two opposing mentalities: between sadness and lust, both in a desperate quest for a salvific faith. My mind became the stage of a struggle between these two mentalities. I hope both of them can recognize ‘their reflections’ in my mirror, even though they may be distorted. I experienced four impacts in the second phase. The first came from a group of young men and women, who represented the finest qualities of our youth. . . A cohort of young individuals, who were my daughter’s acquaintances, convened at my residence to “discuss,” which is to say, to attempt to find an open and honest dialogue regarding the circumstances that surrounds us. I trust that this struggle has played a role in the development of their minds, as well as in mine. It is highly likely that these young individuals will substantially contribute to Brazilian culture. (Flusser, 2005, p. 19)

This autobiographical mark underscores the introspective nature of this book and, above all, its aim to engage with other minds or perhaps to elicit support, in a metaphorical and symbolic manner, for the author’s desire to comprehend diverse realities in order to communicate them or extract valuable lessons from them. The purpose of the book is to teach the art of expressing ideas through allegory, thus elevating it to a superior method of inquiry compared to traditional learning. *The History of the Devil* is an allegorical representation of the contemporary world focused on the consecration of technique and, through that, on a possible history that can be restarted, devoid of reconstructions of the devil’s influence and the mask of sin. However, to do so, it is necessary to comprehend the devil’s intentions throughout history and the concealed nature of sin. Dialectics conceals the aspects that the work of the devil offers us in order to obscure them:

The broad secular and historical horizon that Görres and Creuzer attribute to allegorical intention, as natural history, pre-history of meaning or intention, is of a dialectical nature. . . . whereas, in the symbol, with the transfiguration of decline, the metamorphosed face of nature reveals itself fleetingly in the light of salvation, the allegory shows the observer the facies hippocrita of history as a fossilized proto-landscape . . . (Benjamin, 1984, p. 188).

Is dialectics merely idle talk and thus another creation of the devil that instructs humans to depict history as anti-history, devoid of time and consequently devoid of responsibility? Is dialectic a deceptive tactic acquired by humans

from the devil to diminish the gravity of sin and convert it into advancements characterized by progress, a concept detached from time, influenced by technology, and hailed as an invention?

Sins are transformed into euphemisms, rebranded as accomplishments of humanity: Lust is a powerful force that may turn sexual desire into a driving force for life, scientific exploration, or the ability to read, narrate and write, understood as social class privileges; anger is a substitute for the law, while simultaneously embodying the unpredictability inherent to chance, which in turn influences historical events, gluttony has the ability to convert basic materials into products that lead to the widespread celebration of consumption; envy overcomes avarice in conversation, as it can cleverly devise unjust but advantageous strategies to supposedly resolve all conflicts; pride has a strong affinity for poetry and seeks to cover up ignorance with pseudoscience; sloth converts the melancholy of idleness, of hiding in the ivory tower that turns it into a craving for entertainment. Sins allow all states of exception and rationalize the notion that the ends justify all means. Therefore, sins normalize all inconsequential exercises of power, exclusions, defamation, accusations without proof, dissemination of false news, exploitations, selfishness and vanity concealed in all manifestations of nationalism.

These inversions serve as allegories of sin and do not hide its effects. Instead, provide us with opportunities to discover potential solutions that may still be a result of sin or, alternatively, indications of a different approach that will not reduce humanity to a mere representation of God. Rather, it will enable individuals to acknowledge those who have the ability to transcend the pervasive affliction of sin in everyday life. Hope is the last trick of humanity in coexistence with sin.

Sin is the result of the analogy between God and the devil in their respective creative identities: God created man in his own image and likeness, while the devil produced sin. Consequently, in this context, no blame can be attributed to man, as sin does not define the essence of man. In contrast to the comparison between God and the devil, it is the responsibility of humanity to devise clever and symbolic representations that exist alongside, but separate from, sin, which is ultimately trivialized. If humankind is not responsible for sin, thus, not to blame, man is responsible for technology and its historical transformations. Humanity bears the responsibility for shaping the course of history, and no deceptive tactics or disguises can conceal this reality. This is where Flusser's pedagogical dramaturgy concludes.

However, as a philosopher without definitive convictions, Flusser, the playwright, uses the devil's tools to suggest the possibility of an "initial indication of non-diabolical interference in the harmony of existence" (Flusser, 2005, p. 68). "Our somewhat tired gaze has already accepted the thesis that lust is the

primary driving force of the mind and has long ceased observing the juggling of these modern sorcerers (p. 76).

Is it possible for us, readers of Flusser, to accept this proposition and acknowledge that dialectics can enable us to identify the devil's artifacts and immoral contrivances? Have we ultimately acquired knowledge from *The History of the Devil* and Flusser's dramaturgy? Will we be able to discern between the guises of sin and those of the devil, who manipulates history and interprets it as a metaphor for life? Is it possible that allegory is the devil's ultimate deception, aimed at absolving us of our responsibility for history? The answers to these questions are decisions that must be made; however, they are not Tales of the Devil! ■

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The memory of the future as a phenomenon of unpredictability in Iuri Lotman

Memória do futuro como fenômeno de imprevisibilidade em Iúri Lotman

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ABSTRACT

This study stems from a partial result of a CNPq-supported research on the concepts and rationales running the memory of the future in culture. Based on Lotman's concepts, it aims to understand the memory of the future as a phenomenon of unpredictability. Its theoretical and methodological approaches included bibliographic research on Lotman's writings and occasionally on other authors in social and human sciences, document searches, and empirical analysis of semiotic translations of the photography by Régis Bossu, *The Kiss*. It aims to show that, as an unpredictable phenomenon, memory is formed from the come-and-go of symbols, reminiscences, and cultural texts that can create future recollections.

Keywords: memory of the future; texts of culture; symbol; Lotman

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RESUMO

Este artigo é resultado parcial de pesquisa desenvolvida no CNPq, em que se investiga a conceituação e as lógicas que operam a memória do futuro na cultura. Com base nas concepções de Iúri Lotman, o artigo objetiva compreender a memória do futuro como fenômeno de imprevisibilidade. A fundamentação teórico-metodológica contempla: pesquisa bibliográfica em escritos do pensador russo e, pontualmente, em outros autores das Ciências Humanas e Sociais; pesquisa documental e análise empírica das traduções semióticas da fotografia produzida por Régis Bossu, *O Beijo*. Espera-se demonstrar que, como fenômeno imprevisível, a memória se faz no ir e vir de símbolos, reminiscências e de textos culturais capazes de criar futuros.

Palavras-chave: Memória do futuro, textos culturais, símbolo, Lotman

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The understanding of memory herein presented is tributary to the thought of cultural historian and semiotician Iuri Mikhailovich Lotman; I understand it as a communicational process and, according to my most recent research, it can also be characterized as memory of the future (Nunes, 2024). This text aims to discuss, based on that Russian author, the conceptualization of memory of the future, the object of my ongoing research at CNPq¹, as a phenomenon of unpredictability by considering the last phase of the cultural theorist's work (1999, 2022).

¹This article is a partial result of research developed with a CNPq productivity grant: PQ 2 (2021-2024), Opinion no. 308261/2020-8. Part of this research was orally presented online as one of the conferences at the Semiotics of Unpredictability. International Seminar to Celebrate Yuri Lotman's Centennial in October 2022 at USP.

The outlined methodological path draws on bibliographic research on Lotman's writings (1981, 1990, 1996, 1998, 1999, 2022) and occasionally from social sciences and humanities authors related to the theoretical field of memory, such as historian Mary Carruthers (2011), philosopher Paul Ricoeur (2007), semioticians Irene Machado (2022) and Jerusa Pires Ferreira (2004), among others. It also includes documentary research and empirical analysis of media and artistic cultural texts, which were chosen considering the stages of the research project presented to CNPq and their production of memories of the future in media cultural texts.

THEORETICAL ASPECTS OF MEMORY IN IURI LOTMAN

A property of the semiosphere and the texts, memory responds by making the windows of the present time into another possibility of existing, an act of the present that turns to the past and the future. In its Portuguese translation, *Ensaio de Semiótica Soviética*, by Iuri Lotman et al. (1981), we read the concept of culture intertwined with that of memory. The text offers the notion of a program dear to the TartuMoscow semioticians. By defining culture as the memory of the collectivity, those authors explore "the problem of the system of semiotic rules according to which the life experience of humanity is converted into culture: rules that, in turn, can be treated precisely as a program" (Lotman et al., 1981, p. 41, free translation). Memory is also understood as a program that has some specificities.

The thinkers point to the functional difference between the culture that looks at the past from the point of view of behavior performance, that is, as a program, and the program itself "that looks to the future from the point of view of those who elaborate it" (Lotman et al., 1981, p. 41). They state that a text can be one thing or another depending on the function it fulfills in a given collectivity in its historical life.

Lotman and Uspenskii also offer some of their assumptions for understanding memory in culture as a communicational mechanism: recognizing the importance

of the longevity of the texts and codes of collective memory. It is worth explaining the term “workings,” as Irene Machado does in the preface to the Brazilian edition of the *Unpredictable workings of culture* (2022), that is: “working as a definer of the work of semiosis as a formative expansion of the space of culture” (Machado, 2022, p. 26, free translation). Longevity is a central problem regarding culture and its ability to organize and conserve information. The relation between texts and their codes (which fails to necessarily have to directly correspond to each other) highlights the longevity linked to stability – but also, I suggest, to unpredictability.

The longevity of texts, according to the authors, creates a hierarchy of values within cultures to make the texts with the longest longevity more valid. On the other hand, the longevity of the code is determined by its constancy and internal dynamism, the latter of which guarantees “its capacity to change while preserving the memory of previous states and, therefore, the self-consciousness of unity” (Lotman et al., 1981, p. 43, free translation). This disturbing formulation makes one think that memory can also configure a phenomenon of unpredictability since texts and codes, needed for its materialization, generally require both the stability of permanence and the transformation of unpredictable effects.

Culture becomes synonymous with the long-lived memory of the collectivity, counting on the increase in the volume of texts and on their redistribution, promoting the reorganization of the coding system and generating movement. Thus, the increase in the volume of memory occurs at the expense of a reserve of texts that was inactive in the centrality of the semiosphere, but which may become current. In Lotman and Uspenskii, memory also uses its dialectical pair, oblivion, as a way of gaining content. Thus, the transformation of a chain of facts into text is always accompanied by a selective process, resulting in the idea that every text contributes to memory and to oblivion and that the history of the destruction of cultural texts of memory moves parallel to the history of the creation of new texts, to paraphrase the authors.

We can attest to the dynamism of these conceptualizations by observing the operations of memory in media and artistic cultural texts in the semiospheres in moments of explosion and gradualness, concepts dear to the last phase of the work of the thinker from Tartu, which are explained in the next section.

THE UNPREDICTABLE OF A KISS

On the 30th anniversary of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in October 1979, General Secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union Leonid Brezhnev met Erich Honecker, Chairman of the State Council and General

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Secretary of the Socialist Unity Party in the GDR, at the Niederschönhausen Castle in Pankow, East Berlin (“Der Bruderkuß”, 2019). Several journalists covered the event, including Régis Bossu, a French photographer who reported German news for the photo agency Sygma.

In his memoirs, partially narrated on the blog *Boulevard Extérieur*, Bossu comments that, at that night, “there were speeches, exchanges of medals, and kisses in the Russian way to congratulate each other”² (Bossu, 2009, free translation). The exchange of three kisses on the cheek combined with a hug was known as a socialist fraternal kiss or socialist fraternal hug and meant a greeting between communist leaders manifesting the bond between the countries of the bloc. “In rare cases, when the two leaders considered themselves exceptionally close, the kisses were given on the mouth rather than on the cheeks.” (“Socialist Fraternal,” 2014, free translation). Brezhnev, in turn, was known for kissing the mouth of politicians and/or various personalities, not only communists (Timofeitchev, 2019).

Bossu reports that, despite being positioned in a very bad place (behind the heads of his many colleagues) and being unable to use a wide-angle camera, he zoomed in on the leaders’ faces at the moment of the kiss (Witter, 2015). Sygma sold the image to the French newspaper *Paris-Match*, known for covering current affairs and for his shock-photos, publishing it on a double-page page with the title *The Kiss* (Figure 1) in allusion to Robert Doisneau’s 1950 photograph *The Kiss by the Hôtel de Ville*.

Figure 1

Meeting of Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker on the 30th anniversary of the GDR in 1979, East Berlin



Note. Brain Journal, 2018.

Bossu “was the only one to take a photograph from this angle, with a Nikon 80-200 mm lens” (Costa, 2022, para. 1, free translation). In the words of the photographer: “it was the first time that two political leaders from the Eastern bloc were so intimately and clearly exposed to the rest of the world in such a ridiculous way”² (Bossu, 2009, free translation). Despite its unusual and precise angle, it is worth noting that the kiss constitutes a symbol that was part of a diplomatic ritual in that semiosphere.

The approximation of the faces and lips obtained by zooming, the caption that accompanied the image, the contrast created by the loving instant of the kiss between authoritarian leaders, and its circulation in the *Paris-Match* characterize this image as shock-photos. As such, it is manifested in its “in all its stubbornness, its literality, in the very obviousness of its obtuse nature,” thinking with Roland Barthes (1982, p. 69, free translation). That is: that kiss frees itself from the diplomatic-political plot to become a kiss between Brezhnev and Honecker. With the help of these connotative procedures, the idea of “men’s excitement for the kiss” is constructed, “the torrid kiss of the cold war,” the title of the article about the photo displayed on the French website *L’obs* (Witter, 2015, free translation), among others, and provokes shock and emotion.

This image also shows the kiss as a symbol, as Lotman (1990, p. 101) presents:

... We have seen how the symbol serves as a condensed programme for the creative process: The subsequent development of a plot is merely the unfolding of a symbol’s hidden possibilities. A symbol is a profound coding mechanism, a special kind of ‘textual gene’. But the fact that one and the same primary symbol can be developed into different plots, and the actual process of this development is irreversible and unpredictable, proves that the creative process is asymmetrical. Using Prigogine’s terminology we can define the moment of creative inspiration as a situation of extreme far-from equilibrium which precludes any simple predictable development.

Lotman’s quote seems to indicate the key to understanding what happened to Bossu’s image. Rather than an artistic photo, it was initially intended as a referential image, a photography for the press. However, randomness acted at the moment the image was shot: the unfavorable place the photographer occupied among journalists, the lack of another lens, the use of zoom at the moment of the kiss, etc. A creative process established itself, the consequences of which would be unpredictable on that occasion that celebrated the 30th anniversary of East Germany in the middle of the Cold War. Looking from the present to the past, I think, rather than of a chain of concluded explanatory events, of the explosive processes Lotman theorized since “the moment of explosion breaks

²In the original: “C’était la première fois que deux leaders politique du bloc de l’Est étaient si intimement et clairement exposés au reste du monde de façon grotesque”.

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the chain of cause and effect, causing an entire area to rise up and a collection of identically probable events to come into view” (Lotman, 2022, pp. 93-94, free translation). The construction of that image, as plot and as a text, it was a possible result, the result of the explosive moment of the creation of the image.

The fall of the Berlin Wall 10 years later, a culturally explosive moment, again values photographic cultural text, reactivated in the semiosphere. I stress the importance of images having a high emotional content to remain either in human memory thanks to the neurochemical and psychic processes that consolidate our memories or in culture as memory, considering the importance of emotional images since the first rhetoric in the West, a theme I have developed in many works since the publication of my PhD thesis (Nunes, 2001).

Shortly before the reunification of the two Germanies, a process celebrated on October 3, 1990, Russian artist Dmitri Wrubel, then 26 years old, painted in one of the remaining parts of the wall transformed into an open-air gallery, the East Side Gallery³, the work that would be known to the general public as *The Fraternal Kiss* (Figure 2), the inspiration to which is the photographic image recorded by Bossu, seen by Wrubel at some point in his youth (Bossu, 2009; Witter, 2015; Costa, 2022). The work would become a memorable text, representing the end of the Iron Curtain, and was absorbed by media culture (“A verdadeira história,” 2014).

³From December 1989, two German artists' associations, the Federal Association of Visual Artists and the Association of Visual Artists of the GDR began negotiating the wall painting project by artists from all over the world, as a first all-German art project: 118 artists from 21 countries painted 106 large-scale paintings on the wall on the East Berlin side. The East Side Gallery was founded by official order of the Council of Ministers of East Germany (Clemens, 2009).

Figure 2

My God, help me to survive this deadly love



Nota. “A verdadeira história,” 2014.

According to a documentary produced by Euronews (“A verdadeira história,” 2014), in which Wrubel participates, he would have painted the graffiti in seven days and ceded his rights to the East Side Gallery. I learned from the newspapers they had named the painting according to interpretations linked to the political

context, despite an inscription on it *My God, help me to survive this deadly love*, the original title the artist gave it. In an interview, he explains his intention:

The phrase had to do with a personal experience with my relationship with two women. It is a work dedicated to love, in the image of love. We can all experience different situations in our daily lives in which we feel trapped by the lips of this type of monster. At that time, it was a tribute to my personal difficulties! (“A verdadeira história,” 2014, free translation)

The graffiti inspired by photography summons a more radical irony and resignification due to its contact with other contexts and cultural texts in a new semiotic formation. Metonymic cuts operate the translation and the selection of signs in the creation of the new text since the photojournalistic cultural text was transmuted into an artistic cultural text. If in photography the kiss as photo-shock freed itself from that symbolic context to emerge as an instant, displacing the fraternity codified in ritualized customs among communist politicians, in graffiti the displacement is even greater: the fusional kiss expands in colors, gains tactility by the enhancement attributed to the skin of the aged faces in the grooves of the wall; and discards the whole old scene: the austerity of black and white, the bodies in ties, lined up and ordered, which are subtly in the background of the shot, the formal applause, the rite.

The combination of titles, the one given by the Gallery, *Fraternal Kiss*, and the one inscribed in the work, *God, help me survive this deadly love*, adds a field of paradoxical significance to the kiss: asking God for help to survive deadly love can refer to the request for deliverance from death imposed on so many Germans in innumerable attempts to escape from the eastern zone under the domination of the communist fraternity, portraying the cordiality between the leaders and the mortification of the population, but it can also speak to the traps or monsters of love as the artist wants, metaphorizing the erotic love of their personal experiences. In both situations, love can become love-death. Hence, perhaps, the name “kiss of death,” which also appears as equivalent to “fraternal kiss” in some documentary research carried out.

Graffitied, the features of the eyebrows and glasses make us recognize Brezhnev and Honecker; The kiss – fruit and symbol of love-death – can feed back into the authoritarian sense of the old regime. However, the displacement caused by these intersemiotic translations helps the web of another new plot, now with a parodic effect, caused in equal measure by the strong sense of freedom thanks to the fall of the wall that separated the same municipality into two completely different worlds for 28 years.

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Lotman (2022, p. 97) states that “explosive processes represent the actualization of one out of a series of equally probable possibilities from the bundle. This moment of actualization is also the moment at which indeterminacy is exhausted. At such a moment, all possibilities are equally plausible, and it is fundamentally impossible to predict their consequence” (free translation). If Bossu were somewhere else in the audience, with another camera, he certainly would not have produced the image that matched the standards of the *Paris-Match* and, in this way, that it would not circulate to such an extent to find the Russian artist in some part of Europe in his youth, remaining as an impactful memory to, 10 years later, graffiti it on the remaining part of the wall.

Other images of the same event were produced, such as that of German photographer Barbara Klemm, published in the newspaper *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (Figure 3). The journalist preferred not to use a close-up and photograph the political entourage, emphasizing the rigidity of that ritual. Although a significant image that increases the volume of the memory of the kiss among communist leaders in Western culture, it did not have the same consequence as that by Bossu.

Figure 3
Meeting of Leonid Brezhnev and Erich Honecker on the 30th anniversary of the GDR in 1979, East Berlin Image by Barbara Klemm



Note. “Der Bruderkuss,” 2019.

Documentary research on *The Fraternal Kiss* show that the work suffered numerous damages (Figure 4) and, on the commemorations of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the wall, it was repainted at the request of the East Side Gallery and the German government.

Figure 4

Deteriorated image of the Fraternal Kiss, Berlin



Note. "A verdadeira história", 2014.

All the artists invited in 1989 were again called and paid to redo their works with more durable paints in 2009 (Clemens, 2009), which, to some extent, reinvigorated Wrubel's painting, the Gallery itself, and its tourist appeal. On this occasion, Wrubel and Bossu met. In his memoirs, the photographer narrates: "for twenty years, I could see that the success of the mural only grew, but very few people knew the original from a press photo" (Bossu, 2009, free translation). With the meeting between the two, at least for a certain time, photograph and the photographer could be (re)known by a greater number of people (Figure 5).

Figure 5

Meeting of Régis Bossu and Dmitri Wrubel, in Berlin, 2009



Note. Lebie, 2009.

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It is important to emphasize, based on Lotman's studies – and I especially quote his *Universe of the mind* (1990, p. 104), the duality of symbols. Considering recurrence through cultural history, “a symbol shows its invariancy and its repeatability . . . On the other hand, a symbol actively correlates with its cultural context, transforms it, and is transformed by it. Its invariance is realized in the variations.” We witnessed the transformation of the meaning of the fraternal kiss as a symbol of communist ritual when photographed and, 10 years later, as graffiti. In its new textuality, the kiss, with each explosive movement for its creation, moves a little more.

KISSING AS A SYMBOL IN THE SYNCHRONIC CUTS OF CULTURES

As said, for Lotman, the symbol is a “profound coding mechanism” (1990, p. 101), a special type of textual gene. Thus, the kiss symbol undergoes other semioticizations, such as those provoked by the languages of consumption consolidated in the Western world in which reunified Germany is inserted in a way never foreseen in the cultural context of the cold war in which it was produced as a photo-shock. The image of the graffiti kiss is objectified in *souvenirs* for tourist consumption: T-shirts, books, fridge magnets, etc., sold profusely as signs of contemporary Berlin (Figure 6).

Figure 6

Souvenirs for consumption at the Wall Museum, Berlin



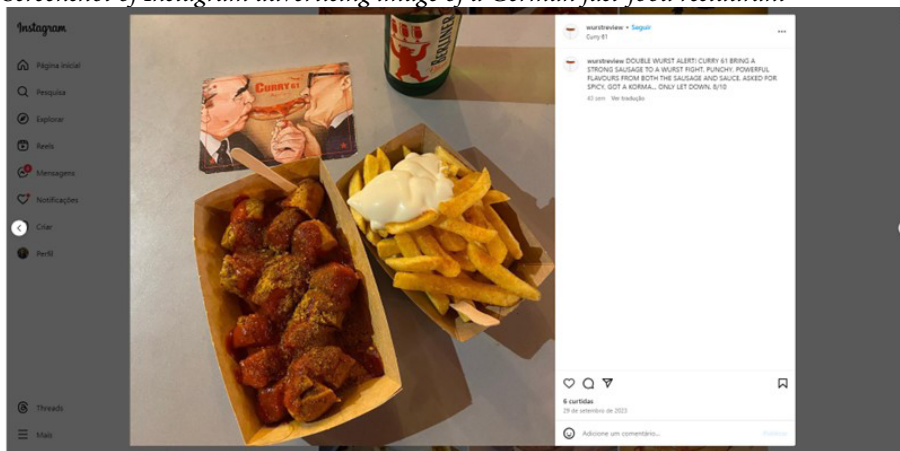
Note. Elaborated by the author.

Souvenirs are added to advertising texts. The advertising and decoration of a local restaurant, constituting new plots, new texts, harbor the graffiti kiss in its condition as a textual encoding gene, provoking the “interpretive recoding.”

according to the expression by Irene Machado (2022). The sense here is the mocking and phallic tone thanks to the sausage seasoned with curried ketchup, characteristic of the *currywurst*, a German fast-food dish, placed between lips that no longer kiss (Figure 7). Just as the hands that in journalistic photography cordially touch bodies in the form of a hug, in advertising they meet to share a toothpick while sustaining the food, connoting affective closeness (Figure 8).

Figure 7

Screenshot of Instagram advertising image of a German fast-food restaurant



Note. Wurstreview, 2023.

Figure 8

Interior of a German Fast-Food Restaurant in Berlin, 2022



Note. Curry61berlin, 2022.

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The record of Brezhnev's kiss on Honecker produced by Régis Bossu in 1979, coded as a shocks-photo, proves to be a long-lived and stable text in the semiosphere when it inspired Wrubel a decade later. I understand that even under the logic of consumption and merchandise that encompass such images, recoding processes establish, in the longevity and stability of the text, the unpredictability provided by the change in the semantic valence of the symbol, which imprints the change of the code.

Let us look at another series of images over the years that separate us from the fall of the wall. According to Witter (2015) and Costa (2022), the Benetton brand used the reference to the image of the kiss to carry out its 2011 advertising campaign with the “*Unhate*” preaching against hate speech. There, antagonistic politicians and religious people reconfigure peace thanks to the kiss (Figure 9), that is, with a different meaning from journalistic photography and Wrubel's graffiti. In both, politicians live in mortal fraternity, connoting ambiguity to the kiss, simultaneously loving and cruel. In the Benetton image, the kiss disambiguates, appeases the leaders; it does not kill, it vivifies.

Figure 9
Benetton brand campaign, 2011



Note. “Kiss Day,” 2014

The understanding of memory as a property of cultural texts helps us to understand it as a living a plastic phenomenon, rather than a fixed one. In this case, the iconic memory (Ferreira, 2004) of the bodies that kiss supervenes on the historical episode photographed by Bossu, probably already forgotten or unknown to the more recent generations that consume the graffiti image, stamped on the T-shirt, printed on the fridge magnet, on the wall of the restaurant. The images of Benetton or the covers published by the Brazilian magazine *Piauí* in the second half of the 2000s no longer mention the communist leaders in the original photo and in the graffiti at the East Side Gallery.

According to the September 2022 article, whose edition honors the Russian artist who died in August of that year, victim of complications from COVID-19, “*Piauí* was inspired by the image of Wrubel⁴ on four covers throughout his sixteen years of life” (Costa, 2022, para. 7, free translation) (Figure 10). All images were created by Russian artist Nadia Khuzina.

⁴Throughout the conducted documentary research, the spelling of the surname of the Russian artist features a “w.” However, the *Piauí* magazine spelled it with a “v,” so it was kept in the citation.

Figure 10

Covers of *Piauí* magazine inspired by the Fraternal Kiss



Note. FutPapers, 2020.

From a semiotic point of view, the covers to the great close-up of the *Fraternal Kiss* and to the angulation of the embraced bodies in an American shot closer to the press photograph by Barbara Klemm of the Soviet ceremony or to so many others that involve the socialist kisses portrayed since then (Timofeitchev, 2019) and that circulate as texts in the semiosphere.

As Wrubel’s graffiti, the parodic criticism occurs in the image. However, they are not just leaders of the Eastern bloc. On the left, the cover featuring Edward Snowden and Vladimir Putin refers to Snowden’s asylum application after revealing secret documents in 2013 that proved the U.S. National Security

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Agency was spying on high-level politicians from several northern partner countries and Brazilian President Dilma Rousseff (“Exilado na Rússia”, 2022). In the center, Michel Temer and Eduardo Cunha on the impeachment President Dilma; on the right, Bolsonaro and Olavo de Carvalho, in the month in which the disagreements between the Brazilian military member and the flat-earthier are reported. The kiss is fraternal between them, but its complicity is parodied because something is to be achieved behind its back – a request, in the Snowden-Putin case: freedom for Pussy Riot, a Russian punk rock group who became known for performing shows and events of political demonstration in favor of women’s rights and against government policies (the all-female group was imprisoned at the time); in Temer-Cunha, the negotiation for Dilma’s impeachment; a scorching object, such as the fraternity between Bolsonaro and Carvalho, which generated the conflict between the then president of the Republic and the member of the military.

Lotman (1990, p. 104) points out that:

What is important is that the semantic potentials of a symbol are always greater than any realization of them: the links which, with the help of its expression, a symbol establishes with a particular semiotic context, never exhaust all its semantic valency.

This is what is revealed by the creation of the media and/or artistic cultural texts that are the photographic image produced by Bossu and the graffiti painted by Wrubel submerged in the semiosphere, in continuum and, in this way, acting as generators of meanings.

As texts, they are reduced mnemotechnical programs, that is, they can “restore memory.” Lotman’s (1996, p. 89) famous statement that “texts are as the seeds of plants, capable of conserving and reproducing the memory of previous structures” helps to understand the consequences of these images that continue in action, generating others, in multiple materialities and cultural contexts, with meanings that are often different from the originals. It is worth noting that the generative capacity of texts imprints the idea that they are not passive carriers of meaning, they are dynamic and internally contradictory. Being a textual generator requires operating in a context in interaction with other texts and the semiotic medium. As Lotman (1996) points out, texts become integral symbols, acquire autonomy from their context, and can function not only in the synchronic cut of culture, but also diachronically as a symbol. “In this case, the separate symbol acts as an isolated text that moves

freely in the chronological field of culture and that increasingly correlates in a complex way with its synchronic cuts” (Lotman, 1996, p. 89).

Kissing as a symbol, depending on the synchronic cut of culture, can unsurprisingly find new actors. Donald Trump, then still a candidate for the US elections, appears kissing Vladimir Putin in Lithuania. The graphic artist Mindaugas Bonanu recreated Wrubel’s *Fraternal Kiss* on the outer walls of a café in Vilnius (Figure 11). Dressed in clothes that refer to those of the Adidas brand, the graffiti includes a series of pieces whose title is the paraphrastic form of one of Trump’s well-known phrases: make America great again. The Lithuanian graffiti reads *Make everything great again*, in any case, discarding the original title of the Russian artist. The co-owner of the establishment, Dominykas Ceckauskas, said in an interview with the agency *Baltic News Service* that “They both have an ego that is too big, and it is funny that they get along well.” (“Graffiti na Lituânia,” 2016, free translation).

Figure 11

Make everything great again, Bonanu graffiti, in Vilnius, Lithuania



Note. “Graffiti na Lituânia”, 2016

According to documentary research (“Vilnius: A quirky,” 2020), from 2016 onwards, with Trump’s victory, that image was erased and replaced by another in which Trump blows at a very sick-looking Putin (Figure 12). Irony is mixed with the languages of consumption that semiotize graffiti, and kissing is transferred to pieces of clothing (Figure 13) in a continuous and gradual movement.

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Figure 12

Make everything great again, Bonanu graffiti, in Vilnius, Lithuania



Note. "Vilnius: A quirky", 2020

Figure 13

Colorful socks from the Make everything great again collection⁵

⁵ See <https://moustache.lt/product/spalvotos-kojines-make-everything-great-again-socks/>



Note. The Ammolite Gallery, 2024.

In 2018, in a municipality in Ceará, Maracanaú, Trump appears once again, now kissing Bolsonaro under the paints of artist Yuri Sousa, whose signature is “Black bad boy” (Figure 14). The creator’s purpose, according to his words, is to put politicians in the position of those they criticize, “in this case, homosexuals” (Carvalho, 2018). The graffiti was erased in less than 48 hours, according to the author, “probably by some Bolsonaro supporter.” In this graffiti, the kiss as a symbol takes on the meaning of a gay kiss – target of homophobia by the represented politicians and, therefore, reason for conservative anger whose reaction is the erasure of the image.

Figure 14

Trump and Bolsonaro’s kiss



Note⁶.

⁶ See <https://br.noticias.yahoo.com/grafite-de-beijo-entre-trump-e-bolsonaro-e-apagado-no-ceara-205707654.html>

MEMORIES OF THE FUTURE – FINAL REMARKS

This series of images shows the reorganization of the coding system, the movement of the texts, and the provoked meanings. Paraphrasing Lotman (1990, p. 18), it is worth saying that the text is not something given, immutable. Inside it, incomplete structures provide a reserve of dynamism when influenced by contacts with new contexts.

Then, what do these texts say about the construction of the memory of the future as a phenomenon of unpredictability? Especially in artistic texts, an internally varied, heterogeneous, panchronic, and dynamic memory speaks to many temporalities, including the future.

The notion of text as a mechanism that generates meanings offers clues to understand the configuration of time in Lotman. As mentioned, the semiotician

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considers the text as condensing cultural memory, capable of preserving previous contexts, that is, its past. However, we can also recognize a projective temporality that points to the future and enables the birth of texts from texts (Lotman, 1996) as in the examples in this study, among many others

The metaphor helps us to recognize the panchrony implied in the concept, in which the texts is “like a grain of wheat which contains within itself the programme of its future development.” (Lotman, 1990, p. 18). We find that time and memory, the condensation of the past and the projection into the future, intertwine with each other. This generative capacity of texts also stresses a memory-genesis in culture necessary to produce them, because, as he states, “memory is not for the culture a passive depository, but part of its mechanism of textual creation” (Lotman, 1996, p. 161, free translation).

The projective memory-genesis I see in Lotman’s semiotics helps deeming it as a processual and generative element, not only as a “memory of the past,” as per Paul Ricoeur (2007) explaining the conceptualization of memory in Aristotle as a mark of the thing remembered but also as a memory of the future. Future, not necessarily as what is placed ahead, but in its web and in what is contained in roads untraveled, as Lotman (1998) teaches us in his *Clio at the crossroads: the future in what could be remembered*.

In other words, the future of all texts the symbols and reminiscences of which feature in projectiles guessed in their hidden possibilities, in the multiplicities of plots to come. From this perspective, I intuit that the semantic reserve “thanks to which a symbol can enter into unexpected relationships, altering its essence and deforming its textual context in unpredictable ways,” as Lotman (1990, p. 104) writes, integrates the creative and mnemonic imagination necessary for the memory of the future.

The memory of the future, among other definitions beyond the scope of this study, is this generative projective movement that can acquire, in turn, the order of the unknown, the unpredictable. Why is the projective mechanism not just expectation? Why can we talk about projective memory? I then bring the research I carry out on memory of the future based on Lotman closer to that of historian Mary Carruthers (2011), as in previous studies (Nunes & Bin, 2018; 2021).

Mary Carruthers (2011) deems the art of memory or mnemotechnics as a memory of the future in her research on classical and medieval rhetoric. The author states that medieval memory operates as a *machina memorialis* and as a mill, grinding the grains of past experience into flour to make new bread. The

art of monastic memory was considered an art of thought and cogitation and would not necessarily be concerned with being faithful to reality.

Thus, it acts as a matrix of a reminiscent cogitation, that is, it mixes what has been stored in a set of random-access memory schemes (referring to the use of tropes and figures) toward its inventive use. Carruthers points out that the rhetorical mnemonic technique was understood as a compositional art bordering on what is now called imagination, creativity, or even visionary experiences.

For Carruthers, to remember is to generate a mental vision from the materials of memory. The author uses Augustine's trope of "the memory of heaven" to draw attention to the fact that, although impossible of being known before death, it was real. She attests that "*memoria*, the means by which humans comprehend time, enables us to recall past things, embrace present things, and contemplate future things through their likeness to past things" (Carruthers, 2011, p. 112, free translation). She understands the process of cognition in a compositional, reminiscent way that consists of recalling acts, mnemonic operations, and captures of other memories.

As a communicative and sociocultural process, "memory can make use of models, theories, or uses that presuppose the creation and invention in the present of a composition directed to the future" (Nunes & Bin, 2018, p. 21, free translation). In a semiotic *continuum* and in explosions, "texts and codes remain, modify, coexist, interact, bump into each other, and the shock germinates novelty, the new text bearing marks of the old, the textual genes, apt to inscribe unpredictability in the nascent memory" (Nunes & Bin, 2018, p. 21, free translation). The memory-genesis I see in Lotman's (1990) concept can be understood under the sign of inventive, projective memory, less used to what happened, and more as memory that recalls the future.

One last image helps to close this study, remaining far from concluding it. Considering the management of the COVID-19 pandemic as a metonym of the Brazilian government in the period from 2018 to 2022, the *Piauí* magazine created another text on its cover in May 2020, the coding gene of which was also the kiss inspired by Wrubel's graffiti, according to the magazine itself (Costa, 2022). Instead of Brezhnev, Honecker, and other public personalities, as in the presented images, iconically recalled by the presence of two actors, only one reminiscent politician is feature, the other being replaced by death, carrying his scythe in his skeletal hands that brings the bodies closer together, inviting them to an incomplete kiss, a promise of a necrophiliac jouissance (Figure 15).

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Figure 15

Cover of the *Piauí* magazine, May 2020



Note. Revista *Piauí*, 2020

Lotman (1990, p. 105) remarks that a symbol exists before any text and independently of it. It emerges in the memory of an artist (writer) from the depths of cultural memory and comes to life in a new text like a grain on fresh ground. In turn, a reminiscence, a reference, a quotation are organic parts of the new text, functioning only in its synchrony. They pass from the text to the depths of memory while a symbol passes from the depths of memory to the text.

With the textual creations based on the images of the Kiss produced by Régis Bossu and Dmitri Wrubel, we witness – by layers of explosions and gradualities considering the continuity of the kiss as a symbol in its semantic plurality – a coming and going of symbols and reminiscences that never return to the produced textualities or to individual memories in the same way, always preserving a degree of unpredictability. The memory of the future or memory-genesis consists of symbols, reminiscences, and the reserve of imagination of moving texts that can propagate futures such as the cover of *Piauí*, in which we will remember the future in the fulfillment of the promise of a kiss. ■

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Black protagonism is finally a hit: Self-representation in *Executive Order* and *Mars One*

O protagonismo negro enfim faz sucesso: A autorrepresentação em Medida Provisória e Marte Um

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ABSTRACT

This study points out an unprecedented media event: in 2022, two films directed and acted by Black individuals reached the mainstream. *Executive Order* by Lázaro Ramos, with 500,000 viewers and *Mars One* by Gabriel Martins, the Brazilian nominee for the Oscars. These works, differing in aesthetics and objectives, pointed to paths, constructing counter-hegemonic visualities regarding the Black and poor populations of Brazil and engaged with the public and critics. By briefly examining the Black presence in Brazilian cinema and the diverse experiences of its creators, we highlight how the construction of these films establishes, whether in form of dystopia or everyday life, other places, and images in a political gesture of rejecting violence.

Keywords: Contemporary Brazilian cinema, Black self-representation, *Executive Order*, *Mars One*

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RESUMO

O artigo aponta um acontecimento midiático inédito: em 2022 dois filmes dirigidos e atuados por pessoas negras chegaram ao *mainstream*, *Medida Provisória*, de Lázaro Ramos, com 500 mil espectadores e *Marte Um*, de Gabriel Martins, o indicado brasileiro ao Oscar. Obras distintas em termos estéticos e de objetivos, ambas apontaram caminhos, construindo visualidades contra hegemônicas sobre as populações pretas e pobres do país, e dialogaram com público e crítica. A partir de um rápido exame sobre a presença negra no cinema brasileiro, da experiência diversa de seus realizadores, apontamos como a construção dos filmes estabelece, na forma da distopia ou da vida comum, outros lugares e imagens, num gesto político de recusa da violência.

Palavras-chave: Cinema brasileiro contemporâneo, autorrepresentação preta, *Medida Provisória*, *Marte Um*

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MATRIZES

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¹ Cited by Lincoln Péricles (2021), free translation. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=buFUHow5D_0

“We are spectators of our absence”
Akins Kinte, O que é um personagem?¹
24th Tiradentes Film Festival

² According to Propmark, a media outlet, in 2022, 53% of advertisements featured Black protagonists, an increase of 9% compared to previous years (*Pretos, LGBTQIAP+, mulheres e corpos*, 2023).

³ I understand neoliberal empowerment according to Michel Feher (2009): The neoliberal subject is a being who must constantly seek to stand out from the crowd, to be identified as the most attractive among their competitors. They must maximize their market value, directing all their vital efforts to generate the greatest possible trust in society, presenting themselves as a great investment (pp. 21-41). This presupposes the understanding of neoliberal society as a corporate society, according to Foucault (2008), where bodies and minds are shaped according to the logic of maximizing their potential, and indifferent to compassion for others and significant social concerns.

ALTERNATING WITH THE PRESENTATION OF NEWS, when one advertise real estate, university courses, cars, or in a Christmas Special, with Black authors and protagonists on TV Globo – the commercial TV network – we observed in 2022, with unprecedented frequency, the inclusion of Black people in positive images in the media.² Not only personalities from soccer, popular music, or soap operas. Appearing in these advertisements, they follow conventional standards of elegance and neoliberal empowerment³ – smiling, well-dressed, and not very black-skinned – and were present in generic and neutralized national representations and, as such, included as consumers. It was also the year in which two films by Black directors, with predominantly Black casts and crews, reached the mainstream (Martel, 2012). They are: *Executive Order* (original title: *Medida Provisória*), by Lázaro Ramos, with more than 500 thousand spectators, and *Mars One* (original title: *Marte Um*), by Gabriel Martins, a film from Contagem, a suburb of Belo Horizonte, the Brazilian Oscar nominee. This unprecedented relevance constitutes a media event according to Weber (2011) and demands an analysis that qualifies and demarcates this singular historical moment, and also those films. In addition to the international ‘trend’ triggered by barbaric events such as the murder of George Floyd in the United States in 2020 and related national events, the neoliberal focus on Black people as a consumer market to be further exploited, and an indelible racism in Brazilian social formation – which is thus exposed in reverse by denial, increasing the presence of black people where they do not usually appear – the media sphere has been having to open itself to the images and discourses of this minoritized majority of 54% of the Brazilian population (IBGE Data, 2020). A sign of the times, the result of decades of struggles and affirmation work that have intensified and improved since the introduction of quotas in universities (Santos & Santos, 2022, p. 448). In addition, this shift was compounded also by the introduction of public policies in the social and cultural spheres, especially in the audiovisual sector, allowing new expressions and self-representations to emerge, alongside the increased identity of a neoliberal bias.

Executive Order and *Mars One* are films with different themes, scope, social ambitions, forms of production, staging, and aesthetics. They were produced from 2018 onwards and commercially released in April and August 2022, respectively. The first, a production with a television cast, the participation of

a renowned Black foreign actor, a large budget and significant media exposure for the director and promotion on social networks, is aimed at a broad audience, characteristics of a commercial film, which does not imply a value judgment.

The other is a low-budget film by an independent production company recognized for its work by the public and critics, made with funds from a public notice for affirmative actions. What unites the two productions and justifies the selection was their unprecedented media relevance, public reception, and the reverberations they received as films by Black directors.

In addition, because they were released in the year of the presidential elections, their narratives, especially *Executive Order*, echoed and responded to the feeling of revolt and indignation by staging the suffocating situation of an oppressive and racist government, remembering that the film faced obstacles from the Bolsonaro government regarding its release (Evaristo, 2022). At a time of low attendance at movie theaters after COVID-19, the release caused audiences to fill theaters throughout Brazil, helping recover viewers who, with streaming, had settled on their couches at home.

Therefore, keeping in mind postcolonial and peripheral studies and representation, references such as Franz Fanon (2008), Lélia González (1988), Stuart Hall (2016), Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1985/2010), and Achille Mbembe (2011) are important for the theoretical reflection of this work. As well as those that deal with regimes of visibility such as Jacques Rancière (2013), or Black invisibility as in bell hooks (2019). Given the specific characteristics of each of the objects under study and the social and aesthetic processes to which they are associated, Sodré (2019), a specialist in communication and black cultures, when defining the Brazilian social form as one of unfinished slavery, since “the slave-owning form of spirits has not been abolished,” allows us to understand and base on its breadth the event that we seek to highlight here. According to the author (2019)

Social form is the way in which society is configured inside and outside. The idea of social form encompasses a vision of people's interiority: how one can understand the other, how one can see the other. . . The concept of social form tells me: 'slavery is not over.' In the social form, people still reject dark-skinned people. I usually refer to the expressions light skin and dark skin. . . Life can be difficult depending on the color of the person's skin. So, this form tells me: 'the slave form has not been abolished from spirits.' (p. 879, free translation)

From this paradigm that viscerally composes Brazilian social formation, one analyzes what films create, their political and ideological circumstances,

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expressed in the form of images and discourses that reject established, stereotyped, and reiterated visualities, promoting another imaginary to be shared by 'light or dark' skins and that will have repercussions in the mainstream (Bhabha, 1998; Sodré, 2019). As noted by director André Novais, from *Filmes de Plástico* [Plastic Films], the same production company responsible for *Mars One*, rejecting and going against the usual forms of representation of Black people is a political gesture. According to Spivak (2010), he opposes "epistemic violence," which is expressed through discourses and images and, thus shapes, imposes, and defines the identity of the other, subjugating this other. According to Novais, in an interview given in 2016, his intention was

portraying Black people as people who live normally. Without the issue of violence or drug trafficking, which is generally how they are portrayed in Brazilian cinema and even in world cinema. . . some people don't understand how political this is, in the sense that it's a way of getting people used to the idea that Black people from the outskirts also live in harmony. (*Ela Volta na Quinta*, 2016, free translation)

Based on these premises and remembering that each film expresses a distinct artistic, social, and aesthetic project, the differences provide the broader picture of the possible paths of this inclusion and what those self-representations bring that is new and disruptive. We proceeded to the case study of these films, seeking to mark in the studies of Communication and in the Historiography of Brazilian Cinema, in 2022, the unprecedented recognition by the public, critics, and social and cultural repercussion of two films by Black authors, actors, and professionals.⁴

It is necessary to clarify that we understand mainstream, according to Martel (2010/2012), as "the culture that pleases everyone."

The word, which is difficult to translate, literally means "dominant" or "large audience," and is generally used to refer to a means of communication, a television program, or a cultural product aimed at a wide audience. Mainstream is the opposite of counterculture, subculture, and niches; for many, it is the opposite of art. (p. 20, free translation)

Mainstream can refer to a 'market culture,' without aiming solely at the entertainment monetization. On the contrary, we believe that the purpose of these films is to reach a significant audience, circulate other narratives and images, build new imaginary elements, contradicting what is established by white Eurocentric otherness, assuming the leading role of creation, in a unique and original artistic aspiration.

⁴ As we will show later, films by Black authors have had and continue to have recognition. What we point out as different is the box office takings of more than 500 thousand spectators with *Executive Order* and *Mars One* being chosen as the Brazilian representative for the Oscar, two significant markers of not yet achieved popular success and critical relevance.

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE EVENT

Contrary to Weber's (2011) characterization of the media event, the repercussion of the two films was not overwhelming, although the publicizing of *Executive Order* since 2020 has been extensive, achieving reverberation and constant work to engage the public. The impact of *Mars One* came from awards and repercussions at the Gramado Festival, but, above all, from the nomination by the Brazilian Academy of Cinema and Audiovisual Arts to compete for the 2022 Oscar for best foreign film. It is the exceptional character that marks the event: for the first time in the history of the exhibition of Brazilian films in commercial theaters, therefore in the history of Brazilian cinema, two films produced by Black people had significant public repercussion.

Cinema in general is an expensive activity, and Brazilian productions in particular depend on public or private funding, which does not guarantee their distribution in theaters and wide reception by the public. Only in the 21st century, with new digital equipment and their release windows, combined with public policies to encourage production, did it become possible to film on a larger scale. However, reaching the big screen and large audiences is still complex. Internal and external socioeconomic and cultural issues explain this panorama, and for Black people this difficulty is even greater (Gomes, 1980; Carvalho, 2005). It is possible to mention the contributions of professionals such as Cajado Filho, Odilon Lopez, Haroldo Costa, who worked as assistants, set designers, scriptwriters and even directors from the 1940s and 1950s onwards. With *Cinema Novo*, significant works by Zózimo Bulbul (*Alma no Olho*, 1974), Luís Paulino dos Santos (*Mar Corrente*, 1967), and Adélia Sampaio (*Amor Maldito*, 1984) emerged. Despite the density of their creations, which were in line with the new cinema, the expressive dialogue with what was happening between Black women's struggle and Black affirmation movements in the United States (González & Hasenbalg, 1982), the closeness with African cultures, characteristic of the 1960s and 1970s, and the oppression of the Military Regime, vividly expressed in *Alma no Olho* (1974) – an experimental short film by Zózimo Bulbul made with leftovers from another film, where the body and gestures speak of the place of Black people in Brazil – this film, like *Amor Maldito* (1984) by Adélia Sampaio – the first about the love between two women – had difficulty being shown and distributed, and only from the 2000s onwards did they begin to be revived.⁵

A director like Joel Zito Araújo, with documentary productions such as *A Negação do Brasil* (2007), fictions such as *Filhas do Vento* (2004) and TV series, continues with greater relevance to this pattern of difficulties in production and repercussion. In 2008, *Dogma Feijoadada* emerged as a manifesto, similar to the Danish *Dogma*, in which sociologist Noel Carvalho, filmmaker Jefferson De

⁵ Studies on Brazilian female directors since the 2010s have brought back the contribution and characteristics of Adélia Sampaio's work and career (Cavalcante, 2017).

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and other signatories prohibit the reproduction of stereotypes, in addition to promoting reflections that have continued ever since (Carvalho, 2005, 2022). This can also be seen in *Bróder*, by De (2010). Furthermore, despite participating in TV series and the feature films *M8 Quando a morte socorre a vida* (2019), and *Doutor Gama* (2021), he and other independent male and female directors produced films that did not stand out in the mainstream.

With the Re-democratization and the beginning of the 2000s, according to Leroux (2019, p. 26), schools in several cities offered audiovisual training to “young people from the working classes, residents of slums, suburbs and outskirts.” As they were based on public notices and needed them to survive, they ended up becoming “social projects” that, in her opinion, present a “civicism of results.” Also according to the author,

This path soon assumes, to a greater or lesser extent, the well-known formula of using art reduced to a tool to civilize young people from the working classes, through the pedagogical construction of the artistic experience, by imposing a palatable thematic and aesthetic standard. The poor’s gaze and voice, even in these initiatives of “giving authorship,” would be somewhat restricted by the expectation that they express what is imagined as being “proper to the popular classes”: only what is necessary and useful. (p. 26, free translation)

This assessment certainly does not reflect the totality of these productions and the paths they open up, however it is important to retain from this analysis how the form of inclusion, the socioeconomic situation, and these producers’ place of residence were transformed into a genre – peripheral cinema – that was imposed on them (Leroux, 2019, p. 26).⁶

The uninterrupted production of documentaries and short films by Black people is significant, as well as the emergence of festivals, publications of Black feminist and peripheral affirmation, collectives, such as *Mulheres Negras*, in addition to production companies such as *Filmes de Plástico*, in Contagem since 2009. Any attempt at systematization will be incomplete, fortunately, because the achievements of various subjects throughout the country are multiple, powerful, and uninterrupted.

Amid this intense molecular movement of different achievements, geographies and territories that express themselves, from the mainstream point of view, it was the execution of George Floyd in the United States in 2020 that catalyzed another broad and international media process of indignation against racism. The case became known as the “primavera negra” [Black spring] (*Estamos vivendo*, 2020), a term originally referred to by Lélia González in *Primavera*

⁶ Because of appropriations of this type, and because the notion of periphery is in itself a value judgment – it assumes a center, the place of the norm, and what is outside it is the periphery – I avoid using it, even though it is a word that is now widely used to designate a cinematographic and cultural genre, academic use, among others.

para as rosas negras in 1991, in the sense of a Blackening of women's and social struggles (González, 2018), and is revived by the Bahia's adman Paulo Rogério Nunes. According to him

This is a historic moment. We are experiencing a Black Spring, with several countries joining the American protests. It is a process that will continue for a long time. However, it is important to remember that police violence is something serious and is linked to issues of racism in the economy, in the media and in all areas. (*Estamos vivendo*, 2020, free translation)

Nunes, founder of *Acelerador Vale do Dendê* and *Instituto Mídia Étnica*, a Black media NGO in Brazil, believes that representation in the media was not a central issue in the fight against racism, but that “representation is fundamental to creating identity. The consumer wants to be seen in the media, in the movies. By placing them in these spaces, you include more people in the market, and by bringing in new consumers, you also bring more innovation to the sector” (*Estamos vivendo*, 2020, free translation).

From the movement of social awareness, self-awareness, and struggle proposed by González in 2018 and throughout her career – among other thinkers and activists of the Black cause today, in a neoliberal and identity-based bias – this movement becomes an enterprise of inclusion of poor Black populations marginalized or lower middle class by consumption, according to the adman's proposal. This approach seems to explain, in part, the current logic of the eugenic and tokenized presence⁷ of Black people in the hegemonic media, approaching aspects of *Executive Order*, as we will show later. Contrary to what Nunes claims, there has always been concern with Black representation, and not only in the media. The question is how, in the unfinished Brazilian slavery, Black people had/have the power to control their representation. Remembering what Rancière (2013) defends, we have that,

⁷The term tokenized comes from tokenism (token: symbol), “the practice of making small concessions publicly to a minority group to deflect accusations of prejudice and discrimination” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2018, p. 387).

The distribution of the sensible reveals who can have a share in what is common to the community based on what they do and on the time and space in which this activity is performed. Having a particular ‘occupation’ thereby determines the ability or inability to take charge of what is common to the community. It defines what is visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language, etc. There is thus an “aesthetic” at the core of politics. (pp. 20-21)

This ‘aesthetic’ mentioned by the author above echoes the disruptive party of *Filmes de Plástico*. Its opposite is visible in the whitewashed portraits of

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Machado de Assis for over a century. According to Rancière, he had the right to space for his noble activity as a writer and social recognition, however, the image of the Black man in the photograph was ‘retouched,’ one example among thousands of others.

⁸In the sense of Georges Didi Huberman (2017) in his book and exhibition *Levantes*.

On the other hand, the ‘uprisings,’⁸ the peripheral insurrections of decades of cultural productions encouraged by NGO workshops, cultural centers, fostered by public or independent notices – such as the 24th *Tiradentes* Film Festival, in 2021 – poor experiments, mixes, remixes of the mainstream, of art, of cinema, practiced in different places, which with *Mars One* reaches a palatable form to the mainstream. It is a work by a director from Belo Horizonte’s outskirts and a production company that, since 2009, has been creating unique works and promoting other sensibilities, narratives, other perspectives and bodies on screen, an experience of the common that manifests itself among Black populations, but not only. Other types of miscegenation are expressed in Brazilian territories, as can be seen in rich discussions between creators such as Gabriel Martins, from Contagem, Minas Gerais, Lincoln Péricles, from Capão Redondo, São Paulo, or Carol Rodrigues, from the outskirts of the South Zone of São Paulo.

In these territories, one produces works that do not even intend to reach the mainstream, as happened in 1988, when the indignant rap of *Os Racionais* burst forth, today incorporated into the media sphere. These are audiovisual manifestations that, like music, seek to express, think, think together and in other ways, and often in connection with music, poetry with the slams of Akins Kinté (Slam Resistência, 2017) and audiovisual as occurs in the cinema of Péricles (Lincoln Péricles LK, n.d.), among many others (Silvino, 2021). These are actions by young people also motivated by access to university, which has contributed to the growth of a critical mass that has diversified the perspectives of academic production by ‘light or dark’ people (Sodré, 2019, p. 879). The expansion of federal universities to the countryside is also in the wake of the creation of collectives such as *Rozsa Filmes* (2017), from Recôncavo Baiano, among other examples.

There is a boom in anti-racist publications by national and foreign authors, whether through the Black women’s struggle with the recognition of the writer Conceição Evaristo, Ana Maria González, the return to the scene of Carolina Maria de Jesus, or through films by beginners being recognized at festivals such as *Tiradentes* Film Festival and taken to international festivals. There are numerous indications, and from this point of view, the production of a mainstream film like *Executive Order*, with a renowned Black actor like Lázaro Ramos as its director, took a long time to happen.

EXECUTIVE ORDER

Executive Order is the first commercial Brazilian film to gain widespread acclaim by addressing racism as a central theme, in addition to its consequences, such as the distortion of laws and the existent aggressive and perverse normalization. Using popular genres today – horror, science fiction in the form of dystopia and humor – the film achieves an almost epic result by promoting the public exposure of Brazilian racism, while at the same time, it gives vent to the common feeling of oppression in the face of the political climate that has been established in the country since 2016, especially under the far-right government of Jair Bolsonaro.

The play *Namíbia, Não*, by Adri Assunção, directed by Lázaro Ramos in 2011, is the origin of the film that the actor began to adapt for the cinema in 2013, transforming the play – in which two characters discussed Black belonging at a time when the country still seemed to have positive expectations for the future – into the disheartening dystopia filmed between 2019 and 2020, which had its release blocked by ANCINE. This blocking, delay, or veiled censorship of the premiere in theaters (Cruz, 2021) had already occurred with *Marighella*, by Wagner Moura, also with a Black protagonist, finished in 2019, but only released two years later.

The career of Bahia's Lázaro Ramos began at the *Bando do Olodum* in Salvador, at the age of 15, and has since been marked by successes as an actor in cinema, theater, and television, as an interviewer, as the author of five children's books and the autobiography, *Na minha pele* (2017), which has racism as its central theme, in addition to being the UNICEF ambassador in Brazil. He is a name linked to social causes and in particular to the racial issue, publicly embodying the figure of the 'one Black man,' that is, the one who has the visibility to speak for all others, according to the concept of Ana Maria Gonçalves, in *Um defeito de Cor* (2017), referred to by him on the television program *Roda Viva* (2022).

It was from this place of visibility and representation that Lázaro Ramos gave 72 interviews between 2020, the final moments of production and the ANCINE blockades, and 2022, when the film was released (*Roda Viva*, 2022). With this, he promoted a constant media intervention on the themes that the Afro-futuristic dystopia raises. It was also through this that he staged his experience under Bolsonaro government: "How did we not realize that this was going to happen?" a terrified question from the characters in the film and the viewer.

The dozens of interviews allowed him to address his ideas about destiny and the power that greater participation of Black people can bring to society: "The public wants this. It's not a social demand, it's a market demand" (*Roda*

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Viva, 2022, free translation). In the interview, it should be noted that the social became the market.

The interviews fueled expectations around the film, through an effective media campaign that combined the film and Ramos' speeches with a militant resistance against racism (the Instagram of *Executive Order* offers instructions and courses on combating racism in companies) and Bolsonaro government's oppressive power, "perversity as a State policy" (Roda Viva, 2022).⁹ Following the initial good film reception, the author encouraged *Executive Order* to continue being showed in movie theaters across the country, stimulating the uninterrupted public presence, a mandatory factor for a film to remain on display. He achieved this over a period of six months, reaching 500,000 spectators in movie theaters, at a time when the public was rarely going to the movies, and practically no Brazilian films were watched. He also published *Diário do Diretor*, a book about the film making. These byproducts filled media spaces and corners with *Lázaro Ramos*, spreading the idea of a film about Black people made by Black people.¹⁰

⁹The Instagram of *Executive Order* offers instructions and courses on combating racism in companies. Retrieved on July 26, 2024, from <https://www.instagram.com/medidaprovisoriofilme/>.

¹⁰On the Instagram of the movie, in June 2022: "I've just watched it, and I confess I'm crying... As a Black woman, I felt in my soul the pain that the film shows, but I was also able to get involved in the strength of resistance that is explicit from beginning to end. *Executive Order* is not far from happening if we do not resist and fight for the country that is also ours" (free translation). Retrieved on July 26, 2024, from <https://www.instagram.com/stories/highlights/18132077785260067/>

THE PLOT AND THE STAGING

Executive Order builds a dystopian future, where an oppressive government decides to forcibly return the Black population to Africa in response to the demand for compensation for centuries of slavery. Antônio Gama (Alfred Enoch), a young lawyer – with the same last name as Luís Gama, a Black lawyer who fought against slavery, much like the character – married to physician Capitu (Taís Araújo), resists the expulsion by fighting against banishment through legal means. The couple lives with their cousin André Rodrigues (Seu Jorge), a journalist who is dating Sarah (Mariana Xavier), who is White. The *sending back* of citizens with 'heavy melanin,' a euphemism with which the government designates the Black population in the film, is commanded by Isabel (Adriana Esteves), "the dedicated and relentless bureaucrat" (Araujo, 2022a) and her secretary, Santiago (Pablo Sanábio). The feminine name is not innocent, since Princess Isabel became known, in official historiography, as the "Redeemer" of Black people and responsible for the abolition of slavery.

In the film, the rebels are hunted down violently by the police, which happens to Capitu in the hospital where she works as a physician. She and other fugitives run through the forest and are rescued by the resistance of the Afrobunker, the urban *quilombo* where they take refuge. There are countless Black people at the place, different in their ways of being, in their skin tone, profession, and age. Antônio, the lawyer, and André, entrenched in the apartment, resist, but are pursued by Izildinha (Renata Sorrah), the building manager of the place

they live. Outside the apartment, André is killed by the police. Santiago, Isabel's assistant, leaves his job and goes to meet Ivan, one of the people responsible for the Afrobunker and his boyfriend, but the resistance fighters, fearing that he is an infiltrator, execute him. Antônio meets Capitu again, the two are arrested, but manage to escape with the help from resistance fighters. In the end, hundreds of Black people take to the streets to the sound of *O que se cala*, a song by Elza Soares, and this image is superimposed on those of other Black personalities. After the end credits, the film shows that the couple and their son had a happy fate in some other land.

By working with popular genres, such as horror and science fiction, the film reaches a dystopia to contemporary taste, with persecutions, hiding places, arbitrary acts and violence by the oppressor, composing a melodramatic narrative of the struggle between good and evil, punctuated by tragic circumstances, with comic relief and a happy ending, and by using middle-class Black protagonists, which is unusual in Brazilian audiovisual fiction. It is a narrative arrangement to the mainstream taste, constructing a melodrama of Black self-representation with injustices, trials, the hero's trajectory, and even contradictions and mistakes among them.¹⁰

The director's inspiration coming from American and Black series and directors is clear. There is an amalgam of atmospheres from series such as "Black Mirror" and *A História da Aia* with landscapes from *Pequena África* [Little Africa], a significant territory for African culture in Rio de Janeiro, where a decade ago excavations at *Cais do Valongo* revealed the places where slaves arrived and were sold. These landscapes appear in chase scenes through the alleys, on the scribbled, gray walls – canonical settings of cinematic dystopia – with the reproduction of advertisements for escaped and wanted captives from the 19th century, which evoke the persecutions of that time. It is there, passing by *Pedra do Sal*, an old reference point for slaves, that the Afrobunker is located. In contrast to the shadows of these territories of escape and resistance, the center of power is luminously oppressive with its rectilinear spaces of large, uninhabited glass buildings that also blatantly occupy other Brazilian cities.

The Afrobunker is the hiding place and spot of resistance where the film gives space for different characters – faced with the fear of being denounced by the White man Santiago – to cry out their pain of injustice and constant prejudice. It is the central moment of the film, in an intense psychodrama that appeals to identification and dialogue with the viewer in a moment of catharsis and engagement, which culminates in Santiago's execution.

According to Lázaro Ramos, he sought inspiration for the staging and lighting in *Moonlight* (2016), in the atmospheres of "If Baele Street Could Talk" (2019),

¹¹White fiction about Black people is obviously full of melodramas, such as Castro Alves's *Navio Negreiro* and many others, not only Brazilian.

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both by Barry Jenkins, and in Spike Lee and Jordan Peele, all Black American filmmakers, seeking the terror that is constructed in the police officers' faceless image. Nonetheless, the terror sought does not come from the staging, but from the situation that is created, unlike what happens in "Us" (2019), by Peele. At the same time, as the director addresses the Brazilian racial issue by resorting to recognition by law, a practice that has not developed properly in Brazil – it is part of American law and it was through it that segregation was ended there, amidst the persistence of violence and racism – we understand the concept of a protagonist lawyer who seeks compensation and citizenship through the law that would protect Black people from exile. Compensation was never considered in Brazil, except by José Bonifácio, who was in favor of Abolition at the time of Independence. As a rule, only farmers claimed their losses from the Emperor and the Republic. What we had after a century of Abolition was the criminalization of racism by the 1989 law, not always practiced and respected, and reparation policies such as the still contested quotas in universities or funding notices in the audiovisual sector – only one in 2016.

In the 1970s, the Black movement in Brazil gained strength in a more structured way, inspired by what was happening in the United States at a time of great turmoil. In addition, we have the powerful struggles for civil rights, after the assassination of Martin Luther King in 1968, motivated by his work in the cause and the militancy of intellectuals such as Angela Davis, of the Black Panthers, who would impact Lélia González and other Brazilian activists, as well as Zózimo Bulbul's artistic work, according to Noel Carvalho (2005).

What changes with *Executive Order* is the point of view from which the film and the characters move. The protagonist is a middle-class man, as is his wife, who is a physician. The plot censors and circumvents the established cliché images of Black people living in slums and/or with weapons. The slum is only mentioned in one dialogue and during a news report, reporting on the attacks, but it is distant. Ramos gave prominence to Black middle-class characters like himself, since they "are practically abandoned in the history of our cinema" (Roda Viva, 2022, free translation). In this way, another visual identity is sought, a geographic territory of its own, which at times will have appeared in exceptional characters from soap operas or TV series. The three protagonists have higher education and live in an apartment in *Botafogo*, not in communities or suburbs, where they are usually located in Brazilian mass-market audiovisual productions.

The ambition to reach a wide audience is noticeable, including outside Brazil, particularly in Africa, where it was released in early 2023, rekindling a dialogue that Brazilian cinema already experienced during the *Cinema Novo* period, or in the United States, where it was shown at Black film festivals. It is

clear, in Ramos' account, the importance of contact with the American cable TV channel Black Entertainment Television and its "sales strategies. . . it realized that there is an audience interested in stories linked to the Black population" (Ramos, 2022, p. 21, free translation). Put this way, for the director, seeing and being seen appear to account for the tragedy unleashed by the film.

At the same time, what can be seen in Ramos and what can be seen in the images of *Executive Order* is the experience he brings from the mass medium in which he performs, television, with the dramatic structure of its fictional products. Media wisdom can be seen in the composition of the actors and the team: co-director Flávia Lacerda comes from television, as does Daniel Filho, the producer, who gives the film the quality of setting and finish, noticeable from the presence of drones in the aerial and nighttime shots made from Botafogo Beach and also in the choice of the English actor Alfred Enoch, known for Harry Potter, son of an English actor with an Afro-Brazilian descendant mother, according to IMDb. In addition, we have in the film Taís Araújo, the charismatic Seu Jorge, the friendly chubby Mariana Xavier, his girlfriend, an Asian neighbor (Paulo Chun), highlighting the concern with diversity of representation, the consecrated television villains Renata Sorrah and Adriana Esteves, Black personalities such as D. Diva Guimarães, Emerica, not to mention 26 more Black people who make up the Afrobunker and the 77 actors in the cast, the majority of whom being also Black (Ramos, 2022, p. 48).

The director hired sociologist Aline Maia Nascimento to investigate what Black people did not want to see in the image as their own characteristics (Ramos, 2022, p. 13). This certainly contributed to the empathy that the film promoted among the Black and White viewers who watched it, since it is a film that also aims to speak to White people: it is about teaching them how to look at Black people.

The film addresses its audience from a new point of view, if we consider the characteristics of Brazilian films, according to the studies of Noel Santos Carvalho (2005, 2022) or João Carlos Rodrigues (2011); thus, it is not from the perspective of the violence of the oppressed or of resentment (Carvalho, 2005). The film also distances itself from conciliation based on narratives of cultural contributions – carnival, samba – according to Ismail Xavier, or from the supposedly happy sexual miscegenation that omits and erases conflicts (Xavier, 1993). It is not about examining the representations of Black people on television either, such as in the 2000 *A Negação do Brasil*, by Joel Zito Araujo, director that is also a screenwriter, producer, and curator who has recognized work for TV Globo. On the contrary, the film seeks to respond to the themes of the proposed research, and sheds light on the Princess Isabel syndrome, the

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good White human being who wants to help, the interracial relationship between Seu Jorge and his girlfriend, addressing other anchor points of the narrative, another perspective.

However, the dramatic structure does not escape the clichés of melodrama that overlap with dystopian essays: the central couple separated and sacrificed by adversity resists. The persecutors are stereotyped, caricatured, not without reason, given that they are consecrated soap opera villains. In the ending, the director creates a dramatic situation that parallels the murders of André (Seu Jorge), who was reported by the evil union, and Santiago, who leaves his job as Isabel's advisor at the Ministry of Sending Back and takes refuge in the Afrobunker, creating the expectation that the White man will successfully join the wronged heavy-melanin people, which does not happen. Santiago is there only because he is the boyfriend of one of the leaders – another diversity that the plot contemplates – but, misunderstood by the majority of Black people, he is executed. André, in Botafogo, is surrounded and killed by the police, the Sending Back henchmen. But Santiago, the White man, is also eliminated, not without violence or opposition, by those who fear for the safety of the *quilombo*. With the plot revolving around Santiago, the director stages the reverse of prejudice and its equally harmful consequences. Ramos thus sought to create a parallel between the irrationality of André's elimination by the police and Santiago's execution by Black people, but the comparison is of a different nature. Black people kill because of fear, to survive; police officers kill because that is their job, they are paid for it. The police have the rationality of power. The Black men in the Afrobunker fear being captured and do not want to believe that Santiago would be there because he loves a Black man. The construction of the scenes with Santiago, the entire sequence of his trip to the hideout and its consequences are disjointed, since his beloved, Ivan, one of the place leaders, forgets what happened right after the murder. There are many actions that simply build up, which must be shown to the viewer because they seem to respond to a progressive agenda of customs. Homosexual love, the support of a White man that only generates distrust, suggests that the issues concerning Black men can only be resolved by their own actions: it is not the White man's problem. The quick and lackluster scenes in this part are not clearly explained and do not have the time and development to make them understandable. They are there to show something and say something because it is necessary to capture the audience, the market, in the director's words, but they soon give way to another issue.

In short, *Executive Order* affirms the right to existence in *extremis*, in a dystopian scenario that leads to the proposal of taking action and raising

awareness. With this, or despite this, what stands out is the pedagogy on how Black people should be seen, reviewed, and see themselves.

At the end of the film screenings, over almost six months, especially on weekends, the film was applauded emotionally by the audience and had a social impact.¹²

MARS ONE

“You must have eyes to see this immense wealth of imagination that nestles under the everyday skin and to turn it into a movie”.

(Guimarães, 2021, free translation)

Mars One, awarded by the popular jury at the *Gramado* Festival in August 2022 as best film and winner of the special jury prize for “bringing back the affection,” a feeling shared by “the tears at the end of the festival screening and wherever it has been shown in a short and hard-fought space in the Brazilian circuit in 33 theaters” (Dias, 2022), did not have the same space and media repercussion as *Executive Order*. The film was screened at the Sundance Festival in Toulouse, France, and won the Best Picture award at the Black Star Film Festival in Philadelphia (BlackStar, 2022), an event dedicated entirely to Black films (Anic, 2022), a fact practically ignored in the Brazilian mainstream. It was because 19 critics from the Brazilian Academy of Cinema (2023) chose this work for the 2023 Oscar that it gained attention, and despite the mobilization to raise funds and awareness among voters at the American Academy, in addition to interviews for newspapers and blogs, the film did not pass the barrier of the 15 pre-selected for the Oscar in December of that year. Before that, however, the independent production company Array Releasing,¹³ owned by Ava DuVernay – the first Black American director to win a film festival, at Sundance in 2012, with *Middle of Nowhere* – bought the distribution rights for the United States, Canada, Great Britain, New Zealand, Australia, and for the American Netflix, premiering there in January 2023. According to Tilane Jones, the president of the collective, “Array is proud to distribute ‘Mars One,’ which marks the first time that Brazil has chosen a film by a Black Brazilian director to represent the country at the Oscars for best international feature” (Keslassy, 2022). As a result, in Brazil, the number of movie theaters interested in screening the film reached 69 and, according to Tela Viva (website), there was a 200% increase in audience (Campanha ‘De Minas para o mundo’, 2022).

¹²“Watching *Executive Order* in the cinema is a revolutionary act.” Comment on the Instagram of the movie. Retrieved on July 26, 2024, from <https://www.instagram.com/p/CdY1w-9p6Gj/>

¹³Array is an independent film distribution collective created in 2011, with resources from arts advocacy organizations, volunteers, and rebel member donors around the world. Retrieved on July 26, 2024, from <https://arraynow.com/about-array/>

Mars One does not address racial prejudice. Gabriel Martins, like his three colleagues from *Filmes de Plástico*, focuses on the dense being in the world that can emerge from the backyard, the street, the house, on the long bus rides that separate the city of Contagem from downtown Belo Horizonte, where there were movie theaters, university, a time for imagination, for imagined films that were created in the tedium of waiting for the trips. The observation and affections that flow from the supposed banality of a window where one sees a busy street and a gas station, in the short film *Fantasma* (2011), in *Pouco mais de um mês, ou Temporada*, by André Novais, in Martins' short films. As Guimarães observed about *Filme de Sábado*, Martins' short film summarizes much of his career, of *Filmes de Plástico*, and of *Mars One*, "when everything outside says no, the gaze turns to the backyard and sees there an immensity of possibilities" (Guimarães, 2021, free translation).

This is the central theme of *Mars One*, as it is also the central characteristic of the productions of these four college friends who created *Filmes de Plástico*, a suggestive name with an unpretentiousness that has led to unique films, recognized in Brazil and abroad at festivals such as Cannes and others. The dreams, fears, and the thread of life that is woven into the daily life of the family of Deivid (Cícero Lucas), a 12-year-old boy who, despite playing soccer well, wants to be an astrophysicist and colonize Mars, contrary to the plans of his father, the doorman Wellington (Carlos Francisco), a former alcoholic who attends the Alcoholics Anonymous Association (AAA) and works in an upper-middle-class building. Deivid shares his secret plan with his sister, Eunice (Camilla Damião), a young college student who helps him buy a ticket to see the conference by Black American astrophysicist Neil deGrasse Tyson, about Mars One, which the boy wants to be a part of in 2030. She, in turn, shares with him her love for her girlfriend Joana, her plan to leave home to live with her, and the fear of her parents' reaction. Tercia (Rejane Faria), the mother who takes care of the artist Tokinho's house, is the victim of a TV show prank at a downtown bar. Scared ever since, she believes she is the victim of a curse that could harm the family. Meanwhile, the father gets the help from a famous player so that Deivid can try out for Cruzeiro (football team); however, this would be on the same day as the conference and the boy does not want to miss it, just as he does not want to have football as his destiny. The father, hopeful about this possibility, leaves work for a few hours because of this event. He asks an assistant to replace him in the tasks at the building manager's house. However, he never imagined that the boy, who complained about the inequalities between his life and that of the residents of that building, would rob the manager's house in his absence. He is summarily dismissed, at the same time that Deivid causes an accident with his bike and

breaks his leg, putting an end to his future in football. The fired father finds out about his son's accident and, upset, goes back to drinking. After the storm of mismatched desires and dreams, Deivid is relieved, his father recovers and his mother realizes that fate spared her from a serious accident, while his sister continues with her girlfriend. Deivid builds a telescope with recycled material and gadgets from his grandfather, who, like him, was also inventive, and on the terrace of the house shows the family the stars and the possibility of reaching them and Mars. Life and its possibilities that can be thought of for everyone.

Limits, destinies, setbacks that everyone shares and that would tend, in other hands, to be treated with a drama that *Mars One* and *Filmes de Plástico* avoid. Limits can be drawn by social, racial, or gender situations, however, one must look at them, seek escapes, understanding, put oneself in the other's shoes. This is the political and affective gesture that the film proposes in a time of so much discord, of so many prejudices released with such violence and irrationality as those experienced in Brazil at that time. This is the empathetic insurrection proposed by the images, "showing Black people's lives without making it activism. The subject is there," as critic Inácio Araujo observes. However, "It is enough to see the way the father is treated when he loses his job – which reveals how this population and the lower social classes are treated in Brazil" (Araujo, 2022b, free translation).

Deivid is Gabriel Martins and his telescope, a sum of stories, personal experiences and the possible "do-it-yourself" to do what he has dreamed of since he was eight years old, as happened with him and his colleagues. Making 'plastic' films, films with the resources available to peripheral neighborhood young who like movies but don't see people like those they know nor the spaces where they live on the screen. Other lives, landscapes, and spaces like Tercia's birthday party, Eunice's dances, the family card game in the living room, the bicycle, the cafeteria, the tiredness, and discomfort on the bus. The doorman struggling with the building manager whom he tries to please and the cleaner who bothers him with criticisms of the unequal situation, the instability of Tercia's breadwinning as a housekeeper, and even the studious Black boy on the computer, with his big glasses. According to Gabriel, bringing this to the screen "is a state of mind, talking about characters in this condition of some kind of marginality, which is not the central place of the narratives, characters who occupy places that the world is not looking at" (Dias, 2022, free translation).

Thus, the characters are Black and live their lives, but they are all different, like the parents of Eunice's girlfriend who, having a better social status, welcome their daughter's relationship, whereas Wellington and Tercia do not understand at first. The tension is visible in the scene of Joana's first visit to Eunice's family,

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in front of the television where Cruzeiro, her father's team, and Atlético MG, her girlfriend's team, are playing a game and Atlético wins, which makes the father very upset. The behavior exposes not only the discomfort with the defeat, but also when he realizes the orientation of his beloved daughter. Small notes that are constructed with and far beyond racial issues.

If *Executive Order* spoke to a large audience by portraying the oppressive climate that was being experienced, *Mars One*, although initially resonating with a smaller audience, also fits into that same reality when, in the opening scenes, in the kitchen, the daughter who is washing the dishes criticizes her mother for not encouraging her brother to help with the housework, while the news of the 2018 election results can be heard on the radio in the background, but there are no comments. The characters, like the audience, experience that change, and they have to keep living. It is everyone's condition.

The bus and the cinema

Gabriel Martins grew up in Contagem when it was still a forest, the place where the family could buy the land which the house that was gradually built on. He began to think about making films when he was eight years old, although there was no movie theater there or nearby. With the encouragement from his parents, at the age of 12 they took him to *Tiradentes* Film Festival, where he was able to participate in workshops and watch *Bicho de Sete Cabeças* (2000), by Laís Bodansky. "That blew my mind. Understanding that there were actors who could transform themselves made sense to me" (Dias, 2022, free translation). At the age of 17, he attended the *Escola Livre de Cinema de Belo Horizonte*, where he made his first short film and met André Novais and Thiago Macêdo Correia. Maurílio Martins, the fourth partner of *Filmes de Plástico*, came to the film school that he attended on a scholarship. In a debate with other creators, he says that,

in order to go to college, I lived far from Belo Horizonte, spending more than an hour on the bus. Home and study, home and work, a place of experiences, of tedium and delays in moving between home and study. This social neglect, the government's neglect of public transportation, ends up creating an excuse to invent in dreamy and very stubborn minds. This is my story, it's the story of André and Maurílio, public transportation has always been a point of great invention. And these people that I saw, still awakened something very strong, parallel with the cinema that reached me. . . And when I started to think about what it would be like to make a film, what I saw in my daily life and what I accessed in the cinema were very opposite and very distant things, What I saw was mainly American cinema and some things

that came to me from Brazilian cinema and seemed very distant from me. In the late 90s and early 2000s, the Brazilian cinema I saw was quite limited in terms of themes and locations. (Universo Produção, 2021, free translation)

Plastic movies?

In the production company that was founded in 2009, the four partners take turns in the different roles of production, filming, and editing, using their own homes as locations, and relatives, neighbors, and the girlfriend as actors. Their stories are used as themes, as seen in Novais' films, themes that have been expanded as they have obtained more resources and the films have been well received in Brazil and abroad, as was the case with *Mars One*, the first solo feature film directed by Gabriel after *No Coração do Mundo* (2019), with Maurílio Martins.

The idea for the script came about in 2014 with the euphoria of the World Cup, but it changed according as Brazil changed. The feature film was only made because Gabriel was approved in the first and sole ANCINE notice in 2016 for low-budget affirmative action films aimed at black people, which, as always, took a long time to be implemented and was only filmed in 2018, under very different political conditions, which is reflected by the film even in the option for a future lived on Mars.

The last few years have been very difficult for film production, and for Gabriel, although there are international streaming services that have employed local directors and crews for films under his supervision, it is public money that can include more, even from an economic point of view, because it gives work to a lot of people. "When you make a film with public money, you can present the personality of your collective in a much more direct way, without mediators. Which is very important, even in terms of income distribution in Brazil" (Anic, 2022, free translation).

As you can see, Gabriel Martins is not making a racially affirming film, even though it exists precisely because it brings Black people and lower-middle-class populations to the screen in situations that are not generally seen in the mainstream.

Mars One is not a film that will constantly pressure you to talk about race, politics, or affirmation. It will engage you from another perspective, it will engage you through emotion, to make you understand how to empathize with others' situation. (Brito, 2022, free translation)

To create this empathetic environment, the film uses an almost documentary tone in the close-up shots of the characters, in the construction of the dialogues, in the

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acting of the cast and in the lighting, which is generally warm for family gatherings, between a warm orange-brown or a soft blue, since it is usually at night when everyone comes back from work that they get together, or in the bedroom when the siblings talk. The camera work is close to the characters, without unnecessary juggling.

As we can see, the training and imagination of these filmmakers and their work say a lot about Brazilian inequality and the social abyss that is consecrated and reiterated in the hegemonic culture and in media products where these populations as such do not exist. They serve the news as administrative problems, security problems, or tearful pity without consequences, or as laughable caricatures, generally hysterical or dangerous in different fictional formats, as can be seen in countless productions by the Globo conglomerate, although with some exceptions. In the academic sphere, continuing to be defined as peripheral, seen as outside the center, outside the culture, or below the established culture, is to ignore that they are precisely transforming decentralization into inclusive culture.

UNDER THE GUISE OF A CONCLUSION

New and vigorous perspectives are being seen in the mainstream through Brazilian films made by people from other spaces, social classes, and representation. As I have tried to show, each of the two films analyzed here, with their differences, offers other possible images of Black populations, free from the uncomplicated and unequivocally prejudiced clichés that have been historically manufactured and reiterated. This is about the possibility of, through new fables of distinct creations, making Black people fully “visible or not in a common space, endowed with a common language” as Rancière (2013) points out, based on Brazilian cinema. This is a path that still needs to be followed, but it is important to highlight that, at a time when Brazilian box-office takings reached their lowest level in 2022, with 1.6% occupancy in theaters, it was these films and directors who pointed to other images and possibilities for cinema made in the country.

This activity continues and new films are being made in adverse realities and showing increasingly adverse scenarios. In this sense, the delicacy and depth of *O dia que te conheci* [The Day I've Met You], by André Novais, produced in 2023, echoes the possibilities of ordinary life and affection in the existence of *Mars One*, which in turn echoes the combative attitude of 2023 *Mato Seco em Chamas* [Dry bush on fire] by Adirley Queiróz. There, Black or mixed-race women prisoners are the protagonists of their lives, affirming their existence in the affection and harshness of segregation, injustice, and inequality. Their insubordination and the way the film is staged figure and revert to a liberating gesture, presenting new dramatic, gender, and representational arrangements

that come to us from filmmakers from the metropolises' outskirts, whose vigor of gaze and criticism has to gain center stage, as happened with the significant audience of *Executive Order* and *Mars One*. ■

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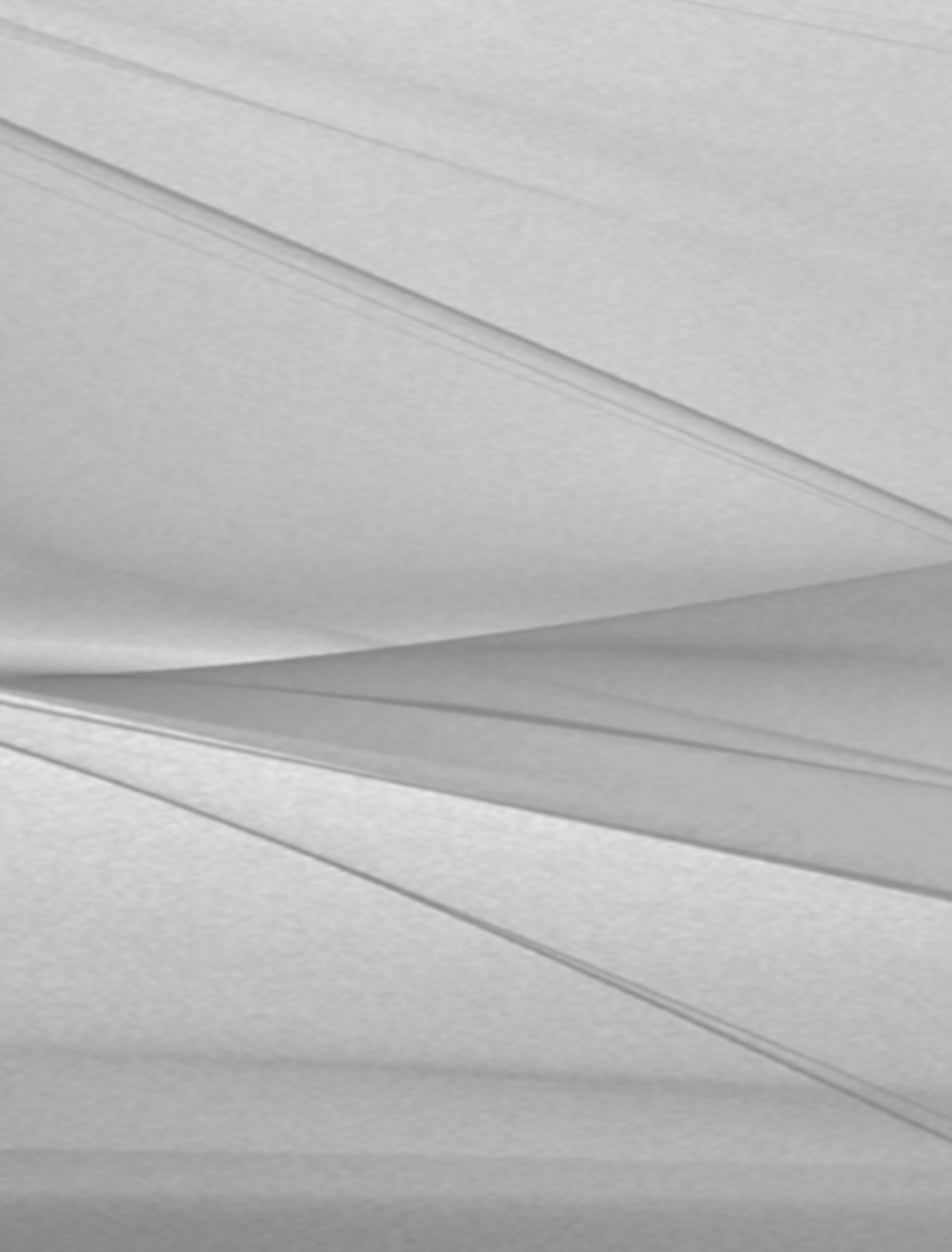
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INTERVIEW



Sailing but also diving: in-depth sound by José Luis Fernández

*Navegar, mas também mergulhar: o som em
profundidade por José Luis Fernández*

Interview with

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THE INTERVIEW WITH Professor José Luis Fernández highlights a pivotal moment in his research as explored in his work *Las Cuatro Revoluciones Invisibles* (2024), delving into profound reflections on the sound industry, particularly at the intersection with an interactive and challenging audience. His current contributions to the study of sound/audio mediatization focus on the phenomenon of podcasts, questioning the revolutionary nature of the medium itself while revisiting characteristics present since the early days of the radio industry. José Luis Fernández holds a Ph.D. in Social Sciences from the University of Buenos Aires, where he serves as a consulting professor. He is also a former president of the Argentine Association of Semiotics.

His work invites readers to navigate the waves, but also to dive deep into an obscure ocean that remains largely unexplored by the academia, the market, and the audience. According to the author, understanding the profound impact of the sound industry on society is crucial for grasping contemporary culture and politics, while the products stemming from this industry are significant tools in the construction of individual identity.



MATRIZes: What was the main motivation—or curiosity—that led you to begin studying sound revolutions and their respective audiences?

José Luis Fernández: I belong to the last generation that, as children, played at home having the radio as background noise, controlled by our parents. There is my first, non-melancholy memory of the interaction between social action and a reception that, albeit somewhat distracted, left vivid memories in me. From that emerged the first intuitions about a mode of reception that differed from what would later be imposed by television: even without supposedly focused attention, meaning was still generated.

Already installed in the study of mass media, it seemed to me that radio discursivity was underappreciated and more nostalgically evoked than investigated from a semiotic perspective. In my first book, there was already a chapter titled “Telephone, Phonograph, Radio: The Radio in its Systems.” Sound media was an inadvertent system and hearing was a mythologized mode of reception. This gave rise to the idea of the revolutionary in the sociocultural aspect of sound/audio mediatizations, and for over 30 years, I have been studying and publishing on various related phenomena, from their relationship with urban spaces to their impact on the expansion of the diverse lives of music.

MATRIZes: Between the popular mass revolutions and those initiated by the so-called “audionauts,” we see a clear shift from the collective distribution of sound/recording industry products towards individualized consumption. Based on your observations, what is the biggest challenge this consumer presents to the industry?

JLF: I think there’s a fundamental aspect here, dating back at least to the 1930s, which has recently become more apparent with the expansion of digital platforms and networked lives: the mobile listener is at an inevitable intersection between the socially mediated production of meaning and the uniqueness of their mode of reception. Cultural industries have generated two types of products for their audiences: narrative and argumentative discursivity, which demands attention and continuity, as seen in major narrative and essayistic works, narrative cinematography and its offshoots in radio drama and soap operas, and organized information, more mythical than deep; and mosaic discursivity, brought back by Abraham Moles, constructed through the articulation of discursive capsules that do not propose a general meaning for each text but at most a certain general trend in the sociocultural sphere.

There are different types of capsules: news flashes, music, weather reports, sports results, horoscopes, cooking recipes, and more. Central mediatizations

based on mosaics include newspapers and magazines, nearly all radio, and public spaces—a system of mediatizations also largely forgotten.

Sound/audio mediatizations are based on mosaics, and their reception is well-suited for various mobility situations: the sound/audio ecosystem connects stable-format capsules, such as news and popular music, among others, with the nuances of conversations or audio message exchanges, whether emotional or professional in nature. This transition is revolutionary and remains so, as it continues to be largely unrecognized by the academic system.

MATRIZes: Regarding the use of the word “audionaut,” at first, it leads the reader to draw a direct parallel with the term “internet user,” (*internaut*) conveying the idea of a technologically mediated subject who navigates the waves but also interacts within their space. What is the most defining characteristic of being an audionaut, and how does it differ from the “listener” that record labels and streaming platforms still use to refer to the audience?

JLF: In my view, the two major technological revolutions with disruptive consequences across discursive practices are the mediatizations of sound/audio and those of digital media. Both permeate the entire socio-cultural and economic life: from spatial to temporal, from commercial transactions to information exchanges, from musical to fictional, from entertainment to academic life, from the utmost macro- to the absolute micro-social. Sound/audio revolutions took place earlier and have been linked to mobility from a very early stage, starting in the 1930s and expanding significantly from the 1960s with miniaturization. Therefore, the audionaut predates the internet user, although the former has also expanded from the latter’s position. The “listener” is a functionalist creation of the figure of the receiver, based on the idea of group reception in front of the audio receiver, excluding musical and telephonic experiences. This is evidenced by the earliest advertisements for radio and phonograph devices, with groups listening in front of speakers, after an initial phase that relied on headphones and amplifier tubes. The listener would engage with serenity, while the audionaut is in motion, mixing moments of distraction and attention, building personal syntheses of meaning that can be articulated with their community. This multi-skilled receiver is similar to a newspaper reader on public transport or a passenger engaging in roadside communications. Such skills are essential for navigating the Internet and its various tangled up platforms. From this perspective, cinematography is a system linked to the arts, while television is an audiovisual parenthesis that fascinated academia and politics, but concealed other reception processes that are only now taking the spotlight.

MATRIZES: Today, we see a push for the mediatization of sound content by the distributors themselves. Playlists, albums, and podcasts deliver visual content with the same intensity as audio content. Do you think the mediatization process between “listening and sharing” is the main mechanism through which consumers influence the industry? Is it the mediatization of sound that defines the success of a content/channel/artist?

JLF: First of all, the socio-cultural and economic system has always tried to intervene in pure sound/audio discourse from the very beginning. However, it never managed to make it disappear; it only caused its importance to become increasingly overlooked.

The telephone, phonograph, and radio ecosystems are the core of the music industry. Since the 1930s, there have been records of phone requests to radio stations asking for musicians to attend or to broadcast their recordings. The digital ecosystem challenges the industrial music system, which is based on the centralized production of musical themes approximately 3 to 4 minutes long, covering a wide variety of genres and regions, and supported by advertising in the media. Since the 1960s, listening to music has been an on-the-move activity.

There is no musical success outside the mediatization of its texts. The novelty of the digital age is the intervention of so-called users—what I refer to as audio-nauts—who can produce, remix, intervene, and distribute musical products without altering the format of the music. For now, this growth has largely occurred independently of the industries, which are now regaining ground, but they must buy already finished and highly successful products, which is more challenging for them and reduces profitability from the artist’s path to reaching the masses.

This part of the revolutionary process is still ongoing.

MATRIZES: The podcast format is an important subject of your studies in your latest book, and although it has broken away from some production and consumption patterns, it’s still difficult to understand just how revolutionary it is. Could you give us some examples of innovations brought by podcasts and the impact they have had on the sound industry?

JLF: Podcasting is a new form of mediatization that seeks to capitalize on the evident growth of streaming platforms dedicated to musical sound. This process is still unfolding, and we should be seeing its full extent over time. For now, there is a clear progressive enrichment of its multi-genre discursive offerings. In the book, I clarify two common misconceptions: on one hand, there is an attempt to link podcasts to radio, but I believe the fact that they are recorded is fundamental for differentiation. On the other hand, the *podcasting* ecosystem being built is not directed at other sound media but is related to

platforms and influencers. Therefore, it seems to me that it is not part of the sound/audio ecosystem but rather another product within the platform, and in that sense, only competes to capture listeners within the already established sound/audio ecosystem. Of course, the significance of podcasts will be defined by their ability to attract audiences, not by the enthusiasm of producers and academics who study them. How can podcasts be compared to radio? By studying the similarities and differences in their discursive exchanges, both technologically and in terms of genre and style, as well as the listening proposals and uses, whether successful or not.

MATRIZes: TikTok has also become an important “mediator of success” for both music and artists, creating trends among consumers of dance related content, in particular. Additionally, the platform offers a series of editing tools that alter the original sound content before distributing, mixing, and creating new music/sounds. Do you think the productive capacity of consumers—as well as audio users—on social media makes them competitors of record labels and producers? Given that content created by them can go viral more than a song produced by a record label, for example, does the audionaut become a fundamental part of the creative sound industry?

JLF: I believe this goes beyond the contributions that can be made to music from a platform like TikTok. I believe this platform will get to the point of competing against YouTube, which remains the largest music distribution platform, besides all its other offerings. It’s important to consider that much of the music distribution on YouTube is minimally audiovisual, often featuring just a few photographs or images of the album cover or performers. At least for now, it’s not clear that the audiovisual aspect is what matters most in the music/YouTube relationship. In any case, once again, it will be the content creators and their various audiences who shall define if music will become stable on TikTok.

MATRIZes: Algorithmic logic has a significant influence on the individualized experience of the audience, but do you think the audionaut is capable of hacking this imposition, or is all consumption and interaction already predetermined by the network?

JLF: This is a crucial question, both due to the growth of algorithms and the resistance to their dominance. For now, at least in music and radio, the situation appears to have reached a standstill: there are as many playlists curated by the platforms as there are by users, and both coexist within the individual. This could be an important example of these new relationships between individuals and the sociocultural, without either area being imposed on the other. But we



must always remember that social sciences study the sociocultural, and the individual represents a boundary. I'm aware that the social sciences are fascinated by the individual, but also believe that this is one of the sources of our current weakness in understanding the genuine transformations that are occurring.

MATRIZes: We often talk about new formats, but let's go back to radio, which still holds an important place within the media ecosystem. What reasons do you attribute to this resilience/consistency of radio even after so many transformations in the production, reception, and interaction with sound content?

JLF: I believe that radio is destined to persist as long as large segments of the population are interested in maintaining contact with their socio-cultural lives while on the move: driving cars, riding bicycles, motorcycles, or skateboards, or simply walking. This fluctuating attention allowed by sound capsules that don't require visual content is a fundamental condition for the resilience of radio and its derivative products.

MATRIZes: Do you believe it's possible to pinpoint the most important revolution in the history of the sound industry? That is, the revolution that brought the most significant impacts and transformations to existing models. Or would you say that these revolutions have meshed up into one "great permanent revolution," and that the divisions serve only for thought organization?


JLF: To simplify, while still synthesizing the entire process: the capture of sound and its manipulation to build different audio positions is a total and transversal revolution, only comparable to the digital revolution, which builds on its achievements and adds a few new ones. This sound revolution discursively structures the ongoing permanent revolution of its audiences, whose figure is the audionaut—permanent because it is still unfolding, and its limits cannot be seen. The two major revolutions necessary as discursive supports for these transversal revolutions are the radio discourse revolution, as the first live mass discourse, and the popular revolution of expanding and defending the music format as the core of the great entertainment industry of its time. In my opinion, such revolutions constitute a transformative socio-cultural ecosystem, one that the academic system has failed to grasp fully, just as the major industrial conglomerates of sound and audio are being forced into a transformation they cannot fully sustain, or only partially endure.

MATRIZes: Beyond podcasts and their developments, what do you observe as the most innovative sound products that you still want to investigate?

JLF: There is a general phenomenon that impacts almost everything mentioned above: the platformization of sound/audio. We have seen some of its consequences and while others should be expected, not every novelty will be revolutionary. As I mentioned earlier, for now, I don't see podcasts as related to the entire sound/audio ecosystem but rather to the platform in general.

Within the mediatization of sound, two very different aspects catch my attention, and I plan to investigate them. On the one hand, voice commands, which seem to be expanding despite being at odds with the general circumstances of social life. It seems absurd to me that we might all spend our lives giving orders to machines, as if the role of an assistant/secretary were accessible to everyone. The idea of this endless murmuring strikes me as dystopian. However, I believe that in various situations of loneliness or, even more so, in active and self-managed mobility, they could occupy an important place in everything related to the Internet of Things. On the other hand, at the cutting edge of sound/audio discursive exchanges, I find the most innovative aspect of radio to be the presence of recorded fragments that interact with live broadcasters. Thanks to sound manipulation software and apps, even drivers are sometimes forced to respond to interventions proposed by the operator, often outside the script. I believe there is the potential for new spatial-temporal discursive games that lead to a transformative effect on radio, bringing about the new discursive presence of the operator, who until now was merely a technical support. Revolutions make path to new positions within the ecosystems touched by them.

MATRIZES: Finally, how are your projects and publications in Portuguese coming along?

JLF: I've been in contact with colleagues from Brazil and Portugal for many years. I've already presented some of them at conferences in Argentina and Brazil. Additionally, I've published in Brazilian journals, though always in Spanish. However, only now has the opportunity arisen to have my work translated into Portuguese. To me, this is a great opportunity to enhance interaction with the teams working in our two countries. 

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AGENDA
IN COMMUNICATION RESEARCH



Youth political practices: Foundations and precepts

Práticas políticas juvenis: Fundamentos e preceitos

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ABSTRACT

We critically review research trajectories on the political practices of Brazilian youth since the 2000s. With a cultural and communicational emphasis, we address how the fields of aesthetics and politics are intertwined in these processes, highlighting the main emerging epistemic and theoretical interlocutors and operators. We conclude that youth resistance has been expanding and erasing the classic concepts of politics through new uses of culture, technologies, communication, and aesthetic experiences. As they denounce inequalities and necropolitics, they negotiate with certain institutionalities and constitute themselves as subjects, occupying municipalities and networks with their political bodies.

Keywords: Youth, aesthetic-political practices, politicities, technicities, urban cultures

RESUMO

Este artigo apresenta uma revisão crítica de trajetórias de pesquisa sobre práticas políticas de juventudes brasileiras desde os anos 2000. Com uma ênfase cultural e comunicacional, aborda-se como os campos da estética e da política se entrelaçam nesses processos, destacando os principais interlocutores e operadores teóricos e epistêmicos deles emergentes. Conclui-se que as resistências juvenis vêm dilatando e rasurando os conceitos clássicos de política por meio de novos usos da cultura,



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das tecnologias, da comunicação e das experiências estéticas. Ao mesmo tempo em que denunciam as desigualdades e a necropolítica, negociam com algumas institucionalidades e se constituem como sujeitos/as, ocupando as cidades e as redes com seus corpos políticos.

Palavras-chave: Juventudes, práticas estético-políticas, politicidades, tecnicidades, culturas urbanas

THIS ARTICLE SEEKS to carry out a critical review of research trajectories in the field of youth and urban cultures developed since the mid-2000s, with an emphasis on monitoring and analyzing the political practices of Brazilian youth, with a focus on the city of São Paulo. The particularity of these studies is centered on the aesthetic and cultural focus as the analytical guide of the investigations carried out. From this epistemological marker emerges both the selection of actions carried out by collectives and young militants, activists and *artists*, as well as unique theoretical-methodological perspectives, which, as Martín-Barbero (2000) advocated in 1987, seek to locate and dialogue with the practices and meanings of the so-called “new political movements, new social subject-actors, new spaces” (p. 76, free translation) that are emerging. In this sense, we are interested in detailing some of the conceptual operators with which we work, as well as indicating the reading perspectives arising from our different field experiences.

It should be emphasized that the critical review proposed here privileges the theoretical-conceptual balance that underlies and results from the dialogue with the empirical results of the research we have carried out. Priority is given to the cross-cutting nature of the approaches taken by each of us along this path—as youth researchers since the mid-2000s¹—to the detriment of the possible particularities of the choices made. Finally, we chose some authors who were considered our precursors, and with them we sewed together, diagonally, the reflection proposed for this article.

The communicational and aesthetic-cultural dimensions of politics and the nuclear nature of self-narratives, expressed by young people in their practices, behaviors, and values, offer us what Martín-Barbero (2022) calls “observatories of the social.” In addition, we believe that some important shifts have been made in relation to other works by contemporary *youthologists*. Firstly, we took a plural approach to youths, in the plural, so as to account for the particularities and intersections between the diversities observed. We also considered the presence of identity markers in the configuration and unfolding of such actions, but paying attention to indicators that locate and intersect these young people

¹ These trajectories can be identified through the following Research Groups in the Directory of Research Groups of the Conselho Nacional de Desenvolvimento Científico e Tecnológico (DGP/CNPq): Imagens, metrópoles e culturas juvenis (Jovens Urbanos. 2006); Juvenália: questões estéticas, geracionais, raciais e de gênero na comunicação e no consumo (2015); and URBESOM – Culturas urbanas, Música e Comunicação (2019). It should be noted that both are linked to the onsejo Latinoamericano de Ciências Sociales (CLACSO), through the Youth and Childhood Working Group.

in their processes of subjectivation and active confrontation of the subjection and vulnerability they experience.

In the same way, it seemed essential to us to listen to the leading roles of young people, including in the production of their own representations. We are therefore situated in a reflexive place that operates *with* young people, and not *about* or *for* them. The proposal of the methodology of recursive problematization (Fernández, 2013) corroborates this investigative pillar, by privileging the enunciation of open and procedural analytical fields rather than the application of previous conceptual frameworks. Drawing on Deleuzian sources that take *rhizomatic* multiplicities as a guide to conduct, and including Foucauldian recursiveness, it is considered that the instruments—the tools—are built along the research path.

It is therefore a look at embodied practices, in which corporealities and subjectivities have been key elements, in which young people occupy the spaces of the streets and networks, also constituting a field of disputes over meaning, self-expression and political authorship. It is striking that these political actors defend collective and horizontal management processes for their organizations and experiences. At times, personal expression seems to give way to expressiveness that only makes sense when shared, displacing the concept of individual leadership. There is an ever-present *we* there, creating links between transnational movements and activism and local *biocultural* resistance (Valenzuela, 2022).

As Garcia Canclini (2022) notes, when referring to the fundamental inversions made by Martín-Barbero when analyzing youth from the late 1990s onwards, the “new uses of digital technologies,” the “destructuring of the urban” and the “disorientation of schools in the face of these mutations” signal a mutation and a broader questioning of “what we still call democracy,” as well as demanding “reincorporating the informative value of the sensitive and the visible into knowledge” (Garcia Canclini, 2022, pp. 12-13).

Based on these assumptions, we believe that youth cultural actions are a privileged locus for political actions, and that the aesthetic-cultural dimensions become a fundamental indicator for understanding youth political practices in contemporary times. In other words, the aim is to understand the political dimensions embedded in aesthetic-cultural processes carried out, interpreted, and experienced by youth collectives, activists, and artists in large urban centers. The hypothesis is that these practices are linked both to more institutionalized fields—public policies, the third sector, private initiative, regional and international bodies, and social movements—and have historically moved into everyday life, through interventions with a certain degree of independence and autonomy (Borelli & Aboboreira, 2011; Borelli, Rocha, & Oliveira, 2009). This is an approach



that privileges youth practices of resistance and existence, characterizing them as a counter-hegemonic, anti-systemic, critical, and *protagonistic* field of action that produces meaning and acts out new orders of the sensible.

This theoretical-conceptual balance, which has been refined over the last few decades and is the result of the research experiences developed so far, allows us to highlight three analytical axes. The first, centered on conceptions of youth in Latin American contexts, emphasizes the links between culture and politics, public policies, and forms of resistance/counter-hegemonic actions that run counter to the advances of necropolitics and other policies that increase inequality and exclusion. The second analytical axis focuses on urban cultures, urbanities, and technicities, understanding the city as an arena for the making and articulation of flows and networks of citizenships and sensitivities. Finally, the third axis deals with communicational (aesthetic-political) border actions, articulated with audiovisibility policies and processes of youth subjectivation, contemplating corporealities, political subjectivities, political bodies, as well as politicities, *artivisms* and new forms of networked political action.

YOUNG PEOPLE/YOUTHS, CULTURE-POLITICS

Two classic references—“youth is just a word” (Bourdieu, 1983, p. 151) and “juvencity/juvenilization” (Morin, 1984, p. 149, free translation)—originally anchored our reflection and have continued to be present even as the dialogue has expanded, particularly in relation to the approaches of British cultural studies and their Latin American resonances: youths always in the plural and young people who are historically situated, but articulated to local, national and global contexts. Young people who propose diversified alternatives for *being together* and acting in a collective and collaborative way, on the streets and in networks; who affirm the need for independence and autonomy, but establish relationships with different institutionalities, through access to social policies, public or private, governmental or non-governmental; who point to the possibility of exercising new counter-hegemonic political practices of resistance, in which culture and aesthetics are fundamental mediators of the actions and strategies adopted.

This is a multiple conception of youth, dynamically constructed from a relational perspective, crossed by historical conditions of class, ethnicity, race, gender, and sexuality, being a migrant or a refugee, living in this or that area of the city, occupying places, and becoming/consolidating themselves as young people, in process, in the face of events to which they are subjected and their own actions, through which they deal with the confrontations in their daily lives.

Faced with this relational perspective for conceiving of youths—and becoming young in the process—we set out in search of links between youths, aesthetics, culture, politics, and new forms of resistance/counter-hegemonic actions. To this end, we have taken on the challenge of contributing some answers to a fundamental question posed by Martín-Barbero (2022, p. 33, free translation): “Is there anything really new about today’s youth?” In this regard, we consider it important to explain, at this point, the conceptions of culture selected, which are also capable of responding to the theoretical-methodological challenge related to what is *new*, in line with another indication from Martín-Barbero (2000), the category of “nocturnal map.”

In this sense, we consider it fundamental, in order to anchor youth narratives—here configured as a privileged methodological locus for the fieldwork carried out—to conceive of culture as reading, writing and text (Bakhtin, 1993) understood as forms and contents, dialogically inseparable and historically contextualized. Culture is also understood as a multiple and polyphonic discursive fabric (Bakhtin, 2008), which responds to the principle of *listening to each other*, a significant key to understanding the relationships that young people establish between themselves, with others and with the surrounding environment, as well as the connection between subjects and researchers and young protagonists.

Culture is also conceived as a non-exclusionary space of intersection between writing/images/oralities and illustrated/official, popular (Bakhtin, 1987) and media cultural forms, as well as a principle for observing and analyzing the different productions, uses and appropriations of young people in the city of São Paulo. Discourse, language, and narrative are instruments of power, but also points of resistance, circumvention, and transgression; they are characterized as a “a field of force within which different ideologies, styles, and ideologies contend” (Brandist, 1995, p. 2). Through dialogue, there is the possibility of breaking away from one-dimensionality (Bakhtin, 1999) and of searching for gaps, discontinuities, the unsaid and the repressed and buried traces (Zavala, 1996): fundamental assumptions for explaining the possible mediations between culture and political practices, youth cultural production and uses.

From the concept of culture as a discursive, multiple, and polyphonic fabric (Bakhtin, 1987), we see culture as a particular form of life and conflict, as symbolic practices of resistance and contestation, but also of consent and negotiation, present in all aspects of everyday life (Gramsci, 2000, 2002; Williams, 1992, 1997). This includes artistic and intellectual activities, cultural products/production and their forms and processes of production and appropriation, negotiation, and struggle for the constitution of hegemonies. Culture not as synonymous with erudition, nor as a field divided into popular, mass, cultured



and illustrated dimensions, but as a place of conflicting mixtures, resulting from complex negotiation processes (material and symbolic) and diverse interests (individual and collective) between social classes, class fragments, population segments, and lifestyles.

In this reflection on the privileged place of culture in collective youth actions, the centrality of reflection on popular culture stands out: the popular constituted by critical dialogue with historical strands, which sometimes relegate it to the condition of folklore, sometimes electing it as the basis of political resistance of the subalternized, in opposition to the dominant. Popular culture emerges as a privileged space for reflection on the links between culture and politics, between the symbolic and power—popular culture not as an expression *en bloc* of a homogeneously constituted class in relation to another, but the popular entangled in a web of conflicts, interests, and negotiations, at the focus of the debate. This is Gramsci's conception of hegemony (2000, 2002) and the way in which Williams (1997) chose him as one of his precursors, transforming *hegemony* into a category that can contain a “seed of life” to be “received” and “recreated” (Williams, 1969, p. 346).

Therefore, based on the explanation of these references, it was possible to decide the search paths and choices for the design of the methodological protocols adopted, as well as the justifications for the use of field research instruments, such as the selection of qualitative techniques related to ethnographic observation, in-depth interviews, the construction of an image/audiovisual collection, among others. We highlight the principle that a methodological proposal should not be delimited a priori, but built through the process of defining epistemological, theoretical, and conceptual presuppositions. This results in an exercise in *reflexivity* about how and what the paths of discovery were (Lopes et al., 2002, 2006), which presupposes taking a position in relation to doing science and the epistemic relationships that are established between subject and object.

In this sense, the dialogue with Williams (1969), who repeatedly indicates the need to update traditional conceptions—articulating residual and emerging traits—so that they can be given their historical particularity (Williams, 1997), is taken up again as an epistemological principle. This premise was reiterated decades later by Martín-Barbero (2000), who proposed taking up Williams' assumption—redrawing a map of “basic concepts”—by building a “nocturnal map”:

Once the guarantees sought by inertia have been lost and the markers that demarcated the instances have been displaced, what we need to draw is the map of the “basic concepts” that Williams is talking about. However, I don't think this is possible

without “changing places,” without changing the place from which the questions are formulated . . . accepting that the times don’t favor synthesis, that we can only sense and suspect that there are still unexplored areas even in the closest reality. . . A map that serves to question the same things—domination, production, and work—but from the other side: the gaps, consumption, and leisure. A map that does not serve to escape, but to recognize the situation from the mediations and the subjects. (Martín-Barbero, 2000, p. 300, free translation)

It is understood that the challenge of changing the place, questioning from another point of view, has been faced in the research carried out, and some choices can be reported in order to reiterate some assumptions. The first of these refers to considering the principle that youth narratives—or the “discursive fabric” (Bakhtin, 1999)—should be incorporated as a methodological locus; not just talking about young people or about young people, but conceiving a multiplicity/polyphony of youth voices that are competent to bring out and guide the direction of the research, and thus respond to a basic question, transformed into a research problem: what do young people think about themselves, their surroundings, their own ways of being and living and the others around them? What do young people say about the possible links between culture and politics?

The second assumption involves repositioning the relationship between culture and politics in a way that is not fissile, as it has been hegemonically treated in many epistemological approaches. To this end, we propose to go against trends that conceive of culture and politics as distinct and exclusionary places, in scenarios related to both the production of knowledge and everyday practices; to question the restriction of culture to the fields of anthropology, the arts, aesthetics and language studies and the notion that politics could do without its symbolic, imaginary matrices; refute notions of culture emptied of power relations and political activity; challenge the political as the exclusive place for reflection on power; contradict perspectives that situate politics as a privileged and restricted locus for macro actions and practices related, for example, to domination and the class struggle.

Consequently, and going against previous trends, it can be assumed—based on the dialogue established between Martín-Barbero (1987) and Gramsci (2000, 2002)—that culture and politics merge, since culture comes to be conceived as a “strategic field of struggle and a space for articulating conflicts” (Martín-Barbero, 1987, p. 85, free translation). This reiterates the concept previously announced, in which culture is made explicit as a particular way of life and of confronting differences and as symbolic and political practices, which can manifest themselves as resistance and contestation, or as negotiation and



² Also noteworthy are the works of Silva (1992), Vargas and Román-Velázquez (2011), Badenes (2007), Cuesta Moreno and Meléndez-Labrador (2017), Borelli, Rocha et al. (2009), Borelli and Freitas (2009), Borelli and Freire Filho (2008), Borelli and Rocha (2008), Pereira, Neves and Budag (2021), Prysthon (2007), Herschmann and Fernandes (2014), among others.

³ The formation and consolidation of two important institutional spaces stand out in the constitution of this subfield of Communication: the founding of the Communication and City Working Group within the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers (ALAIIC) in 1994, initially proposed by Rossana Reguillo and still in force today; and the founding in 2005 (under the leadership of Silvia H. S. Borelli) of the Communication and Urban Cultures Research Group at the Brazilian Society for Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (Intercom). S. Borelli, the Communication and Urban Cultures Research Group” (now Communication, Technicities and Urban Cultures), at the Brazilian Society of Interdisciplinary Communication Studies (Intercom), which is still in force today. Throughout their careers, both have been privileged spaces for reflection, debate, publication and joint research that has deepened and unfolded the fruitful field of urban communication and urbanities, such as youth and youth cultures, urban representations and imaginaries, power and territorialities, methodologies for the study of cities and urban communication media, corporealities and aestheticization, political actions and urban artivisms, migrations, consumer practices, cultural-artistic productions in the city, among others.

consent. Culture, therefore, is a way of life, of diverging conceptions and worldviews and of fighting for the constitution of hegemonies and counter-hegemonies (Gramsci, 2002).

URBANITIES, TECHNICITIES AND YOUTHS

In this path of research and reflection on young people, the urban issue and urbanities is another vector that has been central. In the intersections between socio-cultural, communicational and political aspects *in* and *of* cities, the theme of urban communication (Cuesta Moreno & Meléndez-Labrador, 2017; Reguillo, 1995) presents itself as a field of research that, since the 1990s, has been a privileged locus for investigating and analyzing prominent issues in the field of communication, such as symbolic universes and urban imaginaries, cities and youth cultural production, socialities and interactions engendered in and by cities, hybridizations between local and global, itineraries, urban routes and communication flows between streets and networks.

Although broad and with different nuances, concepts and methods, this gaze and attentive listening to urbanities in order to reflect on young people resonates and dialogues with the reflections of Garcia Canclini (2001), Sarlo (2004), Martín-Barbero (2004, 2022), Garcia Canclini et al. (2012), and Reguillo (1995, 2000), since it highlights the fundamental articulation between urban lifestyles, culture, and communication². Although the approaches, methods and theoretical contributions are diverse, there is a concern to reveal the complex relationships between cities and their vicissitudes based on media cultures, in which sonorities, visualities, corporealities, identities, consumption, uses of the city, cultural practices, sensories and affections are placed as vectors of social communicability in everyday life³.

The epistemic and theoretical-conceptual impact—in Latin American communication and cultural studies in the 1990s—caused by the consideration of political-cultural mediations (Martín-Barbero, 2000, 2004) beyond the media and “mediacentrism” (Badenes, 2007) also brought about the emergence of new themes, questions and places of observation, including cities and urban cultures as communication objects, formulating the subfield that has been called “urban communication” (Álvarez Pedrossian et al, 2021; Cuesta Moreno & Meléndez-Labrador, 2017). According to Badenes (2007, p. 3, free translation), this subfield focuses on “the uses of communication, the various modes of symbolization, production and consumption of collective meanings in a society”⁴, seeing communication as “a cultural process of production, reproduction, circulation and uses of social meanings, and as a question of

subjects and not just apparatuses” (p. 1, free translation)⁵. These notions have served as an important contribution to our reflections and research on urban young people.

From a perspective based on everyday life (Williams, 1997) and on unforeseen, cunning and ordinary actions (Certeau, 1994), we emphasize the notion of urbanities (Borelli et al., 2009; Pereira & Paiva, 2023), 2009; Pereira & Paiva, 2023), which is concerned not only with looking at the city in its official and structural dimension (in socio-economic, urbanistic and institutional terms), but also with focusing on the practiced city, listening to the plots that are constituted in everyday life, which are often invisible, subalternized and excluded from the hegemonic circuits of the planned city. We do not disregard, for example, the São Paulo of official history, of monuments, of road structure, the result of a model of European modernization implemented by managers, urban planners and architects and referred to the great metropolises, such as Paris or Vienna in the 19th century, or to urban models articulated to the modern and segregating functionalism of 20th century American cities. The notion of urbanity incorporated in this text leads us to observe and interpret the ways in which young people appropriate the city, create interactions and socialities, (re)territorialize spaces and compose audiovisual, digital, sound and image cultural productions, which are intertwined with the languages of the urban configuration itself, between its fixes and flows (Santos & Becker, 2006). In this process, cities are not merely a backdrop, but interact with subjects, bodies, aesthetics, and itineraries, engendering complex political and dynamic meanings that can be thought of through the notion of an urban palimpsest (Martín-Barbero, 2022), in which marks are printed and constantly overlaid by others. In such contexts, young people “break and re-imagine the meaning of coexistence, unmaking and remaking faces and figures of identity” (Martín-Barbero, 1998, p. 14, free translation)⁶.

In the 1990s, Carrión (1996, p. 45) wrote a presentation for a dossier in the journal *Chasqui* on “Communication in the Urban Space”, in which he emphasized the city as a symbolic structure, as well as a forum for communication and information. In dialogue with this perspective, we have understood the city as an arena (Borelli & Rocha, 2008), in the interrelationship between subjects, spaces, actions and imaginaries in which the city is not a background or an object in itself, but something dynamic (Reguillo, 1995) and in whose imbrications “things are produced” (Álvarez Pedrosian et al., 2021). Young people’s strategies for being in the world and in cities “clearly allow them to be associated with an effectively communicational field of action” in the ways they experience and interpret “metropolitan life, with all its conflicts and all its charms [which]

⁴ In the original: “los usos de la comunicación, los diversos modos de simbolización, producción y consumo de significaciones colectivas en una sociedad”.

⁵ In the original: “proceso cultural de producción, reproducción, circulación y usos de significados sociales, y como cuestión de sujetos y no sólo de aparatos”.

⁶ In the original: “rompen y reimaginan el sentido del convi-vir deshaciendo y rehaciendo los rostros y las figuras de la identidad”.



means, in these terms, perceiving the city itself as a medium and young bodies as media-bodies” (Borelli & Rocha, 2008, p. 28, free translation).

The city shows itself as an arena and support through which a myriad of youth languages circulate, at the same time as it inscribes itself on these bodies, materializing ways of walking, dressing, performing identities and belonging, creating urban trajectories and negotiating meanings. As they oscillate “between nomadism—taking to the streets, crossing the city, getting to know the world beyond territorial borders—and gregariousness—returning home, seeking refuge and safety, rebuilding networks of sociability” (Borelli & Rocha, 2008, p. 30, free translation), they point to the paradoxes and ambiguities of the urban experience in large metropolises: on the one hand, the excess of stimuli and acceleration, encounters and interactions, invitations to consumption and media-urban languages in profusion; on the other, the stigmas, confrontations, tensions, and violence, exclusions, immobility and precariousness. In a tense negotiation, the urban arena is developed as a place of expression, disputing heterogeneous practices and youthful imaginaries, which involve social reproduction, as well as possibilities of resistance, in the formulation of gaps and fissures to make themselves subjects of discourse, enunciation and social action (Reguillo, 2000).

In the complex and dynamic articulations between young people, urban cultures and urbanities, there are cultural disorders (Martín-Barbero, 2022) that emphasize the development of new sensibilities for time, space, and technologies, in which young people appear as protagonists. An attentive and sensitive reader of Walter Benjamin, Martín-Barbero (2000) drew attention to the German philosopher’s perspective of looking at the fragmentary aspects that occur on the margins, in stories and in everyday life; this approach would have enabled Benjamin to shift the focus away from works of art and think about the perceptual changes of receptors, with their new senses energized by the modern and urban experience of capitalism, big cities, crowds, the presence of the media and technology. These new perceptive senses were formed in conjunction with the experience of the shocks lived daily in the context of metropolises, with the whirlwind of novelties, differences, images, shop windows, architecture, galleries, masses, and consumption, collaborating in the development of a kaleidoscopic modern subjectivity (Benjamin, 2007).

It is in dialogue with these notions that Martín-Barbero (1998, 2004) constructs the notion (or mediation) of technicity, not emphasizing the technique itself, but its anthropological dimension of *techné* (Lopes, 2018), its uses and modes of internalization and elaboration. It is a notion that seeks to highlight

how the technological devices through which new languages and identity, cognitive and aesthetic experimentation are central to thinking about young people are appropriated. This is how Martín-Barbero defined it in an interview with Mariluce Moura (2009, p. 14, free translation):

...there is the compression of time, the compression of space, and this is where I recompose the two fundamental mediations today: identity and technicity—I use this word not out of snobbery, but because a French anthropologist, André Leroi-Gourhan, a contemporary of Marcel Mauss, forged the idea that technique among “primitive peoples” is also a system, not just a set of tools. I link technicity to what is moving in the direction of identity.

Technicity appears in the author’s maps of mediations as early as 1998, in the preface to the fifth edition of *De los Medios a las Mediaciones* (Martín-Barbero, 1998). Firstly, it appears as a mediation that has been repositioned in the dynamic updates of the Barberian cartography (Lopes, 2018) over time; in the fourth and final map drawn up by Martín-Barbero in 2017, technicity appears as a structuring axis or basic mediation of the horizontal axis, along with sensoriality—of Benjaminian inspiration—with which it forms “co-productions that inhabit each other” (Martín-Barbero & Rincón, 2019, p. 20, free translation)⁷. They are interdependent and feed off each other.

⁷In the original:
“coproducciones que se
habitan.”

The notion of technicity has been useful in understanding how young urbanites not only make use of devices, but—based on technological mediation—create languages, political-cultural transformations, ways of being together, of being in the world, as well as other relationships with time and space. As Lopes (2018, p. 57, free translation) argues, technicity concerns “dexterity, the ability to do, but also to argue, express, create and communicate through material forms, a dexterity that is updated based on new ways of dealing with language.” Technicity is thus “embedded in the very structure of cognition/logos and everyday life” (p. 58, free translation).

In this sense, in the last Barberian map, technicities are articulated with sensoriality and socialities, implying their reconfiguration (Lopes, 2018). This is because the forms of expression of technicities interfere and often alter the ways in which many youth groups enter and have a voice and enunciation in the public spaces of cities and digital networks. The interactive and connective possibilities of networks (Martín-Barbero & Rincón, 2019) have enabled young people to create other ways of being together, to develop collaborative practices, as well as to present themselves with their identities, corporealities and audiovisualities. In this way, technicities characterize a conceptual tool that allows us to glimpse



young people's ways of "managing discursive skills and reticular potentialities" (Borelli, Pereira et al., 2023, p. 15, free translation) in cities and in the digital world.

COMMUNICATIONAL ACTIONS, YOUTH SUBJECTIVITIES, CORPORALITIES AND POLITICITIES

As part of our journey of getting closer to young people and their political practices, which are manifested through communicational actions of resistance, other theoretical-methodological markers have been formed and consolidated over the course of our field experience and different reflective productions. In particular, we are struck, as already indicated, by the recurring observation of the centrality of culture and aesthetics in the way the practices and subjectivities of these social actors and actresses are configured today. When we turn to the communicational plane that constitutes these ways of being in the world, certain aspects become evident. As this is an analytical scope that, in our case, focuses on processes and perspectives of resistance, we were attentive to some questions. If there is no doubt about the growing mobilization of networked communication, of mobile technologies and audiovisuals as a driving force, as a structuring vector for society and culture, what is special about the way in which contemporary young people mobilize this data and materiality in their way of acting politically and purposefully?

Given the socio-historical variables that have permeated Brazilian youth political practices since the 2000s, we note the permanence of some categories of analysis that have emerged systematically in our monitoring and reflection on these young people. Going beyond what has been called the "disenchanted" generation and sensibility of the 1990s (Gadea, 2007), the marching, activist, and activist youths of the 2000s to the present day resonate with a warm and plastic mobilization, in which humor, direct action, and a certain political eroticism are present.

Since the first major marches that took the streets of our metropolises by storm in the 2000s (with the Marijuana March), and gained momentum in the 2010s (with the Slut Walk), generating what has come to be called "brand new social movements" (Augusto et al., 2016, free translation), an evident performative conformation and a particular enunciative basis have been configured. The mobilization of technological tools and the presence on social networks to publicize their agendas and as a way of engaging other young people in their public action initiatives is mixed with the occupation of the streets with intense corporealities. As Neder (2017) notes, there is an articulation between "subjectivation, corporeality, and social transformation" (free translation).

The body is thus an essential category in the dynamics of the political events shaped by these young people. This new militant body, sensorial and sensitive, recovers the political memory of the student marches, but does so from an iconoclastic and irreverent mobilization. It's interesting to see how young people's corporealities will gradually compose another way of doing politics, which will mix different discursive regimes and explanatory references. Thus, for example, we see the resort to *memoriographical* baggage coming not only from classical politics, but also from contact with and appropriation of references from music, art, audiovisuals, technologies, leisure practices and habits and the consumption of culture, in its different expressions.

The studies carried out by Cerbino et al. (2001) continue to provide us with solid theoretical references and important methodological approaches for thinking about youth cultures, from their relationship with the body, music, sociability, and gender issues, the last of which is where the greatest gaps are to be found, or the problem areas that most require updating and revision. In the authors' proposal, youths are approached from a cultural perspective and in a regime of complexity, which leads them to enunciate an interesting "anthropology of the youth body" (Cerbino et al., 2001, free translation), crossed by cultural consumption, social interactions, emotional communities, and gender distinctions.

In our analysis of the marching youths and those more clearly focused on activist practices with an aesthetic and audiovisual bias, we identified a *corpographic* understanding (Santo & Lotufo, 2014) of their actions. In our observations, in addition to these contributions, there was also an understanding of how different activisms assume the interface between politics, subjectivation and identities, resulting in themes such as gender and sexuality being put on the agenda, increasingly crossed by ethnic-racial issues.

As presented by Colling (2018, p. 157, free translation):

Feminists, like other social movements, such as the black movement and its theater, have always realized that the arts and cultural products in general are powerful strategies for producing other subjectivities capable of attacking misogyny, sexism and racism.

Saavedra (2017, p. 1), referring to feminist activism, suggests that "there is a direct action (creation) that constructs, through experience, the political subject" (free translation). In this respect, perhaps we can speak in terms of an activist subjectivity, in which "bodies . . . intervene and, with their poetic movements of resistance and subversion, reposition themselves and others in their surroundings" (p. 2, free translation).



Because of perceptions like these, the concept of *politicity* has been fundamental to our interpretations of these “full-bodied political subjectivities” (Díaz Gómez & Alvarado Salgado, 2012). Paulo Freire’s view of the political dimension of education, associated by the author with the idea of politicality, presupposes the mutual determination between autonomy and power dynamics, since this autonomy cannot mean and/or result in the submission of others (Demo, 2002). Critical consciousness and self-criticism are combined, since the former will not be imposed by subjects (educators) in any supposed condition of superiority, but emerges, as (embodied) praxis of everyday life, from the very culture of those who will be autonomously liberated (Freire, 2001).

Political-communicational activisms and aesthetic-political activisms are endowed with politicality, even when they move through or negotiate with institutional spaces, and in a way they update, even if as a “residual tradition” (Williams, 1992), quite peculiar political and cultural legacies. The originality of their way of producing and disseminating audiovisual culture, for example, in a context of technological decentralization and cultural decompression, does not prevent us from locating a specific way of *remixing* and rearranging references and belonging, activating, in their own register and sometimes with biographical intonations, vast *memoriographical* collections, read, in the sense of Feixa (2000), not as a deposit of facts, but as a matrix of meanings and values.

This activist memory (Chaia, 2007) also resonates in initiatives to occupy the city, the media and social networks with artistic events supported by public cultural policies, especially those materialized by the Virada Cultural and the LGBT Pride Parade in São Paulo. As well as obviously echoing a whole movement of recent youth actions that mix aesthetics and politicality (Rocha, 2016) and being historically contemporary with the “brand new social movements” (Augusto et al., 2016, free translation) and collaborative cultural production practices, we understand that there are particularities in the way they configure new regimes of social, urban, cultural and artistic intelligibility. It seems to us that, in their ethical-aesthetic affiliation, these networks (of affection, creation, professional collaboration and subjective support) have enabled the transfiguration of the normative grammar of life, shuffling the semiosis of Western capitalism and the political and communicational mainstream itself.

At this point, we should pay attention to the interesting arguments of Di Giovanni (2015, p. 2, free translation), when he clarifies that

... the emergence of the term *artivism* as an analytical category marks a political and theoretical interest in forms of collective action whose effect and possible interpretations are not exhausted by the taxonomy of the probable ideological

orientation of the participants, nor by the possible functionality that they may fulfill in the political-electoral and media games of representative democracies, whose explanation does not end with the identification of the contextual, historical or socioeconomic factors that fostered their eruption.

In this respect, there is convergence with Sarlo (2004, p. 36) in his observation that “youth is not an age, but an aesthetic of everyday life” (free translation). This principle is echoed in Reguillo’s (2000) research into the practices and dynamics of cultural consumption led by youth groups and collectives. Reguillo sees the constitution of young people as subjects, more precisely subjects of discourse and subjects of action, “with the competence to refer in an objectifying attitude to the entities of the world, . . . with the ability to appropriate (and mobilize) social and symbolic objects” (Reguillo, 2000, p. 36, free translation)⁸.

We believe that this analytical operator includes, according to Ouviaña (2013, p. 78), “a type of construction that is defined by trying ‘from now on’ to produce transformations in its own practices of struggle”⁹, and which refer, in different ways, to precepts of autonomy, *anticipating* or *prefiguring* the new society to which they aspire. This could include the utopian dimension that we have identified in some artivisms, especially musical gender artivisms (Rocha, 2021) and the “aesthetic artivisms of sexual and gender dissidence” (Colling, 2018, p. 1). This possibility is in line with Lourenço’s (2019, p. 20, free translation) reading of “*critical action in urban space* [which] has been gaining adherents, sensitive forms, forcefulness capable of unveiling meanders kept quiet for ulterior motives,” to which the author associates, in a poetic game, the idea of “living and foreseeing politics of space.”

Hybrid, polysemic and plastic concepts, which are so because of political perspectives, seem to us to be suitable for analyzing equally hybrid phenomena of youth political action. Fernández (2013), in order to identify modalities of subjectivation and collective logics in his research with vulnerable Argentinian youths, uses the concept of “corporealities in action” apprehended in their intensity markers, in which the body is itself an epistemic place. In contemporary times, several artist expressions mobilize the place of audiovisual expressivity as an important space for subjective construction, representation, and existence. In a complementary direction, they affirm that their bodies are political, articulating the struggle against, for example, structural racial and gender violence in Brazilian society.

Body as an epistemic place, body as a referent of investigative processuality, political corporealities configured by *speaking bodies* (Preciado, 2014) and by *bodies in alliance* (Butler, 2019), artist bodies occupying urban and digital

⁸In the original: “con competencias para referirse en actitud objetivante a las entidades del mundo, . . . con capacidad para apropiarse (y movilizar) los objetos. . . sociales y simbólicos”.

⁹In the original: “un tipo de construcción que se define por intentar ‘desde el ahora’ producir transformaciones en sus propias prácticas de lucha, que anticipen –o ‘prefiguren’– la nueva sociedad a la que aspiran”.



bodies. Audiovisualities as bodies, affecting bodies. Bodies resisting and existing from a tentacular circuit, in which audiovisible bodies occupy audiovisual bodies and transform human, technological and urban bodies. In other words, as Fernández (2013, p. 20, free translation) points out, “transversalizing the problematics of bodies . . . makes it possible to think of conceptual tools that allow to incorporate the desiring dimensions that animate the ‘between bodies’ of collective actions”¹⁰.

¹⁰In the original: “[t]ransversalizar la problemática de los cuerpos también hace posible pensar herramientas conceptuales que permite incorporar las dimensiones deseantes que animan los ‘entre los cuerpos’ de las acciones colectivas.”

The anthropological and interdisciplinary perspectives offered by Garcia Canclini et al. (2012) in the wide-ranging study they coordinated on young people, urban cultures and digital networks in Mexico and Spain also offer us important clues and perspectives for analysis. The fact that they considered “networked actors” in their methodological choices; the communicational, i.e. “the non-visible networks that organize the city”; the insufficiency of understanding “the logic of the cultural industries” to account for the processes and actors studied; the decompression of the concept of “cultural field” so as to account for the “many transversal processes” that shape the way young people circulate in the publishing, musical, literary and artistic spheres; the realization that “the position of young people is, in reality, neither as free as is sometimes supposed, nor, on the other hand, completely subjected, determined”¹¹ (Garcia Canclini et al., 2012, free translation), presented itself as a perspective significantly in tune with our own perceptions and understandings of the social actors we studied.

¹¹In the original: “la posición de los jóvenes no es, en realidad, ni necesariamente tan libre como a veces se supone ni, por otro lado, tampoco completamente sometida, determinada.”

BALANCES, CONSIDERATIONS, CONTINUITIES

In the context of the resurgence of conservative forces, youth practices and struggles have been signaling the power that emerges from narratives and expressions of resistance, as well as indicating mutations in the ways of appropriating cities and networks in their political doing. They also have a strategic ability to enunciate their identities and subjectivities and their representations, manifested through activism, artivism and various political mobilizations. To do so, they activate languages and aesthetics, technicities, and corporealities.

We are alluding to another central issue in Barbero’s latest map: the notion of *urbanitas*, derived from and in dialog with citizenships, which are more stable and linked to the notion of *civitas*. As the author suggested (Martín-Barbero & Rincón, 2019), *urbanitas* is the way of exercising global/communicational citizenship in networks and flows, which are always moving, with “roots that walk” (Martín-Barbero, 2022) and transform the city and digital environments. *Urbanitas* that reverberate in the notion of urbanity that we have brought up here and that are updated and dynamize the daily life of the lived city, amidst

the techniques, networks, socialities, and ways of doing and living the political. That is, an experience endowed with politicality, an instrument for self-awareness and for collective and liberating social transformations.

We bring to these final considerations the perspective of communicational expressiveness or the enunciative potential of youth political practices as an important core of reflection. It seems central to us to understand how, in the midst of setbacks and systemic reversals, resistance actions multiply and change, building a horizon of action specific to Brazilian youth. The activist and artist heritage has been consolidating enunciative practices that include corporeality and occupy the networks and digital media with a mode of vocalization that starts from the bodies and returns to them. They speak to their people, as well as participating in a public scene that includes differences and confronts restrictions and argumentative clashes. They thus break with dichotomous forms and formats of little complexity, highlighting nuances and pluralities of understanding of the political agenda itself.

It was possible to capture, through the polyphony of voices (Bakhtin, 2008), world views and conceptions and the struggles for the constitution of hegemonies (Gramsci, 2000, 2002), the ways of being, living and constituting—through the mediation of culture, aesthetics, activism, and technicity—new youth political practices. They presuppose the protagonism of young people in the ways they present and place themselves on the public agenda, modifying and re-signifying it. ■

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News coverage of children and young people in ethics codes

A cobertura noticiosa de crianças e jovens em códigos de ética

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the norms inscribed in codes of journalistic ethics on news coverage of cases involving underage citizens to identify established values and principles as well as prescribed professional conduct. Research is based on content analysis of 200 codes from around the world. This study concluded that 128 codes (64%) directly reference the subject, such as respect for the best interest of the child, privacy protection, previous consent to contact, or conditions for conducting interviews. The main concern detected refers to the evaluation of damage caused to children and young people. The concealment of identity is the most frequently recommended procedure to ensure their protection.

Keywords: Children, young people, codes of ethics for journalism, news coverage

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RESUMO

Este artigo incide na abordagem das normas inscritas em códigos de ética jornalística sobre a cobertura de casos envolvendo cidadãos menores de idade, com o objetivo de identificar os valores e princípios estabelecidos, bem como a conduta profissional prescrita. A investigação baseia-se na análise de conteúdo de 200 códigos de diversas regiões do mundo. Concluiu-se que 128 (64%) destes apresentam referências diretas ao tema, como respeito pelo melhor interesse da criança, proteção da privacidade, consentimento prévio para contato ou condições de realização de entrevistas. A principal preocupação detectada foi a avaliação dos danos causados a crianças e jovens e a ocultação da identidade, o procedimento mais frequentemente recomendado para sua proteção.

Palavras-chave: Crianças, jovens, códigos de ética jornalística, cobertura jornalística



NEWSCOVERAGE OF EVENTS involving underage citizens is often the subject of controversy, as it silences their voices, denies them the right to freedom of expression, or, on the contrary, for providing media exposure, with possible negative effects on their personalities' development. Although it does not neglect the initial question, this article essentially focuses on the second, by analysing the journalists' conduct included in ethics codes, a field to which researchers have not devoted special attention.

A reflection is proposed, predominantly in the field of self-regulation, taking into account the contribution to its configuration for sources of law such as The Convention on the Rights of the Child, adopted by the United Nations in 1989. Particularly relevant, for enshrining the prevalence of the child's superior interest and, at the same time, respect for the rights to participation and the protection of privacy, honour and reputation, this convention encourages the media to disseminate information that benefits children, while alerting to the need to preserve them from harmful content.

This research aims to fill a gap in the studies on codes of journalistic ethics: the comparative analysis of the guidelines they present, in different countries and media systems, about the performance of professionals, when faced with the coverage of events in which children, adolescents or young people participate. It is not a matter of verifying the degree of compliance with standards inscribed in the codes, but of verifying whether if they have no rules in this area or incorporate provisions about the conditions of newsgathering and dissemination information in such situations.

MEDIA COVERAGE IMPACT ASSESSMENT

When children, adolescents or young people become protagonists of news stories, the journalist is supposed to respect their rights. Being legally minors, it is a matter of ensuring that the journalistic approach does not disturb the development of their personality, still being formed, nor does it compromise, if such is the case, their social integration. Greater care is needed, of course, in risky situations. As Marôpo (2012) points out, academic literature has been identifying multiple traces of the negative impact of media coverage, such as the creation of stereotypes, the "sensationalist exploration of singular cases and the light, individualistic, little politicized and decontextualized treatment of complex issues" (Marôpo, 2012, p. 208).

Hodges' questioning (2009) about professional conduct – "where should society draw the moral line between society's need (and right) to know and the individual's need (and right) not to reveal?" (p. 281) – is even more relevant

when minors are involved. The option implies weighing the values in question. The journalist assesses whether public interest prevails over the invasion of the private sphere. If so, steps must be taken to minimise the impact on the right to privacy, which is understood as the individual's control over personal information concerning him or her.

The ethical decision is made in this context. The duty to reach the truth cannot ignore the potential damage to people involved – and most of all to the youngest. Hence the intervention of the editorial hierarchy. “Leaving individual journalists responsible for responding to situations as they arise is clearly not enough”, argues Fullerton (2004, p. 523). In this author's study, a former newspaper editor recounts how he acted when, in a story on poverty, a photographer presented an excellent photo of a boy eating cereal. The argument that he had obtained parental permission did not move him. He refused to publish, because the family would feel exposed to ridicule and even discrimination.

The assessment can focus on messages, including those written by minors, published on social networks. “Certainly, there are times to expose secrets and more individuals should become aware about the information they share about themselves, but that does not mean privacy should be invaded simply because the tools are easily available” (Whitehouse, 2010, p. 324). In certain cases, however, other criteria come into the equation. When, in 2018, the *Daily Star on Sunday* reported that a teenager threatened Muslims through a Facebook post framed in an image showing Nazi weapons and flags, the Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) recognized exceptional public interest in the publication of the image. In the view of the British regulator, security concerns, associated with hate speech and the ability to access weapons, made the intrusion into the minor's privacy justifiable (IPSO, 2018).

The perception that media attacks on young people can have devastating effects is amply demonstrated. Failing to preserve the anonymity of juvenile offenders tends to affect their recovery. Identifying, even though indirectly, a child raped by a family member causes double victimization. As Mackay (2008) points out, identification doesn't just affect privacy; it can contribute to the stigmatisation of young people or to them being discovered by predators or estranged parents.

The attitude of journalists concerning identification lacks uniformity as shown by several surveys (Elliott, 1990; Mackay, 2008; Silvestre & Ferreira, 2013). It is even possible that absolute guarantees regarding the respect for privacy are not always genuine. “Journalists need to know if their good intentions are reflected in their practices or not”, concluded Coleman (2011, p. 258), in a study in which 99 North American professionals participated. Most of them proclaimed



respect for ethical principles, but when asked to make choices regarding the publication of photographs of delicate situations, such as drug use, they did not adopt different criteria for children or adults. Recommendations are not lacking in this plan: United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF, 2018) admits that, in certain circumstances, identification may correspond to the child's interest – e.g., if it is part of a social activism program; Accountable Journalism (2016) warns of the risk of exposure to retaliations.

“The decision not to identify children and use maximum care in interviewing them are restrictions that do not exempt journalists from ensuring that, in specific circumstances, they are the story – with a face and right to be heard” (Martins, 2014, p. 194). Ultimately, the option is imposed by circumstances. “Talking to children takes time to go to places, to break the ice, to listen. You cannot interview them by phone or email”, wrote a Portuguese journalist, about the story of a man who, after a separation, raised his daughter alone, as he started a homosexual relationship. She omitted the identity of both: “We didn't even need to talk to each other [the photojournalist] to realize that, in that case, we would have to do it” (Pereira, 2018).

PROFESSIONAL CODES AND PRACTICES

The first cross-sectional study on journalistic conduct standards in children related matters, published by the International Federation of Journalists (IFJ), concluded that “tackling the issue of general failures to acknowledge the human rights of children falls outside the scope of most systems of media regulation, and can only be resolved through education, dialogue and other collaborative strategies” (International Federation of Journalists, 1977, p. 17).

The issue is ignored in historical documents, like the Bordeaux Declaration (1954) and the Declaration of Rights and Duties of Journalists, known as The Charter of Munich (1971) (*Appendix III*, 2021).

Few codes focus exclusively on covering events of this nature. The Italian Treviso Charter, approved in 1990 and today incorporated into the Unique Text of the Journalist's Duties, subordinates journalistic treatment to the child's best interest, which overrides all other interests. Among the rules, anonymity is included, when facts harmful to their personality are at stake, even if without criminal relevance (Ordine dei Giornalisti, 2016).

In 2001, the IFJ created the Guidelines and Principles for Reporting on Issues Involving Children. The guide rejects sensational presentations and gathers basic rules: minimize any damage resulting from the publication of

material, protect visual identification, except for public interest; use fair, open and direct methods to obtain photographs.

Some of these guidelines are reflected in the Nicaragua code for the *Informative Coverage of Topics on Children and Adolescents*, which recommends respect for the right of children not to participate in stories against their will, especially when related to their personal condition and, in particular, if they are at risk or vulnerable (Colegio de Periodistas de Nicaragua, 2005). The *Code of Self-Regulation for the Defence of the Rights of Minors* [RTVE], n.d.), from Spain, determines stronger protection. The Code of conduct-safeguarding, from BBC (2021) states only ten rules, among which treat children and young people fairly and without prejudice or discrimination.

Several academic studies on media monitoring tools (Fidalgo et al., 2022; Himelboim & Limor, 2008; Thomass et al. 2022) leave the topic out. Those that address it, in the context of codes of ethics' analysis, are essentially based on two lines of thought, which are not antagonistic: protecting minors or creating the conditions for a greater participation in the media, in order to empower them as active participants in the public debate.

Based on the issue of privacy, Christofolletti and Gaia (2018) point to a set of recommendations for behaviour, which partly coincide with those identified in this research. Christofolletti et al. (2021) frame the issue within the principle of transparency, briefly mentioning the journalist's attitude when in contact with minors who may not be aware of the repercussions of their statements, as well as the reproduction of content made available by them in a digital environment, also mentioned by Díaz-Campo and Segado-Boj (2015). Himma-Kadakas and Tenor (2023), who are openly critical, argue that most of the documents subject of their research (Swedish and Estonian) stipulate an unjustified exclusion of young people. They need to be updated because they prioritise protection over representation and freedom of expression.

According to Aldridge and Cross (2008, p. 212), "the fact that children and young people are not seen as competent social agents by journalists, news editors and producers, is reflected more broadly in the 'disappearance' of childhood thesis". The media have a very important role to play in reporting on the abuse of children, "educating the public on the reasons behind it, giving it a profile and ensuring that society at large has collective responsibility to deal with the issue" (Reid, 2002, p. 140). However, when coverage gives way to emotion and dramatization, the media can also provoke feelings of fear, guilt and distrust in children (Ayre, 2001).

The issue of identity reservation has also caused reflection. In face of criminal situations, Tompkins (2002) defines a set of questions, which the journalist must ask himself, such as whether the public needs to know the identity of minors



¹James Bulger (2 years old) was murdered by two ten-year-old boys, and allegedly beaten to death. The two murderers were the youngest convicts in the history of modern English justice. Imprisoned until the age of majority, they were then paroled indefinitely, with new identities (Asquith, 1996).

and what damage it can cause them. Regarding the Bulger case, which occurred in 1993 in England¹, Aldridge and Cross (2008) recalled that the publication of photographs of the perpetrators fed the climate of public condemnation. The *Daily Star* titled: “How Do You Feel Now, You Little Bastards?” (Aldridge & Cross, 2008, p. 18). *The Sun* filed a petition, demanding: “Bulger killers must rot jail for life”.

Children displaying by the media can awaken consciences, as the French organisation Observatoire de la Déontologie de l’Information (2017) acknowledged, regarding the photographs of the Syrian boy found dead on a beach in 2015. One showed the body in the sand; the other being transported by a policeman. BBC released this, integrated in a video framing the news. Portuguese daily *Público*, which chose the most shocking, opposed arguments. On the one hand, image violence or respect for the child’s dignity; on the other, some questions: “Isn’t it just as painful to read about these tragedies? In writing, we do not hide reality . . . Why do we use different criteria with image?” (“Porque publicamos”, 2015). Having made the same choice, *The Independent* asked itself: “If these extraordinarily powerful images of a dead Syrian child washed up on a beach don’t change Europe’s attitude to refugees, what will?” (Withnall, 2015). The images have in fact changed public perception of refugees.

The use of minors as sources of news often creates ethical dilemmas. In addition to the reliability of the information, there are most sensitive aspects to consider. Are they able to assess the impact of their statements or determine what information they should reserve for themselves? What impact do they see from their participation in stories? In the case of children, to what extent do they confuse reality with fantasy?

Journalists’ positioning is no less complex. From interviews with 21 Portuguese and Brazilian professionals, Marôpo (2015, p. 13) concluded that “they do not feel prepared to interview children and have doubts about the circumstances in which they can and should listen to them. They feel both criticised for showing children’s images and identities, and for not giving them a voice”. McBride (2003) exposed her perplexities as a young journalist: “I thought children were impossible to write about, mainly because they are so hard to quote. They speak in one-word answers and nonsense sentences”. Having overcome her prejudices, she recognised that “in a child we find the opportunity to suspend judgment and blame”.

Several organisations have designed good practice guides for interviewing children. Media Monitoring Africa (2011) gives journalist a basic recommendation: do not make promises you cannot keep or use bribes. In addition to stressing that the interview length must be age-appropriate,

the Dart Center for Journalism & Trauma (2013) advises against questions that induce guilt and interviews in crime or disaster scenarios, arguing that children in shock need support, not questioning. Teichroeb (2009), for whom minors under 13 should not be sources of detailed factual information's, gives the journalist the responsibility to clearly inform victims of tragedies as to the consequences, if they accept to be identified. The fact that a victim agrees to be identified does not exempt the journalist from assessing what might happen if this is done. "There may be circumstances where the potential harm is greater than the benefit" (Teichroeb, 2009).

Children's disturbance is one of Unicef's concerns and advise: "try to make certain that children are comfortable and able to tell their story without outside pressure, including from the interviewer" (Unicef, 2019). The organization gives its opinion on informed consent, which implies explaining the objectives of the interview and the intended use. For Accountable Journalism (2016), for interviews and images collection, permission must be obtained from the children or those responsible for them, by making the request in their language. If possible, permission should be in writing.

MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

This study is based on two research questions:

1. What values and principles do journalistic codes of ethics and deontology set out as having to be considered in media coverage of events involving underage citizens or when making editorial decision about their dissemination?
2. What professional conduct do codes recommend for these circumstances?

Using the content analysis technique (Bryman, 2012), which aims to implement a both quantitative and qualitative methodology, the objective is to identify patterns.

The corpus of content analysis focuses on the versions retrieved on 24 and 25 September 2023 of 200 ethical-deontological documents. The non-probability sampling, without pretending to generalize results to the universe, gathers 80 European documents, 49 from America, 32 from Asia, 28 from Africa and 8 from Oceania, in addition to four created by supranational organisations (IFJ, Frontline Freelance Register, Photographers Without Borders and Association of Caribbean MediaWorkers), selected according to two criteria:

1. Geographic representativeness, taking into account the media systems in which they operate; and



2. Diversity in scope – that is, nationwide or limited to media outlets; private and state-owned; from Press, Television, Radio and digital platforms; from regulatory or self-regulatory bodies.

The goal is to analyse ethical-deontological documents in different contexts. While the United States of America (USA) favours codes adopted by media outlets, some countries in Latin America have professional orders and Africans, as a rule, follow the models of the former colonial powers. In Europe and in Asian countries, national codes, many of which were created by press councils, coexist with those of different media, which, even though internal, sometimes host other – such is the case of Le Monde Group in relation to The Charter of Munich.

The content analysis was elaborated from the exploratory reading of the corpus, which includes norms on journalists' conduct. Each code was codified in terms of the number of recommendations related to the subject. The content analysis matrix is based on categories related to the essential moments of journalistic activity (newsgathering and dissemination) in cases involving minors.

The first category comprises the subcategories *information collection*, *images collection* and *sounds collection*, as well as *conditions for conducting interviews*. The second comprises the subcategories *general dissemination*; *information or statements dissemination*; *images dissemination*; and *identification*. Common indicators for the subcategories were defined: *general references*; *full inhibition*, *consent – previous as a rule* (from parents or legal guardians); *consent – in certain conditions or circumstances*; *invocation of the public interest*; *invocation of well-being / minor's protection*; *invocation of privacy protection*; and *damage evaluation*. The subcategory related to interviews does not include indicators related to consent, incorporated in the *information collection*.

Global analysis

Of the 200 codes analysed, 128 (64%) have direct references to news coverage of minors. The remaining (72) include 9 French, 7 from USA (including from newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*), 4 of the 5 Brazilian codes and the IFJ, but only one out of the 8 from UK.

Some codes (Table 1) have both direct and indirect references – in this case, 30 in the field of privacy and 58 in the field of non-discrimination (26 refer to all types of discrimination and 32 refer to age). 73 codes include a specific part, article or chapter about children and/or young people – those from the Press Council of India (PCI) and the Online Publishers Association (Greece) are the most detailed. However, it should not be ignored either that The Treviso

Charter is part of the Unique Text (Italy), or that the BBC and Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) have child protection policy regulations, which were taken into consideration in the present research.

Minors appear, in 15 codes, mentioned in parts that also include other citizens, such as victims of violence or crime. In eight, it is equivalent to people with limited capacities, serious illnesses, special or vulnerable needs. It should be noted that 28 codes explicitly allude to the vulnerability or fragility of children and young people.

Table 1

Global analysis

References:	
Direct on minors reporting	128
To minors on privacy parts	29
General to non discrimination	58
To age non discrimination	32
To vulnerability or fragility	28
Parts:	
Specific on minors reporting	73
On minors and other citizens	15

Some type of potential damage caused to minors (Table 2) is pointed out in 99 codes (77.3% of those addressing the media coverage of these citizens), enough to justify journalists' assessment.

Table 2

Transversal analysis of indicators

General references		50
Full inhibition		2
Consent	Previous as a rule	33
	In certain conditions or circumstances	36
Invocation	Public interest	33
	Well-being/minor's protection	26
	Privacy protection	26
Damage evaluation		99

All these 99 codes are in the category "dissemination", 31 of which are also in the "newsgathering". The issue is linked to subcategory "identification" in 84 codes (Table 3).



Table 3
Transversal analysis of indicators

Categories	Subcategories	Indicators							
		General references	Full inhibition	Consent		Invocation			Damage evaluation
				Previous as a rule	Certain conditions or circumstances	Public interest	Well-being/ minor's protection	Privacy protection	
Newsgathering	Information collection	25	0	24	23	7	17	5	11
	Conditions for conducting interviews	7	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.	0	1	2	20
	Images collection	9	0	14	14	5	15	3	5
	Sounds collection	2	0	1	3	1	1	1	1
Dissemination	General dissemination	21	0	0	2	6	2	11	29
	Information or statements dissemination	4	0	3	3	4	2	4	7
	Images dissemination	5	2	4	6	4	4	6	24
	Identification	3	2	3	17	12	5	5	85

Note: values correspond to the number of codes in each indicator. The same code may be included in several indicators

Public interest and protection

Public interest is connected with news coverage of minors in 33 codes. Assuming greater relevance in *identification*, the principle is invoked by RTÉ in all subcategories of dissemination and is inscribed in the South African Press Council code to support the information and images collection, but also the identification.

In three British codes (from IPSO and the newspapers *The Guardian*² and *The Independent*), as well as the Seychelles Media Commission, only an exceptional public interest can outweigh the child's primary interest. *The Guardian* requires robust reasoning for significant intrusions into children's private lives without their understanding and consent. BBC's Editorial Standards requires strong

²In this research, the 2011 version is used. Currently, the newspaper is regulated by the IPSO code.

editorial justification to disseminate material related to the identity of under 18-year-olds as defendants, before the legal process begins.

Child's interest is explicitly mentioned in 17 codes. The Single Text (through The Treviso Charter) gives it the status of superior interest, to which all others must subordinate. The Principles of Charter of Journalistic Ethics (Georgia) bind professionals to respect children's rights. They should refrain from publishing stories that could harm them.

The authorization of parents or legal guardians for contact or news editing is relevant in this area. The Press Council from Moldova protects identity in events with negative connotations, even if they are only witnesses. However, if the journalist considers that it is more favourable to the child, this rule can be ignored, with or without the consent of others. Only after recognizing that there is clear public interest, that the option is better for the child's interest and with the permission of the minor himself does the Editors' Forum of Namibia allow the identification of survivors of kidnappings and gender-based violence, victims of abuse or exploitation, HIV-positive and accused or convicted of crimes.

The PCI presents a set of situations in which identification is in the best interest of the child, as long as the accuracy of the statements is verified and risks such as stigmatisation are taken into consideration: "a. When a child initiates contact with the reporter wanting to exercise their right to freedom of expression and their right to have their opinion heard; b. When a child is part of a sustained program of activism or social mobilization and wants to be so identified; c. When a child is engaged in a psychosocial program and claiming their name and identity is part of their healthy development" (Press Council of India, 2022, p. 100). Children and young people's right to freedom of expression and to be heard also appears in BBC, RTÉ, CBC News, Bulgaria, Albania, Azerbaijan, El Salvador and Uruguay codes. CBC News is clear: "their realities and concerns cannot be fully reflected without being heard in our reporting" (CBC News, 2018).

Direct reference to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is made in 10 codes: from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Cyprus, Uruguay, El Salvador, Mexico (National Chamber of Radio and Television Industry [CIRT], Greece (Online Publishers Association), *The Guardian*, and New Zealand Media and Entertainment – and indirectly in three: Panhellenic Federation of Journalists' Unions (Greece), Antena 3 Televisión (Spain) and Order of Journalists (Italy).

Only 15 codes mention respect for minors' decision about their involvement in reporting. In the Armenian code, it concerns all interviews, videotaping and



for documentary photographs. El Salvador code clarifies that the journalist cannot divulge, expose or use the image against the will of minors.

Among the codes that invoke the protection of minors, restrictions are common to make it effective. Interviews on issues related to their well-being require the presence of parents or guardians, in the Albanian code. The code from the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso* adopts the rule on matters related to the personality of the interviewee or other minors. Croatian code considers unacceptable to interview or photograph a minor if it endangers his well-being.

Privacy

References to children and young people in parts about privacy protection, intimacy or individual rights appear in 29 codes. It is not very often invoked principle, reaching a maximum of 11 codes (in the subcategory *general dissemination*). 23 codes refer to privacy in minors' related parts. Defending the right of privacy protection takes precedence over the news value in the Austrian code, one of nine that subordinates the approach to private matters to the verification of public interest.

BBC's Editorial Standards associate the legitimate expectation of privacy with media coverage of minors. The concept involves a set of factors – such as the place of the event and the nature of the information – to support the editorial decision to deal with private matters. Hence the responsibility for evaluating proposals for disclosing personal information of minors without their consent is assigned to the senior editor. *The Independent* follows an identical perspective: even if the information or pictures have not come directly from the child him or herself, “we should consider whether their use without permission might infringe their privacy” (The Independent, 2012, para. 62). The code of the British regulator Office of Communication (Ofcom) is one of eight that excludes the status, fame or notoriety of the family or legal guardians as a justification for addressing privacy. This group includes some codes from the United Kingdom – or influenced by their culture, such as that of the Seychelles – but also that from Sri Lanka, allowing the exceptional public interest to overlap.

Six codes consider the invasion of privacy by social media. The Canadian Association of Journalists warns to the risk that minors may not understand the public nature of their posts. CBC News undertakes not to provide information that could identify them, to prevent exposure to online predators. The Council for Mass Media (Finland) notes that the public availability of information does not necessarily imply free disclosure. If they display children, the so-called

used generated contents deserve the attention of France Press: to publish, it requires, as in other circumstances, written authorization, except in situations of wars or disasters.

Potential damage

“Shall show compassion for those who may be affected by news coverage. Use heightened sensitivity when dealing with juveniles, victims of sex crimes, and sources or subjects who are inexperienced or unable to give consent” (Society of Professional Journalists, 2014). The advice to the journalist, included in the Code of Ethics of the Society of Professional Journalists (USA), reveals the special care that contact with minors requires, considering the damage that the coverage itself can cause. The problem is raised in 32 codes. The Media Association (Turkey), whose code is the only one that mentions photojournalists, recommends sensitivity when capturing or using photos or videos of victims of crimes or traumatic events. The word sensitivity is, in fact, very common in codes.

Radio Television Digital News Association (USA) addresses the issue of the newsgathering consequences, even if the information is not made public. Codes of different origins – Nicaraguan, Armenian, Albanian, Slovakian – include provisions on contact with minors as information sources, either underlining that they do not always know how to deal with the media or are able to understand the effects of their statements, or regarding the protection of their interests. The German Press Council alerts that journalists shall not take advantage of the fragility of not fully capable people, including children. Codes either from the South African Press Council and the Editors’ Forum of Namibia share this view: “If there is any chance that coverage might cause harm of any kind to a child” (Press Council of South Africa, 2018, para. 18), contact or identification can only occur with the consent, also from the child, their capacity being assessed.

The safeguard of future development, foreseeing the impact of news coverage on personality, is a concern expressed in few codes. Unique Text (The Treviso Charter) is the code that most values anonymity, which is not imposed only if it is about giving positive emphasis to the child. Various ethical documents impose caution in misconduct reporting, crimes committed by young people or investigations and legal proceedings, or in relation to the disclosure of harmful or negative facts. BBC’s Editorial Standards states that the divisional Working with Children Adviser must speak out if it is suspected that minors may be at risk. The Press Council from Serbia grants the decision to the journalist, who must ensure that the child is not endangered by the publication of his or her



name, photograph or recording with his or her image, home, community in which he or she lives or environments that can be recognised.

Few codes refer to stigmatizations and stereotypes or the possibility of causing fear, suffering or sadness. Ecuador's *El Comercio* and Mexico's CIRT encourage journalists to refrain from inciting the emulation of dangerous behaviour. The Unique Text, one of the four codes that allude to minors in the coverage of suicides, requires that details of the act not be published.

Consent

Among the conducts in the codes, the one stated by the indicator *full inhibition* is residual. It is only foreseen in Benin and Togo, in the categories of *images dissemination* and *identification*. Both codes, in force since 2005, were produced by media observatories.

Prior authorization, as a general rule, is required in 32 codes. It can be requested from parents; family members in general; tutors or legal guardians; whoever assumes the status of *loco parentis* (latin expression that means he who replaces the father), as stated by the BBC's Editorial Standards, or the minor himself. A more common situation is consent subject to certain conditions or circumstances, as crime reporting (36 codes). Crime reports are predominant in this indicator, but other situations are also involved. The coverage in the school context is regulated in 22 codes, determining the intervention of the officials of the school, in addition to the family or whoever has authority over the students.

Four British Isle codes (from RTÉ, Ofcom, *The Guardian* and BBC Editorial Standards) and from Zimbabwe and Eswatini refer to informed consent, including that of the minor. Indirectly, informed consent is also inscribed in the Uruguayan and Armenian codes. The latter underlines that "permission must be obtained in circumstances that ensure that the child and guardian are not coerced in any way and that they understand that they are part of a story that might be disseminated locally and globally" (Yerevan Press Club, 2021, p. 4).

"Children and young people are often eager to contribute to our output, but many lack the judgment necessary to assess the longer-term impact it could have on their lives. Parents may also not understand the full implications of their child taking part", stresses the BBC (2019, p. 185). According to RTÉ (2020) code, any proposal to maintain the participation of a child after the refusal of parental consent, or in the absence of it, must be referred to the relevant director, who is responsible for assessing whether the involvement: (i) is justified by the

public interest; (ii) can be achieved in a way that will not be harmful to the child's welfare; and (iii) in all circumstances, if it is appropriate for the child to contribute to output.

Concerning human immunodeficiency virus victims, a common concern, the Press Council of India and the Swaziland National Association of Journalists converge: "The purpose of the interview or photograph and the context in which these may be utilized and the potential ramifications for the individual, their family and their children shall be stated", whenever possible in their language, according to the Eswatini code (Swaziland National Association of Journalists, 2005, p. 46).

Ten of the 14 codes that recommend obtaining consent for images collection (mostly Africans and Asians) also do so for information collection. Only the Nepalese code imposes an absolute ban on interviewing or photographing without authorization. According to the Tanzanian code, without permission or in the face of refusal, contact must be based on an overriding public interest. France Press and the Yerevan Press Club allow written consent, if possible and appropriate.

There are no cases of specific provisions about *sounds collection* – the few detectable in this subcategory are almost always common to the information and/or images collection. Two exceptions: the RTÉ code disallows filming in a school setting without the consent of the school principal and parents; only Armenia code imposes prior consent as a rule.

Subcategory *conditions for conducting interviews* intended to analyse the type of restrictions specifically foreseen for that activity. That is why indicators about consent do not integrate this subcategory, which includes 24 codes, almost all of them proceeding in some way to assess the damage. Ten codes argue that issues beyond their comprehension should not be addressed – above all due to lack of experience to understand the consequences of their statements or unpreparedness to speak to the media. The Lithuanian code notes that questions must be carefully asked and age-appropriate; the Tanzanian rejects the abuse of credulity or trust.

The situation of the interviewees is often considered. In the case of HIV-positive children, the PCI warns for the possibility of them being unaware of their status, which requires prior verification, to prevent questions from being perceived as intrusive or insensitive. Preventing the interview from reactivating the pain caused by past events is a care foreseen in some codes. About trauma victims and child soldiers, Reuters Standards and Values stress that the "the description of the suffering of children may suffice to convey the drama" (Reuters, 2008, p. 555), so direct contact is only justified if it is crucial to the story. The important thing is to avoid exposing a minor to harm.



The risk of certain questions or comments being interpreted as a judgement, ignoring minors' cultural values, putting them in danger or exposing them to humiliation, is raised by the Uruguayan Press Association. Papua New Guinea Media Council's code – the only one that invokes well-being when conducting interviews – seeks to prevent the approach of topics that could have legal or moral effects.

Identity concealment

The subcategory *identification* – which includes anonymity, the most effective way to protect the persons involved in news stories and reports – is the one with the highest figures: 89 codes.

Only three make the identification dependent on prior consent: the Journalistic Ethics Council (Belgium), the Independent Online group (South Africa) and the Croatian Journalists' Association, which also imposes, as conditions to reveal identity, public interest and absence of danger to the well-being. In 17 cases, consent is imposed in certain conditions or circumstances, most of which related to crime. However, even with permission, the NRC (Netherlands) puts on the journalist the decision to publish photographs with (recognizable) children on controversial topics.

78 codes, all of which included in the *damage evaluation* indicator, place the problem of anonymity in the area of coverage of criminal cases. Of these, 51 restrict the identification of minors, whether they are perpetrators, suspects, victims or witnesses to crimes – 27 refer, exclusively or not, to sexual crimes. The protection of the identity of victims is predominant: including in 48 codes, it is materialised in formulas such as the prohibition of disseminating images.

In some cases, confrontation between law and deontology is detected. “Do not divulge the identities of children who are under 18 years old and are victims or witnesses in sexual offences to the media”, advises the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (2020, para. 41), which elsewhere in the code seems to contradict itself: “Do not report the identity of the victim, especially juvenile victim, of sexual harassment, unless it is legal” (para. 56). IPSO and *The Guardian* prevent identification of minors (in the first case, 16 years old; in the second, 17 years old) in sexual abuse cases, even if legally allowed. The same attitude is adopted by the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso*. Tanzania and Sri Lanka codes require a double “brake” – the law and the public interest. The Associated Press' decision is based on criteria such as protection of public safety, seriousness of the crime, official knowledge of the name of the person involved and the existence of a charge as an adult. *San Francisco Chronicle*

hides the name of suspects under the age of 18, but it also allows exceptions, such as if they stand trial as adults, evaluated by reporters according to the nature of the charges.

In the Portuguese-speaking world, the Portuguese newspaper *Expresso* is limited to guaranteeing the strictly protected identity of children or adolescents in conflict with the law. The codes of *Visão* magazine, the Portuguese Union of Journalists and the institutions from Cape Verde and Angola mention the indirect identification, appearing among the 28 presenting ways to avoid it. The code of the Brazilian group RBS prohibits the display of the face, other parts of the body and even clothing, in addition to the individual's name, even if only the initials.

The Mexican newspaper *El Universal* proposes the use of technical resources to guarantee anonymity. Argentine and Uruguayan codes refuse nicknames. Argentine and Uruguayan codes refuse nicknames. The Single Text does not allow to publish information about parents, residence, school, parish or association attended, messages and images online that facilitate identification. In the case of sexual crime in a family environment, four codes (of Ofcom, Seychelles, Cyprus and Jamaica) prohibit the use of the word incest.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

It is a meaningful fact that 64% of the codes analysed include direct references to news coverage of cases involving minors. However, among the values and principles to be respected, only *damage evaluation* reaches a high value: 77.3% of the 128 codes dealing with the matter and almost half of the analysed codes. Regarding recommended conducts, restrictions within the scope of the identification subcategory are relatively common, but not very significant in the others. It is therefore legitimate to conclude that, although they generally recognize the ethical issues raised by this type of news coverage (73 reserve a specific part for it), most codes do not include measures to ensure effective protection of children, adolescents and young people.

Standing out from the rest of the indicators, damage evaluation is present, in various forms, in 99 codes. In almost all, it is included in the category *dissemination* and in 85 in the subcategory *identification*, predominantly linked to restrictions imposed by the approach in criminal contexts. It is residual the reference to other potential damage domains, such as stigmatization and induction of negative feelings. 32 codes enounce the impact directly caused by journalists, while reporting. Few mention the risk affecting the personality or development of minors. This does not mean the absence of protection, provided by the identity concealment.



Invocation of public interest, well-being and privacy protection reaches very close records – always less than a quarter of codes referring to minors. The public interest, as a journalistic value, is particularly striking in the British universe, because in the regulatory framework of IPSO, which influenced others, this type of coverage is part of the set of subjects considered, from the outset, as being of public interest, whose existence has to be demonstrated by editorial officials. In the 200 codes analysed, note to the almost total absence of references to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the children's interest or the respect for their decision to participate in reporting.

On prior consent, results are also not significant, regardless the subcategory, except for *identification*. The indicator with highest value – *consent in certain conditions or circumstances*, in 36 codes – represents 28.1% of those incorporating references.

As the last frontier for safeguarding rights, preservation of anonymity is the most relevant rule enshrined in ethics documents, because it intends to protect individuals – minors, in the case – to avoid harmful consequences of media exposure. It is no surprise, therefore, that 89 codes (68% of those dealing with this type of news coverage) fall into the subcategory *identification*.

Content analysis indicates a greater tendency on the part of audiovisual media groups to include rules on minors in their codes. BBC's Editorial Standards is one of the most detailed, but CBC News and RTÉ also pay special attention to this field of journalistic practice. This proves that the type of company is not decisive, although it is likely that the attachment of European state-owned audiovisual groups to public service contracts and the control of regulatory bodies over private ones will influence the format of ethical devices.

“One cannot seek redress for journalistic shortcomings and lack of integrity in a piece of paper; a dialogue with individuals or organisations is needed to achieve that”, point out Fidalgo et al. (2022, p. 226), by drawing attention to codes' limitations. Ideally a place of confluence of values with means to implement them in a professional context, codes do not cover all situations. It is when facing specific cases that journalists and editorial officials make decisions – even because, according to The Charter of Munich, journalists cannot be compelled to perform a professional act or to express an opinion which is contrary to their convictions or conscience *consciência* (Appendix III, 2021). That is why they often face ethical doubts such as those referred to by Fullerton (2004, p. 512):

It is difficult to know how children feel about what they may say in an interview. The power dynamic is unequal and they may not feel able to decline comment.

In addition, their parents may have made it clear that they expect their son or daughter to participate and children feel pressure to conform to parental wishes. ■

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The challenges of public communication of sciences in climate mutation

Os desafios de comunicação pública das ciências na mutação climática

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ABSTRACT

This study addresses the challenges of public communication of sciences in climate mutation based on Bruno Latour's reflections. This text (1) discusses disinformation and climate denialism; (2) focuses on the importance of working on public communication of sciences by explaining research processes and their controversies; (3) debates why it is necessary to overcome the myth of objective knowledge and to ground the production and communication of different types of knowledge; (4) addresses the intrinsic relationship between science, discourse, and representation; and (5) presents educational-communicative practices that offer clues to face these challenges epistemologically and empirically.

Keywords: climate denialism; public communication of sciences; climate education.

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RESUMO

Este ensaio problematiza os desafios de comunicação pública das ciências na mutação climática a partir do pensamento de Bruno Latour. O texto está dividido em cinco partes: (1) discute a desinformação e o negacionismo climático; (2) foca na importância de se trabalhar a comunicação pública das ciências iluminando os processos de pesquisa e suas controvérsias; (3) debate por que é preciso superar o mito do conhecimento objetivo e aterrar a produção e a comunicação dos diversos saberes; (4) aborda a relação intrínseca entre ciência, discurso e representação; (5) apresenta práticas educacionais que oferecem pistas para enfrentar epistemológica e empiricamente esses desafios.

Palavras-chave: Negacionismo climático, comunicação pública das ciências, educação climática





ONE OF THE MOST eminent minds in political ecology and the anthropology of science, Bruno Latour, passed away on October 9, 2022. This essay is a simple posthumous tribute, highlighting the contributions of his reflections to public communication of sciences in the context of climate mutation.

The central problem addressed in the article is disinformation and climate denialism. Articulating discussions already worked on by Latour throughout his work (such as the need to overcome the myth of objective knowledge, to ground the production and communication of diverse knowledge, and the intrinsic relationship between science, discourse, and representation), this essay presents educational-communicative practices that offer clues for epistemologically and empirically facing the challenges of working on the public communication of sciences by shedding light on research processes and their controversies.

In methodological terms, this essay is based on a bibliographical review of Bruno Latour's work, seeking to identify his key contributions to the field of public communication of sciences in the context of climate mutation and to establish parallels with recent research on climate and scientific denialism in general, as well as in dialogue with other authors, such as Hans Jonas and Byung-Chul Han. The reflections presented here expand on points discussed in the international webinar "Communicating Climate Emergency. A challenge to science, human rights and democracy"¹ and dialog with the results of the study on climate education practices carried out in Brazil from 2016 to 2021, which was conducted by the Brazilian Fund for Environmental Education (FunBEA) with funding from the Institute for Climate and Society (iCS)².

DISINFORMATION IS A PHENOMENON OF POST-POLITICS (NOT POST-TRUTH)

During the 27th Conference of the Parties to the Framework Convention on Climate Change, COP27, in November 2022 in Egypt, Climate Action Against Disinformation released the results of a survey carried out in six countries³, which sought to measure the damage caused by fake news to people's perception of the environment. Brazil was part of the study, which indicated that 40% of people here believe that fossil fuels are clean energy; 44% believe that climate change⁴ is not caused by human activity; 29% say that scientists disagree on the causes of climate change; 24% say that global temperature records are unreliable; and 15% do not believe that fossil fuel production can cause medical problems for those living near extraction sites (Preite, 2022).

¹The author took part in this seminar as a guest speaker.

It was organized by the Universidade Estadual de Campinas (Unicamp) and brought together scientists, professionals, and activists from different countries from June 20 to 24, 2022.

All the presentations are available at *Direitos Humanos Unicamp* (2022).

²The author coordinated this study alongside Rachel Trajber and Semiramis Biasoli. It culminated in the participatory drafting of the *Diretrizes de Educação Ambiental Climática* (2023).

³From October 18 to 21, 2022, the study listened virtually to Brazilians, Australians, Indians, Germans, Britons, and Americans over the age of 18. The survey was based in Brazil by the Observatório do Clima, and the margin of error is $\pm 2.9\%$.

⁴Here we use the term climate mutation or New Climatic Regime instead of more usual expressions such as global warming, climate change, climate crisis, climate emergency or climate collapse, based on the recognition that the changes we are currently experiencing are long-lasting and, in part, irreversible (Latour, 2020).

The idea of the active production of ignorance was popularized in the study published in 2011 by Robert N. Proctor on the actions of the tobacco industry (Latour, 2020). It should come as no surprise, then, that when it comes to fossil fuels and their central role in climate change, the economic interests of the oil industry are also defended with an intense, billion-dollar disinformation campaign of climate denialism:

For a clarifying episode that is not metaphoric in the least: Exxon-Mobil, in the early 1990s, knowing full well what it was doing, after publishing excellent scientific articles on the dangers of climate change, chose to invest massively in frenetic extraction of oil and at the same time in an equally frenetic campaign to proclaim the non-existence of the threat. (Latour, 2020, p. 29)

Nevertheless, recent data shows that 90% of the Brazilians interviewed in the survey conducted by Yale University's Climate Change Communication Program are convinced that the average temperature has been rising for the last 150 years, will rise even more in the future and that, as a result, the world's climate will be altered. These results place Brazil among the countries with the highest percentage of the population aware of the existence of climate change, close to Hungary (96%), Portugal (95%) and Costa Rica (94%), which lead the ranking, and far from those where this rate is lower: Laos (67%), Haiti (67%) and Bangladesh (70%) (Leiserowitz et al, 2022)⁵.

When the question is about the causes of climate change, however, the Brazilian figures (following an international trend) become less encouraging. Only 53% of respondents in Brazil say that the causes are mainly human, a figure close to the countries that obtained the highest percentage on this question (Spain, 65%; Sweden, 61% and Taiwan, 60%) and far from those where the degree of misinformation on the subject is appalling (Indonesia, 18% and Yemen, 21%). This data is consistent with the perception that the Brazilians who took part in the survey have about their own knowledge of climate change: 13% said they know a lot; 52% that they know a moderate amount; 30% that they know little; and 5% have never heard of the subject (Leiserowitz et al, 2022).

Generally speaking, the comparative table of data collected by the Yale Climate Change Communication Program shows that while the so-called developed countries tend to be more aware of and recognize the climate emergency, in the so-called undeveloped countries, on the other hand, the effects of this problem tend to be perceived as closer and more urgent. And this seems to confirm what the movements mobilized around the so-called Climate Justice are denouncing: that the consequences of climate mutation, although they affect practically

⁵This survey was conducted in partnership with an arm of big tech Meta called "Data for Good" and was carried out with Facebook users. The aim was to measure public knowledge about climate change and the beliefs, attitudes, political preferences, and behavior linked to the issue. The sample consisted of 108,946 active users of the platform over the age of 18. Responses were collected from 192 countries and territories around the world between March 25 and April 14, 2022 (Leiserowitz et al, 2022).



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the entire world population, affect more seriously precisely those peoples and communities in situations of greater socioeconomic vulnerability.

There is an intrinsic relationship between rising inequality, deregulation, and climate denialism, which is clarified by Bruno Latour (2020) in his last book published during his lifetime, “Down to Earth: Politics in the New Climatic Regime.” For the author, these three phenomena are symptoms of the same historical situation: the ruling classes have concluded that there is no longer enough room on Earth for everyone and have stopped pretending that history is leading to a common horizon:

The hypothesis is that we can understand nothing about the politics of the last 50 years if we do not put the question of climate change and its denial front and center. Without the idea that we have entered into a New Climatic Regime, we cannot understand the explosion of inequalities, the scope of deregulation, the critique of globalization, or, most importantly, the panicky desire to return to the old protections of the nation-state – a desire that is identified, quite inaccurately, with the “rise of populism.” (Latour, 2020, pp. 10-11)

Latour launches the hypothesis (political fiction, as he calls it) that the messages on ecological mutation delivered since the 1980s by activists, artists and scientists have been heard by the elites. But, having heard the warning, they took the cruel and cynical stance of further defending their own interests and seeking only their own salvation (even if only for a few generations). And for this very reason, even to avoid making this perversity explicit and generating revolt, they began to publicly deny the problem vehemently. Latour compared the conduct of the political-economic elites to that of the owner of the *Titanic*, who used one of the few boats available to save himself from the shipwreck and abandoned the crew and lower class passengers on the sinking ship – making sure to leave the orchestra playing beforehand, to delay the awareness of the tragedy and the inevitable angry reaction of the abandoned:

If the hypothesis is correct, all this is part of a single phenomenon: the elites have been so thoroughly convinced that there would be no future life for everyone that they have decided to get rid of all the burdens of solidarity as fast as possible – hence deregulation; they have decided that a sort of gilded fortress would have to be built for those (a small percentage) who would be able to make it through – hence the explosion of inequalities; and they have decided that, to conceal the crass selfishness of such a flight out of the shared world, they would have to reject

absolutely the threat at the origin of this headlong flight – hence the denial of climate change. (Latour, 2020, pp. 28-29)

Also in 2022, the National Institute of Science and Technology in Public Communication of Science and Technology (INCT-CPCT) coordinated the research “*Confiança na ciência no Brasil em tempos de pandemia*,” with support from the National Council for Scientific and Technological Development (CNPq) and the Carlos Chagas Filho Foundation for Research Support of the State of Rio de Janeiro (Faperj). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the media visibility of scientists and the circulation of scientific articles, many of which had not even gone through the peer review process, increased considerably. On the other hand, the traffic of false or deliberately distorted information about the disease, the supposed treatments and the risks of the vaccines also increased. The aim of this study was to measure the impact of this information disorder on Brazilians’ self-declared trust in science (Massarani et al, 2022).

One of the results is that 68.9% of those interviewed said they trusted or trusted very much in science. This figure represents a large majority of respondents, but is lower than that found in other surveys carried out in previous years. The comparison, however, should be made with caution, because the methods and questions were not the same⁶.

Evidence that the disinformation that has circulated intensely during the pandemic has affected (upwards or downwards) Brazilians’ trust in science can be better identified in the answer to the question of whether or not it has been altered during the COVID-19 pandemic:

...only a third of people (32.9%) say that the pandemic has left their confidence unchanged. For the rest, the pandemic was the period of a change in attitudes towards science. The majority of respondents say that their trust in science has increased a lot or increased (55.6%) and for 10.1% it has decreased. The majority of those who say that their confidence has increased are young, female, with a university or postgraduate degree and an income between two and five times the minimum wage. (Massarani et al, 2022, p. 11, free translation)

The fact that 3 out of 10 Brazilians openly distrust the sciences should not surprise us. After all, it would be unreasonable to expect the majority of the population, abandoned by the elites and betrayed by the promises of Modernity, to “have the confidence of a Louis Pasteur or a Marie Curie in scientific facts!” (Latour, 2020, p. 33). And this is not due to what has become recurrent in journalism to call “post-truth,” but much more to this triangulation between

⁶The INCT-CPCT research used the survey technique, collecting data through personal and individual home interviews. 2,069 people aged 16 or over were interviewed between August and October 2022, distributed among Brazilian municipalities of all sizes, in order to ensure regional dispersion and representativeness. The margin of error is 2.2%, with a 95% confidence interval (Massarani et al, 2022).



climate denialism, the explosion of inequalities and deregulation, which Latour has called post-politics:

When journalists talk about “post-truth” politics, they do so very lightly. They do not stress the reason why some have decided to keep on engaging in politics while voluntarily abandoning the link to the truth that (rightly!) terrified them. Nor do they stress the reason why ordinary people have decided – and rightly so, in their case too – not to believe in anything any longer. Given what their leaders have already tried to make them swallow, it is understandable that they are suspicious of everything and don’t want to listen anymore. (Latour, 2020, p. 35).

If the abandonment of the common world generates a general distrust of the facts, it is therefore necessary to rebuild the collectivities in connection. And in public communication of sciences, this means that scientists need to get off their pedestals and science communicators need to open up the black boxes of scientific practice. This is what we will deal with in the following sections.

IT IS NECESSARY TO COMMUNICATE FACTS AND DEEDS

Bruno Latour (1993) observed that the paradox of scientific knowledge is that, despite being fabricated, it is also solid: there is a certain ambiguity between fact and deed, a relationship of dependence and at the same time opposition between science and research, which is not usually handled well by communication. In general, the so-called diffusion or dissemination of science only shines a light on the results (the cooled and solidified part of science). Meanwhile, most of the scientists’ attention is devoted to what is not yet (and may never be) considered fact: the scientific process, i.e., research.

The result is that, communicated in this way, sciences and technologies become fetishes, concepts that we naturalize as black boxes (Latour, 2000)⁷. As Hans Jonas also observed with regard to technical and scientific progress and its increasing specialization, the collective heritage of knowledge tends to increase to the same extent that individual understanding of the world becomes increasingly fragmented: “. . . his accumulated knowledge becomes increasingly esoteric, less comprehensible to laypeople, and thus excludes most of our contemporaries from its observation” (Jonas, 2006, p. 270, free translation).

The way to minimize this gap is not by trying to make every citizen a scientist – not least because there are different fields of research, and even for scientists in a given area, the knowledge that comes from other disciplines can seem enigmatic. Moreover, it’s increasingly difficult to provide a broad

⁷The word black box is used by cyberneticians whenever a piece of machinery or a set of commands is too complex for us to know how they are used (input and output), not how they actually work (Latour, 2000).

generalist education that gives an overview of all (or most) of the scientific facts involved in the techniques and equipment we depend on in our daily lives. Such breadth would even be a risk, since the inevitable overload of data implicit in it could cause saturation and exhaustion (Han, 2017a) and lead to Information Fatigue Syndrome (IFS), with a loss of analytical capacity and responsibility (Han, 2018).

Enrique Leff said, in his talk at the aforementioned webinar “Communicating the Climate Emergency: A challenge to science, human rights and democracy,” that in view of the complexity of the causes and consequences of climate change, in order for people not to feel paralyzed, it is not enough to simply popularize the findings of climate science, it is necessary to open Pandora’s Box⁸. One way to deal with this challenge would be to communicate facts and deeds, in other words, to explain the theories and methodologies that support scientific knowledge.

⁸ Greek mythology deals with Pandora’s Box as the one in which the gods keep all the world’s ills – such as war and disease – but also the gift of hope.

The bet is that, little by little, the wider public will begin to understand that doubt is part of doing science, and climate deniers (and scientists in general) will no longer be able to use scientific controversies as a discrediting factor, as they do today. The so-called climate skeptics rely on the illusory demand for objectivity, as if there were a single yardstick to judge all the ways of verifying the truth. And so they apply the “double-click test” to climate scientists, saying in an accusatory tone: since you have data that you obviously transform, then you manipulate it.

The term “double click test” was used by Bruno Latour in a lecture given on August 9, 2012, at the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), broadcast by IPTV USP, to illustrate the demand for “information without transformation.” It is linked to the transparency fetish worked on by Byung-Chul Han (2017a, 2017b, 2018), the anxiety exacerbated by digital culture that makes us want to find ready and objective answers to any and all questions on the internet, with just two clicks of the mouse. As this is an unrealistic claim, the frustration resulting from this attempt contributes to not only the sciences, but also religions and politics, increasingly being perceived as liars and manipulators.

Journalism, as a reductive language, also relies on the social expectation that it “contains the essential predicate of truth” (Chaparro, 2007, p. 11, free translation). Traditional journalism has historically tended to present itself as objective, capable of “observing the facts in their material reality, and without deformations resulting from the individual perspective of the observer” (Chaparro, 2007, p. 12, free translation). Journalistic facts would be understood for what they are, not for what they might be worth or mean.



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It is no surprise, then, that journalistic coverage of the sciences generally eclipses achievements and presents facts as objective maxims. Research tends to be presented based on the (often decontextualized) clipping of part of its results, usually those most easily communicated through headlines.

But news – like everything else in general – cannot stand up to the double-click test either (and is being discredited as well). Journalistic facts are worth what they mean, they only gain meaning from their context (Noblat, 2007). Proof of this is that even newspaper writing manuals that advocate objectivity teach reporters to “start the news with what is most important” (Chaparro, 2007, p. 12, free translation).

Part of the campaign that seeks to discredit journalists comes precisely from the importance of journalism for democracy. What is at risk is the factual truth itself, i.e., “the truthful and verifiable account of what happened, and it structures nothing less than politics itself” (Bucci, 2022, p. 8, free translation). Along these lines, the “Fake Free Amazon” project from March to September 2022 mapped the main disseminators of disinformation in the region and identified hyper-partisan websites that present themselves as journalistic: Portal Novo Norte (TO), Terra Brasil Notícias (RN), and Vista Pátria (RJ). All three have in common the fact that they have received public funding and eclipse the socioenvironmental agenda not only with out-of-context data, but with the suppression of these themes, which represented less than 10% of the 206 pieces of content published by them in the period (Intervozes, 2023).

Therefore, communicating facts and deeds that explain climate mutation is a mission that journalists also need to take on. And not just so that we have better news about the issue, but also more news, since the gap is twofold: quality and quantity of coverage. When asked how often they hear about climate change in their daily lives (for example, on TV, in newspapers, on social media or in conversations with family and friends), 27 % of Brazilians say they hear about it at least once a week, 20% at least once a month, 29% a few times a year; 8% once a year or less; 5% never, 9% do not know, and 2% did not answer. Internationally, the scenario is not so different: in Sweden and Germany, where the population most often says they hear about it, the percentage of those who say it happens at least once a week is no more than 66% (Leiserowitz et al, 2022)⁹.

Therefore, communicating the sciences in the context of climate education requires didacticism, but taking care not to fall prey to the fetish of transparency. As Byung-Chul Han (2017b) teaches us, transparency becomes a trap when it is linked to simplification, superficiality, pornography, commercialization, and homogenization – it is ultimately a systemic compulsion of the current stage of capitalism. But in concrete reality we cannot be transparent (in the sense of fully

⁹The countries with the lowest rates of respondents who hear about climate change at least once a week are Yemen (7%), Algeria and Cambodia (both 9%) (Leiserowitz et al, 2022).

disclosing ourselves) even with ourselves, let alone in social and interpersonal relationships: and this impermeability, far from being a problem, is a necessary condition for our health (spiritual, psychic, social): “It has been proven that a greater amount of information does not necessarily lead to better decisions. *Intuition*, for example, transcends the information available and follows its own logic” (Han, 2017b, pp. 16-17, free translation).

Communicating facts and deeds also requires dealing with different temporalities and scales, establishing the proclaimed local-global relationship. But here again, the purely Cartesian approach can lead to a misleading perception of totality, which needs to be overcome: “. . . one cannot pass from the Local to the Global by moving through a series of interlocking scales, as in the illusory impression of zooming that we can get from Google Earth” (Latour, 2020, p. 112).

This antizoom perspective is a central aspect of the actor-network theory developed by Bruno Latour. In order to understand the different scales and temporalities imbricated in a given reality, including in the production of scientific knowledge, it is necessary to follow the actors and describe the phenomena and relationships that constitute it:

Whatever label we use, we are always attempting to retie the Gordian knot by crisscrossing, as often as we have to, the divide that separates exact knowledge and the exercise of power - let us say nature and culture. Hybrids ourselves, installed lopsidedly within scientific institutions, half engineers and half philosophers, ‘tiers instruits’ without having sought the role, we have chosen to follow the imbroglios wherever they take us. To shuttle back and forth, we rely on the notion of translation, or network. More supple than the notion of system, more historical than the notion of structure, more empirical than the notion of complexity, the idea of network is the Ariadne’s thread of these interwoven stories. (Latour, 1993, p. 3)

The concept of sociotechnological networks developed by Latour (1993) helps us to understand that the multiplicity of ways of validating truth has nothing to do with relativism, but rather with relationism. In other words, it is not possible to (re)cognize scientific practice with the modern tweezers of the object-subject. Climatologists, for example, cannot say anything about the climate without the artifacts of theory and the apparatus of the laboratory:

To speak in popular terms about a subject that has been dealt with largely in learned discourse, we might compare scientific facts to frozen fish: the cold chain that keeps them fresh must not be interrupted, however briefly. The universal in networks produces the same effects as the absolute universal, but it no longer has the same



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fantastic causes. It is possible to verify gravitation ‘everywhere’, but at the price of the relative extension of the networks for measuring and interpreting. The air’s spring can be verified everywhere, provided that one hooks up to an air pump that spreads little by little throughout Europe owing to the multiple transformations of the experimenters. Try to verify the tiniest fact, the most trivial law, the humblest constant, without subscribing to the multiple metrological networks, to laboratories and instruments. (Latour, 1993, p. 119)

Latour (2020, p. 113) stated that “each of the beings that participate in the composition of a dwelling place has *its own way of* identifying what is local and what is global and of defining its entanglement with the others.” Boaventura de Souza Santos also drew attention to the irrationality of the claim to universality, and pointed out that “the more global the problem, the more local and more multi-local the solutions must be” (Santos, 1999, p. 111, free translation). Therefore, we need to question the traditional division between center and periphery and recognize that the world increasingly works from the notions of circuit and border (Canclíni, 2015).

REFUSING TO ENTER PLATO’S CAVE

In his book *Politics of Nature: How to Bring the Sciences Into Democracy*, Bruno Latour (2004) calls on us not to enter Plato’s cave, breaking with the view inherited from Greek philosophy that there is an incompatibility between the world of men (human laws) and truths not made by the hands of men (laws of nature). This bicameralism (a break between things as they are – ontology – and the representations we make of them – epistemology – is what historically explains the view of science as one that presents indisputable facts and therefore, with its authority, puts an end to public discussion.

In Greek myth, the philosopher was the savior, the bridge between the world of truth and the social world. This sage, however, was murdered by the horde of ignoramuses, the uneducated and angry society. With Modernity and the appreciation of rationalism, scientists gained prestige and power.

Control of instruments and theory has become the power to define reality not just for experts, but for the general public. On the surface, this is democratic, because there is potentially the possibility of anyone having access to knowledge and technology. In reality, however, this access is restricted to a few:

The rationality of public decision making must appear to be scientific. Hence intellectuals with a scientific style (including economists *par excellence*) have

come to be seen as leading authorities, indeed the possessors and purveyors of practical wisdom. There has been a universal assumption (however superficial and laced with cynicism) that scientific expertise is the crucial component of decision making, whether concerning Nature or society¹⁰. (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 2000, p. 27, free translation)

The spell, however, as we discussed in the previous section, is being used against the sorcerer. And it was precisely the climate deniers who, with their disinformation campaigns, “have thus been clever enough to turn ordinary philosophy of science against their adversaries” (Latour, 2014, p. 27). With their criticism that the climate sciences were not objective, they illuminated the inseparability of the nature/culture binomial and the intrinsic relationship between description and prescription:

We owe to the astute Republican strategist Frank Luntz, a psychosociologist and unrivalled rhetorician, the celebrated inventor of the expression “climate change” in the place of “global warming” the best formulation of this profound philosophy: the *description* of the facts is so dangerously close to the *prescription* of a policy that, to put a stop to the challenges addressed to the industrial way of life, one has to cast doubt on the facts themselves. (Latour, 2014, p. 25)

The findings of climatologists on anthropocentric climate change have an obvious moral and political charge, which most of these scientists are not prepared to deal with: “What is to be done, indeed, in the face of ‘inconvenient truths’ if you possess only the right of uttering them with a mechanical voice and without adding any recommendation to them? You will remain paralyzed” (Latour, 2014, p. 28).

Despite this difficulty, part of the contribution of climate scientists goes beyond the mission of informing: it is about alarming, moving, setting in motion, taking sides in a war. Proof of this is that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize rather than the prize in physics or chemistry (Latour, 2020a).

The quality of information and problem-solving strategies are the two central points for most scientific methodologies. And both require dealing with of science now encompasses the management of irreducible uncertainties in knowledge and in ethics (Funtowicz & Ravetz, 2000). Publicly, however, these uncertainties tend not to be debated.

Since climate science deals with multi-scalar phenomena, with long duration of impacts and high complexity and variability, it tends to rely on mathematical

¹⁰In the original: La racionalidad de la toma de decisiones públicas debe parecer ser científica; y por lo tanto los científicos sociales y humanos (en especial los economistas) han llegado a ser vistos como autoridades conductoras. Se supone universalmente (por acrítica y superficial que esta suposición sea) que el experto científico es el componente crucial en la toma de decisiones, tanto en lo que concierne a la naturaleza como a la sociedad.



models and computer simulations that generate exact numbers in order to produce confidence. In their book *La ciencia posnormal: ciencia con la gente*, Silvio Funtowicz and Jerome Ravetz (2000) criticized this artificial hyper-precision with a joke: an attendant at a natural science museum was heard telling schoolchildren that a particular dinosaur bone was 56,000,012 years old. And when the children ask how he knew so precisely, the teacher promptly starts explaining about carbon-14 dating, but the museum attendant interrupts her and says that he has been working at the museum for 12 years and, when he joined, he took a training course in which he was told that the bone was 56 million years old.

Similarly, the false division between nature and culture is based on supposed certainties, when the sciences are basically dealing with probabilities. Latour denounces the authoritarianism implicit in the belief that facts stand on their own, “without a shared world, without institutions, without a public life, and that it would suffice to put the ignorant folk back in an old-style classroom with a blackboard and in-class exercises, for reason to triumph at last” (Latour, 2020, pp. 35-36): “When one calls upon ‘nature’ this way, it is almost always because one wants to explain yet again to dunces, within the virtual walls of a classroom, what they are going to end being forced to understand” (Latour, 2020a, p. 352, free translation).

One example the author has experienced of how to publicly acknowledge uncertainties is something that frightens – and even offends – many scientists: it happened in Manaus (AM) in 2004, when she was working as a correspondent for the then Radiobrás – now Empresa Brasil de Comunicação (EBC) – in the northern region¹¹. Her office was in the Amazon Protection System (Sipam), a complex that also housed employees from various other federal agencies, including a group of climatologists responsible for a public climate forecasting service. There were dozens of Sipam satellite communication terminals scattered around various isolated locations in the Brazilian Amazon, where there were no other means of remote communication (such as telephone, internet, or radio). Radiobrás’s management was keen to use this communication network to produce content for Rádio Nacional da Amazônia. The author then held a meeting with the team of climatologists and proposed that they do a daily radio program on climate forecasting. And she came up with the idea of making this forecast interactive: from Sipam, a scientist or the reporter herself would call one of the isolated locations and talk to a resident, asking, for example, if it had actually rained there the previous day, as predicted. And if the answer was no, then the scientist could take the opportunity to detail why the forecast had been rainy (i.e. give more details of what factors influence the rainfall) and also

¹¹She was then the only professional of this federal public communications company – which also owns Rádio Nacional da Amazônia – who actually lived in the Amazon region.

explain that the forecast has a margin of error and a scale limit (i.e. it does not always hit the exact spot where the rain will or will not fall). Scientists were so horrified by the suggestion, promptly shouting that dynamics would discredit climatology, that the proposal was shelved.

Some scientists believe that to step down from the pedestal of certainty is to have their authority questioned, because their legitimacy has been built on the ideal of distancing. Modern scientific knowledge is based on the subject-object dichotomy, on the dictum that “*to know is to know from the outside*”¹² (Latour, 2020, p. 84). Galileo’s discovery that the Earth revolves around the Sun in the midst of other planets contributed to the distanced perspective that the sciences adopted: “The fact that one can gain access to remote sites *from* the earth becomes the *duty* to gain access to the earth *from remote sites*.” (Latour, 2020, p. 83).

¹²Italics kept from the original passage; a feature often used by Latour to highlight key ideas throughout his books.

The photograph of planet Earth taken by NASA in the 1960s has become a symbol of the emergence of the environmental issue, of the risk society; a metaphor on which the purposely vague discourse of sustainable development is based, that humanity shares a planet with limited resources and needs to come together to use them well (Hajer, 1995). Bruno Latour invites us to land, but not on the unified mother ship, but on Earth:

It is obvious that the question of the sciences is central we are to survey the Terrestrial. Without the sciences, what would we know of the New Climatic Regime? And how could we forget that sciences have become the privileged target of the climate change deniers? / But we still need to know how to grasp them. If we swallow the usual epistemology whole, we shall find ourselves again prisoners of a conception of “nature” that is impossible to politicize since it has been invented precisely to limit human action thanks to an appeal to the laws of objective nature that cannot be questioned. (Latour, 2020, p. 80)

Latour says that he stopped using the term Gaia because many people appropriated it as if it contained a unidirectional intentionality (“Gaia, mother earth”). This understanding of totality is a mistake, since it is multiplicity in connection that characterizes the thinking of James Lovelock, his main influence in conceiving the Terrestrial:

If the composition of the air we breathe depends on living beings, the atmosphere is no longer simply the environment in which living beings are located and in which they evolve; it is, in part, a result of their actions. In other words, there are not organisms on one side and an environment on the other, but a co-production by both. Agencies are redistributed. (Latour, 2020, p. 93).



In all the disputes taking place in the New Climatic Regime, the sciences play a decisive role. We therefore need to value them without believing too strongly in their metaphysics:

It is impossible to understand what is happening to us without turning to the sciences – the sciences have been the first to sound the alarm. And yet, to understand them, it is impossible to settle for the image offered by the old epistemology; the sciences are now and will remain from now on so intermingled with the entire culture that we need to turn to the humanities to understand how they really function. (Latour, 2017, p. 4)

However, it is not a question of giving up rationality. But to direct it towards the Earthly, not the Global, making explicit the political nature of scientific practice:

How can this difference in orientation be defined? The two poles are almost the same, except that the Globe grasps all things from *far away*, as if they were *external* to the social world and completely *indifferent* to human concerns. The Terrestrial grasps the same structures from *up close*, as *internal* to the collectivities and *sensitive* to human actions, to which they *react* swiftly. Two very different versions of the way for these very scientists to have their feet on the ground, as it were. (Latour, 2020, p. 82).

In other words, to land is to immerse oneself in the folds of the Terrestrial, without giving up the “moderns’ major innovation: the separability of a nature that no one has constructed – transcendence – and the freedom of maneuver of a society that is of our own making – immanence” (Latour, 1993, p. 140).

IMBRICATING ONESELF IN THE TERRAINS OF LIFE

The Earth is not the all-encompassing Global, so big that we cannot grasp it, nor is it the Local of illusorily self-sufficient borders and identities. It is made up of collectives in connection, who need to get to know which are their terrains of life or, in other words, which are the actors (human and more than human) on whom they depend and with whom they need to establish diplomatic relations. Landing, in this sense, is a movement that must reconcile two apparently contradictory processes, that of attachment and that of globalization: “The soil allows us to attach ourselves; the world allows detachment. Attachment allows us to get away from the illusion of a Great Outside; detachment allows us to escape the illusion of borders” (Latour, 2020, p. 112).

And the way to do this is through description: “How could we act politically without having inventoried, surveyed, measured, centimeter by centimeter, being by being, person by person, the stuff that makes up the Earth for us?” (Latour, 2020, p. 113). A process of recognition and analysis that should no longer take place in terms of production systems (based on the notions of freedom and mechanism, with a central role for human beings), but rather generation systems (based on the notions of dependence and genesis, with a distributed role for human beings):

Caught up in a system of production, humans are alone in having the capacity to revolt – always too late; caught up in a system of engendering, *many other protestors* can make themselves heard – before the catastrophe. In the latter system, not only points of view but also points of *life* proliferate. (Latour, 2020, p. 107).

The contradiction between the system of production and the system of engendering is “not simply a matter of economics but rather of civilization itself” (Latour, 2020, p. 108). In line with Bruno Latour, an author who influences her¹³, the award-winning Brazilian journalist and writer Eliane Brum, in her most recent work, *Banzeiro Òkòtò - uma viagem à Amazônia Centro do mundo*, stated that “living in the ruins, among ruins, ruining myself too, I understood that nothing changes, nor does the forest have a chance of continuing to exist, as long as people – all people, not just human people – are treated as leftovers” (Brum, 2021, p. 251, free translation). And, in another passage, she added:

It is not possible to tackle the climate crisis with the same thinking that generated the climate crisis. The future depends on our ability to radically transform the way our species views itself and what it calls nature. To do this, we need to generate not only other knowledge, but also another structure of thought and even another language. (Brum, 2021, p. 343, free translation)

Thinking from the point of view of systems of engendering also means shifting the notion of past and future: we are now looking for the connection (what is or is not taken into account), rather than objectivity. There is no longer the arrow of modernist time, the ideas of linear progress and tradition as a return to the past no longer make sense: “It is the sorting that makes the times, not the times that make the sorting” (Latour, 1993, p. 76). The various temporalities, the provisional result of the connection between beings, therefore, coexist in what we call the present:

¹³The author is a supporter of Sumaúma, a trilingual news agency based in Altamira (PA), and took part in a virtual meeting with Eliane Brum’s team on December 16, 2022, when she confirmed that Latour’s work is one of her influences in thinking about the Amazon and the socioenvironmental issue in general.



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I may use an electric drill, but I also use a hammer. The former is thirty-five years old, the latter hundreds of thousands. Will you see me as a DIY expert 'of contrasts' because I mix up gestures from different times? Would I be an ethnographic curiosity? On the contrary: show me an activity that is homogeneous from the point of view of the modern time. Some of my genes are 500 million years old, others 3 million, others 100,000 years, and my habits range in age from a few days to several thousand years. (Latour, 1993, p. 75)

To exist, produce knowledge, and communicate it from the Earth, recognizing oneself as part of engendering systems, is to try to answer the following questions avoided by Modernity: "Who or what is speaking? Who or what is acting?" (Latour, 2017, p. 67). The modern doubt of double representation (do scientists betray or translate nature? Politicians betray or translate the people?) is one and the same. In the New Constitution (or Parliament necessary for the New Climatic Regime), mediation is brought to the fore, but not to solve the enigma (because the pure thing does not exist: science without society, politics without objects), but as a way of reactivating democracy (Latour, 1994).

From 2011 to 2013, Latour coordinated the *Gaïa Global Circus* project at the *Chartreuse de Villeneuve-lès-Avignon*, in which students from various disciplines simulated a climate conference in which the delegates were countries as much as "forest," "oceans," "lands," "indigenous peoples," "cities," "non-governmental organizations," "international organizations," "economic powers," "stranded petroleum assets," etc. And scientists were part of the delegates, in a dispersed way (and not gathered together and separated from the others, as at the Climate COP) (Latour, 2017).

Latour's inspiration was the National Water Authority, which has existed in the Netherlands since the 13th century, and which speaks on behalf of the rivers and seas, which is essential for a country built on dikes. In California, on the other hand, he regrets that there is no similar representation mechanism, despite farmers in the Central Valley depending on the waters of the aquifer, which are being overexploited:

The fiction resides not in giving water a voice but in believing that *one could get along without* representing it *by a human voice* capable of making itself understood by other humans. The error does not lie in claiming to represent nonhumans; we do that in any case all the time when we talk about rivers, voyages, the future, the past, States, the Law, or God. The error would lie in believing it possible to take such interests into account without a human who embodies, *personifies*, *authorizes*, *represents* their interests. (Latour, 2017, p. 425)

Doing Science imbricated in the thousand turns of the Earth is ultimately an exercise in representation. And that increasingly requires scientists to improve their senses of perception of the various actors, as Ailton Krenak (2019, p. 15, free translation) reminds us:

I read a story about a European researcher in the early 20th century who was in the United States and arrived in a Hopi territory. He had asked someone from the village to facilitate his meeting with an elder he wanted to interview. When he went to meet her, she was standing near a rock. The researcher waited until he said: ‘She’s not going to talk to me, is she?’ To which his facilitator replied: ‘She’s talking to her sister.’ ‘But it’s a rock.’ And the fellow said: ‘What’s the problem?’

However, representation, which is so necessary for democracy, encounters obstacles in contemporary Western societies marked by digitalization and the cult of exposure, in which humans and more than humans tend to be objectified:

Today, the world is not a theater where actions and feelings are *represented* and *read*, but a *market* where intimacies are exposed, sold, and consumed. The theater is a place of *representation*, while the market is a place of *exposure*. Thus, theatrical *representation* is currently giving way to pornographic exposure (Han, 2017b, p. 80, free translation).

In Western or Westernized societies, the “people of the commodity” (Kopenawa & Albert, 2019) are not shy about putting ancestral objects, animal bones and fetuses on display, for example. Something that infuriated Yanomami thinker Davi Kopenawa the first time he was in Paris and was taken by his hosts to visit a museum. Wisely sensing that description and prescription go hand in hand, he then asked himself:

After all, after seeing all the things in that museum, I ended up wondering if the Whites hadn’t already started acquiring so many of our things just because we Yanomami are starting to disappear too. Why do they keep asking us for our baskets, bows, and feather ornaments while the miners and farmers invade our land? Do they want to get these things in anticipation of our death? Will they then want to take our bones back to their towns? Once we’re dead, will we be displayed in the same way, in glass cases in some museum? That’s what it all made me think (Kopenawa & Albert, 2019, p. 429, free translation).

The Terrestrial invites us to take action, to “turn this mercantile house back into a home, a party house, where life is really worth living” (Han, 2017a, p. 128).



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To do this, we need to go beyond scandalous and spectacular indignation at climate collapse:

The society of indignation is a society of scandal. It has no *contenance*, no composure. Disobedience, hysteria, and rebellion – which are characteristic of the waves of indignation – allow for no discreet and factual communication, no *dialog*, no *discourse*. (Han, 2018, p. 22, free translation)

Fleeting indignation disperses without generating movement. We therefore need to find and tell stories that help us postpone the end of worlds:

Our time specializes in creating absences: of the meaning of living in society, of the very meaning of the experience of life. This generates a great deal of intolerance towards those who are still capable of experiencing the pleasure of being alive, of dancing, of singing. And there are many small constellations of people scattered around the world who dance, sing, and make it rain. The kind of zombie humanity we are being called upon to join cannot tolerate such pleasure, such enjoyment of life. So they preach the end of the world as a way of making us give up on our own dreams. And my provocation about postponing the end of the world is precisely that we can always tell one more story. If we can do that, we will be postponing the end. (Krenak, 2019, p. 19, free translation)

A challenge for public communication of sciences in the New Climatic Regime, therefore, is to produce narratives that generate discourse and action. And one way to do this may be to move from Nature to the Terrestrial, from the Global-Local to the terrains of life: “Have you noticed that the emotions involved are not the same when you’re asked to defend nature – you yawn, you’re bored – as when you’re asked to defend your territory – now you’re wide awake, suddenly mobilized? (Latour, 2020, p. 17).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS: CLUES OFFERED BY EDUCOMMUNICATION

So far, this essay has achieved four of its five objectives. Based on Bruno Latour’s thinking and in dialog with recent research on climate and science denialism in general and with other authors such as Han Jonas and Byung-Chul Han, it has been possible to: (1) discuss disinformation and climate denialism; (2) focus on the importance of working on the public communication of science by illuminating research processes and their controversies; (3) debate why it is necessary to overcome the myth of objective knowledge and ground the

production and communication of diverse types of knowledge; and (4) address the intrinsic relationship between science, discourse and representation. In these final remarks, it remains to present educational-communicative practices that offer clues for epistemologically and empirically confronting the challenges of public communication of sciences in the context of climate mutation.

In Brazil, there is a certain historical distance between environmental education and climate science (Jacobi et al, 2011; WWF-Brazil & Instituto Ecoar, 2009). In so-called climate education, “a content-based reading tends to predominate, as a transfer of meanings of techno-scientific potential, with a list of tips and practical suggestions of a behavioral, simplistic, reductionist, and decontextualized nature” (Tamaio, 2010, p. 46, free translation).

This assessment also appears in the international literature on the subject, which points out that environmental education campaigns related to climate change are marked by the belief that, in order to change habits and behaviors, efficient and objective communication is needed. This view is based on short-term pragmatic thinking, which continues to treat recipients as automatic decipherers or as simple means to achieve a certain end (Brulle, 2010; Nerlich et al., 2009).

Bruno Latour (2004, p. 351) taught us, however, that “Ecological crises, as we have interpreted them, present themselves as generalized revolts of the means: no entity – whale, river, climate, earthworm, tree, calf, cow, pig, brood – agrees any longer to be treated ‘simply as a means’ but insists on being treated ‘always also as an end.’” For this reason, public communication of sciences is increasingly being urged to adopt a dialogical, critical, and collaborative stance, which finds its theoretical basis and methodological support in what is known as socioenvironmental educational-communication (Brianezi & Gattás, 2022).

A good example of climate education that values scientific knowledge as a process, in an educational-communicative way, is the Climate Mural. It was created by Frenchman Cédric Ringenbach, from the French National Centre for Scientific Research, in 2015, from the exercise of asking his trainees to place graphics from the IPCC reports and relate them. In 2018, the Mural became an association and was licensed under *Creative Commons*, free for non-commercial use. In the game, which has an online and printed version, for children and adults (in two levels: intermediate and advanced), the participants position 42 cards containing images and key data from the 6 reports already published by the IPCC, in a dialogical way, looking for the connection between them.

The positioning of each card and the dialog generated from the construction of the mural are mediated by a facilitator. In Brazil, there are almost 100



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¹⁴Data from December 2022 systematized by Climate Reality Brazil and made available to the author because she is part of Climate Reality's international network of climate leaders and the national network of *Jornadas pelo Clima* facilitators.

¹⁵In 2016, the Brazilian Climate Center (CBC), created by Alfredo Sirkis (who died in 2020), began representing The Climate Reality Project in Brazil, created 10 years earlier in the United States by Al Gore.

In August and September 2022, the international organization held its annual virtual climate leadership training focused on Brazil, in Portuguese, with 7,000 people registered, 3,000 of whom completed the training.

¹⁶More information is available at (Journey for Climate, 2022).

¹⁷Constantly updated (Climateca, n.d).


Climate Mural facilitators and more than 3,000 people who have taken part in building murals, making us the second country outside Europe with the most editions¹⁴. These figures are directly related to the Virtual Climate Learning Journeys – *Jornadas pelo Clima*, created by Climate Reality Brasil manager¹⁵, Renata Moraes, at the end of 2020, and which by the end of 2022 had already completed 33 classes, with 577 micro-projects written and 739 certified participants.

Jornadas pelo Clima (Climate Journeys) has been certified by the Banco do Brasil Foundation as a social technology and listed in the UN Resource Library as a reference in the education sector¹⁶. Each day consists of 5 weekly synchronous meetings of 3 hours each, with a playful and interactive perspective. And between them, the exchange between participants continues via WhatsApp group – and there are missions to complete, which seek to bring climate knowledge closer to each person's life. Each person is encouraged to draw up a micro-project to put some of what they have learned into action.

In October 2022, Climate Reality Brasil sent out an online questionnaire to people who had completed the *Jornadas pelo Clima*, and received 67 responses. Of those respondents, only 29% actually carried out all or part of their micro-project. Despite the low number, the actions generated are significant, among them: the virtual library of open educational resources on climate education (*Climateca*) created by the SP Climate Coalition¹⁷, and the inclusion of climate education in the curriculum of public schools in Rio de Janeiro (Municipal Law No. 7.523/2022), the result of mobilization promoted by the RJ Climate Coalition.

Climate mutation is multiplying “tangled objects” (Latour, 2004) that remind us that we have moved from the world of objective certainties to that of probabilities, requiring us to open up and relate to different black boxes of scientific knowledge. Educational-communicative experiences such as the Climate Mural and Climate Journeys, from different perspectives and actors, seem to make dialog a strategy for translating and, above all, appropriating scientific knowledge by audiences and collectives mobilized in favor of their livelihoods in the context of the New Climatic Regime.

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Journalism as a tool of “psychological action”: *Folha de S.Paulo* and the struggle against “subversion” in the dictatorship^a

O jornalismo como arma de “ação psicológica”: Folha de S.Paulo e a luta contra a “subversão” na ditadura

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to analyze the role of *Folha de S.Paulo* in the so-called “anti-subversive” struggle of the civil-military dictatorship in Brazil, focusing on a campaign of “psychological action” entitled “União Contra a Violência,” published by the newspaper in July 1969. Thus, we seek to further the analysis of the role of journalism as a legitimizing agent of the repressive apparatus of the State, attesting to the role played by *Folha* in one of the periods of greatest recrudescence of the regime (the creation of *Operação Bandeirante*) and the clear harmony between the company and the doctrinal precepts of the dictatorship.

Keywords: Folha de S.Paulo, journalism, dictatorship, psychological action.

RESUMO

O objetivo deste trabalho é realizar uma análise sobre o papel da *Folha de S.Paulo* na chamada luta “anti-subversiva” da ditadura civil-militar no Brasil, tendo como foco uma campanha de “ação psicológica” intitulada “União Contra a Violência”, realizada pelo jornal em julho de 1969. Desta forma, procuramos avançar nas análises sobre o papel do jornalismo como agente legitimador dos aparatos repressivos do Estado, atestando o protagonismo exercido pela *Folha* em um dos períodos de maior recrudescimento do regime, – durante o contexto de criação da Operação Bandeirante (Oban) – bem como a clara sintonia que existia àquele momento entre a empresa e os preceitos doutrinários da ditadura.

Palavras-chave: Folha de S.Paulo, jornalismo, ditadura, ação psicológica.

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¹The project “Company liability for rights violations during the Dictatorship”, a pioneer in the field of transitional justice in Brazil, is an initiative coordinated by the Center for Forensic Anthropology and Archeology (CAAF) at the Federal University of São Paulo (Unifesp). In addition to *Folha de S.Paulo*, the only communications company included in the notice, the project also investigates the activities of the groups Companhia Docas de Santos, Petrobras, Fiat, Itaipu, Josapar, Parapanema, Cobrasma, Companhia Siderurgica Nacional and Aracruz. The research is financed by a Conduct Adjustment Agreement agreed between the Federal Public Ministry and Volkswagen, due to the German automaker’s recent responsibility for violating human rights during the Brazilian dictatorship. Regarding the Volkswagen case, see Silva (2018) and Silva et al. (2022). For more about this project, access: <https://www.unifesp.br/reitoria/caaf/projetos/empresas-e-ditadura>

THIS WORK IS PART of a research project that seeks to advance evidence on the possible collaboration and responsibility of the newspaper *Folha de S.Paulo* with the repressive organizations of the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964-1985)¹. Of an academic, theoretical-methodological, but also legal and political nature, the project aims to point out the various facets and connections established between different sectors of the business community and the regime in an attempt to pursue sufficient evidence to hold these companies and their managers responsible for relations of complicity with the dictatorship. It conditions, to the field of Communication, a different look at the journalistic practices carried out during the period, and provides a more accurate analysis of the effective involvement of communication companies with the military’s repressive policies.

It is necessary to go beyond, in this sense, from the analyses that are limited to investigating a certain editorial “complicity” or “support” given by newspapers to the 1964 coup or, at the other extreme, their role as resistant victims of the censorship perpetrated by the regime. This work attempts to take into account the active role that journalism played during that period, which allows us to think about the *responsibility* of these companies more transparently and straightforwardly and their considerable role in consolidating the repressive logic that developed during the dictatorship, according, for example, from what has already been developed by the most recent historiography on the theme (Basualdo, 2016; Campos, 2020; Campos et al., 2020; Verbitsky & Bohoslavsky, 2013).

Starting from this perspective, this article aims to demonstrate how *Folha de S.Paulo*, during one of the periods of greatest resurgence of the dictatorship, in July 1969, in the creation’s context of Operação Bandeirante (Oban)², became involved in the elaboration of a campaign of “psychological action”, counter-information and advertising – entitled “Union against Violence” – summoning various sectors of civil society, businesspeople, politicians and the military to mobilize in the so-called struggle against “subversion”. Alongside this, it also aims to draw attention not only to the company’s apparent alignment with the doctrinal precepts of the dictatorship, which culminated in the arrest, torture and death of hundreds of opponents of the regime, but also its leading role and responsibility assumed at that time. This can help to scrutinize specific hegemonic readings about journalistic practice during the dictatorship and the role of *Folha de S.Paulo*, in particular, in creating a consensus established as supposedly “democratic”.

FOLHA DE S.PAULO AND THE DICTATORSHIP: BEYOND CONSENSUS AND CONSENT

It is known and acknowledged the role played by the so-called mainstream press in supporting and sustaining the legitimacy of the coup that overthrew President João Goulart in Brazil in 1964 (Abreu, 2005; Bonsanto, 2014; Larangeira, 2014). Classical studies such as Dreifuss (1981) consolidated the interpretation that there was an apparent “solidarity of interests” between an organic elite at that moment, formed by the business intelligentsia, – of which this media sector, most of it, was part – and political and military groups that mobilized economically and politically in ideological campaigns to ensure an “appropriate” climate for military intervention. As a result of this view, we can state that the 1964 coup was also “media-driven” (Silva, 2014) and that the military dictatorship cannot be defined indiscriminately only by its “civil” character since a strong class orientation configures it as “business- military” (Campos et al., 2020; Comparato, 2014).

However, the official narrative of groups such as *Folha de S.Paulo* continues to state that this “support” would have been punctual and that soon after, they became resistant, when not victims of the authoritarian policies of the regime, later acting with great prominence in the process of re-democratization of the country (Mota & Capelato, 1981; Pilagallo, 2012; Pinto, 2012). Selectively appropriating from the past in an attempt to construct a particular narrative about the period – based on strategies that we previously defined as its “historiographical clichés of self-legitimation” (Bonsanto, 2018; 2021) – *Folha de S.Paulo*, which in 2009 characterized the military regime as a “soft dictatorship”, it was for a long time recognized, by itself, as the “Diretas newspaper”². In its last hundredth anniversary, celebrated in 2021, it even called itself a newspaper “at the service of democracy”, promoting free online courses for its readers in the pursuit of teaching new generations what the “horrors” of the dictatorship were (Bonsanto, 2022).

A more critically examined and detailed reading of the newspaper’s performance during the period may reveal other facets. Firstly, there is a necessity to emphasize that the censorship imposed by the military acted both in its repressive and disciplinary character, as the State recognized the importance of the media at that time to disseminate ideas, create collective emotional bonds and legitimize certain consensuses (Ortiz, 1989). On the other hand, there was a relative affinity of interests between the business community and the regime, as we mentioned previously, and, in this sense, it is possible to affirm that the ideology of “security and development” preached by both made (self)censorship a conniving strategy and convenient to further strengthen

²In reference to the elections that could have marked the “official” end of the dictatorship in Brazil.



these close relationships (Bonsanto, 2021). The “pragmatic opportunism” practiced by journalism during the dictatorship helped many companies to enhance their business during the period and, simultaneously, create a positive image of the regime. This harmonious society ran smoothly, exempt from conflict (Aquino, 1999). Their consent was “virtually total” (Smith, 2000), which assures us that for these media companies, there was much more self-censorship than prior censorship and effective control of news production, with a sort of idealization of their combative resistant and victimizing actions occurring a posteriori afterwards (Barbosa, 2006).

Folha de S. Paulo was one of the newspapers that certainly benefited most from this situation, primarily after the acquisition of the group by businessmen Octavio Frias de Oliveira and Carlos Caldeira Filho in 1962, two years before the outbreak of the dictatorship. The company’s official narrative states that it was a time of severe financial difficulties, where journalism was initially left aside so that its directors could prioritize resolving debts and reformulating the group’s organizational and technological structure (Mota & Capelato, 1981; Paschoal, 2007; Pinto, 2012).

Five years after the coup, in 1969, *Folha de S. Paulo* was positioned as one of the most read and circulated newspapers in Brazil, mainly due to the exponential and significant increase in the company’s vehicle fleet, which went from 24 cars in 1960, to a substantial growth of 165 vehicles. *Folha de S. Paulo* also boasted of being the owner of the largest and most modern graphic park in Latin America, representing a compound of recently acquired companies, comprising four more printed newspapers – *Última Hora* (1965), *Notícias Populares* (1965), *Folha da Tarde* (1967) and *Cidade de Santos* (1967), – as well as the “Fundação Cásper Líbero” and “Tv Excelsior”, to concentrate only on companies in the communication industry (Bonsanto, 2021).

It must be considered, therefore, that such growth would only have been possible in the face of a straightforward approach between the company and the dictates of power that were taking place at that time. On the occasion of the company’s 50th-anniversary celebrations in 1971, even after the promulgation of AI-5, with the dictatorship forcefully intensifying its repressive apparatus, silencing, torturing and systematically eliminating its opponents, *Folha de S. Paulo* stated, for example, to remain “deeply identified” with the direction of the nation, by following “the efforts of the Revolution of 64 to rebuild Brazil” (Meio Século, 1971).

That is why, in addition to simply complying with the policies imposed by the military, we need to consider the responsibility assumed by the company during the period. This also allows us to affirm that there is a

very significant difference between simple consented “support” given by the newspaper to the military and active, reciprocal participation, which certifies support and legitimacy to an authoritarian regime by, at least in the case of *Folha de S.Paulo*, almost a decade. However, before clarifying to what extent this harmony was present through the company’s journalism, in dialogue with the regime’s prerogatives, it is necessary to better define some concepts arising from the dictatorship’s security doctrine that guided these assertions to a certain extent.

SECURITY DOCTRINE, PSYCHOLOGICAL ACTION AND THE STRUGGLE AGAINST “SUBVERSION” IN THE DICTATORSHIP

An important document that helps us understand how the dictatorship sought to rationalize its practical doctrines of political action are the manuals of the “Escola Superior de Guerra”. They clearly establish the “National Security Doctrine” and the view, on the part of the military, that we were experiencing a moment of “revolutionary war”, a particular conflict where the presence of the internal and “subversive” enemy was a problem to be addressed, to be fought so that the “revolution” could fully achieve its objectives³.

In this war to achieve national purposes, the Doctrine declared in advance who you should lean on: “*This process is the responsibility of the elites* [emphasis added], part of which are the people themselves, precisely because of their more effective – and more enlightened – participation in homeland” (Brasil, 1979, p. 34). Due to their “presumed superior qualification”, the “full awareness of their role” and the “patriotism of their actions”, it would be up to the elites, thus, to “indicate the paths to follow”, interpreting the national interests and aspirations so that they disseminate in public opinion the “high values of social coexistence” and the “authentic interests and aspirations” of the ongoing revolutionary process (Brasil, 1979).

The Armed Forces saw themselves, in this sense, as just “one of the combat elements, only occasionally the most important”. This war, they stated, belonged to the entire nation and should be fought in unity, “with the effective participation of the government and the people” (Brasil, 1979, p. 222). For this there were effective instruments, such as an efficient “psychological action”, carried out with the correct use of social communication, propaganda and public relations, creating a current of favorable opinion, focused on “national interests” and which kept the population immune to “subversive action”.

Utilizing psychological warfare was fundamental, in the view of the military, even more so with the “sophistication of contemporary means of

³The “Superior School of War” (ESG) was founded in 1949 and played an active role in the technical-ideological and moral training of the military, political and civilian elites of the post-coup and dictatorship. Its doctrines and guidelines began to be published in a unified manner starting with the “Basic Manual” of 1975, always with brief and punctual conceptual and situational updates (Lentz, 2021). In this work, we use the version produced in 1979. However, it is important to emphasize that, since its foundation, ESG was responsible for systematizing and establishing guidelines that culminated in the principles of its “National Security Doctrine”, fundamental for establishing, in late 1960s, the context that outlines this work. The role of responsibility that we attach to *Folha*, in this sense, shows us that its protagonism anticipated, in theory, guidelines that were already circulating within the organic elite that gave support and legitimacy to the regime, as we will see below.



communication”, which allowed “to destroy the enemy through the fabulous power of penetrating his spirit and undermining him to the point of nullifying any defense effort, without sometimes having to fire a single shot” (Brasil, 1979, p. 227). Thus, in this war, the main objective would be to “influence opinions, emotions, attitudes and behaviors” of the population in the struggle against subversion. Your “psychological action” plan ought to bring together a series of resources and techniques – which could range from “demonstrations” and requests for help, to “pressure” and “threats” – to generate this predisposition of behaviors in the community, executed in “aggressive and continuous” conduct, in order to act in a preventive, repressive and operative manner (Brasil, 1979, p. 228).

There is still a breach in the historiography of the Brazilian press regarding the role played by journalism in these “psychological action” campaigns during the dictatorship. Whether due to the scarcity of documentation, little explored and systematized, or due to the lack of work more closely related to the dynamics of the newspapers themselves, which are often concerned with analyzing specific issues, such as the simple “support” given to the coup, neglecting the responsibility exercised by many companies in the support and legitimacy of the regime’s repressive policy.

Significant research is being developed in Argentina, such as the work of Risler (2018), which analyzes the “productive dimension” of the dictatorship exercised mainly due to the help of psychological action campaigns carried out by the press in his country. Likewise, in Brazil, the Argentine dictatorship sought to generate forms of consensus and legitimacy about its actions, based above all on the adherence to moral values, order and family and the campaign against the so-called “subversion” and the regime’s internal enemies. Psychological action campaigns were designed as a systematic policy. Acting as “moral correction technologies”, their purpose was to influence the “social minds” of the population in order to guide emotions, impose behaviors and model attitudes and values that were consistent with the repressive policies implemented by the military (Risler, 2018).

Another important work was carried out by Micaela Iturralde (2012; 2014; 2015) in her research on the role of the newspaper Clarín in the psychological action campaigns of the last Argentine dictatorship. According to her, the periodical played a fundamental role in the so-called “campaign against subversion”, working to build a hegemonic consensus to “spread, legitimize and implement” the programmatic lines of the military’s official discourse (Iturralde, 2015). Therefore, Clarín’s journalism participated as a political actor that sought

to intervene explicitly in the course of events, playing a fundamental role in the symbolic construction of the Government led by the Army of its country, and that was responsible, above all, for the legitimization and normalization of its repressive apparatuses (Iturralde , 2012; 2014).

Forwardly, we will see how these actions materialized in the pages of *Folha de S.Paulo*, along lines very similar to the experiences listed above. Here, we must also emphasize the importance that the Brazilian military gave to the existence of an “effective information system” capable of concretely monitoring subversive movements (Brasil, 1979). Considering this, since the 1964 coup, they have progressively implemented policies – whether “legal” or clandestine – that have made it possible to intensify the instrumentalization of the struggle against subversion. The National Security Law, enacted in March 1967, for example, warranted the normalization of the norms of “internal war”, allowing political opposition activists to be indiscriminately classified as “subversives” and enemies of the nation (Fico, 2001). It was the AI-5 decree, in December 1968, in turn, that “institutionalized” the strategy of security agencies in combating subversive struggle, representing the “legal gateway” to a more efficient and organized repressive structure during the dictatorship (Alves, 1984; Joffily, 2013).

The end of the 1960s also marked the resurgence of the dictatorship’s policies against left-wing combat, mainly in large urban centers. The regime saw these groups as a major threat to sustaining the legitimacy of its government and homeland security, as seen from the perspective of its security doctrine. After having created the National Information Service (NIS) in 1964, and the Information Centers of the Army (CIE), Aeronautics (CISA) and Navy (CENIMAR), in 1967 and 1968, the dictatorship organized what it can be considered one of the most notorious centers of information, prison, torture and death in the State of São Paulo and of the entire regime. Once again, the harmony and collaboration of the political and business elite seemed to be tested, with *Folha de S.Paulo*’s journalism a recognized protagonism and participation, as we see.

UNION AND VIOLENCE: THE RESPONSIBILITY OF *FOLHA DE S.PAULO* IN THE STRUGGLE AGAINST “SUBVERSION” IN THE CONTEXT OF CREATING OPERATION BANDEIRANTE

According to current analyzes of historiography, it was in February 1969, during the First Internal Security Seminar in Brasília, that it formally gave the



initiative to create Operation Bandeirante (Oban), a centralized organization for the “anti-subversive campaign” which should operate in São Paulo, as the main center for combating subversion in the country (Fon, 1979; Huggins, 1998; Joffily, 2013). In June 1969, under the command of the general of the II Army, José Canavaro Pereira, a meeting was called to discuss a plan to combat “terrorism” in a more systematic way, which resulted in the solemn act of founding the body, on July 1st. As it is known, the act was attended by several civil and military authorities of the State, as well as political and business figures (Joffily, 2013, p. 42).

There is evidence that the Federation of Industries of São Paulo was directly held accountable for financing the organization, which helped with a “little fund” where significant portions of the São Paulo, national and international business community collaborated. In Gaspari’s book (2002, p. 62) there are reports that groups such as Ford, Volkswagen and Ultragas, for example, lent cars to Oban so he could carry out the repression. Nowadays, due to a series of investigations and reports endorsed by the National Truth Commission itself (Brasil, 2014), it is known that *Folha de S. Paulo* actively participates in providing its vehicles for the pursuit and capture of opponents of the regime. Cláudio Guerra, former Dops deputy, in a statement to the Commission of the São Paulo Journalists Union, stated that the dictatorship’s agents used the company’s cars “to enact surveys and place wiretaps because the press car did not attract attention. Back then it was not as easy as it is today (...) and the car was great for that” (Bellintani et al., 2017, p. 44).

Due to its initially illegal and clandestine character, Oban was never formalized institutionally. This ensured them a certain “dynamism” and “flexibility” to implement their repressive activities, since in theory they did not even need to be responsible for their actions (Joffily, 2013). On June 28th, 1969, in an indirect mention of the creation of the organization *Folha* even reported that São Paulo was executing a “plan to combat terrorism”. In an interview with the newspaper, the then governor of the State, Abreu Sodré, did not give further details, saying only that “the plan is confidential”, but he already left a clear message to the population: “Now we too are going on the offensive” (“São Paulo executa”, 1969).

Even though they maintained a certain amount of secrecy about the organization’s configuration, internal documents later produced by the military described what its functions would be. Oban, as a joint and coordinated operation between several organizations, aimed to “identify, locate and capture the members of subversive groups” in São Paulo, with the

purpose of “destroying or at least neutralizing the organizations to which they belong”⁴. To this end, they had a specific center designed to “develop guidelines and trigger psychological action”, as well as undertake “counter-propaganda anti-terrorist” campaigns⁵.

As we sought to demonstrate in this article, Oban did not conduct its psychological action and counter-propaganda work alone. As the document above highlighted, this operation needed to be carried out in a “joint and coordinated” manner. Professional journalism, represented by sectors of the mainstream press, worked in this sense as a fundamental agent in configuring the dictatorship’s counter-information policies, acting with recognized protagonism and legitimizing certain consensuses in the struggle against subversion.

Folha de S.Paulo, back then, seemed to be a very engaged and supportive vehicle for national security guidelines. On July 1st, considered to be the formal date of the founding of *Operação Bandeirante*, the newspaper printed on its cover the “sincere congratulations” it received from Marshal Costa e Silva, then “president” of the Republic, for “always faithfully informing the population” (“Costa e Silva congratula-se”, 1969). Already on the 5th, the newspaper showed us signs of the articulation that was taking place between the local business community and the repression, by reporting the “solidarity” and “trust” given by “company men” to the police and military commands. In the form of the then president of the Federation of Industries of the State of São Paulo (FIESP), Theobaldo de Nigris, *Folha* spotlighted the business community’s repulsion towards subversive movements: “It is necessary to retaliate with energy against all attacks perpetrated by the elements that hide behind of this agitation” (“Solidariedade dos empresários”, 1969).

Here it is worth a brief parenthesis to draw attention to how these speeches between the business community and the regime seemed to take place, even if in a veiled and not apparent way. On the same July 5th, *Folha* ran an advertisement from Ford, published in other editions throughout the month, about its F-350 trucks, the very known “Ford Forte”, a vehicle that, according to the publication, “performs the services that requires speed, efficiency, strength and economy”. This unpretentious advertising could have gone unnoticed, if it weren’t for the fact that the advertisement (Figure 1) featured trucks of distribution from *Folha de S.Paulo* itself and the company Ultragas, both, like Ford, recognized as being involved in “strong” and “efficient” services that, through the transfer of their cars to the military, collaborated with the dictatorship’s repressive actions, many culminating in illegal arrest, torture, death and disappearance of political activists⁶.

⁴As informações no II Exército e a Operação Bandeirante. Departamento de Ordem Política e Social, 28-06-1970. Arquivo Público do Estado de S.Paulo, fundo DEOPS, Dossiê 50-Z-9, 74.

⁵Operação Bandeirante. Central de Difusão. Contra-Propaganda Anti-terrorista. Proposta para ação psicológica, setembro/1969. Arquivo Público do Estado de S.Paulo, fundo DEOPS, Dossiê 50-Z-9, 60

⁶Regarding the case of Ford in particular, it is important to mention that the company was indicted in Argentina for having given its “Ford Falcon” models to the military to carry out illegal operations, involving the arrest, torture and death of political activists. In 2018, former company executives were convicted of crimes against humanity in the country, which considered them accomplices of the military in the kidnapping and torture of at least 24 of its employees in 1976. For more, see Basualdo (2016) and Molina (2018).

A

Journalism as a tool of “psychological action”

Figure 1

Ford Forte ad.

ANUNCIE NA
FOLHA

ULTRAGAZ

QUEM NAO PODE PERDER TEMPO VAI DE **FORD F-350 FORTÉ**

Você já reparou que o sempre um Ford que faz os serviços que exigem rapidez, eficiência, força e economia? Veja o serviço de entrega de jornais: Lá está o Ford. Um F-350, o único caminhão de tonelage média do Brasil. Transporta 3.5 toneladas de carga. É fácil de manobrar, até no trânsito difícil da cidade. É veloz, forte, tem motor de 181 HP com grande capacidade de aceleração, grande potência, grande torque. É muito econômico pois trabalha com reserva de potência.

Conheça o F-350 no seu Revendedor Ford Forte. É bons lucros.

Arquira também o F-350 através do Consórcio Nacional.

Ford
Caminhões

Note. Folha de S.Paulo , July 5, 1969.

The newspaper’s publications thus showed the degree of harmony between business, political and military groups, who were mobilized at the time in the struggle against the “subversive” movements. The trigger for the events appears to have occurred with a fire that destroyed a significant part of the assets of TV Bandeirantes, in São Paulo, on July 16, 1969. The following day, *Folha* gave extensive prominence to the case on its cover. According to Governor Abreu Sodré, these fires could only be “the work of terrorists”, hence the need for the people to “join the government, in the campaign against the enemies of the country”⁷:

I appeal to everyone to become a guardian of everyone’s tranquility and life. It’s not just up to the police to defend us in an uncertain war. It’s up to all Brazilians in S.Paulo. Point out where the traitors are, where the killers of our soldiers are [...] Will we, São Paulo residents, continue with our arms crossed, seeing that every day one of us falls victim to these attacks? No. We are all mobilized today, from the State governor to the humblest servant. Everyone is called to fight against those who hide to kill, to burn, to silence the voice of São Paulo. [...] stay alert, become civil police officers and report every unknown element, every suspicious attitude that you notice in a vacant

⁷ Regarding the case of Ford in particular, it is important to mention that the company was indicted in Argentina for having given its “Ford Falcon” models to the military to carry out illegal operations, involving the arrest, torture and death of political activists. In 2018, former company executives were convicted of crimes against humanity in the country, which considered them accomplices of the military in the kidnapping and torture of at least 24 of its employees in 1976. For more, see Basualdo (2016) and Molina (2018).

lot, in a house, in a bar, in an apartment. Report it, call the police, help us arrest them, cooperate so that we can get our hands on this group. (“Sodré: incêndio”, 1969)

In addition to this forceful statement by the governor, encouraging the population to denounce, not to remain idly by, but to become a sort of police officer so that together they could “lay their hands” on subversive elements, *Folha* also emphasizes a speech by General José Canavarro Pereira, commander of the II Army and one of the founders of Oban, as we have seen. For the general, the country’s security was the responsibility of “all the people”, expressing his concern “in the face of the need to launch a civic campaign to re-educate young people” (“General Canavarro”, 1969).

Folha’s journalism seems to have gone further, promptly answering the call of businesspeople, the governor and the general. That same day, he started a campaign, entitled “Union against Violence”, which would gain prominence on its pages for practically a month. Even though the origin of the fires had not been proven, the newspaper declared its solidarity against the “manifestations of insanity” articulated by a “cunning, unscrupulous and daring adversary” who sought to compromise public tranquility. Solidarity which, according to an editorial published by *Folha*, should be translated:

in a more intimate union, especially between those who have a heritage to defend – a heritage that does not belong, primarily, to a few men or a few companies, but rather belongs to the State and the country, at whose service it is found. This union, naturally, must be created around the constituted authorities, so that they can continue their efforts to transform Brazil into the great country of our dreams – an objective that, fortunately, is being achieved little by little, despite the nonsense of a minority.

Alongside this union – which is the duty of all conscious and responsible Brazilians – it is necessary to redouble vigilance against the enemy However, do not expect everything from public authorities, as everyone knows that security – especially in the current circumstances – is the responsibility of each citizen and each community Today’s victims have the comfort of knowing that they are not alone in this hour of sadness. With them is the best the country has in its moral reserves. We offer them the comfort of unconditional solidarity, reinforced by that call for unity and vigilance against those who want to make the Brazilian family uneasy and prevent Brazil from reaching its high goals. (“União contra”, 1969).

In the following days, the newspaper began to reproduce on its pages the expressions of support that had been receiving for the positioning of its



campaign, due to “so much repercussion [which] is having in the press and other sectors of Brazilian life” (“Repercute o apelo”, 1969). Once again, General José Canavarro had his speeches accentuated by *Folha*, now on the occasion of the tribute paid to the Army by the Commercial Association of São Paulo, where he reinforced that “businessmen and authorities” should “march together in the search for achieving the objectives of the Revolution”. For the general, the role of the business community was fundamental in the work of political formation of Brazilian nationality: “It is, however, in the psycho-social field where the company must play, at the moment, its great role” (“Canavarro: empresários”, 1969).

On July 20th, an extensive political-advertising manifesto was published on *Folha*’s internal pages. This time, FIESP showed solidarity with the newspaper’s campaign, giving its message to “Brazilian people” against the groups of subversives who “deserted their Homeland”. According to the Federation, this was a “fortunate for awareness” moment:

It would be a criminal omission to cross our arms at the exact moment when rebellious ideas of annihilating our best traditions are put into practice ... The industrial entrepreneurs of São Paulo, absolutely convinced of the great responsibility that weighs on their shoulders – and with the moral and civic authority gained in the democratic struggles they fought, alongside our Army, in the memorable national redemption campaign of 1964, – feel it is our duty to alert families, workers, students, intellectuals,, the entire labor people of Brazil, to take an indispensable awareness towards a cohesive union and indestructible action against the impudence and evil of who intend, with the anti-christian weapons of terrorism, to subvert public order and exterminate homeland security. . . . The industrial entrepreneurs of São Paulo, fully trusting in the patriotism and high spirit of cohesion of our Army, encourage people to collaborate more closely with Brazilian Government, repelling, the availability to each and to everyone, the criminal attempts to disrupt order. (“A Indústria Paulista”, 1969)

Along with this manifesto, *Folha* began creating headers with advertising messages from the “Union against Violence” campaign, put it out over the next few weeks (Figure 2), with the following messages: “order and progress”; “love builds and hate destroys”; “we trust in Brazil”; “work is the law of the strong”; “decision and courage – Greater Brazil”; “United we will win – Greater Brazil”, all signed as a “collaboration by *Folha de S.Paulo*”. The newspaper remained convinced of its collaboration, showing itself to be one of those largely responsible

for mobilizing the people with the government to “banish” “terrorism” activities from national life. The person who once again confirmed this recognition was the president of FIESP, Theobaldo de Nigris, who believed that the work of mobilizing public opinion against the “enemies of Homeland” was fundamental: “and there is no one better than the publicity organizations to be responsible for leading this movement, following the example of what FOLHA DE S.PAULO has already been doing” (“Empresário: união”, 1969).

Figure 2

“Union Against Violence” campaign, headers published on the pages of *Folha de S.Paulo* throughout the month of July 1969



Note. Authors' elaboration.

Reinforcing the support of its campaign partners, *Folha* published another editorial to highlight the need for the “appeal” that in union against violence: “and we are pleased to note that it is raising awareness in areas of opinion” (“Contra a violência”, 1969). He took the opportunity to emphasize once again that “terrorism” activities were not only directed against the government, as those who suffered the consequences were the people themselves. At this point, *Folha*’s journalism carried out work that was not limited to preventive actions, as it also acted, – as the recommended practices in the “Superior School of War” manuals showed us – in its “repressive” and “operative” character. This was what the newspaper did, for example, when it published photos and names of “wanted terrorists” on its pages, many of whom were later arrested, tortured and killed by the dictatorship (“São 25 os procurados”, 1969).



This tone shaped the company’s collaboration in the struggle against the subversive groups. It is not our place here to repeat these speeches exhaustively, since we have already shown how *Folha*’s journalism was directly responsible for this mannerism. Just to illustrate the scope and extension of the campaign, it is worth mentioning that the newspaper also received, throughout the month, expressions of support from commercial entities (“Entidades do Comércio”, 1969); of the rural classes (“Líderes rurais”, 1969); of the archdiocese (“Cardeal Rossi”, 1969); from the State government – which gave its “applause to the newspaper’s initiative. . . [for acting] as a convening sector for the population. . . , entirely in tune with present needs”(“Sodré conclama”, 1969); of the stock exchange – declaring that *Folha*’s initiative was a “national salvation” campaign, of great repercussion and “absolutely necessary” (“Bolsa conclama”, 1969); and, finally, the commander of the II Army, General Canavarro, who classified *Folha*’s campaign as “patriotic and praiseworthy” (“Canavarro: união”, 1969).

On August 3rd, 1969, practically a month after the foundation of Oban, *Folha* concluded its campaign with yet another editorial, recognizing that its appeal had been “fully accepted” by the entire Brazilian community: “high authorities, military and ecclesiastical classes, as well as the business classes, added their voice to ours and to the public opinion” (“A união e a violência”, 1969). By an act that we cannot consider as flawed, *Folha* made a subtle semantic shift in the title of its campaign, by naming its editorial “Union and violence”. It was as if it was no longer enough to call on the population to unite “against” it, but rather “with” violence. In this way, the text ended by stating that their proposed objectives would have been achieved: stopping subversive violence with the union of all “responsible” people.

All that was needed was to raise their awareness of the necessity to take a clear and defined position against those who insisted on confronting them. This was what this newspaper tried to do, formulating its appeal for “unity against violence”, which was at the same time a message of alert and confidence in the country’s destiny . . .

As this campaign is now closed, we thank those who participated in it and supported it, inviting them to remain vigilant against those who do not want to see the country progress in peace . . . Violence, unfortunately, has not been completely eradicated from our midst, but we are absolutely convinced that it will not flourish, among other reasons because it is directly contrary to the very formation of the Brazilian people; It will not flourish, yet, because, awakened to the created problem by the audacity of the radicals, we will know how to unite against them, in a united front with the constituted authorities. (“A união e a violência”, 1969)

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The necessity to stand a “clear and defined” position, called for from a “united front” with the constituted authorities, made the undertaking assumed by *Folha* a success, not only editorially on a journalistic level, as it was not just *Folha* who recognized the success of his own work. Documents produced in the following year, 1970, by the dictatorship’s security organizations, stated that the “success of the repression of subversion” and “terrorism” in São Paulo resided, in summary, “in the support of civil elites and civil and military authorities, in integrated work that combines efforts and multiplies results.”⁸ Thus, the Second Army referred to Oban with “great and just pride”, as “without a doubt, it marked the beginning of our offensive in the field of subversion and is becoming an example for the entire country.”⁹

The union *and* violence assumed by the business, political and military sectors – including *Folha de S.Paulo* journalism played a significant role, as we have seen in this article – they were responsible for a pioneering model of combating opponents of the regime. Its information and repression mechanisms became so efficient that they ended up serving as a model for the implementation of the Information Operations Department – Internal Defense Operations Centers (DOI-CODI), later spread throughout the country. The final report of the National Truth Commission (Brasil, 2014) states that it is difficult to pinpoint the exact number of political prisoners who had their rights violated in these places. Only in the DOI-CODI of the II Army, belonging to the São Paulo region, more than 5 thousand people were detained in its own premises, at least 50 of whom did not leave there alive. Figures that *Folha* today probably must not be proud of. It should at least be on the account of the company to recognize its responsibility for these acts, before so categorically proclaiming its role “at the service” of democracy. ■

⁸ A subversão e o terrorismo em São Paulo. Departamento de Ordem Política e Social, 17 de agosto de 1970. Arquivo Público do Estado de S.Paulo, fundo DEOPS, Dossiê 50-Z-09-87.

⁹ As informações no e a Operação Bandeirantes. Departamento de Ordem Política e Social, 28-08-1970. Arquivo Público do Estado de S.Paulo, fundo DEOPS, Dossiê 50-Z-09-74.

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Object of memory as an analytical category of album covers

Objeto de memória como categoria de análise de capas de disco

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RESUMO

A partir de autores ligados aos estudos de memória, comunicação e cultura, este artigo discute a noção de *objeto de memória* como categoria na análise de capas de disco *long playing* (vinil), no contexto das relações que envolvem práticas culturais, música e materialidades. Como representações culturais partilhadas por artistas, gravadoras e fãs, as capas articulam memórias visuais acionadas no tempo, do passado ao presente, pelos sentidos a elas atribuídos, sua presença e materialidade (desgastes, imperfeições etc.). Observa-se como alguns autores tratam o termo objeto de memória, ou circundam a noção para, ao longo desse diálogo, refletir sobre a efetividade da categoria na análise das capas de disco.

Palavras-chave: Capa de disco, objeto de memória, memória

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ABSTRACT

Based on authors related to memory, communication and culture studies, this article discusses the concept of object of memory as a category in the analysis of long-playing record (vinyl) covers, in the context of relationships involving cultural practices, music and materialities. As cultural representations shared by artists, record companies and fans, covers articulate visual memories triggered over time, from the past to the present by meanings attributed to them their presence and materiality (wear, imperfections etc.). The article examines how some authors treat the term object of memory, or surround the concept, in order to reflect on the effectiveness of the category in analyzing album covers.

Keywords: Album cover, object of memory, memory



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¹Released in the United States in 1948 by Columbia, the long-playing record (LP) holds a different recording format. It has 10 or 12 inches in diameter, smaller grooves than 78 rotations per minute (rpm) records, and rotated at a slower speed, 33 1/3 rpm. All of this meant longer recording time, hence the name.

THERE ARE TWO IMPORTANT ASPECTS as we talk about vinyl records nowadays. The emergence and popularization of the compact disc (CD) between the 1980s and 1990s caused long-playing records (LP or vinyl, as they are currently called)¹ to become less sought after, so that their production was greatly reduced or discontinued. However, a record factory went against the tide in Brazil: in 1999, two phonographic professionals created Polysom, in Rio de Janeiro, with the aim of continuing to produce and offer records. This dream only lasted until 2007: unable to cope with the costs and the ever-decreasing demand, the business was shut down. Then, in 2009 other entrepreneurs bought Polysom's machinery and facility and resumed activities, already targeting a new type of consumer market: adults, with greater purchasing power, who treat the LP as a cult object, and young people who are learning about this recording medium (*A fantástica fábrica de vinil*, n.d.). One of the interests of this audience is the triple aesthetic experience that records and their covers provide: handling and tactility, the images on covers and the acoustic product of the recording. Many artists have responded to this market interest, albeit very small, and released their work in three different media: CD, streaming platforms and vinyl. In this case, even if the product is a new release, the LP points to an old technology that requires little-used hardware (record players) and builds an aesthetic and media experience that is no longer the current hegemonic form of the music market. Coexisting with other recording media, consumption and listening practices in the field of Media Culture, even a new LP carries out a communicational process that is distinct from more contemporary practices. Vinyl record causes the cultural history of the media to rewind itself, which ceases to be a linear, unidirectional and evolutionary process, presenting itself as a mesh woven into different levels of uses and meanings, innovations and reappropriations.

A second aspect is related to LPs as collectors' items that circulate in a lesser-known market: the so-called vinyl fairs that take place particularly in large urban centers. In these places, exchanges and enchantment mark their operating logic:

The fair space is full of stalls with covers on display and accessible for handling by interested parties, just like in the old music stores. One may see many people arriving eagerly to find what they are looking for or be surprised by a rare piece. The enchantment is visible on the faces of most visitors: firstly, the sellers, who are proud to have the sought-after copy; then, the buyers, who are delighted; and finally, the general public, who are looking for leisure and entertainment

around this object that is once again on the cultural itineraries of cities. (Vargas, 2020, p. 639, free translation)

Entertainment, enchantment, aesthetic experience and symbolic consumption are features of this market founded on the semiotic and affective power of these objects that combine the LP records and their covers. At vinyl fairs, records are thought of as collectors' items, but not exactly as inert objects, without their original function².

A subtle paradox lies here. On the one hand, according to Benjamin (2009, p. 239), it is "imperative in the art of collecting that the object be disconnected from all its primitive functions in order to establish the most intimate imaginable relation with which is similar to it." Baudrillard (2008, p. 95) treats collecting as a "passionate enterprise of possession," in which "the everyday prose of objects becomes poetry, unconscious and triumphant discourse." Collectors want to own a particular piece, revere it for its rarity, for completing a space in the syntagm of their collections. To satisfy such passion, they remove the item from its everyday functions and denotative meanings and places it in a new poetic construction defined by subjectivity or an idiosyncratic notion of order. However, in the case of records, the preservation of these objects are also linked to its their founding and original property of playing music. Housed in a package (the cover), their everyday functions are maintained. The subjective and passionate bonds with objects in collections are linked to maintaining its integrity, so that they continue to function as their protocols of existence, even though they are apparently attached to social and media practices that still exist, although they are no longer hegemonic.

Even though it is linked to this paradox, the piece used and kept in a collection takes on other meanings in its materiality, highlights in its life journey, the product of handling by the subjects with whom it has been related over time. It has a history, physical marks and is linked to different contexts, a profile observed and studied by collectors:

The most profound enchantment for the collector is locking of individual item within a magic circle in which they are frozen as the final thrill, the thrill of acquisition, passes over them. Everything remembered and thought, everything conscious, becomes the pedestal, the frame, the base, the lock of his property. The period, the region, the craftsmanship, the former ownership—for a true collector, the whole background of an item adds up to a magic encyclopedia, whose quintessence is the fate of his object. In this circumscribed area, then, it may be surmised how

²It is always important to remember that the current cult of vinyl records and the aesthetic, cultural, and consumer experiences they entail consider both this complex object, which combines hearing, touch, and vision, and a larger system that makes it work, i.e., the record itself and the record player. Thus, the aim here is to emphasize the visual and tactile aspects of the product packaging of this system, thereby expanding the limits of the observation of researcher Simone Pereira de Sá (2009), who focuses the experience on the record/record player pair. According to the author, "what is at stake in this practice and how its advocates justify their passion . . . is that the material characteristics of vinyl and record players constitute central elements of the discourse. And it is only through them that informants culturally legitimize this form of listening" (Sá, 2009, p. 53, free translation). In other words, the issue is that covers cannot be taken out of the experience that the long-playing record, conceived as a device within a system, provides.



the great physiognomists—and collectors are the physiognomists of the world of things—turn into interpreters of fate. (Benjamin, 1999, p. 487)

Conceiving that objects have a history, framing them in their contexts and interpreting their destinies are practices that place them as points of memory. Whether they are anchors, articulators or material starting points for the construction of memory, there are objects that are not restricted to their immediate functionalities or to the limits of present time. Although they exist in the present, their marks point to possible pasts that partly can be reconstructed today. They are “singular, baroque, folkloric, exotic, ancient” objects. They seem to contradict the demands of functional calculus to respond to a purpose of another order: testimony, remembrance, nostalgia, evasion” (Baudrillard, 2008, p. 81). They are objects of reasonable use that comprise a type of memory-document: “a time compressed into the object and which becomes an index of a certain context and a starting point for other relationships” (Vargas, 2020, p. 662, free translation). These are what I seek to define in this article as *objects of memory*, artifacts that grow over time and unfold with it, wear down and articulate themselves in experiences of remembrance, framing and oblivion as they are seen, handled and questioned by individuals, even if worn by time and use, becoming ruins.

Based on authors who study Memory in the Media and Media Culture, this article aims to reflect on the concept of an object of memory as a category to analyze LP album covers. Covers are considered as one of the active elements in the processes of constructing a materialized memory, through which the past is reconstructed in successive presents. This object is part of the relations involving cultural practices, music, materiality, symbolic consumption and subjects. As they are shared cultural representations (Hall, 2016) by artists, record companies and fans in society and culture, covers produce visual memories activated over time, from the past to the present.

In this endeavor, we will look at how some authors treat the term object of memory or surround the concept in order to reflect on this category in the analysis of album covers.

ALBUM COVER AS AN OBJECT OF MEMORY

One of the first mentions of the term object of memory, albeit not very in-depth, appeared in the classic work of Maurice Halbwachs (1990). According to the author, memory has a social and collective meaning that overrides the

individual. It is a collective construction and represents the identity of a given social group. As Elsa Peralta (2007, p. 5, free translation) explains, for the author,

the primary function of memory, as a shared image of the past, is to promote a bond of affiliation between the members of a group based on their collective past, giving it an illusion of immutability, while at the same time crystallizing the prevailing values and perceptions of the group to which the memories refer.

Without considering any tensions or contradictions between collective and individual manifestations, for Halbwachs memory is a set of relatively stable ideas, values, representations, and tastes that marks memories of a group or society, defining this collective in a way that produces identity points. In this approach, objects are understood as material representations of these mnemonic manifestations and of the society's own characterization. For example, by citing descriptions of spaces by Balzac and Dickens, Halbwachs indicated the strength of representation of social positions provided by objects and their arrangements in the scenic space:

... each object appropriately placed in the whole recalls a way of life common to many men. To analyze its various facets is like dissecting a thought compounded of the contributions of many groups.

Thus, even in their apparent inertia, the symbolic character and the power of representation of collective identity are the aspects that define objects of memory, their configurations, and places:

Indeed, the forms of surrounding objects certainly possess such a significance. They do stand about us a mute and motionless society. While they do not speak, we nevertheless understand them, because they have a meaning easily interpreted. ... However, the permanence and interior appearance of a home impose on the group a comforting image of its own continuity. (Halbwachs, 1990, p. 132)

However, as is known, memory is not only a collective representation but also a product of tensions between the social and a range of subjective and individual demands. Thus, when dealing with objects of memory, this dialectic must be kept in mind. Considering the individual pole, Ecléa Bosi (2003) introduced the concept of "biographical objects." According to the author, it is common for us to create our own spaces with our objects arranged in a way that composes a



particular expression, faced with the increasing standardization, impersonality, and mobility of the cities we live in.

As mobility and contingency accompany our relations, there is something we wish to remain immobile, at least in old age: the set of objects that surrounds us. In this set, we love the tacit but eloquent arrangement. More than an aesthetic or utility sensation, they give us an affirmation of our position in the world, our identity; and those that have always been with us speak to our soul in its native language. (Bosi, 2003, pp. 25–26, free translation)

Here, such objects are approached more for the particular and personal bond they create with us than for representing a collective identity. In fact, the collective and individual vectors coexist in objects, including their materialities: on one hand, they are products of an era, of production technologies, and usage patterns; on the other hand, their long-term use has made them elements of particular characterization and expression. “The more oriented to everyday use, the more expressive the objects become: metals round off, become oval, wooden handles shine from contact with hands, everything loses its edges and softens” (Bosi, 2003, p. 26).

By citing Violette Morin, Bosi (2003, p. 26, free translation) indicates that biographical objects

... age with their owner and become incorporated into their life: the family clock, the photo album, the athlete’s medal, the ethnologist’s mask, the traveler’s world map. . . Each of these objects represents a lived experience, an affective adventure of the owner.

Album covers are part of this set of objects that, even though produced industrially, carry within the dimensions of memory, tactility and handling, the links of particular objects. On the one hand, they constitute visual indices of songs, artists, or certain cultural contexts; on the other hand, they are linked to their owners, are part of their record collection, occupy a specific position on the shelf, and bear marks of time and use: yellowing, worn edges, some tear or imperfection, etc. Thus, album covers as objects of memory can tell both collective and personal stories.

Album covers serve two seemingly opposing logics: they belong to both realms of consumption and industrial production, and the personal and affective sphere. According to Igor Kopytoff (2021), objects are divided into two types: at one end one can find commodities, subject to exchange and defined by their

common and usual nature; at the other end there are unique, uncommon things, related to culture, difficult to exchange for other things or money as they do not easily conform to market demands and categorizations and do not align with the idea of measurable value as in commercial exchanges. The logics of commodity and singularization, far from being static and exclusive, are gradients that characterize objects in society and are found in varying degrees in almost everything. Covers, as considered here, are productive examples of this bivalent and tense dynamic. On one hand, initially, they are packaging devices and base their existence and meanings on physical and symbolic contact with the consumer. On the other hand, at the same time, covers undergo processes of singularization and move away from commoditization by constituting value in the cultural field, in uses, and in appreciation based on criteria that prioritize the symbolic, memory, and aesthetic experience. Therefore, they are outside the submission to the homogenization of exchange values of commodities.

In the sense that commoditization homogenizes values, while the essence of culture is discrimination, excessive commoditization is anticultural—as indeed so many have perceived it or sensed it to be. And if . . . societies need to set apart a certain portion of their environment, marking it as “sacred,” singularization is one means to this end. Culture ensures that some things remain unambiguously singular, it resists the commodification of others. (Kopytoff, 2021, p. 93)

Notably, one should invoke this dialectic between commoditization and singularity to reflect on album covers. According to Kopytoff (2021, p. 95), “most consumer goods are, after all, destined to be terminal” as they limit their existence to a certain period until they become fragile or inefficient, to be replaced by newer ones. However, there are also durable goods that can remain effective and, more importantly, singularize by having passed through other hands and served former uses: in a word, they activate or build memory. This cultural aura of used objects (or antiques), created from the passage of time (distant or immediate), is what drives the market for used goods, in which records and their covers are the examples discussed. Generally speaking, when the market prioritizes new products, another field of interest opens up for older, used objects, which gain value according to the demand from specific communities. In this case, the passage of time regulates the process of singularization, under the generic denomination of *antique*. Obviously, they remain as commodities and constitute market value; however, the valuation criteria transform according to parameters related to culture, status, and rarity of the items. “This interpenetration within the same object of commodity principles and singularization principles”



(Kopytoff, 2021, p. 101) is a central point for considering album covers as objects of memory. Rarity, the marks it carries from a particular cultural movement, the importance in the musical context, design, and the appearance of integrity, or its physical imperfections increase its value for specific communities and are part of the singularization process given by the passage of time. This can be called *historical value*, as a documentary reference of a certain context, as a mark for building certain memories shared by these communities, and at the same time, extrapolating them in the dynamics of society.

Hence, it is also important to reflect on how materialities and presence shape memories. In this context, it is valid to address cover as objects of memory due to their tangibility. When dealing with *biographical objects*, Bosi (2003) identifies them not only by their symbolic relationship with their owners but also by their presence: the positions they occupy in domestic environments, the places they hold, the many presences of these objects throughout people lives. It is this force of meaning founded on materiality and space that Gumbrecht (2010, p. 13) refers to as the production of presence:

The word “presence” does not refer . . . to a temporal but to a spatial relationship to the world and its objects. Something that is “present” is supposed to be tangible for human hands, which implies that, conversely, it can have an immediate impact on human bodies. . . . Therefore, “production of presence” points to all kinds of events and processes in which the impact that “present” objects have on human bodies is being initiated or intensified.

To think of album covers through the category of objects of memory means to observe their configuration in matter and presence, covers only make sense if they are in front of us and within reach of hands and eyes. It is their physical constitution (density, texture, weight, size, tactility, etc.), their visual perception (shapes, colors, contrasts, figurativity, etc.), and their physical existence that affect us and produce certain perceptual and aesthetic experiences. Although we know that objects of memory have meanings assigned collectively and/or individually, as a result of experiences, knowledge, and traditions, there is a force of presence given by their materiality. This is revealed in their imperfections, wears and tears, and what has conformed through the passage of time, marks of use and constant handling throughout their lives³. Hence, it can also be said that covers as objects of memory have life⁴ and a trajectory. Such paths have been constructed due to their active participation in our lives; in relationships each of us weaved and continues to weave with objects. Even if they are stored away for years, the seemingly slow and peaceful passage of time affects objects

³Based on responses in a series of interviews with LP collectors, researchers Yochim and Biddinger point to the presence of an intangible quality in records related to more human aspects of this industrial object. In it, memory stands out: “... some collectors discuss their records in terms of connection to the past. That is, they suggest that in both listening to and holding records they feel linked to people, places and times of the past” (Yochim & Biddinger, 2008, as cited in Sá, 2009, p. 62).

⁴On the life of objects and the affectation of the body, see Erick Felinto and Vinicius Andrade (2005).

and, when rediscovered, affects all of us. This power bears such an extent that we only perceive it when we lose one of these objects. Although this realization is obvious, it is in the absence that we feel the negative intensity of the former presence of what is no longer among us.

Objects of memory, as old and used items, have both the symbolic dimension of marks of meaning and the strong presence of worn material. Hence the need, as Gumbrecht (2010, p. 15) states, to build “. . . a relation to the things of the world that could oscillate between presence effects and meaning effects.”

If presence and materiality are important, the category of objects of memory applied to the understanding of album covers implies things that can be positioned prominently both in social life and in private spaces. As they are significant to society, they are commonly found in museums, on display within a space-time narrative with other objects, in a specific location, following organizational criteria (Rebesco & Crippa, 2013). Objects in museums are relics-like, cultural remnants of a past in ruins that, in its impossibility of being reconstituted, fragment into the materialities of these exhibited artifacts. Such objects are observed through the intentions of the present, and it is these intentions (or gazes) that give mobility and layers to these relics, despite their materialities point to the past.

Objects of the past have always been pulled into the present via the gaze that hit them, and the irritation, the seduction, the secret they may hold is never only on the side of the object in some state of purity. . . ; it is always intensely located on the side of the viewer and the present as well. It is the live gaze that endows the object with its aura, but this aura also depends on the object's materiality and opacity. (Huysen, 1995, p. 31)

The aura mentioned by the author is the possible meaning constructed in the exhibited piece. Part of it lies in the material from which it is made (its originality), while another part comes from the way it is positioned by the curatorial design of the exhibition. There is also a third part in the viewer's gaze that reconstructs it through subjective projections and other conditions and repertoires of the present and their life history. Although there is an attempt to show the reality of the displayed piece and to reposition it in its original context and function, both are dissipated in the museum's *mise-en-scène*. Contradictorily, the museum makes the reality of the object disappear and opens it to new dialogues. As Huysen (1995, p. 33) notes,

. . . the point of exhibiting was quite frequently to forget the real, to lift the object out of its original everyday functional context, thereby enhancing its alterity,



and to open it up to a potential dialogue with other ages: the museum object as a historical hieroglyph rather than simply a banal piece of information; its reading an act of memory, its very materiality grounding its aura of historical distance and transcendence in time.

Artifacts placed in museums suffer from this double action: displaced from their original context, they carry in their materiality aspects that point to their past and, in another way, they are subjected to new readings both by the exhibition's *mise-en-scène* and by the viewer's gaze. As archaeological objects, they doubly point to the past and the present, a request that is somewhat similar to the issues surrounding album covers as objects of memory. In part, covers are out of their context because they are the product of a technology that is, shall we say, not hegemonic in today's music consumption, even though there are spaces built in a nostalgic way⁵, such as vinyl fairs and private nightclubs. In both places, covers are also placed according to certain presentation parameters. Fairs and nightclubs are not exactly museums, but they do have criteria in the organization of their displays, unfolding as space-time narratives, and always allowing for new interpretations by various spectators who look, touch, and engage with the covers, imprinting new meanings onto objects based on their experiences and repertoires.

If considered as materialities that endure over time in the form of languages, album covers as memory objects transport parts of the communicative act they once triggered from the past to the present (Barbosa, 2019), or they translate into the present fragments of the communicational process in which they initially participated. As this original process no longer exists, or is worn out and ineffective, these objects become traces of previous communication processes that are documented by them and reconnected to their own current existence and the memory work they conduct from the perspective of the present. These are distinct regimes of temporality: the one rooted in the origin, marks, and primary function of the object, and others that are constituted through various handlings and engagements in later present times. It is as if such objects carried condensed times from their origin to the present within their materiality (for example, the wear and imperfections generated by handling) and in the various meanings activated throughout their life cycle. However, the passage of time also reveals aspects of absence, of what no longer exists, of the relationships once established and now displaced, of the old uses and the work no longer conducted. Temporalities and absences can be rearticulated in various ways in the multiple presents in which the object is used. Hence, the importance of the

⁵Nostalgia here is defined according to Niemeyer (2018, p. 13): "... a desire for a return to a past time that has never been experienced by the yearning person or the missing regret for a past that never was, but that could have been..."

memory work that can be inferred from them and that is triggered by society each time such objects are reconstructed.

In the case of records, these contacts in time take place through the ritual of putting them on the record player, listening to them and seeing and manipulating covers. Through these actions, it is in part possible to understand the process that is built up in listening to music from the analog recording technology. Not only its materiality, but also the indices it contains, which redesign a social technology of listening and viewing. In other words, a particular way in which music is mediatised is documented and materialized there, in the grooves of records and the visuality of covers. These relationships among temporalities go beyond the time of the music or the spatial and temporal limits of listening and continue to produce meanings over other periods, short or long, and can always be revisited in different contexts. Similarly, the time of visual images on covers expand in this constant flow between past and present.

Another author who uses the term object of memory is Michael Pollak (1989), but in a different sense to what is being constructed in this reflection. For him, objects of memory are not necessarily old and used, but are characterized by being means of reorganizing memory today under a certain framework in the present. For Pollak, it is not old artifacts that document acts of the past in their meaning and materiality, but those constructed today to show us certain frameworks of memory, whether hegemonic or not, through artifices of a sensory nature, such as a film.

In the closest memories, those of which we keep personal recollections, the reference points generally presented in discussions are ... of a sensorial nature: noise, smells, colors. ... Although it is technically difficult or impossible to capture all these memories in memory objects made today, film is the best support for doing so: hence its increasing role in the formation and reorganization, and therefore in the framing of memory. (Pollak, 1989, p. 11, free translation)

For the purposes of this article, the concept of object of memory as a category for analyzing album covers has a different meaning. Created in the past and rearticulated in the present from various points of view, objects of memory are like cultural texts, in the sense indicated by cultural semiotician Iuri Lotman. A cultural text defines a sign system, with meaning and a communicative function, given in any language. Neither a closed statement in itself as a sign, nor reduced to an indivisible unit (Lotman, 1996), a text



has at least two codifications: one that defines the semiotic system in which it is inserted, and another that models the system as a specific whole. For example, respectively, the dance system (music, body, movement, volumes, etc.) and a specific choreography (Lotman, 1996, p. 79). Cultural text is a dynamic mechanism for generating meaning that both tends towards its internal unity of coherence (a choreography with its own movements and arrangements), and also opens up into various subtexts and into translations and contagions, through its borders, with systems external to it (music, costumes, the architecture of the space, etc.).

The concept is thought of dynamically – as a translator of culture, and systemically – as an articulating mechanism. Treating covers from the perspective of objects of memory means thinking of them as cultural texts and considering this mobile and translatable structure in the cultural context. It means conceiving objects as heterogeneous in its multiple internal and external relationships, in their folds, in what they translate and produce from outside and in what they export to the larger system that contain them. As intelligent devices, they are open to other readings and meanings according to the cultural dynamics they are inserted in. Album covers are mechanisms that translate past information, processed by designers, articulated with the music they pack, with the consumption of the musical genres and artists at issue. They are not closed statements, but relate to other languages (music and image), other contexts and other meanings.

According to Lotman, cultural texts have three basic functions:

- a. Communicative: in which information is transmitted from senders to receivers, the basic procedure of any communicative system.
- b. Meaning generator: also called creative function, it is the product of various possibilities of translating texts from one language to another, from one context to another, from a specific time to others. In translation operations, some elements are lost and others are created. This makes it possible to treat the translatability of texts as the creative power they contain. For Lotman (1990, p. 15), “... meaning is not only an invariant remnant which is preserved under all manner of transformational operations, but is also what is altered, we can claim that there is an accretion of meaning in the process of such transformations”.
- c. Mnemonic: related to the memory of culture, this function refers to texts’ ability to capture, conserve and produce information from previous systems that, at the same time, are resignified. “The text is not only the generator of new meanings, but also a condenser of cultural

memory. A text has the capacity to preserve the memory of its previous contexts”.

Album covers are objects of memory thought of as cultural texts, which articulate all three functions, especially conservation and memory production. They are old and used objects that bring with them latent possibilities for their reconstruction in the present, unfolded and translated into new configurations. Like archaeological pieces, they are articulated in layers of meaning, deep or superficial, which remain in potency for future translations. Obviously, these layers need to be reworked by new readers in new contexts and under new material and/or symbolic demands, they need to be discovered and activated, but the latency of the meanings is present in the materiality of these objects.

SOME FINAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR REFLEXIONS

This article did not intend to finish the subject or fully define the concept of object of memory as a category for analyzing long-playing album covers. The dialogues presented here with authors from memory studies and communication and culture opened up some points for further reflection on the concept and its application in the analysis of covers, in line with the objectives of this article. It was possible to identify seven points that summarize the proposed dialogues, leading the discussion into new fields and developments.

Album covers as objects of memory:

1. Translate and trigger affective relationships among listeners, music and image. Despite they are industrial artifacts and have a serial, non-auratic existence, album covers articulate close or distant memories, even in several copies of the same record, regardless of their integrity. Such memories lie in relationships mobilized by covers with listeners and in the affections given to them.
2. Manifest themselves through two major fields of meaning: a) part of the meaning lies in viewers, in the affective relationship they built with this object in the past. It still does in the present or with new conditions of existence for this object, such as belonging to a discotheque or being on sale at a vinyl fair. And b) another part lies in the materiality and presence of covers themselves, both as semiotic anchors defined by tangibility and circumscribing part of the relationship with these



objects, such as physical states and wears and tears seen as marks of use and the passage of time.

3. Are dynamic and powerful artifacts that unfold with the passage of time, accumulating and growing over time and with handling. As rarities, they are dynamic in their diachronic constitution.
4. Reveal powerful dialogues between someone in the past, in ancient material conditions of production and communication, and someone in the present in other situations. This dialog involves a process of translation of communicative processes (production, technology, language, context, reading, etc.), rather than mere information.
5. Intensely articulate relationships between different temporalities. The relationships established among artists, musical works, covers and viewers, initially given in the time-space of the original production, take place not only within the chronological limits of music and listening. They can also produce meanings over the course of certain periods, long or short, or even be resumed long after they have occurred, in new contexts. In the case of visual images on covers, their enjoyment amplifies in the flows unfolded between the past and multiple presents, without being limited to its original context or environment. Based on the relationship between music and image, memory allows this space to expand to any real or imagined situation in which both are recalled.
6. Are traces, vestiges and ruins, clear in the wears, tears, damages and material imperfections. They are tense memories because they are always reorganized in the present, under constantly updated demands as material documents of the past.
7. Are dynamic, heterogeneous and systemic like cultural texts, porous pieces in a border situation, always open to contagion and translation. They trigger memories of previous times and articulate other cultural texts in their images, such as fashion, body, design, behavior, artistic languages, etc.

Thinking of record covers in the category of object of memory means working with old and dormant material artifacts that preserve and/or trigger memories, which are in a position to produce relationships in time according to the viewer's investment. They are silent pieces that patiently await some handling or reading, relationship or conjunction that brings them out and gives them sound, movement and meaning, something that puts them through a process of semiosis.

They are like musical instruments at rest, waiting for hands to make them vibrate and sound: they have sound in their power, but they need to be activated. Because they are matter, they vibrate internally imperceptibly, at very low frequencies. A handling amplifies their vibration, changes their colors and gives them conditions to produce new meanings. Metaphorically, they are white objects that, on the one hand, contain in their materiality all the frequencies of the chromatic spectrum and, on the other hand, are receptive to any other tones. ■

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Suicide prevention campaigns and their reception by young university students^{*a}

Campanhas de prevenção ao suicídio e recepção por jovens universitários

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ABSTRACT

Addressing communication and health, this research aims to analyze suicide prevention campaigns and their reception by young university students. This qualitative methodology involved document analysis (campaigns from 23 organizations) and successive semi-structured interviews (with 12 youths) and is characterized as a study of advertising reception. Results show that the campaigns *scarcely* impact the studied youths and that their communication often addresses the promotion of mental health instead of suicide prevention, reinforcing taboos and failing to fulfill, as pointed out by the public in the reception practices, the expected function of informing people about means of helping and assisting imminent suicides.

Keywords: Communication, reception studies, suicide, prevention campaigns, youth.

RESUMO

Ao tratar de comunicação e saúde, esta pesquisa visa analisar as campanhas de prevenção ao suicídio e a recepção dessa comunicação pelos jovens universitários. A metodologia qualitativa envolve as técnicas de análise documental de campanhas de 23 organizações e entrevistas semiestruturadas sucessivas com 12 jovens, caracterizando-se como um estudo de recepção da publicidade. Os resultados evidenciam que as campanhas têm pouca repercussão entre os jovens estudados, e que sua comunicação, frequentemente, aborda a promoção da saúde mental em vez da prevenção ao suicídio, reforçando o tabu sobre o tema e descumprindo, como apontado pelo público nas práticas de recepção, a esperada função de informar sobre os meios de ajuda e atendimento ao suicídio iminente.

Palavras-chave: Comunicação, estudos de recepção, suicídio, campanhas de prevenção, juventudes

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A

Suicide prevention campaigns and their reception by young university students

THIS STUDY INTERCONNECTS the fields of communication and health to address the issue of suicide, with a focus on its prevention. It examines suicide prevention campaigns to analyze how audiences respond to them, especially young people. Suicide is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon, typically addressed within the field of healthcare, but discussed in social sciences as early as 1897 by Emile Durkheim.¹ Now considered a global public health problem (World Health Organization [WHO], 2023a), suicide requires interdisciplinary prevention policies in which communication can play a key role.

¹The book *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* is considered one of the foundational studies in contemporary sociology as well as in research focused on the phenomenon of suicide.

Drawing on a literature review of the scientific production on the subject, we make connections with previous studies in communication and health (Araújo & Cardoso, 2007; Pessoni, 2007; Schiavo, 2013), contributing to this interface by examining suicide prevention campaigns and their impact on audiences (Klimes-Dougan & Lee, 2010; Till et al., 2013; Ftanou et al., 2018) from the perspective of communication. The social relevance of this study lies in its potential to highlight ways to create more effective communication and help design suicide prevention campaigns that meet the needs of public policies and specific target audiences.

The focus of this study is on suicide prevention in the context of the *Yellow September* campaign, which aims to reduce the stigma surrounding the subject and help reduce the number of deaths by suicide. In this context, we seek to understand how people (the general public) engage with the communication of these campaigns and make meaning of suicide prevention in their daily lives. Are such prevention campaigns relevant to young people? What is the impact of these campaigns and how can we make them more effective?

Therefore, the overall goal of this study is to analyze suicide prevention campaigns and how university students respond to this kind of communication. The specific targets are: (a) to identify communication about suicide in prevention campaigns at the global, national, regional, and municipal level, paying special attention to the specificities of campaigns directed at university students; (b) to analyze the reception practices of young university students regarding how they engage with and make meaning of suicide prevention campaigns. The study was conducted locally in Porto Alegre, Rio Grande do Sul, Brazil, but also considers prevention campaigns in other contexts, including international, national, and regional settings, besides federal public higher education institutions with administrative headquarters in Rio Grande do Sul, in 2021.

The communicational approach adopted prioritizes the cultural practices of individuals and is grounded in cultural studies and Latin American perspectives, media consumption and reception studies (Jacks & Escosteguy, 2005; Jacobi, 2019;

Piedras, 2007, 2009), and social advertising (Saldanha, 2018). Studies in the fields of health and psychiatry (Ftanou et al., 2016; 2018; Klimes-Dougan & Lee, 2010; Randolph & Viswanath, 2004; Till et al., 2013; Torok et al., 2017; Wakefield et al., 2010) contribute to the theoretical framework and methodological choices of the study, done within an interdisciplinary context.² A literature review (Stumpf, 2011) was carried out by searching databases in the fields of communication and health. The searches related to communication included publications from 2015 to 2020 at a national level, while the searches in health databases considered works from 2010 to 2020 with an international scope. This was followed by a two-step qualitative empirical phase (Flick, 2009).

The first step focused on the media product: suicide prevention campaigns publicized during *Yellow September* in 2021, drawing on the documentary analysis technique (Moreira, 2011) and contributions from previous studies (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004; Torok et al., 2017; Wakefield et al., 2010). The procedures and instruments used made it possible to track, identify, describe, and analyze how suicide was addressed in the communication of prevention campaigns. The sources were the communication channels on the Instagram profiles of 23 organizations, considering five levels: international, national, regional, municipal and higher education institutions (HEIs).

The second step of the empirical research was observational³ and focused on the media reception of suicide prevention campaigns. This was done by conducting successive semi-structured interviews (Laville & Dionne, 1999; Minayo, 2016) mediated by video (Braga & Gastaldo, 2012), with the display of campaign material (Jacobi, 2019; Piedras, 2007). In this regard, studying the reception practices of advertising in the fields of communication and health supports the production of these campaigns by providing insights into how the target audience interprets them.

It should be stressed that suicide is the fourth leading cause of death among young people aged 15 to 29 (WHO, 2023b). Between 2011 and 2022, 147,698 cases of suicide were recorded in Brazil, with a 6% increase among young people (Alves et al., 2024). According to this investigation, resources to promote strategies for the prevention of self-harm and suicide should be better allocated, considering the specific needs of different social groups, such as indigenous people (Alves et al., 2024).

The procedures and instruments used make it possible to chart the contextual and sociodemographic data of university students, identifying their cultural and media consumption practices as well as their reception practices to the campaigns. The sources were 12 young medical students,⁴ with profiles uniformly distributed in terms of age group (18 to 30), gender, race/ethnicity, experience with therapy, means of entry in higher education, and stage of course.

²This research is a cooperative effort involving a study group in communication [Comunicação e Práticas Culturais (UFRGS/CNPq)] and a study group in psychiatry and behavioral sciences [Comportamento Suicida e Transtornos Mentais Graves (UFRGS/CNPq)].

³The research was submitted to and approved by the Research Ethics Committee of the University Hospital of the institution. Approval number from the ethics committee: 41985021.7.0000.5327

⁴We chose this setting and audience based on previously presented data of the prevalence of suicide rates among young people and health professionals, as well as in reception to the needs of a higher education institution (HEI) sensitive to the risk of suicide within the university community.



Table 1
Profile of survey participants

Participant	Entry in HEI	Age	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Marital Status	Children	Home State	Race/Ethnicity*	Residence	Source of Income	Therapy	Use of Medication
1	AA	26	W	Hetero	S	N	SP	Black	Student Residence	Parents/PRAE	Y	Y
2	U	25	W	Hetero	S	N	RS	White	Family	Parents/Scholarship	N	N
3	U	24	W	Bi	S	N	RS	Brown	Family	Parents/Scholarship	Y	Y
4	U	24	W	Hetero	S	N	RS	White	Alone	Parents	N	Y
5	AA	29	W	Demi	S	N	RS	Black	Family	Parents/PRAE	Y	N
6	AA	24	W	Hetero	S	N	RS	Black	Alone	Parents	Y	Y
7	AA	28	M	Gay	S	N	SP	Black	Friend	Godparents	Y	N
8	AA	30	M	Gay	S	N	RS	White	Student Residence	PRAE	Y	Y
9	U	23	M	Gay	S	N	RS	White	Friend	Parents	Y	N
10	U	24	M	Hetero	S	N	RS	White	Family	Parents	N	N
11	U	24	M	Hetero	S	N	SP	White	Family	Parents	Y	N
12	U	24	M	Hetero	S	N	SP	White	Alone	Parents/Scholarship	N	Y

* Self-declared data

Note. Designed by the authors

By using this methodology, we addressed the phenomenon of suicide through prevention campaigns, from the perspective of communication and health. The findings are presented below, preceded by a brief contextualization of previous research and the study subject.

PREVIOUS STUDIES ON SUICIDE, PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS AND COMMUNICATION

Studies in communication and health (Araújo & Cardoso, 2007; Cardoso & Araújo, 2009; Pessoni, 2007), as well as knowledge from the field of psychiatry, which we will touch on,⁵ help define the subject of this study, beginning with the definition of suicide. Suicide is a complex and multifactorial phenomenon (Cassorla, 2017; Souza, Minayo, & Malaquias, 2002). According to Bertolote

⁵ We will not discuss the interdisciplinary contributions of previous studies in depth due to limitations of space and the choice to present the empirical results of this study.

(2012, p. 21, free translation), it is a “deliberate, intentional act of causing one’s own death... it is an act initiated and executed by a person who has a clear notion or strong expectation that the outcome will be fatal and result in their own death.” It results from “various factors, amongst which the biological contribution of individuals, their personal history, circumstantial events, and the environment (Souza, Minayo, & Malaquias, 2002, p. 675).

Considered a public health problem, this type of self-inflicted violence requires prevention, i.e., “any measure aimed at interrupting the cause of a disease before it affects an individual, thereby preventing its occurrence” (Bertolote, 2012, p. 81, free translation). The first records of suicide prevention date back to the early 20th century in England, and for long there was little clarity in programs and actions. Those that did exist “did not specify whether they aimed to reduce mortality, suicidal behavior of any kind or both; ... there was no specific target audience” (Bertolote, 2012, p. 94, free translation). In the late 1990s, the World Health Organization (WHO) launched a landmark program for the development and proposal of suicide prevention actions based on strategies validated by experts in the field, which guides the production of educational materials. Today, the WHO recommends that suicide prevention be developed in five areas:

. . . treatment of mental disorders; restriction of access to methods; appropriate media coverage; adequate education and information programs in schools, for the general public and for healthcare and social workers; and active search for and systematic screening of individuals at high risk of suicidal behavior. (Bertolote, 2012, p. 102, free translation)

It is clear that suicide prevention should be pursued through public policies, in a multidisciplinary manner and across different segments of society. This context highlights the role of communication in suicide prevention, starting with the WHO guidance for addressing the topic in media and audiovisual production. We stress that this approach impacts the taboo surrounding suicide (Mendes et al., 2022), considering that restricting narratives and the circulation of meanings about suicide is also a form of silencing the practices and historical backgrounds of movements that support the public debate on mental health issues (Gonçalves, 2022).

On the other hand, there is the role of persuasive communication in public policies, which is encouraged by the WHO in the hope of promoting behavioral changes. Historically, public health campaigns has played a strategic role in disclosing information on epidemiological and health issues to the population (Araújo & Cardoso, 2007). Prevention and communication campaigns are used by different health organizations, both global and local, with the aim of spreading



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knowledge and changing health-related behavior (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004; Torok et al., 2017; Wakefield et al., 2010), and also to raise awareness among people about suicide (Ftanou et al., 2016; Torok et al., 2017).

It is important to distinguish between health promotion campaigns and suicide prevention campaigns. Public health campaigns comprise authoritative actions and information for different social groups, facilitating the development of networks and skills that encourage healthy habits, as well as access to healthcare, diagnosis, and treatment. Suicide prevention campaigns, on the other hand, are a subset of health promotion campaigns and, like others, comprise specific actions and information about the phenomenon in order to fight the social stigma associated with illness and prevent suicide cases.

According to the *Suicide Prevention Situational Overview*, a suicide prevention campaign:

1. Implements a formative research and a systematic planning process; 2) Embeds the communication campaign into an overall suicide prevention strategy; 3) Defines clearly specified audiences, goals and a call to action; 4) Is informed by audience research; 5) Is pre-tested; 6) Is evaluated. (California Mental Health Services Authority, 2012, p. 1).

Suicide prevention campaigns are developed in a complex and fertile setting, especially because of the different actors in the fields of communication and health (Araújo & Cardoso, 2007; Pessoni, 2007; Schiavo, 2013). The role of persuasive communication in campaigns shaped by public policies is to inform, educate and mobilize society. Whether defined as advertising (Gomes, 2001) or social advertising, this kind of communication must be informative, persuasive and for the interest of society. Therefore, it should “mobilize people interactively within the political and social context of concrete causes that directly affect the life or group of individuals” (Saldanha, 2018, p. 263, free translation).

Mobilizing individuals to reduce suicide rates by means of health policies and prevention campaigns raises the question of the effectiveness of such actions. In the field of health, literature reviews on the subject point to limitations in measuring prevention outcomes. A frequently adopted method is to assess the impact of a campaign by tracking the increase in phone calls to crisis centers (Song et al., 2017). However, the effectiveness of public health campaigns is usually based on the amount of media coverage and how long people are exposed to preventive messages, assuming that circulation is synonymous with positive audience reception and adherence. Few studies investigate the exposure of audiences to communicative messages with the aim of understanding the acceptance and assimilation of campaigns by research

subjects (Pirkis et al., 2017). Dumesnil and Verger (2009, p. 1211) note that “it is difficult to establish whether these programs help to increase care seeking or to reduce suicidal behavior.” Torok et al. (2017, p. 15) stress that, “Critically, there is a need for increased quantity, consistency, and quality of evaluations of mass media campaigns for suicide prevention to advance the evidence base.”

In the field of communication, the reception practices to social advertising or to the communication of suicide prevention campaigns can be addressed by researching the reception or the “relationship of people with media or communication channels” (Jacks; Escosteguy, 2005, p. 15, free translation), and the role played by the interpretation (reading or appropriation) of messages by audiences (Piedras, 2009). Through media consumption, audiences are exposed to campaigns and can make meaning of the communication in their reception practices. In this process, the communication goal of the campaigns is to generate knowledge, understanding, conviction or action in the audience (Colley, 1976). Whether they will achieve it depends on how individuals decode and interpret the messages based on their sociocultural contexts. Therefore, it is essential to consider the particularities of a campaign’s objective and target audience. In the field of health, there are generalist prevention campaigns that use billboards and aim to publicize helplines to the general public, and also segmented campaigns aimed at addressing the vulnerabilities of particular social groups. Given the prevalence of suicide among university students (Kaslow et al., 2012; Klimes-Dougan & Lee, 2010), and especially medical students (Schwenk et al., 2010), we focused on this audience to study the reception practices to the *Yellow September* suicide prevention campaigns.

EMPIRICAL APPROACH TO THE ISSUE OF SUICIDE AND ITS PREVENTION

Currently recognized as a global public health problem, suicide causes more deaths than AIDS/HIV, malaria, and homicide. In 2019, it was the fourth leading cause of death among young people worldwide, with low- and middle-income countries accounting for 77% of suicides (WHO, 2021)

This situation is reflected in Brazil. Suicide is one of the top four causes of death in the country. Among the young population, when analyzed by biological sex, suicide was the eighth leading cause of death among women and the third among men in 2017 (Boletim Epidemiológico: Mortalidade por suicídio e notificações de lesões autoprovocadas no Brasil, 2021). The state of Rio Grande do Sul has one of the highest suicide rates in Brazil (Franck, Monteiro, & Limberger, 2020), with 2019 data recording four deaths by suicide per day (Melo, 2019). Porto Alegre, the state capital and most populous city, has the highest number of victims (Franck,



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Monteiro, & Limberger, 2020). The true extent of the phenomenon may be even greater than the known data suggests, given that studies on suicide are still limited (Piccin et al., 2020) and cases are underreported (Souza, Minayo, & Malaquias, 2002).

We must also consider the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the mental health of the general population (Organização Pan-Americana de Saúde, 2021). Although suicide rates in Brazil remained stable before and after the pandemic, these figures increased in cities with higher social inequality among individuals with poor access to healthcare (Ornell et al., 2022).

Additionally, we should observe the relationship between the phenomenon of suicide and the broader context of mental health. A survey by Instituto FSB Pesquisa indicates that 53% of Brazilians experienced a worsening of their mental health due to the pandemic, reporting anxiety, mood changes and insomnia. According to the same survey, young people aged 15 to 34 are the group most likely to seek regular mental health care (Instituto FSB Pesquisa, 2021). University students have seen an increase in mental health issues: in 2018, a survey of higher education students found that 32.4% had received psychological care, with 39.9% having used psychiatric medication. In addition, the report noted that “the idea of death affects 10.8% of the target population and suicidal thoughts affect 8.5%” (Associação Nacional de Dirigentes das Instituições Federais de Ensino Superior, 2019, pp. 229-230). Considering healthcare students and professionals, it is noteworthy that, over the past 130 years, the suicide rate among physicians has been higher than that of the general population (Muzzolon et al., 2021).

Although mental health issues and their related problems are present in contemporary life, the subject is not openly debated and access to information is restricted. On the one hand, mental health problems are common among young people, who actively seek treatment from professionals. On the other, suicide remains a sensitive or taboo topic, facing obstacles for not being publicly addressed in society and the media. This is partly due to the aforementioned restrictions presented by the WHO on how the subject should be addressed in journalism (WHO, 2023a).

However, in the domain of audiovisual entertainment, an increasing number of productions show suicide as a phenomenon related to everyday situational experiences. This was recognized worldwide in 2017 with the series *13 Reasons Why* (Yorkey, 2017), which addresses suicide in the life of a high school girl along with discussions about bullying and depression. A study on child and adolescent behavior in the US linked the streaming of the series to suicide rates, highlighting the connections between media consumption and suicidal behavior (Bridge et al., 2020).

Given the above, we felt compelled to understand the sociocultural phenomenon of media consumption and reception to suicide-related communication in Brazil nowadays. However, rather than investigating the

reception to entertainment media products that address suicide, such as *13 Reasons Why*, we chose to explore the issue from the perspective of prevention, focusing specifically on persuasive campaigns in the hope that the results might contribute to making suicide prevention policies more effective.

In Brazil, the National Policy for Health Promotion (PNPS, 2015) and the National Policy on Self-Harm and Suicide Prevention (PNAPS, 2019) mobilize individuals and organizations from different sectors. The PNAPS has nine goals focusing on the following issues: promoting mental health; raising awareness about self-inflicted violence; providing psychosocial support for people in psychological distress; assisting families; organizing events and actions that help understand the phenomenon; and “intersectoral coordination for suicide prevention, involving health, education, communication, media, police and other entities” (Brasil, 2019, free translation).

These goals are in line with the overall objective of the PNPS:

Promote equity and the improvement of living conditions and lifestyles, enhancing the potential for individual and collective health while reducing vulnerabilities and health risks caused by social, economic, political, cultural, and environmental determinants. (Brasil, 2015, p. 11, free translation)

Its approach to health promotion, and not only suicide prevention, provides the development of policies and the production and dissemination of health knowledge and practices in a shared and participatory manner (Brazil, 2015). To this end, in the operational section “IX, Social communication and media,” it recommends:

The use of various means of communication, both formal and popular, to help the different groups involved understand and speak out, conveying information on the planning, execution, outcomes, impacts, efficiency, efficacy, effectiveness, and benefits of the actions.” (Brasil, 2015, p. 16, free translation)

Suicide prevention campaigns and their communication are developed based on such guidance. Both are interrelated but have different natures. Suicide prevention campaigns are substantial actions linked to public policies and health and wellness organizations, involving different social actors with the goal of preventing the outcome of suicide. In contrast, the communication of these campaigns consists of informational and persuasive media messages and communicative actions, produced, and publicized by different social actors and channels to spread information, engage various audiences in reflecting on suicide risk and encourage individuals to seek help from healthcare providers in situations of risk.



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Yellow September is a global suicide prevention campaign that began in 2003, including World Suicide Prevention Day (September 10), as proposed by the International Association for Suicide Prevention, with the endorsement of the WHO. In Brazil, the *Yellow September* campaign was implemented in 2014, aiming to “reduce stigma on the subject and assist in the prevention of deaths by suicide in the country” (Setembro Amarelo, 2023, free translation).

To achieve this goal, working to inform and guide different social segments on seeking help, the campaign has two main fronts. The first is through the support line provided in Brazil by the *Centro de Valorização da Vida* (CVV), phone number 188, and other digital communication channels. The second guides people to seek specialized mental health professionals, mainly psychiatrists and psychologists, in the Unified Health System (SUS) or in private clinics and offices.

Like other public health campaigns scheduled for specific months of the year, such as *Pink October* and *Blue November*, *Yellow September* gives periodic visibility to the issue of suicide, achieving widespread public recognition. The involvement of institutions that deal with the subject in Brazil, such as the Federal Council of Medicine (CFM), the Brazilian Association of Psychiatry (ABP), and the *Centro de Valorização da Vida* (CVV), encourages other organizations to address it, opening up space for the phenomenon to be discussed in society and in the media, the context in which this study was developed.

RECEPTION PRACTICES OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TO SUICIDE PREVENTION CAMPAIGNS

To address communication about suicide in the 2021 *Yellow September* prevention campaigns, we investigated 23 organizations: six at international level, seven at national level, seven at regional level and four at municipal level, as well as six local higher education institutions, focusing on the particularities of campaigns targeting young university students, the audience of this research.

In analyzing how the campaigns address suicide, we identified, among other aspects,⁶ the most frequently used terms in the organizations’ messages in all five contexts, leading to the following results: (i) international organizations⁷ predominantly use the term “suicide”; (ii) national organizations⁸ simultaneously use the terms “Yellow September,” “life” and “prevention”; (iii) regional and local organizations⁹ prioritize the term “September”; and (iv) higher education institutions¹⁰ focus on the term “Yellow September.”

The results reveal that communication about suicide in the 2021 *Yellow September* campaigns from the 23 organizations studied is diverse. Most of them link *Yellow September* to the idea of “life promotion” and few explicitly address the issue of suicide

⁶ In the research that gave rise to this paper, the analysis of the campaigns from the 23 organizations includes specific aspects of the concept of communication, form and language, channels, among others, which will not be explored for reasons of limited space.

⁷ World Health Organization (WHO), Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), American Association of Suicidology (AAS), American Foundation for Suicide Prevention (AFSP) and Beyond Blue.

⁸ Ministério da Saúde (MS), Ministério da Mulher, da Família e dos Direitos Humanos (MDH), Conselho Federal de Medicina (CFM), Conselho Federal de Psicologia (CFP), Associação Brasileira de Psiquiatria (ABP), Associação Brasileira de Estudos e Prevenção de Suicídio (ABEPS) and Centro de Valorização da Vida (CVV).

⁹ Secretaria da Saúde do Rio Grande do Sul (SSRS), Conselho Regional de Medicina do Rio Grande do Sul (CREMERS), Conselho Regional de Psicologia do Rio Grande do Sul (CRPRS) and Secretaria Municipal da Saúde de Porto Alegre (SMSPOA).

¹⁰ Universidade Federal de Rio Grande (FURG), Universidade Federal de Pelotas (UFPEL), Universidade Federal do Pampa (Unipampa), Universidade Federal de Santa Maria (UFSM), Universidade Federal de Ciências da Saúde de Porto Alegre (UFCSPA) and Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Sul (UFRGS).

prevention in such terms. The international organizations are those that generally address suicide prevention in their communication, while the national, regional, and local organizations touch on the issue, shifting the focus of communication to the promotion of life and mental health. This may be due to the fact that regions and cultures are in different stages of breaking the stigmas surrounding suicide and public debate on the topic. While in Brazil the *Yellow September* campaign only started in 2014, internationally it has existed for two decades, enabling the development of numerous communicational approaches, which may have provided better conditions for a more assertive approach to the issue.

In general, the results show that the analyzed campaigns, especially those from national and regional/local organizations, either contradict or do not fully observe the previously mentioned guidance from health experts, organizations, and public policies for suicide prevention campaigns. By prioritizing communication that reinforces the campaign name *Yellow September* rather than focusing on the issue of suicide prevention, these campaigns are not explicitly aligned with the goal of reducing stigma on the subject and contributing to the prevention of deaths by suicide. Neither do they objectively provide information on how to seek help, be it the CVV helpline (188) or ways to access specialized mental health professionals. In their communication, the campaigns do not make it clear whether they aim to reduce suicide mortality or any suicidal behavior, and it is not possible to identify any specific target audience.

These campaigns, publicized in September 2021, make up what we call “offered flow” (Piedras, 2009) of communication about suicide. From the viewpoint of communication and cultural studies, the mere circulation of these messages in the media does not imply their consumption or reception by audiences, which is what builds “appropriated flow” (Piedras, 2009), based on their practices and specific contexts. However, in designing the study, it was assumed that the participants, when asked about suicide prevention campaigns, would recall some of the campaigns circulating at that time, whether at local, regional, national, or international level, or at their own higher education institution.

Aiming to access reception practices most closely related to the participants’ everyday experiences, the expectation was to collect data on how they made meaning of a campaign that caught their attention and could be mentioned spontaneously.¹¹ We followed this methodological principle from previous studies (Piedras, 2007) to avoid prompting responses to any campaign in particular, hoping that each participant would contribute the communication about suicide that would be investigated in their reception practices. However, to our surprise, during the interviews with the 12 participants in the observational research, none of them spontaneously recalled any kind of communication or campaign related to suicide prevention.¹²

¹¹In the research that gave rise to this paper, the empirical approach with the interlocutors involved successive interviews, addressing their background, experience with therapy, relationship with the topic of suicide, media consumption and, finally, reception practices, which are being emphasized in this discussion at the expense of the others for reasons of limited space.

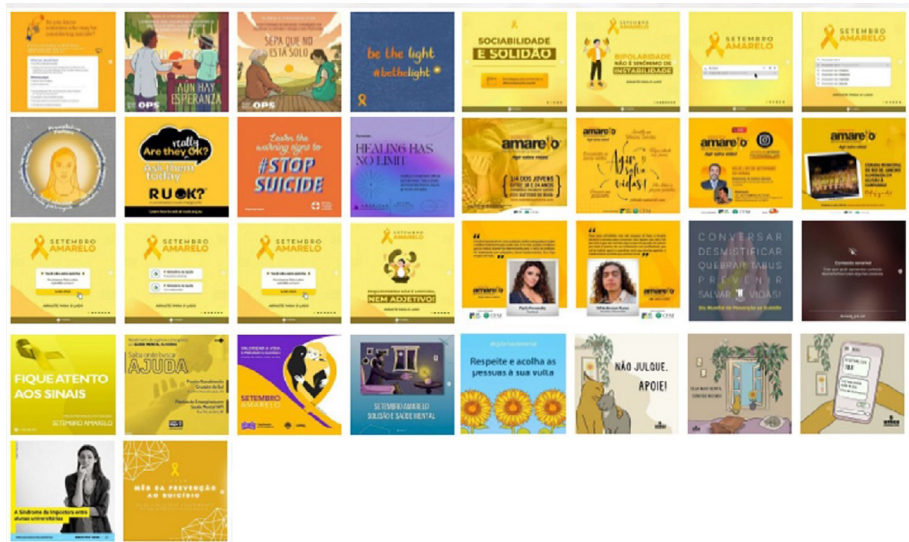
¹²On the other hand, when prompted to speak, they recalled situations in which suicide was addressed in their cultural and media consumption (books, movies, series, etc.). All participants spontaneously mentioned the series *13 Reasons Why*, which reveals engagement with the subject. We will not discuss these findings here for lack of space.

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This outcome, which will be discussed below, made it necessary to present a communication flow (Figure 1). This flow consists of campaigns that were in the media during the research period (September 2021), so that the participants could select the ones that called their attention and make meaning of them.

Figure 1
Campaigns shown to participants



Note. Compilation of campaigns posted by the organizations on Instagram in 2021

These suicide prevention campaigns were shown to the participants for later discussion during the interviews. However, most of campaigns failed to engage the university students, especially because they saw them as mental health campaigns, with few elements specifically related to the subject of suicide. This was clearly expressed in their responses:

This doesn't even look like suicide campaign material, maybe (if) in a corner something about suicide were mentioned... none of them really mention suicide, except for the CVV phone number. (Participant 3, intern student)

... to me, it communicates much more the question of being more empathetic, listening to people, I'm not sure it relates to the issue of suicide. (Participant 6, clinical cycle student)

I don't believe it's something that would make me think specifically about the issue of suicide. I think it lacked a bit more of what was done in the CVV ones, it would have touched a nerve better, not like them, but rather they are acting, it should be more direct. (Participant 10, basic cycle student).

The university students showed greater engagement with campaigns that communicated the subject assertively, directly, and simply, facilitating access to relevant information and search for help. Specifically, four campaigns, which we will discuss below, were positively and significantly mentioned by the participants in their responses, providing evidence of meaning-making by the university students. The contexts of these campaigns are international and regional/local (Municipal Health Department of Porto Alegre) and national (Brazilian Psychiatric Association/Federal Council of Medicine (CFM) and the *Centro de Valorização da Vida* (CVV)). They are examples of good practices at national and regional/local levels, being exceptions due to addressing suicide explicitly.

Below is the campaign material of the Municipal Health Department of Porto Alegre (Figure 2),

Figure 2

Título pendente



Note. Instagram of Secretaria Municipal de Saúde de Porto Alegre (@saudepoa)

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The university students reported feeling engaged by the objective communication of the information presented in the campaign material, which conveys confidence, relevance, and assertiveness by informing people where to seek prompt help at the SUS for urgent and emergency mental health care.

Wow! This information about 24-hour mental health emergency services is extremely important; knowing where you go for help, that should be on a huge poster. This is one of the most essential things for someone who isn't well to know where to look for (help), because it's one of the hardest things to find out, and sometimes there's no way, no money, no place. So, it's a super important topic. (Participant 6, clinical cycle student)

This (material) here is also essential information that people need to have. It's important that they know it exists. It was good to have a direct, complete, and important message... I think it makes for good communication, a direct, simple, and complete message. (Participant 8, intern students)

Another campaign mentioned frequently and positively by participants was a joint effort of the Brazilian Psychiatric Association and the Federal Council of Medicine. (Figure 3).

Figure 3

Campaign run by the Brazilian Psychiatric Association and the Federal Council of Medicine



Nota. Instagram of Conselho Federal de Medicina (@medicina_cfm)

In reception to this communication, the university students reported feeling invited to reflect on the subject, taking into consideration the epidemiological data included in the material, which highlights that the number of deaths by suicide in their age group (young people) is significant.

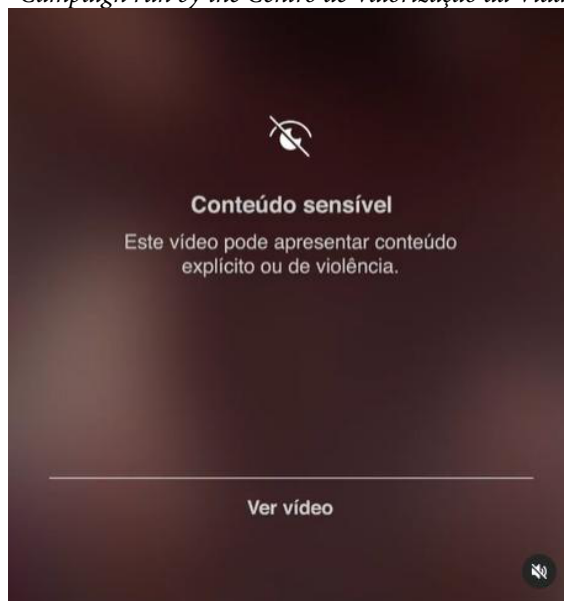
I like this kind of text, that is impactful. It says a lot, and it's the kind of thing that would make me think, "18- to 24-year-olds," especially because that's my age group. So I would think, "Wow, such young people, and if this is happening, then it's close to me and I'm not paying attention." This text would attract me. I liked the text, it's both impactful and informative. (Participant 6, clinical cycle student)

I liked having this type of statistic because it shows that it's quite prevalent. I think that for someone who thinks about this, they also realize that it's not just them, right? But I think something was missing... there could have been a message, a solution, to give you hope, more than just that "action saves lives." I think it wasn't enough to give hope, compared to the rest. (Participant 9, clinical cycle student)"

The national campaign of the *Centro de Valorização da Vida* was also frequently mentioned by the participants (Figure 4).

Figura 4

Campaign run by the Centro de Valorização da Vida



Nota. Instagram of Centro de Valorização da Vida (@cvvoficial)



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Communication in this campaign is distinctive for being audiovisual and featuring the typical warning of social media: “Sensitive content – This video may contain explicit or violent content,” which aroused the curiosity of the participants. Meaning-making by the university students is ambivalent, due to the potential sensitivity of the content.

My first thought was never this, it was always more like: ouch, it must be an image of a suicide scene. And I don't want to see a suicide scene, so I would just skip it... it wouldn't impact me because I would refuse to watch it, since that's what my mind associated with what I would probably see in those images. (Participant 5, clinical cycle student)

[The campaign is] a punch in the stomach, I like that. I think it's good, it hits a nerve. It really is an invisible pandemic, we're sometimes much more concerned with nonsense on the internet than with people we love who are suffering from this. (Participant 10, basic cycle student)

This [campaign] gave me a feeling of doubt. Because it doesn't seem like... it doesn't seem like a suicide prevention campaign. It seems more like social criticism than something that would prevent you from committing suicide. I liked it, if it were social criticism, like liquid relationships or something like that [and which] is somehow related to suicide, but not directly. If it were for such social criticism, I would like it, but for a suicide prevention campaign, I think people wouldn't say it's related, it's not a direct campaign against suicide. (Participant 7, internship student)

Given the university students' accounts of how they made meaning of the campaigns, we see indications of which type of communication is able to make them engage with the content and thus inform them about suicide prevention, triggering behavior change and reducing risks. These findings suggest that it is not enough to simply publicize *Yellow September*; more than that, organizations need to communicate the issue of suicide and the ways to prevent it clearly and objectively, whether in cases of ideation, the need for dialogue/support or emergencies involving attempts.

These results, which emerged from the audience's reception practices, coincidentally reaffirm the expert guidance previously mentioned and apparently overlooked by most of the analyzed campaigns. This shows that communication can be more effective if those responsible for its development

pay attention to the recommendations consolidated in Brazil and worldwide concerning prevention campaigns.

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS AND CONCLUSIONS

The results of the study on communication and suicide prevention, with a focus on campaigns and their reception by university students, are sufficient to meet the research objectives. However, they indicate the need for continued and more complex approaches. As highlighted by other international researchers, there is a need to reflect on the information about suicide prevention circulated by promoting institutions (Randolph & Viswanath, 2004; Torok et al., 2017; Wakefield et al., 2010), taking into account, particularly, the audiences (Ftanou et al., 2016) for whom these communications are intended (Ftanou et al., 2018).

On the one hand, we gathered evidence on the kind of communication used in the *Yellow September* campaigns in international, national, regional, local, and higher education institution (HEI) contexts, as well as on how university students make meaning of them. On the other hand, this research has raised questions: How should we approach this complex and multifactorial phenomenon of suicide? How should we talk about its prevention in such diverse and unequal contexts? How can we effectively implement the different roles that communication can play to reduce stigma and cases of this type of death?

We carried out the study with a focus on the *Yellow September* prevention campaign fully aware that, as a prevention policy, bringing the subject the fore in only one out of the twelve months in the year is insufficient. What we did not expect, however, was to identify so many campaigns promoted by different organizations that, paradoxically, were so wary or fearful of addressing the topic in a direct and objective manner, as recommended by experts since the 1990s. Contrary to established guidance, in most organizations whose campaigns were researched, the communicative choice was to promote life and mental health rather than suicide prevention.

In another phase of the study, in the hope of understanding which of these campaigns the audience of university students would engage with, we were once again significantly surprised, which required a change in methodology. We had assumed that some of the numerous campaigns being publicized in September 2021 would have been seen and remembered by the audience, but this did not happen. None of the 12 participants spontaneously



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mentioned recalling a suicide prevention campaign. It is noteworthy that the university students surveyed are from a medical school in the state of Rio Grande do Sul, users of the social media platform Instagram, and are thus immersed in a media environment in which were posted campaigns from health and psychiatry associations and councils as well as communication from their own school, focused on *Yellow September* (which made up the corpus of this research).

In this investigation, given our main goal and the mobilized resources, we were unable to determine why communication about *Yellow September* seems to be invisible or irrelevant from the audience's perspective. This calls for future empirical studies focusing on reception and, before that, media consumption, to identify how and why such campaigns do not stand out as significant among the other media offerings that attract this audience's attention. These assumptions are in line with the needs of different levels of persuasive communication (Colley, 1976), promoting a variety of persuasive communication strategies and covering different communication levels. This is justified by the fact that these individuals have different experiences related to information access and the studied social phenomenon.

Besides the finding that the campaigns have little impact on the studied audience, the main result of the research shows that, in general, the communication used in the campaigns focuses on promoting mental health rather than suicide prevention. As a result, it reinforces taboos about the subject and fails to meet the expected function for university students: informing them about ways to help and seek help and where and/or how to find assistance for imminent suicide.

It should be noted that the expectations of university students regarding what should be communicated in such campaigns coincides with the recommendations of suicide prevention experts in the medical field (WHO, 2023a) and national public policies concerning the objectives and methods of communication that campaigns should follow (Brasil, 2019). This finding motivates future research into the production of campaigns; after all, it is clear that some steps in the recommended process for developing campaigns – systematic research, dialogue with broader strategies, clear definition of goals, audiences and a call to action, dissemination, pre-testing and evaluation (California Mental Health Services Authority, 2012) – are not being adequately addressed.

Despite these potential gaps in campaign development, we observed among the researched organizations a significant interest in and commitment

to *Yellow September* which is certainly driving investments in the production and dissemination of communication. However, in the context of this study, these campaigns are not fully exploiting their potential to meet the goal of reducing stigma about the subject and assisting in preventing cases of suicide. Many of them are not even being seen and remembered by certain audiences. Therefore, it is essential that the results of studies like this are used as reference for developing future campaigns, ensuring that public and private investments made by organizations effectively contribute to suicide prevention policies. ■

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A discursive approach to the legitimation strategies of television journalism

Uma abordagem discursiva das estratégias de legitimação do telejornalismo

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ABSTRACT

This study¹ discusses the legitimization processes of Brazilian television journalism by identifying and analyzing discursive strategies used by *Jornal Nacional*, a Rede Globo broadcast. Aiming to investigate how the events reported affect the discursive legitimation strategies developed in the news coverage, three journalistic events were selected for analysis: the Brumadinho dam disaster; the increase in Amazon fires, and the COVID-19 pandemic. This investigation employs the three-level discourse analysis – situational, discursive, and semiolinguistic – proposed by Charaudeau as its theoretical-methodological framework. The main discursive legitimation strategies identified refer to self-referentiality, appropriation of amateur content, instantaneity, and didacticity, the operationalization of which rests on the complexity of each event's situational level, understood as a space of coercion.

Keywords: Television journalism, mediatization, legitimation discursive strategies

RESUMO

Este artigo discute os processos de legitimação do telejornalismo brasileiro a partir da identificação e análise de estratégias discursivas acionadas pelo *Jornal Nacional*, exibido pela Rede Globo. Tendo como objetivo investigar como os acontecimentos reportados pelo telejornal incidem sobre as estratégias discursivas de legitimação desenvolvidas nas coberturas, três acontecimentos jornalísticos foram selecionados para análise: rompimento de barragens em Brumadinho, aumento de queimadas na Amazônia e pandemia de covid-19. A investigação tem como base teórico-

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metodológica a análise do discurso em três níveis – situacional, discursivo e semiolinguístico, – proposta por Charaudeau. As principais estratégias discursivas de legitimação identificadas foram autorreferencialidade, apropriação de conteúdos amadores, instantaneidade e didaticidade, sendo sua operacionalização influenciada pela complexidade do nível situacional de cada acontecimento, entendido como um espaço de coerções.

Palavras-chave: Telejornalismo, midiaticização, estratégias discursivas de legitimação

THE CRISIS OF CONTEMPORARY Journalism constitutes one of the most complex in its history, going beyond funding modes and reaching the institution's very legitimacy worldwide (Christofolletti, 2019; Meditsch, 2018). In Brazil, the worsening de-legitimization process of the Press is completing a decade. News coverage of the June 2013 protests² was criticized for distorting and manipulating facts. Journalists were harassed and many dispensed with journalistic credentials and worked discreetly amidst the crowds, in an attempt to minimize the risks of being attacked (Queiroz & Coutinho, 2014). That year, the Brazilian National Federation of Journalists (Fenaj) recorded 189 attacks against communication professionals in the country. Despite a reduction in occurrences in the following five years compared with 2013, from 2019 onwards the attacks exceeded the 2013 recorded numbers and reached 430 instances of violence against journalists in 2021 – a record since the beginning of Fenaj's historical series. In 2022, the total number of incidents fell slightly totaling 376 cases; however, occurrences of threats, harassment and intimidation grew 133%. Fenaj relates the situation to Jair Bolsonaro's administration, who during his presidential term was the main antagonist of the Press (Fenaj, 2023; *Violência contra jornalistas*, 2021).

Meditsch (2018, p. 11) evaluates that the crisis “seems to contaminate society itself” immersed in the growing phenomenon of disinformation. Such is its severity that in 2020, amidst the COVID-19 pandemic, the World Health Organization (WHO) postulated an infodemic, defined as “an overabundance of information – some accurate and some not – that makes it hard for people to find trustworthy sources and reliable guidance when they need it” (Organização Pan-americana da Saúde, 2020, p. 2). This issue reveals one facet of mediaticization processes, understood as new interactional patterns made possible by virtualization (Hjarvard, 2012) a “new communicational architecture” in which feedbacks are intense and complex (Fausto Neto, 2018, p. 68).

²The protests began on June 6, 2013, called through social media by the Movimento Passe Livre (Free Fare Movement – MPL) and demanded the suspension of the increase in bus and subway fares in São Paulo. They spread to 25 capitals with different demands (Figueiredo, 2017).

Christofoletti (2019, p. 57) positions the media's "erosion of credibility" within the context of the crisis of institutions. According to the *Edelman Trust Barometer*, conducted in 28 countries including Brazil, in November 2022 the percentage of overall trust in the media was 50%, lower than companies (62%), non-governmental organizations (59%), and the government (51%). In Brazil, 46% of respondents said they trust the media (Edelman, 2023).

We understand that, amidst the scenario of crisis and convergence (Jenkins, 2009), new media and traditional media in constant reconfiguration which no longer have delimited borders or distinct uses act concomitantly. Television – especially open channels – continues to occupy a central role, especially in major events coverage, in which it mobilizes large audiences (Becker et al., 2018; Jost, 2010) and seeks to activate "a sense of occasion," a kind of collective empathy before the events broadcasted (Katz, 1993, p. 59). In these moments, television journalism – which today goes beyond the specificity of television (Emerim, 2020) – increases the development of strategies intended to establish, ensure and especially regain a position of legitimacy before the public and its peers. Legitimation processes are understood here as communicational practices that seek the recognition of an institution, organization, activity or individual before society. Besides the other's gaze, they currently imply a relational aspect and demand actions from the public (Barichello, 2017; Dall Agnese, Barichello & Belochio, 2016; Berger & Luckmann, 2014; Charaudeau, 2014c; Van Leeuwen, 2007).

Given this context, this article investigates incidence aspects of the events reported by television journalism on the discursive legitimation strategies mobilized in news coverage. Our empirical object of analysis is *Jornal Nacional* (JN), the longest free-to-air television news program in Brazil and with the largest audience, broadcasted by Rede Globo de Televisão from Monday to Saturday.

The article is divided into five parts. Following this introductory section, we present the theoretical-methodological framework used to investigate the discursive legitimation strategies mobilized by JN. Next, we present the three news events that broke out between 2019 and 2020 selected for analysis due to their power of individual and collective affectation (Quéré, 2005) and long-lasting characteristic (Fontcuberta, 1993): the Brumadinho dam disaster, the increase in Amazon Rainforest fires and the COVID-19 pandemic³. Our intention here was not to evaluate the coverages, but the discursive legitimation strategies verified in them. The section also details the path taken to identify discursive strategies. We then compare the operationalization modes of the discursive legitimation

³Our selection of three news events at different times (first and second semesters of 2019 and first semester of 2020) sought to unveil different discursive legitimation strategies and different operationalization modes.



strategies identified in each event. Finally, we identify aspects of the utterance conditions of each event to analyze their incidence on the discursive legitimation strategies mobilized by the coverages.

THEORETICAL-METHODOLOGICAL BASES USED TO DISCUSS DISCOURSE AND LEGITIMATION

Charaudeau (2013, p. 67) points out the specific conditions under which discourses emerge and compares this frame of reference to a stage, “with its constraints of space, time, relations, words, in which social exchanges and what constitutes their symbolic value are staged.” Communicating therefore implies minimally recognizing these constraints, this set of conditions under which and act of communication occurs; means being aware of a “communication contract” (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 68) defined as the “set of constraints that codify sociolinguistic practices, remembering that such constraints result from the conditions of production and interpretation” (Charaudeau, 2019, p. 60). This set of constraints consists of internal and external data.

External data correspond to the situational or communicational level and “play the role of coercions” (Charaudeau, 2014d, p. 453). They refer both to the regularities in the behavior of individuals and to the stable characteristics of the exchange situation. Charaudeau (2013) divides external data into four types of enunciation conditions: of identity speaks to the identity traits that influence the act of communication and can be defined by answering the question “who speaks to whom?” (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 69); of intention considers the communicative aims and is defined by answering the question “what are we here to say?” (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 69). The author identifies four aims when answering this question:

a *prescriptive* aim to “make” the Other “do” something; an *informative* aim to “provide” the Other with “knowledge”; an *incentive* to “make” the Other “believe” that something being said is true (or possibly true); a *pathos* aim to “make” the other “feel” a pleasant or unpleasant emotional state. (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 69)

Continuing: of purpose echoes the thematic domain to which the discourse belongs and is defined by answering the question “what is it about?” (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 69); of device constitutes the specific environment in which the act of communication occurs and can be identified by answering questions such as “what physical places are occupied by the participants [in the communicative exchange]?” (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 70).

Internal data, on the other hand, are found at the discursive and semiolinguistic levels and refer to how discourse is constructed, that is, “how to say?” (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 70). Charaudeau establishes three behavioral language spaces: 1) space of speech, in which the identities of speaker and interpreter are constructed; 2) space of relationship, in which the relations between speaker and interpreter are established; and 3) thematic space, where the themes of communicative exchange are organized.

While the discursive level constitutes the place where the modes of speaking conditioned by the situational level are, the semiolinguistic level corresponds to the textual configuration itself and must meet the stakes of legitimation, credibility and captation (Charaudeau, 2005).

Captation strategies seek to seduce or persuade the Other in the communicative exchange. To do that, the speaking subject can adopt two types of attitudes: a) controversial, which questions values or the legitimacy of the addressee or a third party; or b) dramatization, which seeks to sensitize the Other using analogies, comparisons and metaphors, leaning more on beliefs than on knowledge and dramatizing the information (Charaudeau, 2014a).

Credibility, in turn, results from the need for the speaker to be believed. For that, the speaking subject can adopt three positions: 1) neutrality, producing a discourse that seeks to erase all trace of personal judgment; 2) commitment, producing a discourse of conviction; and 3) distancing, producing a cold and passionless discourse (Charaudeau, 2014b).

Finally, legitimation refers to the subject’s right to speak and legitimacy. Charaudeau (2014c) clarifies that a position of authority can be conferred by two types of construction: institutional authority, when the subject has the authority of knowledge (e.g., specialists) or decision-making power (e.g., directors); and natural authority, based on the speaker’s act of persuasion and seduction.

Berger and Luckmann (2014, p. 122) define legitimation as “a ‘second-order’ objectification of meaning” process, as it consists of creating additional meanings to the institutional processes that explain and justify them. Hence, the “function of legitimation is to make objectively available and subjectively plausible the ‘first-order’ objectifications that have been institutionalized” (p. 122).

Van Leeuwen (2007, p. 91) proposes four key categories to analyze how discourses construct legitimation or de-legitimation for social practices in public communication and in everyday interaction: 1) authorization – similar to Charaudeau’s authority, this legitimation resorts to tradition, customs and law, and to persons who represent an authority or institution; 2) moral evaluation – legitimation by reference to value systems; 3) rationalization – legitimation that



resorts to the goals and uses of institutionalized social actions and the social knowledge that validates them; and 4) mythopoesis – legitimation conveyed through narratives whose outcomes reward legitimate actions and punish non-legitimate actions.

Recuero (2020) uses the categories proposed by Van Leeuwen to analyze the discursive strategies used to legitimize disinformation on Twitter. For the author, the phenomenon of disinformation is intrinsically related to the legitimation strategies mobilized in the discourse. In evaluating the construction of discourse legitimacy, Sacramento et al. (2020, p. 5) conclude that COVID-19 “may be our first pandemic of the post-truth era.” In this scenario, there is a shift “from experimental authority, based on scientific experiment and its theoretical-methodological principles and rigors, to an experiential authority, reliant on personal experience about the things of the world as truth itself” (p. 10), a change that begins to recognize witnesses – and no longer just scientists – as knowledge producers. As such, the authors understand that “experience as a place of truth has undeniably taken a central place” (Sacramento et al., 2020, p. 10).

Evaluating the discursive legitimation strategies of US journalism based on Van Leeuwen’s proposal, Robinson (2017, p. 14) calls attention to the implications of this new place attributed to experience in narratives. For the author, to accept personal, informal experience as expert creates credibility and authority challenges for journalists.

After examining some examples of strategies developed to legitimize discourses, the next section details the path taken to identify the discursive legitimation strategies mobilized by JN in the coverage of three events.

OBJECT OF STUDY: NEWS EVENT AND DISCURSIVE STRATEGIES

Our first selected news event for analysis was the Brumadinho dam disaster, which occurred on January 25, 2019 and is considered one of the greatest human and environmental tragedies in Brazil. News reported the death of 270 people and three were still missing as of January 2023 (Zuba & Milagres, 2023)⁴. In 2015, Minas Gerais had already experienced the largest environmental disaster in the country’s history: the Fundão dam in the district of Bento Rodrigues in Mariana broke, resulting in 19 people dead. The environmental, social, and economic impacts reached 39 municipalities in the states of Minas Gerais and Espírito Santo (Tokarnia, 2020).

The second news event selected was the increase in Amazon Rainforest fires. Our analysis began on August 21, 2019, when data from the Brazilian

⁴Sixteen people denounced by the Federal Public Ministry are facing charges of aggravated homicide and environmental crimes in the Federal Court. Vale and Tüv Süd, the German company that certified the dam’s safety, are also facing charges of environmental crimes (Zuba & Milagres, 2023).

National Institute for Space Research (INPE) revealed a 145% increase in fire outbreaks in the Amazon, which had intense repercussions in the national and international press (*Amazon fires increase*, 2019), and was one of the most talked about topics on social media (*#PrayForAmazonas*, 2019).

Our third event selected was the COVID-19 pandemic, declared on March 11, 2020 by the WHO and which by January 30, 2023 had killed 6,807,572 people worldwide, 696,603 of them in Brazil, which places the country second only to the United States in number of fatalities (WHO, n.d.).

Each news event was analyzed for four weeks, totaling a corpus of 84 JN editions available on the Globo Play platform, where we watched these editions fully in search of clues to discursive legitimation strategies. Initially, we defined these traces. Besides transcribing the audiovisual text⁵, based on the works of Rezende (2000), Paternostro (2006) and Siqueira (2012) we identified the fragment format (headline⁶, lead in⁷, off⁸, stand-up⁹, interview¹⁰, message¹¹, reader¹², voice over¹³, tag¹⁴, leading question¹⁵, display¹⁶, live coverage¹⁷, closing¹⁸ and amateur content¹⁹). We also identified the speaker, location, data and time-stamp of the excerpt analyzed.

This decoupage process resulted in 220 fragments which were grouped according to their main characteristics, forming discursive pockets that helped identify the discursive legitimation strategies²⁰. We then divided these fragments into four typologies that meet the object in the mediatization context:

1. Self-referentiality: considered one key aspect of Journalism transformed by the mediatization process. It produces an utterance that rather than privileging the external world, highlights its own operations in a kind of self-celebration of a specific form of Journalism, which is also taken as a character (Fausto Neto, 2008). Resuming Luhmann²¹, the author understands that in the “presentation of this ‘reality of construction,’ a new reading contract is built through which the media end by being its own object” (Fausto Neto, 2008, p. 98).
2. Appropriation of amateur content: refers to user-generated content that is increasingly integrated into journalistic narratives, as a consequence of the ubiquity of recording devices added to the “collective acquisition of skills for content production” (Martins, 2015, p. 252). These contents have redefined the roles of producers and consumers and irreversibly transformed the relations between journalists and audience (Christofoletti, 2014; Serra et al., 2015).
3. Instantaneity: a strategy that concerns aspects of one main news-value and the very essence of Journalism – the production of actualities (Franciscato, 2014; Wolf, 2001). Radio and, later, television broadcasts defined the

⁵ Considering text a “*material manifestation* (verbal and semiological: oral/graphic, gesture, iconic, etc.) of staging an act of communication” (Charaudeau, 2019, p. 77). Imagery, graphic and editing resources typical of television journalism were maintained in cases where visual decoupage helped to evince the discursive strategy analyzed.

⁶ Headlines are the stories highlighted in the newscast opening to capture the audience.

⁷ Text read by the anchor live in the studio or by the reporter in a live coverage, which introduces the subject covered in a report, reader, interview, live coverage, etc.

⁸ Text recorded by the reporter with subsequent image insertion.

⁹ Also called a bulletin, it marks the presence of the reporter in the field.

¹⁰ Also called soundbite, these are testimonies inserted in the reports recorded with the guidance of a journalism team.

¹¹ Fragment verified in our corpus only during the COVID-19 pandemic. These are testimonies sent by the public and broadcast to provide guidance to viewers – a message, as it was called by JN.

¹² Note read live by the anchors, with or without insertion of live images.

¹³ Note recorded by the presenters with subsequent image insertion.

¹⁴ Note read at the end of a report with complementary information.

¹⁵ Dialogue between reporters and interviewees.

¹⁶ Note read by the presenter in the studio with art insertion in a virtual panel.

¹⁷ It corresponds to the simultaneity narrative described by Charaudeau (2013).



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¹⁸ End of the newscast.

¹⁹User-generated content that integrates journalistic narratives. We use the expression ‘amateur’ only to distinguish them from journalistic productions and not as a way to pejoratively evaluate the content.

²⁰Given the restricted article space, we reproduce here only 28 of the 220 fragments selected for the research (see Table 2).

²¹Understanding the media as observing systems, Luhmann (2011, p. 21) stresses that they are forced to distinguish between self-reference and other-reference and cannot “consider themselves to be the truth. They must construct reality – another reality, different from their own.”

²²Based on the ideas of educator Paulo Freire, Cerqueira (2018) further develops the pedagogical function of television journalism proposed by Vizeu (2009) and describes 12 didactic devices of current television journalism.

²³Barichello, Dall Agnese and Belochio (2016) propose a three-level model for analyzing the legitimation strategies of Journalism: macro (institutional), micro (organizational) and hybrid (institutional and organizational). Our analysis proposal recognizes the authors’ work, relating it to our methodological framework based on Charaudeau (2005, 2013, 2014d, 2019).

meaning of instantaneity for contemporary Journalism, as until then it was linked to the periodicity of printed newspapers (Franciscato, 2014). This meaning has been redefined by the internet and, especially, by social media accessed via mobile devices (Bell & Owen, 2017).

4. Didacticity: concept elaborated by the Centre de Recherche sur les Discours Ordinaires et Spécialisés (Cediscor) in 1993 “to designate the didactic coloring of discourses whose social vocation is not fundamentally to transmit knowledge” (Moirand, 2014, p. 165). Moirand (2000, p. 10) observes that events of a different nature such as catastrophes, scientific discoveries and health-related issues are transformed by the media into “*places of knowledge transmission.*” Analyzing television journalism specifically, Vizeu (2009, p. 80) states that the pedagogical function is developed by a didactic construction, which results “from a series of cultural frameworks, social practices, professional culture, organizational constraints and the field of language” mobilized by journalists when producing news²².

Our investigation showed that the strategies were developed in articulation with the goal of legitimizing Journalism, the Rede Globo organization, its professionals and the television news narrative construed by them. In our analysis, these strategies are related to the situational, discursive, and semiolinguistic levels proposed by Charaudeau (2005, 2013, 2014d, 2019)²³, as summarized in Table 1:

Table 1
Institutional, organizational and television news narrative discursive legitimation strategies

SITUATIONAL LEVEL	DISCURSIVE LEVEL	SEMIOLINGUISTIC LEVEL
Institutional legitimation strategies	Organizational legitimation strategies	Television news narrative legitimation strategies
Self-referentiality	Self-referentiality	Self-referentiality Appropriation of amateur content Instantaneity Didacticity

Source: the authors.

Discursive institutional legitimation strategies seek to legitimize Journalism as a social institution configured “in the conjunction of technological possibilities with certain historical, social, economic and cultural conditions” (Gomes, 2007, p. 5). Guerra (2008) adds that Journalism has as its pillar the mediation between facts of reality and people. For the author, the journalistic institution symbolizes “the systematization of values and technical procedures forged throughout the development and social legitimation of journalistic practice,” i. e., the characteristics that shape both the *be* and *do* of journalism: its concept, principles and function (Guerra, 2008, p. 143). Relating it to Charaudeau’s situational level (2005, 2013, 2014d, 2019), these are strategies that reinforce the identity, intention and purpose of Journalism as an institution.

Discursive organizational legitimation strategies seek to legitimize journalistic organizations. Organizations materialize the journalistic institution by performing the mediating function of Journalism, meeting institutional standards in specific ways, depending on the audiences for which the products are developed and also paying attention to internal and external factors that influence the quality of the journalistic product (Guerra, 2008). Organizational legitimation strategies seek to establish a reliable and transparent link between the journalistic organization and its audiences. Corresponding to the discursive level proposed by Charaudeau (2005, 2013, 2014d, 2019), organizational legitimation strategies refer to the specific ways of speaking of the journalistic organization.

Discursive legitimation strategies of the television news narrative seek to legitimize the very configuration of such narrative and its speaker and refer to the fabric of the news itself or, relating it to Charaudeau’s semiolinguistic level (2005, 2013, 2014d, 2019), to aspects of the textual configuration that seek to meet stakes of credibility, captation and legitimation.

After presenting the path we undertook to identify the discursive legitimation strategies mobilized in the news coverage, the next section presents different operationalization modes identified for these strategies.

INVESTIGATING THE CONSTRUCTION OF DISCURSIVE LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES

Self-referentiality and the appropriation of amateur content emerged as discursive legitimation strategies common to the three news events selected for analysis, but constructed in differently. Table 2 presents a selection of fragments that illustrate these differences. Highlights in bold emphasize the analysis.



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Table 2
Fragments selected for analysis

No.	Format	Speaker/location	Date/time-stamp	Transcript/link
1	Stand-up	Ricardo Soares B. Horizonte (MG)	01.26.2019 12'27''	GloboCop's image https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7332166/
2	Off	Carlos de Lannoy Brumadinho (MG)	02.04.2019 3'25''	In a report aired yesterday on Fantástico... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7354856/
3	Lead in	Renata Vasconcellos JN Studio (RJ)	01.31.2019 1'35''	G1, Globo's news portal , prepared an animation... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7345623/
4	Off	Ricardo Soares B. Horizonte (MG)	02.01.2019 10'58''	Rede Globo confirmed the information... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7348848/
5	Off	Roberto Kovalick Brumadinho (MG)	01.28.2019 2'08''	Film reporter Rogério Rocha caught... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7336205/
6	Off	Roberto Kovalick Brumadinho (MG)	01.29.2019 6'49''	Producer Renan Peixoto, from Globo News , talked with... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7339126/
7	Lead in	Renata Vasconcellos JN Studio (RJ)	02.06.2019 1'35''	...the report is by Andrea Sadi and Marcelo Parreira . https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7361055/
8	Stand-up	Roberto Kovalick Brumadinho (MG)	01.28.2019 1'42''	...you can see, it is not completely safe [reporter leans on a tree to cross]. We have to cross , for instance, this stream here . And someone also put a log here to serve as a bridge. You can't take more than one step . Look! There is a lot of mud, a lot of branches . [cut in edit] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7336205/
9	Off	Júlio Mosquera Brasília, DF	08.21.2019 8'47''	The British network BBC highlights ; record number of fires in the Brazilian rainforest... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7861484/

Continuation...

No.	Format	Speaker/ location	Date/time- stamp	Transcript/link
10	Lead in	Renata Vasconcellos JN Studio (RJ)	08.23.2019 16'18''	Grupo Globo's Fact or Fake fact-checking service found some examples [of posts about the Amazon with old photographs or from other places] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7867621/
11	<i>Off</i>	Felipe Santana New York, USA	08.28.2019 11'55''	And this morning, Greta Thunberg posted a photo on social media in which one could already see the lights of New York City [the photo is reproduced without identifying the social media mentioned] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7879685/
12	Leading question	Unidentified journalist Brasília, DF	08.22.2019 2'53''	Could it also be the farmers? [Question asked to Bolsonaro regarding the authorship of the Amazon fires] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7864435/
13	<i>Off</i>	Bianca Rothier Zurich, Switzerland	03.17.2020 39'15''	In today's interview, the director of the European branch of the WHO highlighted that we live in an unprecedented moment and stressed the importance of journalists' work for the successful fight against the pandemic. https://globoplay.globo.com/v/8407649/
14	Amateur content	Anonymous narrator Brumadinho (MG)	01.25.2019 7'19''	Good God! Get out, out, move! [man records the mudflow with trembling camera] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7330310/
15	Amateur content	Anonymous narrator Brumadinho (MG)	01.25.2019 7'26''	[audio of panting] Dude [sic], everyone down there [sic] for sure died [video records a worker escaping the mudflow] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7330310/
16	<i>Off</i>	Fabiano Villela Belém (PA)	08.21.2019 4'08''	In São Félix do Xingu, Ibama inspectors seized 1200 cattle heads in an area embargoed for illegal deforestation and that should have been vacated for forest regrowth... [off with photograph reproductions of seized cattle. In characters: images provided by IBAMA] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7888327/



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Continuation...

No.	Format	Speaker/ location	Date/time- stamp	Transcript/link
17	Off	Ana Paula Rehbein Palmas (TO)	09.16.2019 21'09''	... A family who was driving by the place recorded the scene [anonymous narrator : Look, the boy is setting it on fire!] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7928069/
18	Off	Giovana Dourado Goiânia (GO)	09.16.2019 19'53''	...those who live in the neighborhood were scared [anonymous narrator : It's getting near, my God! What will become of us? Look at the 6 games!] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7928069/
19	Amateur content	Sofia, 4 years old Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	03.24.2020 17'59	She's here to relay an important message. Stop going out! We have to stay indoors, got it?... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/8428682/
20	Live coverage	Liliana Junger Brumadinho (MG)	01.25.2019 20'29''	... I'm live from the district of Córrego do Feijão, in Brumadinho. Where the three mine dams, which broke, are located... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7330310/
21	Lead in	Sandra Annenberg JN Studio (RJ)	01.26.2019 1'33''	We just received an update on the death toll... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7332166/
22	Stand-up	Roberto Kovalick Brumadinho (MG)	01.28.2019 2'19'	The helicopter is now arriving to pick up the body found on the bus. It's making a very careful approach. Look, to get close to the rescuers [cut in edit]. It arrives very close. They are now preparing to look for the body that was found earlier inside the bus [pause]. This is a very risky operation. Now it's moving away a little bit [new cut in edit]. This job requires great care and a lot of respect for the body that is currently being removed. We can see the body bag. Now we can see the body being taken away; the first body removed from the bus that was found yesterday by the search teams. https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7336205/
23	Off	Graziela Azevedo São Paulo (SP)	03.12.2020 15'20''	... Experts explain that the elderly and people with chronic diseases are at greater risk, but asymptomatic children and young people are transmitters. https://globoplay.globo.com/v/8395411/

Continuation...

No.	Format	Speaker/ location	Date/time- stamp	Transcript/link
24	Reader	Renata Vasconcellos JN Studio (RJ)	04.02.2020 24'49''	... The Jornal Nacional webpage has other information about the welfare registry [required to obtain emergency aid during the pandemic] https://globoplay.globo.com/v/S453685/
25	Message	Luís Claudio Caetano, garbage collector Rio de Janeiro (RJ)	03.30.2020 49''	... We do our job and I ask you to do yours by collaborating, by staying at home and helping us, just as we are [sic] helping you keep the city clean. https://globoplay.globo.com/v/S444288/
26	Off	Alan Severiano São Paulo (SP)	08.26.2019 26'10''	On the Trans-Amazonian Highway, more blatant forest destruction [images of seized logs]. https://globoplay.globo.com/v/7873524/
27	Reader	Ana Paula Araújo JN Studio (RJ)	03.28.2020 22'10''	...the work of all fellow journalists here at Globo, but also of all outlets, is a powerful medicine : to provide information so that people can protect themselves... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/S440881/
28	Reader	Renata Vasconcellos JN Studio (RJ)	03.23.2020 4'01''	... Information at times like these is vital, is fundamental . Just like washing your hands: you have to wash it. And we have to stay informed... https://globoplay.globo.com/v/S425010/

Source: the authors based on *Jornal Nacional*, editions between January 25 and February 26, 2019, August 21 and September 21, 2019, and March 11 and April 11, 2020, available on the Globo Play platform (<https://globoplay.globo.com/>).

Regarding the Brumadinho dam disaster, self-referentiality concentrated at the organizational and television news narrative levels, valuing technical resources (fragment 1), programs (fragment 2), outlets taken as sources by JN (fragment 3) and investigation procedures that demonstrate alignment of the organization and news program with journalistic principles, such as precision (fragment 4), seeking to personify the network, its programs and vehicles to establish greater proximity with viewers (Jost, 2010). Professional self-referentiality was reinforced by the presence and authority of cameramen, producers and reporters in the news coverage (fragments 5, 6 and 7), but especially by the emphasis on the reporters' experiences to report the event (fragment 8), emphasizing the "reality



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of construction” (Fausto Neto, 2008, p. 98) and sometimes dramatizing the journalistic work (Coutinho, 2012). Such a performance resumes a romantic ideal of the journalist as one who takes risks in searching genuine information and, on the other hand, seeks to withdraw from increasingly questioned journalistic canons such as objectivity, neutrality and precision, for a more realistic televisual aesthetic that mimics characteristics of amateur videos (Martins, 2015) and elevates the reporters’ experiences in covering news events, while evidencing the *actorization* of journalists, a characteristic of journalism in the mediatised society (Fausto Neto, 2008).

As for the increase in Amazon Rainforest fires, we identified a greater role of self-referentiality at the institutional level. Reference vehicles were cited several times as to certify the event itself (Leal & Carvalho, 2014; Soster, 2009), denounced by science and minimized by the Bolsonaro administration (fragment 9) in a preview of what would be experienced months later amidst the COVID-19 pandemic. Such institutional level strategy also upheld a boundary between journalism and social media-generated information (Christofoletti, 2014, p. 269), emphasizing basic processes of journalistic production like fact checking (fragment 10) and overshadowing media that dispense with journalistic mediation (fragment 11). Social media’s generic identification contrasts with the constant verbal and imagery reference made when the information sources are the journalistic organizations themselves. Even fragments such as leading questions, previously excluded in the editing process or replaced by the reporters’ text (Coutinho, 2012), began to be incorporated into news reporting (fragment 12), pointing to the journalistic practice as a collective and plural process rather than restricted to the reporter, thus recognizing other actors involved in the journalistic ecosystem and collaborating to reinforce the institution’s authority. Despite episodic, these initiatives seek to meet the social demand for more transparency and less journalistic opaqueness (Deuze, 2005; Ferrari & Christofoletti, 2022).

These institutional-level operationalization strategies of self-referentiality were ratified and intensified in news coverages of the COVID-19 pandemic, especially as a defense and reinforcement tactic of institutional authority against the attacks on the press pronounced by the then President, Jair Bolsonaro. As such, the news program also gave visibility to repeated other-referencing evaluations (Luhmann, 2011) on the importance of journalism in combating the pandemic (fragment 13).

Regarding the appropriation of amateur content, in the Brumadinho dam disaster the strategy was developed mainly by incorporating anonymous

testimonies to the narratives, including image records with simultaneous narration of the recorded facts (fragments 14 and 15), showing the viewer “that the image was captured by a body, by a human being engaged in the reality being filmed and who, instead of hiding, shows their subjectivity, their point of view” (Jost, 2009, p. 19), sometimes producing a violent image²⁴ that is “more lived than properly seen,” contrasting with images obtained from “a disembodied point of view”²⁵ (Jost, 2010, pp. 100-101), such as the mining company’s security cameras. These testimonies played a double role: they pointed out the news event’s power of affectation (Quéré, 2005), humanizing narratives based on official sources; but they also dramatized the reports by repeatedly showing violent images (Jost, 2010).

In the coverage of the Amazon Rainforest fires, appropriation of amateur content occurred by integrating images and photographs into the narratives, coming mainly from official inspection and security institutions that publicized their actions daily in the news (fragment 16). Such operationalization mode invested the news program with a kind of “gift of ubiquity” (Charaudeau, 2013, p. 135) despite having prioritized the factual and fragmented character of the information, common to environmental coverage and current narrative constructions (Babo, 2017; Girardi et al., 2020; Motta, 2017). As in the Brumadinho disaster, the testimonies incorporated into the reporting on the fires were also characterized by anonymity or generic identification of their authors (fragment 17) and only concerned the event’s power of affectation (Quéré, 2005) in its extension to the Cerrado and Pantanal regions, being used especially to certify the off narrations and to greater dramatize the narratives (fragment 18). Testimonies from the Amazonian peoples were restricted to only few and brief interviews conducted by the news teams.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, appropriation of amateur content, until then restricted to incorporating images, photographs and occasional testimonies – to humanize, dramatize or publicize violations and/or factual information – was made more flexible and expanded to all elements of the television news narrative, in a singular example of journalistic adaptation that, within a mediatised society (Hjarvard, 2012), enabled the construction of reports during social distancing.

An example is Hélder Duarte’s reporting on the grassroots organization of Rio de Janeiro’s favela residents through social media to prevent coronavirus cases, aired on March 24, 2020. Three testimonies from residents posted on social media were reproduced by the report. All of them properly identified. Amateur images and records of water shortage made by residents also integrated

²⁴For Jost (2010, p. 101) the violent image produces a perceptual shock as “it allows one to live the event; as it builds, through its utterance, a humanity behind the camera in such a way that certain images, even if not showing much, can nevertheless become violent.”

²⁵Jost (2010) uses this expression to describe the images recorded by CNN monitoring cameras of the plane collision with the first World Trade Center tower, on September 11, 2001, in New York.



the report. A four-year-old girl's appeal for people to respect social distancing (fragment 19) was reproduced both on the opening headline (italicized excerpt from fragment 19) and after the off: "This four-year-old girl, Sofia, knows more than most grown-ups." Aside the mention in off, the girl's name was reiterated by characters which also identified the region in which Sofia lives, showing differences in relation to the anonymous amateur content integrated into the two previous events.

Instantaneity and didacticity were specific strategies verified in the news coverage of the Brumadinho dam disaster and the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. By identifying instantaneity and didacticity as discursive legitimation strategies specific to these events, we are not denying that JN has mobilized these resources in other coverages, as both instantaneity and didacticity are founding characteristics of television problematized by the mediatization process (Casetti & Odin, 1990; Jost, 2010; Machado, 2000). However, instantaneity and didacticity were mobilized only occasionally in the other events, not configuring a coordinated action with a specific goal, or a strategy in Charaudeau's terms (2013).

From the collapse of the Vale company's dams in Brumadinho, the news program favored the discursive strategy of instantaneity to add greater authenticity to the reportings. For this purpose, JN resorted to live coverage by reporters directly in the field (fragment 20), interventions by anchors in the studio (fragment 21) and even recorded reports that simulated "live" effects (Fechine, 2008), establishing hybrid temporalities *blurred* by the narrative construction. We take as an example the opening report of January 28, 2019, made by reporter Roberto Kovalick. At 2'19", Kovalick narrates the rescue of a body simultaneously to the firefighters' work (fragment 22). Standing in an area with drier mud, which delimits the work point of reporting teams, Kovalick describes from a distance the arrival of a helicopter, the preparation for victim removal, the retreat of the aircraft, the body removal and the aircraft departure. These five narrated moments are detailed by the cameraman using the *zoom in* resource, offering the viewer a beat-by-beat of the rescue mission, creating "the illusion of a story being made" without time and space constraints, an effect that Charaudeau (2013, p. 111) attributes to live narratives but that extends to recorded narratives that simulate such transparency.

Despite aiming at a simultaneous narration and simulating a sequence shot, we observe two editing cuts on the fragment, probably to adjust the stand-up reporting (56") to the rescue time (which we cannot specify but is supposedly much longer). Some pauses made by the reporter were maintained to accentuate the suspense, in a narrative construction that mimics amateur videos and

seeks to withdraw from characteristics such as speed and dynamism, typical of television news montage (Polydoro & Costa, 2014). Perhaps this mode of operationalizing instantaneity stems from recognizing that agility and speed as not fundamental characteristics of daily news programs, given increased news speed in the mediatized ecosystem. At a time when transparency is a key value required of journalism (Deuze, 2005; Ferrari & Christofolletti, 2022), the blurring of hybrid temporalities established by JN can contribute to its own de-legitimization process, as it accentuates audience distrust on the events reported and their correspondence with reality.

Didacticity was mobilized from the very first COVID-19 pandemic coverage, and JN assumed a pedagogical function (Vizeu, 2009) by informing the population about actions and behaviors to fight the coronavirus. This discursive strategy was operationalized by invoking: explanations, anchored in WHO managers, the Ministry of Health and other scientific authorities (fragment 23); additions, highlighting content from *Jornal Nacional* and other Globo vehicles on the internet (fragment 24); and exemplifications, inserting testimonies from the public and from journalists who respected the guidelines of the scientific community disseminated daily by JN. “Essential Message,” which first aired on March 27, 2020, illustrates how experience took the “place of truth” (Sacramento et al., 2020, p. 10) in the newscast. Essential workers – such as truck drivers, garbage collectors and supermarket employees – begun to endorse the appeal for people to stay at home. The segment was produced without the (perceptible) presence of a reporter and/or producer and without *off* insertion, blurring the journalistic mediation. Looking directly at the camera, the workers said their name, age and told a little about their personal lives and daily work. Images of the workers were inserted to give greater authenticity to the testimony. In the end, all categories asked viewers to respect social distancing, as shown in fragment 25.

After evidencing the operationalization modes of the discursive legitimation strategies identified in news each events, we discuss below how the reported events affected the discursive legitimation strategies mobilized by the news coverages, the main issue of this article.

INCIDENCE OF UTTERANCE CONDITIONS ON THE DISCURSIVE LEGITIMATION STRATEGIES

Each reported event represents, for the newscast, a set of coercions that affect the discursive legitimation strategies mobilized by the coverage. Resuming the three levels of analysis proposed by Charaudeau (2005, 2013, 2014d, 2019), these



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coercions stem from the utterance conditions on the situational level (external data) and influence the discursive and semiolinguistic levels (internal data). Table 3 shows aspects of the utterance conditions of each event.

Table 3
Aspects of utterance conditions of the three events analyzed

Event	Condition of identity “Who speaks to whom?”	Condition of intention “What are we here to say?”	Condition of purpose “What is it about?”	Condition of device “Under what circumstances?”
Brumadinho	Mediator journalist	Provide the other with knowledge Make the other feel	Human and environmental tragedy	Reporters live on the field since it began
Amazon	Mediator journalist	Provide the other with knowledge Make the other feel Make the other believe	Legitimizing a human and environmental tragedy	Reporters gradually approach the scene of the event
Pandemic	Opaqueness and emphasis on the journalist’s mediating role	Provide the other with knowledge Make the other feel Make the other believe Make the other do	Legitimation and ways to prevent a human tragedy	All immersed in the event

Source: the authors based on Charaudeau (2005, 2013, 2014d, 2019)

Regarding the condition of identity, both in the Brumadinho dam disaster and in the increase of Amazon Forest fires, the journalists played the role of mediator between the facts and the audience, valuing their position as witnesses of the reported events, sometimes also highlighting a supervisory role, as verified in reports on the destruction of the Amazon (fragment 26). This role was blurred during the COVID-19 pandemic: with the narrative flexibility adopted to enable coverage, experts, interviewees and witnesses began to give their testimonies through video call applications, often without the perceptible mediation of a reporting team, simulating face-to-face contact with viewers, restricted until then to journalists. Sometimes this blurring was intentional, as in the “Essential Message” segment analyzed in the previous section as an example of didacticity. On the other hand, the expansion of

self-referentiality demonstrates the growing effort of JN to emphasize the authority of journalism, the organization and its professionals.

As for the condition of intention, in the Brumadinho dam disaster the coverage was specially designed to meet the two main aims of the communication contract highlighted by Charaudeau (2013): informative (to provide knowledge) and pathos (to make the other feel). In the increase of Amazon fires, the coverage was developed to meet an incentive aim (to make the other believe) against the Federal Government's denialism in face of the INPE numbers regarding the increase in fires.²⁶ During the COVID-19 pandemic, in face of controversial information released by the Federal Government²⁷, the newscast also favored a prescriptive aim (to make the other do) materialized in the strategy of didacticity, assuming a role of advisor to the population on conducts and practices for disease prevention.

Regarding the condition of purpose, while the Brumadinho coverage thematized the repetition of a human and environmental tragedy, the Amazon coverage focused on the very legitimacy of the tragedy. In the pandemic, the purpose encompassed legitimation and prevention of a tragedy, with news information being associated with a "powerful," "vital" and "fundamental" medicine (fragments 27 and 28).

As for the condition of the device, while in Brumadinho reporters were on the field shortly after the dam failure and favored simultaneous narratives (Charaudeau, 2013), in the Amazon coverage this approximation occurred gradually as the news program was irritated²⁸ (Luhmann, 2011) by the international media ecosystem and privileged reconstitution narratives (Charaudeau, 2013). During the COVID-19 pandemic, as a global event²⁹ everyone – and not just journalists – were immersed in it and could spread information in real time, which also helped to blur the journalist's role as a mediator between the facts and the audience.

Considering this situational-level external data and advancing to the discursive level, i.e., the ways of speaking of television news, the discursive legitimation strategies – especially after the COVID-19 pandemic onset – began to be operationalized more symmetrically, *with* the audience and *with* peers. *With* the audience because amateur content was integrated into the news program not only to humanize, dramatize and publicize violations and/or factual information, as in the Brumadinho dam disaster and the Amazon fires, but to give visibility and value the experiences of common citizens, no longer predominantly anonymous. This new journalistic way of speaking aligns with the intense circulation of micro-narratives that characterize the

²⁶On August 2, 2019, the Federal Government even dismissed the INPE director, Ricardo Galvão, for disagreeing with the data disclosure on the increased deforestation in the Amazon (Quierati, 2019).

²⁷Besides defending a more lax social distancing, Bolsonaro encouraged early treatment with drugs without proven efficiency and non-mandatory vaccination against the COVID-19 (Monari et al., 2021).

²⁸According to Luhmann (2011, p. 47) the concept of irritation "refers to the form with which a system is able to generate resonance to events in the environment."

²⁹According to Bovet (2012), this expression was used in the opening of a French television program on the death of Osama Bin Laden on May 2, 2011.



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current media ecosystem (Babo, 2017; Motta, 2017) and the recognition of testimonies as experiential authorities (Sacramento et al., 2020). *With* peers because television news began to recognize, value and integrate more collaborative journalistic practices, another characteristic of journalism in mediatization, and which in the pandemic was mobilized to reinforce its institutional authority.

We emphasize, however, that this symmetry is an *intention* that can both value journalistic mediation – when the newscast references its peers, for example, a characteristic described by Soster (2009) – and blur it (by privileging amateur content), but does not interfere in the maintenance and reinforcement of its centrality in news production. In other words, we consider symmetry with the audience and peers as a transversal strategy to the other discursive legitimation strategies operationalized by JN from the COVID-19 pandemic coverage.

Arriving at the semiolinguistic level – or the discursive legitimation strategies of the television news narrative – we identified the increase in first-person narratives as one of the most significant reconfigurations. Although anchored in idealized representations of the profession (Charaudeau, 2013), the discursive legitimation strategies of the newscast began to privilege no longer the personal or institutional authority of individuals (Charaudeau, 2014c; Van Leeuwen, 2007), but the experiential authority (Sacramento et al., 2020) of its speakers, whether sources or the journalists themselves, evincing new tensions in the news information contract.

Based on the discursive legitimation strategies analyzed here, we argue that the complexity of constraints in each event forces the newscast to adapt, establish new relations, different ways of speaking, diversify its themes, expand its intentions and, more recently, seek the engagement of both its speakers and its audience. ■

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Sabotage: Torquato Neto's football in *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*

Sabotagem: O futebol de Torquato Neto em Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo

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ABSTRACT

Torquato Neto is best known as poet and lyricist, although his activity expanded into sports coverage, specifically in *Jornal dos Sports*. However, the author's approach to football is rarely mentioned. This study aims to explore the connection between football and the script of *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*, a project for a program on TV Globo that was never aired. From textual records, this study examined the audiovisual strategies devised by the screenwriter and director for the broadcasting piece, showing another venue for research into the writer.

Keywords: Torquato Neto, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*, sports coverage, broadcasting, football

RESUMO

Torquato Neto é mais conhecido como poeta e letrista, embora suas atividades tenham se expandido para a cobertura esportiva, especificamente no *Jornal dos Sports*. Entretanto, a aproximação do autor com o futebol é pouco mencionada. O propósito deste artigo é explorar essa relação por meio do roteiro de *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*, projeto para um programa na TV Globo que nunca foi ao ar. A partir desse registro em texto, é possível examinar as estratégias audiovisuais engendradas pelo roteirista e diretor para essa peça de radiodifusão. Além disso, esse exame apresenta outro horizonte para as pesquisas a respeito do escritor.

Palavras-chave: Torquato Neto, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*, cobertura esportiva, radiodifusão, futebol

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Brazil is a wonderful continent, with the yellow of gold, the green of forests, the blue of the sky, the strength of the sea, the taste of beans, the nutrition of rice, the beauty of traditions. Rui Barbosa was the Eagle of The Hague who answered in all languages to the illiterate of Europe. Our football is the best in the world. We only lost the last World Cup due to sabotage
Torquato Neto, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*

IT COMES AS A SURPRISE that Torquato Neto, a well-known contributor to *Jornal dos Sports* in the 1960s, has not prompted in-depth studies regarding his relationship with football. However, when his texts came to light, the sports publication was experiencing an unprecedented editorial turn. A prolific composer of popular songs, the author expressed himself through different artistic expressions that were contemporary to him, many of which deserve more attention from researchers. This omission is justified by the fragmentary nature of his legacy and his early death in 1972. Another factor that explains the omission is the nature of his columns, which, despite appearing in print editions of a specialized media outlet, did not focus on match results or athletes' performances.

Given Torquato Neto's sinuous approach to football, this article focuses on the script for *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* [Life, Passion, and Banana of Tropicalism] in order to see how this relationship was built. The purpose of the text was to organize the production of a show about the musical movement, to be aired on TV Globo, and it only came to light in posthumous volumes (Neto, 1982, 2004a): due to administrative and political difficulties, viewers did not have access to the televised show planned by the author (Vaz, 2014). It was not broadcast, but the way its two parts were scripted inspires research into the points of contact between sport and broadcasting and audiovisuals.

Previously, in the audiovisual field, efforts have been dedicated to different nuances, such as the correlation established between strategies for editing feature-length fiction films, character monologues and the intensity experienced in the sports universe (Herbert Neto, 2021a). Concern about the process leading up to the consolidation of Brazilian broadcasting, the role played by sports coverage and the political crossings resulting from the historical dynamics surrounding radio and television motivated works with different motives (Herbert Neto, 2022b; 2024). In none of these cases was a script available for consultation. The artifice, which is indispensable for the preparation of the programs, hardly goes beyond the limits of the production itself, which

does not make the researchers' job any easier. The historical source therefore requires a different approach.

As the other studies examined what reached the viewers, a look at *Life, Passion, and Banana of Tropicalism* must focus on the procedures contained in the script. The focus shifts to the explicit motivations and emphases in the script. These clues serve as a principle for its characterization. José Carlos Capinam helped with the writing, although Torquato Neto, as well as scriptwriter, is also credited as director. Musical numbers centered on the artists who made up the movement (as recorded in the name of the show), the participation of guests from music, audiovisual and literature, and the proselytizing of tropicalist theses were planned¹.

The analysis contributes to, in a way, resizing *Tropicália*, even though this exercise is not one of the main actions of this work. It highlights the contours of Torquato's poetics: understanding these indications is fundamental, considering that there are many memorial accounts of this cultural moment and that the artists who took part in its decisive moments set out to describe them (Gil & Zappa, 2013; Veloso, 1997). Journalists also sought to give coherence to the troubled events in music, which had implications for the arts (Calado, 1997; Vaz, 2014). In academia, a considerable number of researchers have delved into the complexity of the author – both those mediated by his language and those attentive to the social, political, and cultural reverberations of his work.

In this sense, two broad fields can be divided: on the one hand, those with a historical bias, represented by Coelho (2002) and Branco (2015); and those with a markedly literary slant on the other, as exemplified by Ribeiro (2010), Bosi (2014), and Damasceno (2019). This does not cause isolation or make intersections impossible – a position apparently sought by Pires (2004). The references that escape the bibliography are limited to the monitoring that the country's media companies give to sport for a basic reason: the imperfect connections with sport. The document consulted to fill this gap was conceived with the expectation, which never materialized, of airing both an introduction to *Tropicália* and the intensification of the movement: on the first page of the script, the years 1967 and 1968 are noted, precisely the time when this artistic platform was launched (Neto, 2004b, p. 65).

The broadcast was scheduled to take place between the end of one year and the beginning of the next. To be able to see with the vision of history and at the same time look at Torquato Neto's poetics is the task this article undertakes. The aim is to deal with these aspects, in the evaluation of the author's work, under the conception of popular culture from Bakhtin's perspective (2010). It is from this Bakhtinian perspective that the script will be examined, with a focus

¹Both the film strategies and the discourses envisaged by the script will be discussed in the last section of the article.



²The meaning of the word “people” in this context is ambivalent, but unavoidable for understanding the engagement of artists in the 1960s. Ridenti (2014) rigorously examines this problem in the Brazilian context.

on circulation within popular trends. This is also because there seems to be no exception to the various expressions to which the author resorted: he clearly wanted to establish an approach that would be accessible to the people². This is the point where we will identify some of the main tensions surrounding the composer, journalist, filmmaker, and poet from Piauí. Before exploring this particular approach to language, it is necessary to situate the author's involvement in sports coverage, through the *Jornal dos Sports*.

‘RELATIVE OPACITY’: SPORTS COVERAGE IN THE LATE 1960S

The accounts in Torquato Neto's biography (Vaz, 2014) do not paint football in more vivid colors: there are conflicting passages, which sometimes distance him from his childhood and adolescence with a ball on his foot (p. 56), and sometimes describe his ecstasy at the Brazilian national team's second consecutive victory in the sport's main competition, during the 1962 World Cup in Chile (p. 83). The controversial familiarity would not be the alibi for Torquato Neto's entry into *Jornal dos Sports*, a traditional Rio de Janeiro publication. Holanda (2010, 2012) helps put together a mosaic of the coverage that the newspaper carried out in the final half of the 1960s, the period in which the lyricist's entry is recorded.

The writer from Piauí started collaborating with the publication well after the executive and journalist Mário Rodrigues Filho acquired it: previously, the columnist had worked for *O Globo* and had a good relationship with Roberto Marinho (Holanda, 2012, p. 88). This solid relationship made it possible for the businessman to finance the transaction, which had previously been managed by Argemiro Bulcão's group, for the management of the columnist and writer. Heir to another businessman in the press, Mário Rodrigues, and brother of playwright Nelson Rodrigues, Mário Filho circulated widely at cultural meetings (Machado, 2014, p. 89), among the most influential political groups (Holanda, 2012, p. 91), and in the leadership of clubs (Coutinho, 2019, p. 22). The newspaper was permeable to intellectuals.

In addition to his resourcefulness for intellectual circuits, Mário Filho and his newspaper helped to consolidate new protocols, from the 1930s onwards, with athletes “transformed into idols of the emerging mass culture, and therefore able to compose reports along the lines of ‘a history of private life.’ The players' lives became of interest” (Holanda, 2012, p. 87, free translation). More importantly, their work was not restricted to descriptions of sporting events, but spread toward Carnival, education, and youth with the dual function of reporting and

promoting events – as documented by works of different inclinations (Alvito, 2013; Castro, 1992; Lira Neto, 2017).

Coelho (2002) points out that Torquato Neto wrote the *Música Popular* column from March to October 1967 (p. 134). This was after 1966, when Mário Filho suffered a heart attack and died. Hollanda (2012) segments the trajectory of *Jornal dos Sports* into different eras and identifies a definitive break in the absence of the well-known manager. Control of the company passed to his widow Célia, who soon committed suicide, in yet another dramatic family episode (Castro, 1992). In the latter half of the same decade, it is possible to identify an inflection in the publication, parallel to the behavior of those who followed sports, more attentive to the agendas of young people (Hollanda, 2010).

Like various spheres of the public scene, football was influenced by the transformations of the 1960s. Hollanda (2010, p. 196) discusses the emergence of youth football fans in the 1960s, tuning in to this shift in behavior towards the sport: “Opposition to the club’s directives was now gaining the public sphere of the streets, in the form of semi-improvised marches, which were inspired by the agitations carried out by students in the city center” (free translation). The link to the desires of young people redirected *Jornal dos Sports* and made it possible for more poignant subjects to be ostensibly present, and at first glance, distant from sporting practices: fine arts, cinema, and popular music gained much ground, culminating in the arrival on the newsstands of the publishing project *O Sol*, which was entirely cultural (Hollanda, 2010, p. 169). More open to experimentation, the supplement achieved autonomy, with individual sales.

Torquato Neto’s involvement in the company’s routine was precisely during the period when sports coverage was less impervious. This relative opacity is linked to sporting traditions, which are closely connected to politics. Memorial accounts show the author’s early interest in popular culture, something that points to a common landscape in sports coverage by media outlets in the 20th century: the horizon of Gilberto Freyre’s propositions (Vaz, 2014, p. 75). Grandiloquence, supported by praise for miscegenation, would be a fundamental element for understanding Brazilian football and, above all, for rhetoric in print and broadcast journalism (Herbert Neto, 2023b).

Freyre was admittedly a reader of the German philosopher Friedrich Nietzsche, to the extent that the aesthetic developed around football in Brazil by the Brazilian writer was underpinned by conceptions of the European author’s youth (Herbert Neto, 2021b; Hollingdale, 2015). It is surprising that the similarities between Torquato’s work and Nietzsche’s have not been emphasized. The mention



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³In the newspaper *Última Hora*, Torquato Neto wrote the column *Geleia Geral* in the early 1970s. In one of the printed editions, the author expressed his proposal to destroy language and explode it.

by Pires (2004, p. 20) is an exception. Both Torquato and Nietzsche are authors of fragmentary legacies, which result in disputes over spoils (Brito, 2019). The proposal to explode language is a constant in both: in the explosive character of the author from Teresina³ (Neto, 1982, p. 63) and in the dynamite self-image of the writer born in Weimar (Nietzsche, 1995, p. 109). The two men's experiences of madness in sanatoriums in Brazil (Vaz, 2014) and Germany (Brito, 2019), respectively, would authorize the parallels.

Moralism was a keynote in the political activities of factions to which Freyre belonged, with a dualistic social vision and a propensity for Manichaeism (Herbert Neto, 2024, p. 142). These groups exerted a strong influence on sports coverage and their political ramifications were sensitive. To antagonize, in yet another similarity to Nietzsche, Torquato Neto's thinking does not support this narrow division of reality (Pires, 2004, p. 20). The script prepared for television fractures dichotomous perspectives on music, fine arts, and politics. It is both zealous and subversive in terms of traditions, thus creating tension in the text. A similar tension can be found in other popular manifestations with a romantic bent (Herbert Neto, 2024).

⁴The first book published by the author is markedly influenced by Wagner and romantic Germanism (Nietzsche, 2012).

The Nietzschean phase⁴ that motivates Freyre has strong inspirations from Romanticism (Herbert Neto, 2021b). By way of comparison, the iconoclastic proposal of the single edition of *Navilouca*⁵ in the 1970s, which brought together many of Brazil's leading artists, would correspond to the *Athenaeum* at the turn of the 19th century in Germany, which published experiments with decisive consequences for European philosophy (Lemos, 2022, p. 14). The problematic links between artists, intellectuals and activists of the mid-20th century and the romantic stance have been explored by Ridenti (2010, 2014), but it is not possible to look at all these references to foreigners without considering the risks of incurring Eurocentrism.

⁵The single volume of the almanac (1974) was edited by Torquato Neto and Wally Salomão, at the time under the surname *Sailormoon*, and only published after the Piauí native's death.

This composition of references makes Freyre's presence in *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* less unusual. The script anticipates the interest in visiting the author in Recife to film a brief interview, outside, based on the following question: "Professor Gilberto Freyre, sociologist of *Casa Grande e Senzala*, illustrious thinker of the *Casa de Apicucos*⁶, is your tropicalist science being distorted by these young composers, teatrologists, and filmmakers?" (Neto, 2004b, p. 70, free translation). To get a sense of their relevance in the text, just look at the cast, which obviously starts with the names of Caetano Veloso and Gilberto Gil: "Renato Borghi, Othon Bastos, Ety Fraser, Ítala Nandi, Emilinha Borba, Vicente Celestino, Linda Batista, Jorge Ben, Aracy de Almeida, Nara Leão, Nana Caymmi" (p. 65). These figures are the notable *tropicalistas*, plus their main inspirations – "Gal Costa, Marlene, Maria Bethânia, José Celso,

⁶The script has a number of spelling mistakes. The neighborhood Gilberto Freyre was known for was Apicucos, in Recife.

Glauber Rocha, Flávio de Carvalho, Gilberto Freire⁷, Chacrinha, Nelson Motta, Luiz Jatobá, Grande Otelo, Os Mutantes, Luiz Gonzaga” (p. 65).

The original list differs from the following list, with the guests. There are names of famous people, such as Ibrahim Sued, Jacinto de Thormes, Carlinhos de Oliveira, Pedro das Flores, and Nelson Rodrigues (Neto, 2004b, p. 65). It is worth highlighting the presence of the brother of the historic owner of *Jornal dos Sports*. Also listed are institutions, collectives, associations linked to carnival and generic figures, such as the Brazilian Academy of Letters, Misses with sashes, the Banda de Ipanema carnival block accompanied by cartoonist Jaguar, the carnival’s winning samba school, application colleges, conservatories, the Pedro II College band, uniformed fans, deputies and senators, Indians and Indian protectors, transvestites⁸, Marlene and Emilinha fan clubs, the ten most elegant, the bottle boy, American tourists, Peace Corps, and the circus.

Norma Bengell and Grande Otelo, other artists mentioned in the script, do not appear in any of the lists (Neto, 2004b, p. 65). The volume of participants, including protagonists and guests, is not an isolated sign of the show’s profusion. The script suggests sequences of collages, which would mix external filming, such as the interview with Freyre; musical performances; voice-over narrations and inflammatory speeches on the set; parades and flag-raising with slogans or mottoes of the ongoing dictatorship; and even explosions and the destruction of the theater in which *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* would take place. The intention to establish an “atmosphere of reportage” is noted (Neto, 2004b, p. 66, free translation). Despite the latent intention of resembling popular auditorium shows – such as the Chacrinha show, which is mentioned prominently in the cast – it is difficult to associate what was scripted with any particular television genre, even if based on less static approaches (Herbert Neto, 2020; Mittel, 2004). The anarchic particularities and the constant use of irony are further hindrances.

The interface with football manifests itself subtly on the front page, which shows the cast and guests. The mention of uniformed supporters may be directly related to the changing behavior of those who followed their teams in stadiums during the period. In the second half of the 1960s, a distinction emerged between fans who organized themselves into new, independent groups, compared to those who concentrated around small ensembles with wind and percussion instruments (Hollanda, 2010, p. 214). The emergence of the so-called *torcidas jovens* (young football fans) can be seen as another sign of the generational transition that Brazil was going through and which had Tropicália as a symbol on the popular music scene.

⁷In other passages, the writer’s name also appears in this way, in a clear deviation from the original.

⁸There is no further information, so it is impossible to say whether they were trans women or trans men.



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The text proposes that the organized fans appear in the first *take* after a shot of the map of the southern hemisphere (Neto, 2004b, p. 66). The impasse of the boundary between tradition and modernity runs through *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* until the very last page. It culminates in a quote in quotation marks: “Each generation must, in relative opacity, discover its mission. And fulfill it or betray it” (p. 85, free translation). It is a reference to Fanon's thinking (1961, p. 214) with an almost identical transcription of a passage by the author, which takes up the escape from the mentality of Europe or the United States, but carries another feature of the generational discussion: the Martinican psychiatrist had died prematurely, a few years before the script was written.

‘FULFILL IT OR BETRAY IT’: TORQUATO NETO AND LANGUAGE

Napolitano (2005, 2010, 2014) highlights the dilemmas that young Brazilian artists faced during this brief period and reiterates the need to unravel the social, political, and cultural implications of their actions through records that are not always considered legitimate historical sources. Still on the generational question, Coelho (2002) points out the pitfalls to which researchers who are interested in this moment are subject, especially when the study is aimed at characters who are still obscure. The example of Torquato Neto is symbolic. With consultations of the same documents, guided by similar motivations, the results do not usually give the necessary emphasis to the nuances of this time period, warns Coelho. In the end, generalizations become constant, with the imminence of determinism.

The Piauí author's dealings with language are entirely connected to the repressive yet unique context. This ambiguity is an integral part of the script. On the other hand, Torquato's poetics manifests these traits through football in different ways. One could mention the writings, made public after his death, in which idols and martyrs are listed: after mentioning Ernesto Che Guevara, Jimi Hendrix and Décio Pignatari, Baker Futebol e Regatas appears, an imaginary club that pays homage to Chet Baker with the formulation of a sporting entity (Neto, 2004c, p. 300). It's just one of those expressions, which would reappear with force in the idea of the TV program.

In a long exposition, under the responsibility of actress Etty Fraser in the script, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* synthesizes the ideal of country contained in the movement, by defending elements related to the country: “Brazil is a wonderful continent, with the yellow of gold, the green of the forests, the

blue of the sky, the strength of the sea, the taste of beans, the nutrition of rice, the beauty of traditions” (Neto, 2004b, p. 74, free translation). The characterization of Brazilianness and the nation itself should not be taken literally. Humor, very close to sarcasm, shapes the fragments that follow one another, which makes their concatenation in time equally complex.

The mockery is far from being a mere vice of language or an idiosyncratic mannerism of the author: it is part of a strategy of challenging during repressive periods, as often happens in sports coverage (Herbert Neto, 2024). The *Jornal dos Sports*, for which Torquato Neto wrote, exemplified this subtle way of opposing the dictatorship and reverberated tendencies that refer to the orality of broadcasting vehicles. The characteristics of talking about football in Brazil go back to centuries-old traditions of confronting or subverting seriousness and the official character in times of persecution and oppression (Bakhtin, 2010). Because of its well-known closeness to the Popular Culture Center (CPC) of the National Student Union (UNE) and to engaged art (Vaz, 2014), this conflictual dimension deserves to be highlighted.

The text is built on the ambiguities of binomials such as national-foreign and aesthetic-political. “Rui Barbosa was the Eagle of The Hague who responded in all languages to the illiterates of Europe. Our football is the best in the world. We only lost the last World Cup due to sabotage. Our women are the best wives and cooks in the universe” (Neto, 2004b, p. 74, free translation). Although the passage incurs the moralism it was trying to deny – by relegating the country’s female population only to childbearing or domestic roles – it is the most straightforward, as it links football, national identity, and international success. Other layers lie in the affirmation of Brazilian superiority in the sport, starting with the campaign of the national team that represented Brazil in the 1966 World Cup – much criticized for its lack of organization and the search for popularity, by the authorities of the dictatorial regime in force, at the expense of the team (Herbert Neto, 2022a, p. 11). The praise is coated in irony and scathing criticism of the government.

Next, it is the motto of sabotage that deserves to be highlighted. As the country’s sports administration bodies were coordinated by federal policies until the end of the 1970s, there were many suspicions of boycotting opponents through football (Herbert Neto, 2022a, p. 17). Despite the authoritarian atmosphere, accusations of favoritism towards teams with good relationships with the top management came to light through sports coverage, both on radio and in print. The *Jornal dos Sports* was decisive in this mission, but the script and the denunciations, published in sections specializing in the sport, lend a comic touch.



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The act of sabotage, however, takes on a different form with Torquato Neto: it is in language that the gesture is most vehemently consummated. In the bifurcation that defines the alternatives for the generation to betray or fulfill its own mission, the author sets himself up as a saboteur and imposes a third option. Reviews of his work acknowledge the violence of his constructions, which range from poems to horror in cinema (Ribeiro, 2010). The sabotage perpetrated by the overthrow of President João Goulart's Labor Party in the 1964 coup, whose leaders had prevented the Brazilian national team from winning a third world title in a row, is reciprocated by a saboteur of poetics. Jango's line of action even has a strong relationship with the intersection between football, politics, and communication in the history of broadcasting (Herbert Neto, 2023a). The seemingly random images that follow, in texts with no automatic connection and sequences based on the absence of a lighter chain, represent this.

The long speech attributed to Etty Fraser continues: "Our music is the most inspired and our cinema has won the Palme d'Or. In terms of natural wealth, we've had the greatest economic cycles in the world, with the sugar cycle, the cocoa cycle, the coffee cycle, the gold cycle, the rubber cycle, and now we're having the oil cycle" (Neto, 2004b, p. 74, free translation). Just as in the case of football, international recognition was unavoidable in order to safeguard Brazilianness: what attests to the merits of the national team is success in the World Cup, while the synonym for the prosperity of the country's cinema is success at the Cannes Film Festival in France. Despite trying to defend Brazil's potential, the script is still conditioned by somewhat European parameters.

After presenting the economic, cultural, and social amalgam in the form of a historical aphorism, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* ironizes the result of Brazil's centuries of history – "All these cycles left beautiful architectural ruins" (Neto, 2004b, p. 74). The wreckage that resulted from historical sabotage, such as the aforementioned 1964 coup, is brought into the script. Ultimately, even the program was sabotaged. Filming was confronted with location transfers between Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo until, in the end, the show was not carried out (Vaz, 2014, p. 199). As it draws to a close, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* brings together football and politics in an explicit bricolage.

When the cast and guests piled onto the set to form the choir, images of matches would be projected (Neto, 2004b, p. 79). In unison, there would be goal shouting. The reference to sport is shown in two other shouts, chanted together: "The cup that is coming to us"; and "The cup that is leaving us." The imbrication with political disputes would be due to editing resources, which

would place the brief and striking allusion to the football universe after political speeches – in the author’s words, “excessively patriotic, laboristic, optimistic, opportunistic” – before a film about the President of the Republic Getúlio Vargas, who committed suicide in 1954 (Neto, 2004b, free translation). The application to the national context reverberates in contemporaries, but in no way should Torquato Neto and, consequently, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*, be examined in the wake of his generation.

The peculiarity that distinguishes him from his peers at first sight is his posthumous nature: it was only after his death in 1972 that his first books were published, such as *Os Últimos Dias de Paupéria*⁹ and *Torquatália*¹⁰ – both collections of unpublished texts include the script for the television program, complete with notes and poems. The biographical data entices researchers to look for indications of future suicide in the writings (Neto, 2004a). There is, therefore, a danger of being held hostage by determinism. The stereotype of the romantic author with an early death sentences readings to very specific biases¹¹. In other words, death wrongly serves as a metric for measuring Torquato’s poetics and biography.

⁹Organized by Wally Salomão and Ana Maria S. de Araújo, the book was later reissued (1982).

¹⁰It was published in two volumes, organized by Paulo Roberto Pires.

¹¹*Torquato Neto: Todas as Horas do Fim*, a documentary released in 2018, gathers important records, but falls into the temptation of suicidal morbidity.

“IF YOU PLANT IT(SELF), IT WILL GROW”: FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo points in the opposite direction. The word that opens the title of the script is symptomatically the antonym of death. The name given is consistent with the intensity of the project. Strengthening the perception that liveliness is the foundation for the show is the ambition to invite many of the main names in Brazilian culture – different or even antagonistic to each other – and the break with thematic linearity and time sequencing during the course of the television show. Football is inserted in order to contribute to the movement that viewers will experience during the broadcast. Even though it became consolidated throughout the 20th century as an element of national identity (Helal, 1997; Wisnik, 2008), the sport is first and foremost a game for which bodies in displacement are required. Film strategies meet this production of meaning, with the suggestion of abrupt cuts, dynamic external filming and in the theater.

The new orientation, which ruled out suicide for his entire oeuvre, meant that his works during his lifetime were also re-evaluated. The compositions, in partnership with other Tropicália artists or not¹², and the texts published in print media reached the ears and eyes of the public with Torquato Neto’s deliberate authorship. This did not happen with many of the fragments that were published in books: the poet even took it upon himself to burn most of his own records

¹²The composition “Dente no Dente,” released after the lyricist’s death in partnership with Jards Macalé, exemplifies this emphasis on intensity and movement. The song is also called “Sim, Não” on other occasions. The inclination is opposed to the morbidity of the other interpretations (Macalé, 2016).



Sabotage: Torquato Neto's football in *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo*

before he died (Pires, 2004, p. 209; Vaz, 2014). The intensity foreseen for the script runs through his participation in the musical and journalistic contexts.

Both the songs and the newspaper columns were easier to circulate. Without understanding the author's biography merely as a project that was interrupted before the right moment, it is possible to ponder his predilection for pieces with these nuances, to the detriment of bookish or baccalaureate traditions. Much less accessible, the books are not in keeping with the latent claim to be popular – with all the ambivalence that term brings. The choice was justified in order to move their propositions forward in 1960s Brazil, where almost 40% of young people and adults were illiterate (Haddad, 1995). What's more, a country with ancestral oral traditions, with Afro-Amerindian origins (Simas et al., 2020)¹³.

¹³In an attempt to re-read philosophy in a popular key, Simas et al. (2020) present a proposal linked to orality that contributes to the analysis – although it does not focus on the case of Torquato Neto.

If taken to its ultimate consequences, the program for alternative horizons based on Torquato Neto's work is even capable of sabotaging a certain canonical geography about popular song and, in particular, the movement that motivated the script for TV Globo. While the memoirs focus on São Paulo or the south and center of Rio de Janeiro as the epicenters of the cultural effervescence that erupted at the turn of the 1960s and 1970s (Gil & Zappa, 2013; Veloso, 1997), the trajectory of the author from Teresina makes the spotlight move towards Usina, a region in the Tijuca neighborhood: where he spent many of his last months (Vaz, 2014, p. 359). The area is close to Maracanã, a traditional football stadium in the northern zone of Rio de Janeiro.

A Jornal dos Sports with less precise boundaries, capable of also following music, theater, cinema, and, of course, football, received Torquato Neto's column. In the printed editions, the section was accompanied by the suggestive title *Música Popular*. The company launched its youth-oriented graphic design with *O Sol*, reinforcing this relative opacity. The attempt to win over younger audiences with different approaches is not a privilege here. Kucinski (1991) shows that, in this decade and the next, equivalent proposals emerged in capitals far from the southeast of Brazil. A critique of this vehicle for the artist's poetics is equally essential.

The specialized sports publication, which gained notoriety under the direction of executive Mário Filho, is known for its good relations with football and government authorities (Herbert Neto, 2023b). This dissuades any attempt to turn *Jornal dos Sports* into a libertarian libel. The conditions of the historical period, with the emergence of youth movements on the public scene and the commercial interest in this dynamic, make it easy to understand the openness to approaches such as that of the author of the *Música Popular* column. Still on the subject of the media outlets in which the poet worked, it should be

pointed out that, although *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* did not air, other Tropicalismo initiatives reached viewers at the end of the 1960s, such as TV Tupi's *Divino Maravilho*¹⁴ and TV Globo's *Direito de Nascer e Morrer do Tropicalismo*¹⁵.

The author's language could not be confined to media defined by writing. Hence his prolific output in the field of popular song. The sabotage plan included the symbolic takeover of broadcasting with *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* when viewers would be able to see the effects of his verve in images and sounds, as part of the movement led by Bahian singers and songwriters. After looking at the indications for text and film, it would be frivolous to say that football appears peripherally in the script. On the contrary: it offers a link with popular culture and, even with the still incipient techniques of capturing and storing video for television, it helps to show the dynamism that marks the stillborn program and, even more so, the expressiveness of the author from Piauí. It is a sign of vitality. ■

¹⁴Information from the Chamber of Deputies (October 28, 68, 2004).

¹⁵It is possible that, after long negotiations and transformations, *Vida, Paixão e Banana do Tropicalismo* became a TV Globo program (Evangelista, 2011).

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The women of the dictatorship represented in *Cova 312*

As mulheres da ditadura representadas em Cova 312

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ABSTRACT

This research investigates the way in which Brazilian literary journalism represent women, especially considering the issue of violence. For this, a critical reading of reportage books in the Jabuti Award is presented. After attesting to the small number of female authors and the lack of representation of violence against this group, an analysis of *Cova 312*, by journalist Daniela Arbex, is developed. Despite focusing on the representation of the Brazilian military dictatorship and exposing a male protagonist, the reportage books emphasizes women who belonged to that context, showing the most different possibilities of struggle and confrontation the female figure experienced in that context.

Keywords: Literary journalism, violence, women, Cova 312

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RESUMO

Este estudo investiga como se dá a representatividade da mulher no jornalismo literário brasileiro, considerando, especialmente, o tema da violência. Para tanto, apresenta-se a leitura crítica dos livros-reportagem em destaque no Prêmio Jabuti. Após verificar o pequeno número de autoras mulheres, bem como a falta de representação da violência contra esse grupo, é desenvolvida uma análise da obra *Cova 312*, da jornalista Daniela Arbex. Apesar do foco estar na representação da ditadura militar brasileira e expor um protagonista homem, o livro-reportagem atribui destaque às mulheres que fizeram parte daquele contexto, evidenciando as mais diferentes possibilidades de luta e enfrentamento que a figura feminina vivenciou durante o período.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo literário, violência, mulheres, Cova 312



A

NARRATIVES, OF THE MOST distinct natures, play an important role in society: journalistic texts, for example, have the main mission of informing, in addition to bringing to light important aspects about humanity, stimulating discussion and social criticism. Literary texts, on the other hand, despite not having information or a commitment to truth as their foundation, often use fiction to also promote reflections on socially relevant issues.

When combined, in what we call literary journalism, the two types of narrative have great power of recollecting events that truly occurred, that is, it is not fiction, but the use of aspects of literature to, by detailed and broad language, provide interpretative experiences that contribute to promote critical thinking on relevant topics, leaving an important legacy for social and collective memory. From this perspective, Mateus (2022) emphasizes that a society devoid of historical knowledge linked to shared memory is capable neither of reflecting on the present, nor of drawing important lessons for the future.

When representing the world, these narratives that preserve memory permeate the idea of otherness, as they give voice to subjects, generating a sense of empathy, since, from these readings, the “I” begins to have a broader meaning that is inserted into the social context through artistic representation. In this way, literary journalism can expand the construction of meanings before individuals, since it explores narratively the most diverse profiles, including, for example, socially vulnerable groups, such as Black, poor, Indigenous, LGBTQIAP+ people (lesbians, gays, bisexuals, *travestis*, transsexuals and transgenders, queer, intersex, asexual, pansexual and other variations) and women, among others. When these subjects are represented not only they have their existence and identity valued, but also become known from a perspective that goes beyond the traditionally constructed stereotype. Furthermore, when a narrative represents social phenomena, such as violence, it problematizes, reinterprets, narrates, and encourages immersion in the understanding of realities.

Understanding that violence, especially that practiced against socially vulnerable groups, is part of the Brazilian context, I elaborated this article to investigate how literary journalism produced in Brazil promotes narratives that contribute to social criticism. To do so, I analyzed the representation of women in Brazilian news stories highlighted in the “Reportage” category of the Jabuti Prize – one of the greatest literary awards in the Americas –, from 2000 to 2017.

With this in mind, the methodology used to conduct this research is based on the premises of Comparative Literature, which, according to Tania

Carvalho (2003), aims to compare literature with other objects of study in order to obtain broader results about the topic under investigation, in this case, the intersection between literature and journalism. Based on this, I mapped the works awarded by the Jabuti Prize in the “Reportage” category, from 2000 to 2017, and selected, from among the three works awarded in each year, those that referred to violence against minority groups in a more emphatic manner. Aiming to understand the phenomenon, I analyzed in particular the work *Cova 312*, by Daniela Arbex, published in 2015 and awarded in 2016, and, among the socially vulnerable profiles, I chose to investigate the way in which the women are represented.

THE VIOLENCE IN REPORTAGE BOOKS

Hannah Arendt (1985, p. 6) states that “No one engaged in thought about history and politics can remain unaware of the enormous role violence has always played in human affairs”. Muniz Sodré (1992) claims that violence is growing in the country in direct proportion to the increase in population in urban centers and the deterioration of the population’s living conditions, which faces problems such as food, health and education deficiencies, unemployment, and others.

Scenes of violence are broadcast daily by the media and are often trivialized, considering historical and social aspects. Therefore, it is necessary to question which works are capable of stimulating interlocutors to have a new perception of this universe that involves violence. Thus, I understand that by combining journalism—with its informative nature—and literature—with all its linguistic and humanizing contribution—it is possible to provide readers with new ways of viewing certain events, while the author of this type of text has the possibility of choosing how to approach the facts, arousing, to a greater or lesser extent, critical sense and permeating values from which it becomes possible to create a new perspective on situations of cruelty.

In considering the objective of this investigation to verify how violence is represented—especially that against women—in literary and journalistic productions, in order to understand whether the reports promote social reflection, I carried out a critical reading of the reportage books awarded by the Jabuti Prize, from 2000 to 2017. The following works were part of this mapping: *Estação Carandiru* (1999), by Dráuzio Varella; *A família Canuto e a luta camponesa na Amazônia* (1999), by Carlos Cartaxo; *Meu casaco de general: Quinhentos dias no front da segurança pública do Rio de Janeiro* (2000), by Luiz Eduardo Soares; *Eny e o grande bordel brasileiro* (2002), by Lucius de Mello; *Abusado* (2003), by



Caco Barcellos; *Viúvas da terra* (2004), by Klester Cavalcanti; *Operação Araguaia: arquivos secretos da guerrilha* (2005), by Taís Morais and Eumano Silva; *O nome da morte* (2006), by Klester Cavalcanti; *O massacre* (2007), by Eric Nepomuceno; *O sequestro dos uruguaios: Uma reportagem dos tempos da ditadura* (2008), by Luiz Cláudio Cunha; *Conversas de cafetinas* (2009), by Sérgio Maggio; *Assalto ao poder: o crime organizado* (2010), by Carlos Amorim; *O espetáculo mais triste da Terra* (2011), by Mauro Ventura; *As duas guerras de Vlado Herzog: da perseguição nazista na Europa à morte sob tortura no Brasil* (2012), by Audálio Dantas; *Holocausto brasileiro* (2013), by Daniela Arbex; *A casa da vovó: Uma biografia do Doi-Codi (1969-1991), o centro de sequestro, tortura e morte da Ditadura Militar* (2014), by Marcelo Godoy; *Cova 312* (2015), by Daniela Arbex; *Nazistas entre nós: A trajetória dos oficiais de Hitler depois da guerra* (2016), by Marcos Guterman.

The observation regarding the authorship of the award-winning reportage books since 2000 allows reaffirming what already occurs in other artistic fields in general, that is, if the majority of filmmakers, musicians, fiction writers, painters, etc., are men, this also occurs in the field of literary journalism. Among the 18 works mapped, there are only two female writers, one of whom wrote two of the award-winning books, and the other is an author who writes in partnership with a male author. It is not possible to know whether men are more engaged with literary journalism than women, but considering the entire context—not only artistic, but also social and cultural—what is evident is that men hold a greater space in the production of these works or, at least, in their awarding. In addition to this fact, it is known that it took a long time for women to assume prominent positions in the world of journalism. In fact, there is still less editorial segmentation today than before, that is, specific subjects that are investigated and developed mainly by men.

In the field of Literature, researcher Regina Dalcastagnè conducted a study on the representation of the central characters in Brazilian novels from 1990 to 2004, published by *Companhia das Letras*, *Record*, and *Rocco*, Brazilian publishers. As revealed by Dalcastagnè (2005), the possibility of creating female characters is linked to the sex of the person developing the work, since books written by women present 52% of the characters as female, with 64.1% as protagonists and 76.6% as narrators. In turn, when the authors are men, female characters account for 32.1%, with only 13.8% as protagonists and 16.2% as narrators. Furthermore, the research also reveals data on the authors of the novels, indicating that 72.7% of Brazil's writers are men.

According to the author's analysis,

female condition has evolved in many ways, but literature—or at least novels—continues to be dominated by males. It is not possible to say whether women write less or whether they have less ease in publishing with the most prestigious publishers (or both). Evidence suggests that the ratio of male to female writers is not exclusive to the largest publishers. (Dalcastagnè, 2005, p. 31)

Dalcastagnè (2005) concluded, in her mapping of Brazilian literature, that regarding the characters in these novels, among the protagonists 62.1% are men and 37.8% are women, with only one case in the “other” category. The disparity in representations is further evidenced by the result that shows female characters occupying the position of protagonist or narrator to a lesser extent. Their main occupations in the novels are, in this order: housewives (25.1%), artists (10.2%), unemployed (9.6%), and housekeepers (7.4%), among other activities such as students, teachers, sex workers, journalists, or writers. Thus, the dominant character’s profile in contemporary Brazilian novels is that of a male white heterosexual adult, and more successful than female characters.

These findings allow inferring that, also in other arts, it is uncommon for these groups to be represented with an active voice. Women, children, Black and LGBTQIAP+ people, for example, are not given preference at the center of narratives. From this perspective, researcher Lizandro Carlos Calegari (2013) conducted a study on the representation of women, gays and Black people in the literary canon and concluded that “these groups, along with others, because they have been placed on the margins of society, history and literature, denounce their condition of exclusion, but mainly of suffering” (Calegari, 2013, p. 30).

Based on the mapping and critical reading of the award-winning reportage books, I concluded that the people affected by violence, represented in the works, are mostly political activists or victims of an authoritarian system. Next to them are rural workers, some of whom also being political activists. Furthermore, people in general are affected by violence and represented in contemporary reportage books, including individuals from the less privileged classes, such as prostitutes, children, adolescents, and homosexuals.

Based on this, one sought to understand the profile of those attacked; however, as most of the works present a very wide diversity of characters, the profile identification was similarly varied. For gender, 14 works present both male and female victims; two demonstrate cruel acts committed only against men; another two—those referring to sex workers—show violence specifically

against women, and one highlights women's suffering after the loss of their husbands, who were murdered.

In this sense, I note that there is a lack of representation among the award-winning literary journalism works in the period analyzed, particularly regarding violence against women. When this specific representation occurs, it is directed at women in the context of prostitution or considering the daily difficulties stemming from the loss of their husbands. This issue requires attention, given that in 2020, the Brazilian Ministry of Women, Family and Human Rights (MMFDH)¹ registered 105,821 reports of violence against women, but it is clear that this number could be even higher, considering victims who do not report violence for various reasons. Moreover, in the first half of 2020 alone, 648 women were murdered because of their gender. Cases of this nature could constitute relevant themes for the production of contemporary pieces of literary journalism; however, they are not represented in the award-winning reportage books in the studied period. Despite this, most works, at some point, mention the acts of cruelty directed at women, always within the broader sense of the narrative.

Considering what I mentioned earlier about the lack of representation of vulnerable groups in the artistic field, especially regarding sexual orientation, skin-color, and social status—people who are affected by violence on a daily basis—, it is possible to observe that this is not the focus of the works mentioned either. Although these groups are represented, there are no specific narratives aimed at them among the award winners. For the same reason mentioned above, the outcome of the mapping, in terms of sexual orientation, color and age, is also quite ample. Although at least five of the works include violence against LGBTQIAP+ individuals, there is no exclusive mention of the topic, even though Brazil holds one of the largest figures of LGBTQIAP+ homicides worldwide.

Based on these results, I thoroughly analyze one of the few award-winning pieces of literary journalism in the period from 2000 to 2017 written by a woman, the book *Cova 312*, by Daniela Arbex (2015), whose perceptions are exposed in the next subtitle of this article.

THE WOMEN REPRESENTED IN *COVA 312*

Daniela Arbex is an investigative journalist dedicated to defending human rights. At the age of 49, she worked for 23 years as a special reporter for the *Tribuna de Minas* newspaper in the state of Minas Gerais, Brazil. Arbex is one of the most awarded journalists of her generation, with more than 20 national and international tributes.

¹ Available in Portuguese at <https://www.gov.br/mdh/ptbr/assuntos/noticias/2021/marco/canais-registram-mais-de-105-mil-denuncias-de-violencia-contra-mulher-em-2020>

As part of her award-winning career, Daniela Arbex published, in 2015, *Cova 312* [Grave 312], a reportage book whose investigation began much earlier, in mid-2002. Her investigations, which made several headlines in *Tribuna de Minas*, were expanded as new facts came to light and, with the visit to the deceased activist Milton's family, in 2013, the journalist finished gathering all the information about the case and concluded her revealing work. *Cova 312*, published by *Geração Editorial*, won the Jabuti Prize in 2016 in the reportage book category.

The 342-page book tells the story of how the armed forces killed political activist Milton Soares de Castro, faked his suicide, and disappeared with his body. Arbex reconstructs the story and not only reveals the path the young man faced but also discovers the location of the grave where his body was buried: the previously anonymous grave 312 that gives the book its name. In addition, it presents other episodes from the time of the Brazilian military dictatorship, based on the stories of more than 20 characters who experienced the struggles of that time.

Cova 312 is made up of three parts, divided into sub-chapters. In addition to the written language, the work includes images of various documents that prove the information gathered, archive photos that allow visualizing the characters during the dictatorship, and the representation of current places such as the *Linhares* Penitentiary and Milton's grave.

Notably the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship began in 1964, after the coup d'état led by the Army, and lasted until 1985. Before that, the country was already suffering from political instability, stemming from a weakened democracy and the remnants of the *Estado Novo* period (1937–1945), marked by violent repression practices.

Arbex's work breaks down the details of this period characterized by authoritarianism and daily wars. The entire narrative is marked by the strong presence of literary language; the book is, exactly as stated in the introduction, written as if it were a novel. These particularities, in certain situations, provide a light tone, as they cover the author's own trajectories in the search for information and the explanation of moments of relaxation between characters. However, at the same time, on many other occasions, this form of narrative, with literary characteristics, allows for an immersion in the memory of this tragic period in Brazilian history in an extremely realistic manner. In other words, it is a book that provokes true discomfort, leading both to feelings of empathy for the pain of others and to very deep reflections.

All of these aspects are discussed in detail in the reportage book and deserve a specific study. However, considering the selection I made for this



article, I describe below the way in which the female image was represented based on Arbex's work. Although the narrative deals broadly with the Brazilian dictatorship period and has as its central character a man, the guerrilla Milton, the journalist presents very clearly the women's role in this context.

Throughout *Cova 312*, Daniela Arbex brings to light the representation of many women who experienced the Brazilian dictatorship. Not all of them participated actively in some movement fighting against the regime, but there are several female figures who played extremely important roles, beyond the front line of militancy, considering that many acted as support for the maintenance of family needs, including the prisoners' ones. Excepting one story, the women highlighted in the narrative are not placed in an exclusive chapter; their trajectories are told in line with the reports about the guerrillas, torture, and imprisonment.

Based on the results obtained from reading the reportage books that were part of the mapping, I understand that Arbex's view of women who experienced the dictatorship period may be related to the fact that she herself is a female author. This aspect is in line with the information provided by Dalcastagnè (2005), when she reveals that the representation of female characters is much more significant when a work is written by a woman.

Having made these reflections, I will cite some excerpts in which the journalist attributes prominence to female figures in her work. At the beginning of the reportage book, before even delving into the issues related to the dictatorship period, Daniela Arbex (2015) introduces Milton's family: his sister Gessi and his mother Universina.

Universina, a healer, is portrayed in the narrative as a strong woman who care deeply for the well-being of her family. She had 10 children from her first marriage with the policeman Marcílio, and five more from her second, however, as Arbex (2015, p. 41) reports: "unlike her first husband, the police officer brought violence and the uncontrollable desire to sexually abuse his stepdaughters into their home." This short excerpt is imbued with a vast meaning, because it is possible to perceive another form of violence represented in the work, in addition to the cruelties of the dictatorship, this time aimed at the women of a family who were forced to submit to the orders of someone they could supposedly trust.

The journalist says that when Universina managed to free herself from that relationship, she reunited with her children, since many had scattered to other places to get away from their stepfather. "She didn't mind suffering any hardships, as long as she was with the 15 offspring she had given birth to" (Arbex, 2015, p. 41). These descriptions about the mother show the strength of the woman

who, in addition to giving birth to several children, working selling bread and dedicating herself to her family, suffered violence and later looked for everyone to unite the family.

Still regarding the Soares de Castro family women's trajectories, Arbex dedicates pages of her narrative to talk about Gessi, the guerrillas' sister. She would have been the last person Milton was with before going to *Caparaó*.

The green-eyed woman who had once been a beauty queen was also beautiful on the inside. She always had a good word to say and, in addition, she was a great baker, just like her mother. She was also a healer. Unhappy in her marriage, she fulfilled both father and mother roles, raising two children on her own with the help from a sewing machine. To support her offspring, she worked night and day listening to the needle pierce the fabric to thread the dresses she made. — Bro, stop with these ideas of equality. Mom already told you: “you’re going to be crushed like a worm.” Milton was always trying to harmonize, and Gessi continued: — I so wish you had a girlfriend, a family. If you had someone, you wouldn’t screw everything up. The big always step on the small, and against force there is no resistance. (Arbex, 2015, p. 64)

From the excerpt, I notice that the narrator highlights a saga that, by representing the guerrillas' mother and sister, also shows a female profile that has the fate of experiencing an unhappy marriage and, later, of fighting alone to support her children. Although she begins by talking about Gessi's physical beauty, what follows in depth is the beauty “on the inside.” Thus, strength and suffering go hand in hand, almost romanticized in a description that reveals exactly the opposite of the adjectives related to frailty, historically attributed to women.

Nevertheless, even experiencing marriages that had painful outcomes, traditional thoughts regarding the importance of family formation are still part of women's discourse, as Arbex explained in the aforementioned excerpt. By mentioning her mother's thoughts, Gessi tries to convince Milton to replace his life of activism with the search for a family. This may be established precisely by the sense of protection of these women, accustomed to struggle to provide the basics for their children.

It is also important, in the fragment in which the sister tries to convince Milton to change his mind, Gessi's understanding of relations of domination, when she emphasizes that the great prevails over the small is a natural behavior, indicating hierarchical issues, with emphasis on the phrase “against force there is no resistance,” which basically summarizes the reasons why militant struggles



during the dictatorship period were often weakened by the political discourse of militarism and, later, erased.

In *Cova 312*, there is a reference to a night when, while Gessi was sewing, her brother went to visit her, who gave her a hug, without telling her where he was going, but gave her a note and a small photo with information that could help if she needed to maintain some contact. When Gessi received the note, “pressed the paper to her chest and thought about Mrs. Universina” (Arbex, 2015, p. 64). This reference to Gessi thinking about the mother demonstrates almost a solidarity between the women in the family who understand each other. Furthermore, it once again highlights the maternal feeling, since the immediate thought was about the mother’s concern. Sometime later, Gessi reported never having had the courage to open the note, regretting not having known what was written.

Just like Milton’s mother, countless other mothers suffered the uncertainties of the dictatorship period. Arbex (2015, p. 75) describes that, since Milton’s arrest, Mrs. Universina “reported almost daily to the soldiers of the 3º Army, in the capital, seeking information about her son. She had heard that he had been taken to a small Brazilian town whose name she did not know how to pronounce.” In addition to the physical and psychological violence suffered by her husband, the mother, who represents so many others, ended up, albeit indirectly, suffering the dictatorship violence for not having access to the slightest information about a son who was in prison.

Another moment in the work that represents these relationships between mother and children is the episode in which the journalist describes a confrontation, with the possibility of death, in which one of the guerrillas, Nilo, thought of his mother, Filomena: “at that moment, he remembered the gaunt face of his mother, a primary school teacher who had lived for years in a loveless marriage” (Arbex, 2015, p. 148). In addition to once again representing the idea of unhappy marriages to which women were destined, the journalist reports that the last time Nilo saw his mother was at Christmas, in a simple moment of celebration. “With lack of money, there was no plentiful table, only a few sweets made by his mother so that December 24, 1968 would not go by unnoticed. Remembering Mrs. Mena gave the young man more courage” (Arbex, 2015, p. 148). Here, once again, we have a demonstration of the traditions that permeated women’s lives: loving mothers with difficult marriages, doing everything for their children.

Psychological violence plagued countless women during that period, many anonymous, who ended up facing the dictatorship horrors, even

without direct involvement. Arbex (2015) tells the story of Érica Meyer, who lived in Rio de Janeiro and welcomed her nephew Marco Antônio into her home, who was being sought by the military. The aunt was 60 years old and was captured in her nephew's place, imprisoned for 35 days, accused of being an accomplice to the militant, and was also considered a suspect of espionage. Arbex (2015, p. 131) says that Érica did not understand how "law enforcement representatives could subvert the basic principles of individual rights to threaten people, especially someone who hadn't taken part in any action against the government." The journalist adds that the woman never got over the humiliation she suffered at the DOPS, "when she was forced to stand naked in the presence of several strangers. She felt blemished. She had been morally violated" (Arbex, 2015, p. 131).

With this account, it is possible to see the story of yet another woman who, although having not chosen to directly combat dictatorial ideas, questioned the political stance of the time, since she perceived as inconceivable the idea of the government producing acts of humiliation and cruelty against human beings. The injustices of that period are also highlighted in this book excerpt, as there is an increase in accusations against a person who had little or no involvement with the militants' actions. Although it is not clear whether Érica suffered any other kind of physical torture, the psychological violence she suffered is notable, in a hierarchical relationship of domination that is symbolic, coercive, and political at the same time.

As for Marco Antônio, he was later captured and suffered various forms of torture by the military so that he would denounce the names of the other militants. "In September 1969, he had his arms and legs tied to an iron bar for simple revenge" (Arbex, 2015, p. 131). His mother was also represented in *Cova 312*, when the journalist recounts that, unhappy to see her son's physical state, Maria Luiza de Azevedo Meyer "arranged a meeting with the wife of the commander who was presiding over the investigation to ask for clemency." After this appeal, and "shaken before the widow who had practically raised her 10 children alone, the officer's wife tried to intercede with her husband, but the effect was the opposite. The student was harshly persecuted" (Arbex, 2015, p. 131). In addition to the unfortunate retaliation against the militant, I can see in this fragment the idea of empathy between women, almost as if they could understand each other's pain in a more sensitive manner. Again, another mother, with several children, crying out for the life of one of her own.

Concerned mothers, aunts and sisters with a painful past were, for the most part, hidden by history and forgotten in the collective imagination, yet



they played an important role in that period, precisely by maintaining as much dignity as possible for their families and, even without direct combat, acting as bases of resistance against the dictatorship horrors. Ana Maria Colling (2015, p. 380) states that, in Brazil, there are “countless examples of maternal courage and determination to free their imprisoned offspring. In defending the lives of their offspring, mothers have become fierce militants who know no limits.” The author also points out that this is the reason why they were feared by the repressive forces.

Arbex (2015) corroborates this idea by emphasizing that the political prisoners’ mothers played a fundamental role in preventing the murder of many, as they had an important role to play in combating the torture and violations committed, looking for ways to sensitize the law enforcement. “Although she wasn’t part of the political movement against the regime, she was forced to fight. She had to resist in her own way,” says Arbex (2015, p. 164), referring to Ângela, an important figure in the mobilization of families whose members had disappeared.

In addition to the mothers, Arbex’s narrative also includes those women who, dissatisfied with the country’s situation, worked on anti-government missions. These women were even more hated by those in power. Colling (2015) affirms that, for the Brazilian military dictatorship, militant women were not only regime opponents, but also subversive figures in the face of established values, since it was not up to women to think and participate in politics. As such, women who took up political activism in parties opposed to the dictatorship “committed two sins in the eyes of repression: of rising up against the coup policy, opposing it, and of disregarding the place destined for women, breaking the social standards established for both sexes” (Colling, 2015, p. 378).

Some of these female figures who dismissed the possibility of keeping quiet in order to be included in the standard were represented in Arbex’s work. The author recounts, for example, an action in which the militants, in a form of protest, orchestrated a bank robbery:

Witnesses reported that one member of the group of robbers stood out from the rest. The descriptions given to the police were of the only woman in the group. According to the *Mercantil* bank victims, she was wearing a blond wig, a thin green dress that fluttered in the wind, and boots. She was student Maria José Carvalho Nahas, from UFMG School of Medicine. Although she had straight black hair and never wore a disguise during her actions, just a discreet

pied-de-poule skirt, the guerrilla woman caught the popular imagination. Decades later, Maria José became known as the Blonde with the Machine Gun. (Arbex, 2015, pp. 144-145)

The aspects cited by the historian in the sense of escaping standards are clear in this fragment, as it shows a role that was out of the ordinary for a woman who, besides being a medical student at a time when more prestigious studies and professions were for men, became a militant, taking part in a bank robbery, in an action that was much more political than economically motivated.

Another reference to Maria José, also known as Zezé, is exposed in the same confrontation in which Nilo remembered his mother Filomena. In this excerpt, one describes that the activist, at gunpoint, thought about the poem “Morte do Leiteiro,” by Carlos Drummond de Andrade, which deals with the inequalities of Brazilian society. Arbex (2015, p. 149) describes some verses from the poet’s work and analyzes the situation: “she resorted to Drummond’s poetry to try to keep her sanity.” The journalist strives to show that sensitivity, based on art, was part of the guerrillas’ lives, indicating that, even at a time of conflict, literary references could be allied to a certain level of relief. This also occurs at other points in the book, when the narration emphasizes poetry, music, and other expressions that accompanied the militants, and which were often strongly repressed under the dictatorship, as well as the books that political prisoners hid so that they could read and have contact with artistic expressions.

Despite the poeticism, the dictatorship suffering was felt by everyone, and probably it was even more humiliatingly by women. Maria Amélia de Almeida Teles (2014, p. 14) highlights that both women and men were tortured, but women were systematically the target of sexual violence. “The practice of rape and forced abortion was commonplace in torture sessions when it came to violent political repression against left-wing militants.” The researcher explains that both men and women were forced to undress in front of the torturers; if they did not comply, their clothes would be ripped off and torn. “In many cases, electric wires were inserted into the vagina and anus. Some women were raped. Others suffered forced abortions due to kicks in the stomach. . . .”

In addition to physical attacks, women were humiliated. simply because of their gender. As historian Colling (2015, p. 380) explains, “when dealing with politicized women, the military immediately tried to disqualify them as autonomous subjects. Her characterization is as an appendage of men,



incapable of making political decisions,” and adds that “for the repression, women do not have the capacity to decide on their entry into the political world; when they appear there, it is because they have been introduced by a man,” and for this reason, their affiliation to left-wing parties would have no political importance, since it was necessary to identify the figure of a husband or father, for example. These questions show that, besides suffering for militating against a regime they disagreed with, women also had to deal with relegation due to their gender.

The torture committed against women is represented in the reportage book. Maria José was a victim of one of them, and her friend and fighting companion, Carmela, explained what she saw. Daniela Arbex described the statement:

Several days passed without a more precise signal to guide me. Who would be there? I later learned from the prison guard that my friend Maria José Nahas had been thrown into that hell. *Surda* [deaf cell] was the name given to that cubicle where the only noises were those of rats and cockroaches, surrounded by webs and spiders that lightly wove their lives. *Surda* was a one-to-six-foot space, where the prisoner, in order to survive, would always have to be in horizontal position on a cement bed, and there was a pit at the cell backside. (Arbex, 2015, p. 186)

Upon realizing Zezé’s apparent frailty, a new guard from *Linhares* commented to a veteran: “I feel sorry for these girls trapped here. They must be scared. – Scared? These women have more courage than men – Veiga replied. . . .” (Arbex, 2015, p. 192). When making a connection between the path taken by Maria José, and her participation in actions against the government, her escape and the situation in the so-called “*surda*,” and the comment made by the guard, it is notable the attempt to maintain the stereotype of the frail, frightened and weak woman, an argument refuted by the other guard, but not without comparing them to men, highlighting it how something that would be out of the ordinary. This stereotype is also clear at another point in the narrative, when Zezé meets a common prisoner who was known to his family:

I’ve already told these people that you come from a distinguished family and isn’t involved in this political mess. You were just used by these troublemakers, since girls like you don’t get involved in these things. The young woman smiled, thinking about how wrong that man was about her. There was no point in arguing back. (Arbex, 2015, p. 192)

He was a hitman and, when he was released, he visited Zezé's mother, taking pride in having given the "girl" good advice. Despite the impressions regarding women's frailty or even incapacity in the face of political and social issues, Carmela and Maria José came to be known as two of the most dangerous guerrillas of the period. Arbex (2015, p. 190) also portrays moments in Maria José's personal life: "against conventions, the 23-year-old bride got married in a lilac-colored *laise* dress," breaking, once again, the expected standards.

Arbex's book has a sub-chapter entitled "The woman who faced the regime," which tells the story of Ângela Pezzuti, whose two nephews and the sister were imprisoned by the military regime.

Wednesday, 6 a.m., downtown Belo Horizonte. The alarm clock rang on that November 19, 1969, waking Ângela Pezzuti, 36 years old, for another day of cross-bearing journey: visiting, almost 300 kilometers away, the children she did not give birth. Even without carrying them in her womb, she felt like a mother to Ângelo and Murilo. Ângela dedicated part of her life to caring for the children of Carmela, her sister, who had also joined the resistance against the dictatorship. Since the boys were arrested for the first time, in January of that year, she began to tirelessly watch over the survival of her nephews and her own sister during the many times she was imprisoned. If it were not for her crusade to locate and monitor her relatives in prison, they would certainly have succumbed to all the violence which they were exposed to. (Arbex, 2015, p. 163)

With this excerpt, it becomes clear that each woman played a leading role: one acted in the fight against the regime, and the other also joined the struggle, playing the role of protecting the family and maintaining everything necessary for everyone's survival. This aspect becomes even more striking when the journalist reports that Ângela and Carmela met during a visit to the political prisoners in Linhares, and the sister told them that she was going to flee the country to avoid her fourth time in prison: "But Carmela, are you going to leave your children imprisoned in *Linhares*?, Ângela, everyone has a mission in life. I am a revolutionary. I leave my children with you. Your mission is with my children" (Arbex, 2015, p. 165). In this conversation, which also showed that it would be the last time Carmela would see her children, it is remarkable the idea of each woman's mission, contributing to the struggles of the time. Still on the subject of Carmela, Arbex (2015) briefly recalls an event in which she took part in a meeting with the then militant Dilma Rousseff, who was later elected as Brazil's first—and up to now, only—female president.



On more than one occasion, Ângela did not know the whereabouts of her sister and her nephews, Ângelo and Murilo. On these occasions, she was the protagonist in seeking out the authorities and trying to locate her family, mobilizing other people to do the same. The author reports that, on a certain occasion when everyone disappeared again, every Friday Ângela left from Belo Horizonte to Rio de Janeiro in search of news. She even went personally to the house of Colonel Ari Pereira de Carvalho, who had given her permission to visit her nephews at the *Vila Militar*, where one has told they were being held: “What are you doing here?— he asked, embarrassed by the fact that he was shirtless and without the uniform that made him more powerful than other mortals” (Arbex, 2015, p. 176). This passage is a strong sign that the authorities of the time needed to maintain their position of power.

Returning to Carmela’s story, Daniela Arbex explains that, a month after her escape, the activist was captured in Rio de Janeiro and subjected to countless sessions of violence at the Army’s military police unit. When she arrived in Linhares, “the exuberance of her personality and the permanent sparkle in her eyes had disappeared. She was an undead. She was dirty, broken, looking much older than her 44 years” (Arbex, 2015, p. 13). The journalist says that, to pay homage to Carmela, the political prisoners began to sing and the women’s gallery responded by singing together, which was precisely the form of communication between men and women at the prison. When analyzing this episode, it is important to infer that gender differentiation, in the sense of demeaning women as if they were in inferior conditions, was much lower among the militants, men and women, who had similar ideals.

In one of the moments of the reportage book, Arbex (2015) recounts that the women prisoners were transferred from the “Girls’ Gallery” in Linhares, without any warning to those who remained, and many of the prisoners remained for a long time without knowing where the people who were their sister-in-arms, wives, fiancées and friends were, also causing the group to separate. The journalist relates that there was a garden that the women took great care of; they gave the prisoners flowers on certain visits, so the inmates tried to keep it very carefully to preserve the idea of keeping the women close in some way. The soldiers, however, destroyed the garden several times, and the inmates always planted again until, finally, the army decided to lay cement in the courtyard, putting an end to the garden. Despite this, the plants resisted and sprouted in unlikely places, for example in the middle of the damaged concrete. A clump of *sempre-vivas* [a flower species endemic to Brazil] emerged

from there, which was later uprooted and thrown to the ground so that the inmates could witness their death.

No one gave up on replanting the seeds. For every plant that was cut down, another one appeared in the political prison. The rebirth of the *sempre-vivas* fed hope in a period of human desertification. At no other time has the country faced so much pain. (Arbex, 2015, p. 237)

This pain is represented quite emphatically in *Cova 312*, which seems to be able to capture the suffering of those involved as far as the understanding of someone who has not experienced similar situations can reach. Thus, in this work, Daniela Arbex transforms what was a number into private, real stories of people who had their lives and, in many cases, put them aside for a greater ideal, since, in that context, “the loss of freedom itself was the price to pay for keeping ideas free” (Arbex, 2015, p. 111).

In this way, by representing these identities and bringing to light the stories of the women who lived through the Brazilian dictatorship, the reportage book gives voice to female figures who are often hidden from different narratives, including the historical one, thus reinforcing the possibility of humanization through works characterized by literary journalism. ■

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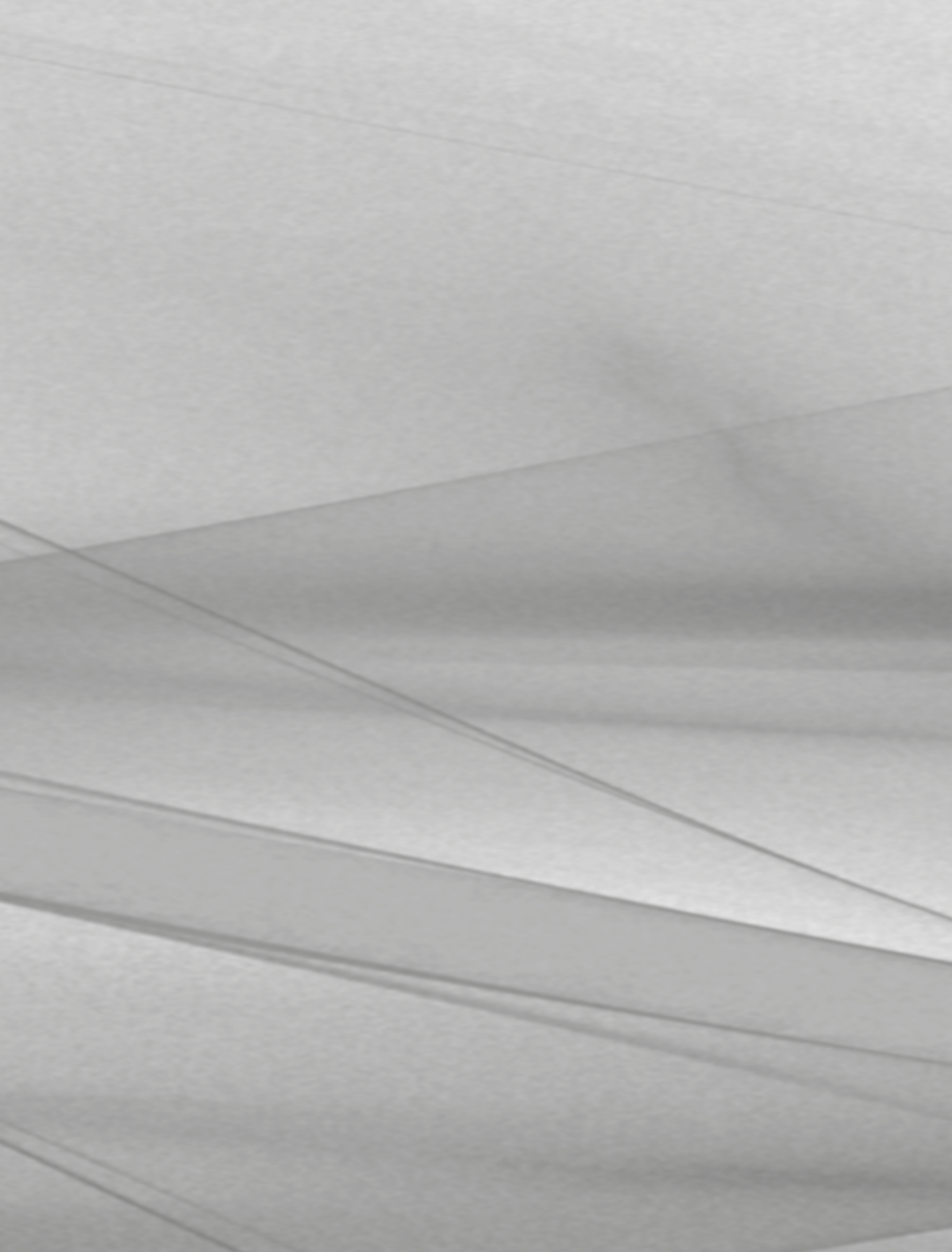
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1 R D REVIEW



The crisis of narratives is also the crisis of the subject in community

A crise das narrativas é também a crise do sujeito em comunidade

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ABSTRACT

This is a review of the book *The Crisis of Narration* by philosopher Byung-Chul Han. In this book, released in Portuguese, in 2023 by Editora Vozes, the author discusses the disappearance of authentic narratives in modernity. For Han, the excess of information that comes with digital platforms leads to an unbridled consumption of “narratives” on social media, a phenomenon that causes individuals to lose their sense of community and empathy with each other.

Keywords: Crisis of narration, digital platforms, storytelling

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RESUMO

Este texto é uma resenha do livro *A crise da narração* do filósofo Byung-Chul Han. Nesta obra, lançada em 2023 pela Editora Vozes, o autor discorre sobre o desaparecimento das narrativas autênticas na modernidade. Para Han, o excesso de informações que surge com as plataformas digitais ocasiona um consumo desenfreado de “narrativas” em mídias sociais, fenômeno que leva os indivíduos a perderem o senso de comunidade e de empatia entre si.

Palavras-chave: Crise da narração, plataformas digitais, storytelling



BYUNG-CHUL HAN IS a philosopher and writer known for his objectivity. He is direct, straight to the point, and, generally, seeks to develop various arguments and reflections around a central issue in his works. In *The Crisis of Narration*, published in Brazil in 2023, could not be different. Han begins the preface by attesting to a “narrative crisis” (p. 9), anchored precisely in a period in which narratives are constantly being evoked in the currently prevailing discourses.

Modern societies have lost the ability to narrate and create narratives that offer significance, meaning, and guidance, weakening the bonds between people and institutions. The crisis of narration reveals, for Han, a crisis in the sense of community. True narratives are capable of giving meaning to specific moments of daily life, to the days of the year, to the relationships between subjects and environments, filling these spheres of life with symbolic charge. Narratives are symbolic techniques that transform the “being-in-the-world” (individualized subject) into a “being-at-home” (subject in community). Thus, we also attest to the transformative capacity of narrations. Rituals are narrated because narrative has a transformative function.

So why do narrations undergo a crisis in modernity? For Han, modernity, marked by its open, borderline, and transparent aesthetics, prevents narratives from being strengthened, since narratives are essentially “forms of concluding and closing off” (p. 12). It is precisely for conferring outcomes that narratives are capable of creating meanings, which are consolidated in the narrative closing.

Following this perspective, narratives create stories, while the late modernity aesthetics is anchored in a punctual and fragmented temporal idea. For Han, the media contained in digital platforms are not narratives, as they are produced and publicized in a digital spatiality that privileges opening and dissolving much more than closing. In his perception, the *stories* of social networks are the perfect examples of this case. Thus the storytelling would be the capitalist appropriation of narratives. It submits the narratives to consumption, filling the brands, products, services, and people with libidinal energy to be engaged and discharged in the form of consumption. The storytelling can be seen as the technique that creates affective bonds between people and consumer objects. At a certain point, the author refers to storytelling as “*storyselling*.”

From these points, Han discusses for ten chapters the consequences of the crisis of narratives and how this crisis is closely linked to the economic and technological expansion experienced by humanity in the last century. The philosopher opens a discussion on how constant speculation of Capital on technological innovations, especially media and of daily life, have affected the ways in which subjects in the Western world understand identity, time, and space.

Han argues about how the crisis of narratives, also driven by capitalism and the advertising market in the creation of superficial narratives – storytelling – weakens all solid and secular institutions, creating a general feeling of distrust and discredibility in democracy, in political subjects, in the press, etc. Consumption degrades the utter functioning of democratic institutions, and it can only be “reverted” by the rescue of narratives as theoretical-methodological instruments, but also as community devices.

In “From Narration to Information,” Han explains that the modern newspaper reader has lost the ability to linger on the news. This reader seeks only information, rather than stories. At this point Han makes a first distinction between information and narration, since the latter is present in news that covers an event “from afar” – as distance is its distinguishing mark, which information lacks. He rescues the Walter Benjamin’s concept of “aura,” which would be the trail of something that appears in the distance. The aura allows the visualization of something, without letting it be fully touched, shown, or exposed. It retains a sense of mystery, curiosity, and doubt. Information does not have aura as it is too transparent, too bare, too direct. They are embodied as data to be viewed, consumed, and passed on in droves. If there is a narrative crisis due to the flood of information we have access to today, there is also a journalistic crisis.

This crisis caused by the flood of information is also a crisis of reality, as we now live in a moment in which we access and interfere in reality through data. Data is just information. More than that, we are constantly seduced and summoned to provide information about ourselves, our customs, habits, tastes, and political opinions on digital platforms through consumption. There is a new regime of power that emerges from this and operates, no longer by the repression of individuals, but by the absolute exploitation of their freedom and, above all, their freedom to consume.

Once again inspired by Benjamin and his essay *Experience and poverty*, Han follows up with the chapter “The Poverty of Experience” to explain how the crisis of narratives is also a crisis of experiences. But how? In his view, experiences are traditionally narrated and presuppose continuity to pass on certain wisdom or knowledge through narratives. In the lack of narratives, there is no wisdom, only problem-solving techniques (p. 33).

In the chapter “The Narrated Life,” Han shows how the idea of happiness is related to the idea of redemption, because both arise together in the closure of a marked historical time (a narrative/an experience). If we are constantly in contact with a current, punctual, and fragmented idea of time, we are not capable to give rise to happiness. Such atrophy of time in modernity

prevents the rescue of the past and causes the crisis of narratives. Here, the author resorts to Marcel Proust's ideas of muscular atrophy as well as Martin Heidegger's temporal atrophy.

These feelings of fragmented time and of being alone in the world, hallmarks of modernity, decentralize the subject in such a way that they can no longer claim a self-identity. No narrative makes sense to that subject. Without narrative anchoring and external guidance, the individual turns to itself and starts to give a greater emphasis to "the self." Temporal atrophy leads us to an inability to narrate our lives, further intensified by digital spatialities and temporalities, which, devoid of true narrative anchors and mediated almost entirely by information, allow the subject to access narratives only through consumption. On digital platforms, there is no narration, only the accumulation of information materialized in entertainment, media, products, and services.

A life without narration is also a "bare life," which is the title of the next chapter. In this segment, Han's argument is very close to the ideas found in his other books, such as *The Transparency Society* (2012) and *The Burnout Society* (2015). For the author, when narratives fail and are unable to provide significance and symbolic meaning for things, especially for objects, they become "bare" of significance, empty of meaning. Notice that narratives give the facts of life an almost undeniable meaning that gains more and more strength and meaning over the years with the practices of narration. In modernity, if things, events, situations, and objects lack meaning, we come to see and live a life increasingly poor of meanings. We search for meanings in the information and narratives of Capital, in the storytelling of digital platforms.

If there are no strong narratives that anchor us in the world, we turn to ourselves and begin an intense process of self-production. For Han, selfies and the practices of spectacularization of everyday life on social networks are examples of this. Modernity evokes a constant self-bareness, not only physical, but also financial, affective, cultural, sexual, etc. This transparency of information is completely opposed to the veiling and concealment essential for narration.

The excess of information leads to the computerization of the world, a stage of rationalization of humanity even more advanced than that described by Max Weber. For Han, the digitization of realities dissolves everything into data and information – which cannot be narrated, only calculated and explained. This causal relation becomes imperative and leads individuals to what he calls the "disenchantment of the world," the title of the fifth

chapter. We have lost the ability to be enchanted by things, to see magic and playfulness in the world. “Information is the endpoint of atrophied language” (Han, 2023, p. 84).

The excessive digitization of the world – disenchantment – also leads us to a continuous and progressive distancing from reality as it is. When we access the world only through smartphone screens and social media platforms, we come into contact with a reduced and cropped reality that can be easily put aside with a single click on the smartphone screen. Reality loses the ability to shock us, to affect us deeply – instead, we start to react with buttons of *like* or *dislike*. Reactions become mechanical, automatic, and devoid of a more critical and lasting reflection. For Han, this excessive digitization causes the sense of community to erode.

Without the possibility of coming together as a community, the neoliberal narrative of performance puts us in the position of “entrepreneur of his own self,” creating a feeling of competitiveness among all. A social cohesion to create a “We” is lacking and, instead, we sink into a narrative that constantly promotes the individual self-actualization of subjects. In an authentic narrative community there is no excessive and noisy communication, which is characteristic of the digital age. Instead, a quiet harmony that unites everyone in a feeling of empathy with others.

In “Theory as Narrative,” the author argues that theories must be essentially narrative. In a world increasingly taken over by Big Data, the processes of collecting, storing, and analyzing data are getting closer and closer to scientific studies. But, according to Han, Big Data does not explain anything, it only makes correlations between one piece of information and another. Theories, on the other hand, create conceptual connections between things, explain how and why they behave the way they do. They offer a closure that locks things into a conceptual framework. In this way, theories are very close to narratives.

In the following chapters, “Narrative as Healing” and “Narrative Community,” Han argues that the resumption of narratives can be the answer to a more empathetic and harmonious society, in tune with the needs of all. For him, the support of authentic narratives, such as psychoanalysis, the reduction of excessive consumption and the use of digital platforms can restore the sense of community in modern society. In this sense, it is also possible to infer that the academic and scientific community must act in this process. Scientists should avoid accessing knowledge through data, preferring theories. And if theories have the capacity to narrate, researchers can get involved in a movement that aims to restore authentic narratives for the strengthening of communities. ■

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The crisis of narratives is also the crisis of the subject
in community

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