


ABOUT CRITICISM, SELF-CRITICISM AND LEGITIMATION: the journalistic ethos in The Staple of News

SOBRE CRÍTICA, AUTOCRÍTICA E LEGITIMAÇÃO: o ethos jornalísticos em O Mercado de Notícias
SOBRE LA CRÍTICA, LA AUTO-CRÍTICA Y LA LEGITIMACION: el ethos periodístico en El Mercado de las Noticias

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ABSTRACT:

The article analyzes the dispositions, perceptions and values of journalists interviewed by Brazilian documentary "O Mercado de Notícias" ["The Staple of News"] (Jorge Furtado/2014/94 min). The analysis is based on the theoretical-conceptual framework of Pierre Bourdieu's sociological thinking. Some of the main excerpts from the testimonies of the 13 professional agents invited by the filmmaker are studied and categorized to explain their representations about the journalistic field.

KEYWORDS: Journalistic ethos; The Staple of News; Pierre Bourdieu.

Framing the debate

After leaving London, I returned to the newsroom of The Times. One of my first stories concerned a "homicidal maniac" who had scattered his victims' limbs under various doorsteps of the West Side. I wrote it up as if I were composing an ancient canard: "Un homme de 60 ans coupé en morceaux. . . . Détails horribles!!!" When I had finished the story, I noticed one of the graffiti scribbled on the walls of the pressroom in the headquarters of the Manhattan police: "All the news that fits we print." The writer meant that one can only get articles into the paper if there is enough space for them, but he might have been expressing a deeper truth: newspaper stories must fit cultural preconceptions of news. (Darnton 1990, p.96)

Modern journalism has its genesis and acquires its legitimacy as a prominent social institution from within a broader, all-encompassing plan, etched into Western history: the advent of the Enlightenment, an intellectual project shaped by the bourgeoisie in its consolidation as a dominant class between the 17th and 19th centuries. In this long journey of hegemonic ascension, the bourgeoisie established a

set of institutions responsible for consolidating a model of society whose impact lasts to this day in the form of modern democracy and “institutions correlated with it: market, public sphere, public opinion, opinion journalism” (Gomes, 2009, p. 72).

Historically, as one of the narratives etched in the context of modernity, journalism began to inculcate in its agents, journalists, a series of dispositions responsible for guiding their daily practices and representations; but also to be erected from them, in a dialectical process - a dynamic exemplified in fine detail by American historian Robert Darnton (1990) when reporting on the tacit norms shared by his colleagues in the writing of *The New York Times* in the 1960s. This process of incorporating “previous cultural conceptions” summarized by Darnton (1990) as a system of values shared among journalists, can be interpreted as the constitution of an *ethos*, an analytical-operational category here understood in the Bourdieusian sense, that is, it constitutes a set of dispositions, perceptions and practical values shared by the agents which guides both their self-image and their practices and representations (Thirty-Cherques, 2006; Peters, 2009; Lago, 2003; Bourdieu, 2019).

As Lago (2003) argues, when turning to the study of the romantic *ethos* in Brazilian journalism, that *ethos* is an analytical category that can be observed in different media and manifestations. Such is the case in this article, whose empirical objects are the testimonies of Brazilian journalists interviewed for “O Mercado de Notícias” (2014/94 min), an audiovisual documentary directed and scripted by filmmaker Jorge Furtado. The feature film includes statements from 13 professionals about journalism and its practices; it also includes a debate on the future of the profession. Not by chance, the documentary has as its guiding thread the homonymous play “The Staple of News”, written in 1626 by English playwright Ben Jonson (1572-1637)¹ - a contemporary text, therefore, to the beginnings of bourgeois revolutions. The play discusses the principles of journalism in the 17th century and dialogues through cinematic editing with the speech of social actors - journalists - invited to discuss the central object of the film, journalism itself.

Consequently, the choice of the object of this article and its pertinence are not accidental. The audiovisual production presents a complex reading of the journalistic field by bringing together different profiles of professionals, in terms of age, gender and professional affiliation, debating between the lines the discursive homogeneity

¹ Ben Jonson was an English playwright and poet who, according to the documentary's argument, was emblematic in Elizabethan theater.

consolidated through a heterogeneity of views on the profession. Therefore, it is analytically recognized that the suffix "ism" does not fit the goal of denouncement presented by the documentary, which - in the interface it establishes between dramaturgical aesthetics, the statements of journalists and the director's interventions - subtly projects to the foreground nuances of contradiction and complexity of the journalistic universe, without providing a reductionist strategy of "denouncement" or being exhaustive on the topic. Although the aesthetic richness of the confluence of languages worked by Furtado is recognized, for methodological purposes, it is to the scope of statements from professionals that this analysis turns.

From a structural point of view, the article is divided into three parts. Initially, the documentary "O Mercado de Notícias" is contextualized with the objective of explaining the argument, the plot and the details of the production that are dear to the analysis. Later, the thought of sociologist Pierre Bourdieu and his theoretical-methodological construct - the Theory of Practice - are sought after in order to provide the concept of *ethos*. This search is, from the beginning, anchored in the caveat that the sociology postulated by the French intellectual constitutes a complex system of thought, which, inadvertently, might result in the trivialization of its concepts if displaced from the theoretical matrix that generated them - "stripping them of their scientific operability, making them ineffective in helping to understand the phenomena they focus on" , as reiterated by Lago (2015, pp.728-729). Finally, the testimonies presented in the cinematographic production will be the ones under scrutiny.

As for methodological procedures, the testimonies contained in the documentary were edited out and, especially those most prominent to research goals², were categorized according to their arguments as used by the different agents; their homologies on views about journalism; their appeal to the field's historical discourse of self-legitimation; their mechanisms of critique; and their representations about the profession, either from journalists themselves or from the social world. Furthermore, three categories of analysis were mobilized in order to establish interfaces between the feature film and the construction of a professional *ethos*, namely: 1) journalism and the self-image of professional practice; 2) journalism and belief in facts; and 3) non-legitimized practices: anti-journalism.

² The criterium used to define which statements are prominent is to select excerpts from the documentary that converse with the research goals, that is, those in which journalists discuss their perceptions on journalism and the ways in which journalistic practice is executed.

O Mercado de Notícias: journalism at the crossroads of documentary and dramaturgy

In developing its central argument, the documentary “O Mercado de Notícias” discusses some of the main parameters that define the ways of being and thinking stemming from journalists, in addition to addressing the historical emergence of the printing press and its long-term role in the construction of public opinion. The background narrative of the production is the homonymous play, written by the English playwright Ben Jonson, who weaves an acid and humorous criticism about the beginning of journalistic activity in London, in the 17th century. The translation of the text into Portuguese, a work that took about three years, was done in an unprecedented way by the director of the film in partnership with translator Liziane Kugland. Due to the complexity of the editing, the process of constructing the feature film lasted eight years, a period which involved production and dramatization of the play, filming, editing and post-production. In the composition of the documentary, theatrical montage acts performed by 14 actors alternate with interviews with 13 Brazilian journalists of different generations, political opinions and individual and professional trajectories: Bob Fernandes, Cristiana Lôbo, Fernando Rodrigues, Geneton Moraes Neto, Jânio de Freitas, José Roberto de Toledo, Leandro Fortes, Luis Nassif, Maurício Dias, Mino Carta, Paulo Moreira Leite, Raimundo Pereira and Renata Lo Prete.

The theatrical montage plays a significant role in the construction of the documentary narrative, as it highlights, in a very particular aesthetic, a determining element in the feature film's argument: the transformation of information into commodity. In the plot, which takes place in the English capital in 1625, a man named Pila Pai simulates his own death and, disguised as a beggar, watches over his son, Pila Júnior, who became of age and began to squander the family fortune. Within this context, a novelty emerges in London: the birth of a News Market, which provides a great flow of prosaic information, leading Pila Júnior, in the middle of his wasteful routine, to get a job for his friend Tom. The father disapproves of the wasteful life that the son leads and decides to return, imposing on the proselyte the penalty of living in mendicancy. The text calls into question the characters' curiosity about the news, or, even more, the popular desire for news, especially those which are not based on any eventual “public interest”.

The idea of discussing journalism and the social importance of professional practice is evidenced by Jorge Furtado in the documentary's script, through which he

develops an initial defense of the activity, showing a parallel with the position of the agents interviewed in legitimizing the field:

(Scene: Furtado talks to the cast of the play, all seated in a circle)

Jorge Furtado: I didn't want to make a film against, I wanted to make a film in favor. So my thoughts went, I will not speak ill of bad journalists, let's call journalists that I respect, that I read, that I admire and see what they think the journalist profession is like, we are in a moment of total transformation in journalism.³

In this scenario, the encounter between the empirical object - the documentary "O Mercado de Notícias" - and the conception of ethos originated from Bourdieusian sociology allows for a reading between the lines not only of the specificity of Jorge Furtado's work, but - and above all - about the peculiarities of the social space structured by the microcosm of contemporary journalism in a scenario of profound changes in professional practice. Thus, it is understood that the Bourdieusian conception of ethos is articulated as an operational tool to understand the symbolic values shared among journalists in processes that refer back to the historical legitimation of professional activity, as well as to the sedimentation of arguments aimed at criticism, self-criticism and the intrinsic and extrinsic symbolic struggles of the profession in a scenario of structural changes in their practice.

Theory of Practice: theoretical-analytical elements from Pierre Bourdieu

This article's theoretical-methodological choice for the Bourdieusian ethos as an explanatory key was not random. Historically, the critical sociology arising from Pierre Bourdieu's thought is imprinted in the French intellectual field as an alternative for understanding the systems of classification, mechanisms of social reproduction and structures of domination that do not depend solely on economic capital to legitimize themselves. Bourdieu's operational concepts, in this sense, emerge from fundamental assumptions such as methodological rigor and the idea of reflexivity. Using terms from the French sociologist himself, his research mechanisms are understood as instruments that imply a rupture with common sense (Bourdieu, 2009) - that is, the Bourdieusian theoretical apparatus can be interpreted "as an analysis of the mechanisms of domination of modern societies, as a theory of social practices or, still, as an analysis of the production of ideas and symbolic systems" (Valle, 2007, p.117).

³ Quote by Jorge Furtado. Transcription excerpt: (04:03 - 04:19)

Throughout its extensive construction, Bourdieusian epistemology articulates, in order to overcome, some of the most notorious antinomies of Social Sciences: “individual against society, action against structure, freedom against need” (Valle, 2007, p. 120). In this scenario, the methodological approach developed by the author - reformulated, refined and discussed over the more than fifty years of his career - came to be called praxiological knowledge. In this process of intellectual maturation, Pierre Bourdieu began his striving to overcome two perspectives of investigation previously considered incompatible: subjectivism and objectivism, seeking to reintroduce agents in the structure and escape - without falling into the paradigm of rational calculation - the “Structuralist trap” that envisioned them as mere epiphenomena (Bourdieu, 2013; Valle, 2007; Lago, 2015).

The sociologist classifies himself in a paradigmatic junction as a constructivist structuralist. His belonging to the structuralist tradition is justified due to the fact that he discusses the objective structures, organizing dispositions and regularities in the practices of agents of the social space. In illustrative terms, this line of reasoning is evidenced in the author's reference to symbolic systems - language, culture, discourse - as structured structures (Bourdieu, 2009). Additionally, as can be observed in the arguments of Brazilian journalists in the documentary “O Mercado de Notícias”, the constructivist perspective refers to the subjective dispositions, the practical sense of the agents, who have perception and appreciation schemes that allow relative autonomy in the modes of action from within the constraints and needs of the social space (Bourdieu, 2009; 2013; 2015; Valle, 2007; Wacquant, 2007; Grenfell, 2018).

Key ideas from Pierre Bourdieu's thought are structured around a set of concepts - field, habitus and capital - entitled Theory of Practice. In this scenario, “field” constitutes an operational concept used in a Bourdieusian perspective to understand the different social universes anchored in the totality of the world. However, it is not a given reality, but a tool - a kind of starting point - for research development (Bourdieu, 2009). As it could not be otherwise, the key to understanding this study lies in the specificities of the journalistic field.

Moreover, a field, here understood as “a way of life, that is, a social space coupled with a symbolic system” (Miceli, 2003, p. 73), is composed of elements such as a symbolic set of signals, practices and representations of the world unconsciously incorporated and manifested from a habitus. Another structuring concept of the Theory of Practice, habitus is defined as a “mediating notion” (Wacquant, 2007, p. 66) that emerges as an understanding mechanism with which to “break with the duality of

common sense between individual and society by capturing the 'interiorization of exteriority and exteriorization of interiority' ". In a succinct way, habitus can be translated as a system of durable, incorporated dispositions, like "structured structures" predisposed to act as "structuring structures", which are established as matrices of perception and appreciation schemes of social agents - they guide, in this sense, practices and representations that can be objectively regulated and regular without necessarily being the result of obedience to explicit rules (Bourdieu, 2013; 2015).

In analytical terms, as explained by Thirty-Cherques (2006, p. 33), habitus has three other constitutive instances: ethos, héxis and eidos. An important concept and explanatory key for the unveiling of the journalistic field - the object of the present analysis -, the ethos consists of the moral dimension that guides the agents in their practical actions. Bourdieu (2013, p. 55) defines the concept literally as a "general and transposable disposition that, being the product of learning dominated by a certain type of objective regularities, designates 'reasonable' or 'absurd' conduct (madness) for any agent subjected to these regularities". Héxis, in turn, refers to the incorporated bodily dispositions. The dialectical relationship between the subjective dispositions of the agents and the objective structures of the fields derives from the fact that the habitus, in addition to acting on the cognitive structures and classification systems of the social world, also produces - in an articulated way - a set of states and body postures related to the durable dispositions of relationship with the body that "embody or 'somatize' historically specific properties of a social context" (Peters, 2009, p. 19). Finally, eidos concerns the actual cognitive dimension of habitus, that is, its perception schemes, "categorical ordering and interpretive understanding of worldly phenomena" (Peters, 2009, p. 19) by which everyday events are given meaning.

From a heuristic point of view, the separation between the three dimensions of the habitus can prove to be systematically useful. It is pertinent, however, to recognize that these are articulated dimensions and that they coexistently operate in the practices and representations of social agents (Thirty-Cherques, 2006; Peters, 2009; Bourdieu, 2013; 2018). Thus, understanding the ideas of field and habitus in a dialectical sense is of crucial relevance for understanding the modus operandi of Bourdieusian theory - here applied to the journalistic field. The field, as an analytical category, is responsible for structuring habitus as an operative notion. In contrast, the creative dimension of the habitus composes a structural predisposition of the field in a relationship of constant tension. Grenfell (2018, p. 89) emphasizes the importance of this link, since "practice is

not reducible to habitus - it is an emerging phenomenon in the relationships between the actors' habitus and their contextual social fields".

Connecting the aforementioned operative notions and fundamental concepts for understanding of material and symbolic disputes and the different forms of domination of the social world, the Bourdieusian idea of capital can be interpreted as a kind of "accumulated work", historically appropriated by agents or groups of agents, which enables them to appropriate social energy in its objectified or symbolic way. For Bourdieu (1997c, p. 15), the understanding of the structure and functioning of the social world depends on the reinsertion of the concept of capital in all its constitutive forms and "not only in the form recognized by economic theory". The sociologist thus expands the sphere of mercantile exchange and projects it towards "a broader anthropology of exchanges and cultural evaluations in which economic exchange is just one type" (Moore, 2018, p. 136). By this logic, each field has legitimate capital distributed unevenly among its agents.

While Pierre Bourdieu gives important weight to economic capital in his analyzes, the author recognizes that the possession of symbolic capital by certain agents to the detriment of others places them in different hierarchies in the social fields. It is not casually, therefore, that the 13 agents from the journalistic field mobilized by Jorge Furtado in "O Mercado de Notícias" are legitimized as exponents of "good journalism". In this scenario, even within the heterogeneity of the trajectories presented, the different forms of capital are responsible for structuring, along with the field, the habitus of their agents - a reflection that is essential for the empirical analysis of the statements of journalists throughout the documentary.

The professional ethos of journalists in the documentary “O Mercado de Notícias”

Considering the theoretical-conceptual framework exposed, the analysis of the elements of professional ethos is based on the interface between the statements of journalists present in the documentary “O Mercado de Notícias” and the Bourdieusian thought matrix. Based on empirical observation, the article aims to highlight elements that are shared by the agents, in addition to other peculiarities in the structuring of journalistic activity that are revealed in the concatenation of statements from the documentary. From a methodological perspective, three categories of analysis are set out, as follows:

1. Journalism and professional self-image

The first disposition expressed in the agents' testimonies concerns particular representations that they have of themselves. In general, in the dynamics that encompass their practice, journalists share symbolic elements responsible for identifying, constructing and subsequently characterizing, under the label of news, everyday events that are dissonant from a generally hegemonic and socially disseminated symbolic order (Silva, 2013). In this context, when questioned in “O Mercado de Notícias” about the kernel of the journalist profession, the interviewees - regardless of their position in the heterogeneity of the sample - claim themselves to be agents legitimately responsible for the selection, organization and construction of news from events present in the social world. Paulo Moreira Leite's argument when emphasizing that “journalism illuminates and forms consciences”⁴, for example, makes such a disposition evident.

Regarding selection criteria for news production, professionals do not go further - or are not willing to go further - into the specifics of their parameters. On the other hand, as expressed by José Roberto de Toledo, when placing the journalist in the position of being responsible for “separating the wheat from the chaff and preferably publishing the wheat and not the chaff”⁵, professionals limit themselves to defining succinctly the need to choose certain events to the detriment of others in everyday life. Hence, the avoidance – or difficulty – in expliciting the reasons for journalists choices

⁴ Quote by Paulo Moreira Leite. Transcription excerpt: (13:39-13:49).

⁵ Quote by José Roberto de Toledo. Transcription excerpt: (07:49-08:01).

and imprecision in the very definition of what news is become cognizable, as the following statements show:

*News is fundamentally what you don't know, isn't it?*⁶

*Every piece of news is an answer to a question.*⁷

*News is everything that someone somewhere tries to hide, the rest is propaganda*⁸

On the other hand, as in José Roberto de Toledo's example of the recognition that the concept of a reporter "has undergone a revolution"⁹, the agents explicit their awareness of the transformations affecting the profession. Added to this is the attempt to demarcate - to edify the margins of an institution which withholds the dissemination of public information, as stated by Bourdieu (1997) when dealing with the French journalistic field – of a symbolic space, which Brazilian professionals do in the field:

This is the advantage that we can provide. Because the piece of news: "COPON [Monetary Policy Committee] raised the interest rate by 0.25%, by 0.5% ... this is in the Central Bank's statement, it doesn't take much effort. Now what does that mean?"¹⁰

*Information is part of our job, we handle news processing. I think that the understanding of the journalist's work today is actually greater than it was because today we know exactly what we do. To put information on the internet, (...) "It's on fire here in the supermarket in my neighborhood", this is not journalism.*¹¹

Likewise, when asked about the changes brought by the Internet to the kernel of the profession, respondents are quick to demarcate the values that distinguish the symbolic production carried out by journalists at the expense of other sources of information offered in abundance by the logic of sociotechnical networks. From a Bourdieusian perspective it can be assumed that society inserts its constitutive mechanisms in people's lives in the form of "durable dispositions or trained capacities and structured propensities to think, feel and act"; mechanisms that, at the same time, guide people "in their creative responses to the constraints and demands of their existing social environment" (Wacquant, 2007, p.66). Thus, although habitus - and

⁶ Quote by Paulo Moreira Leite. Transcription excerpt: (11:35-11:37).

⁷ Quote by Maurício Dias. Transcription excerpt: (12:25-12:27).

⁸ Quote by Leandro Fortes. Transcription excerpt: (12:18-12:32)

⁹ Quote by José Roberto de Toledo. Transcription excerpt: (16:16-16:20).

¹⁰ Quote by Cristiana Lobo. Transcription excerpt: (16:37-16:51). Added emphasis

¹¹ Quote by Leandro Fortes. Transcription excerpt: (16:52-17:10). Added emphasis.

consequently ethos - constitutes a durable disposition, it is not shown to be static or perpetual; in other terms, given that it is a structured structuring structure (Bourdieu, 2009; 2013), its dispositions can be "corroded, contradicted or even dismantled by exposure to new external forces" (Wacquant, 2007, p. 67). Diving deep in the documentary makes it possible to verify a constant updating process that materializes - as exemplified in the agents' dispositions regarding the legitimacy of the journalistic field, regardless of the heterogeneity of their place of speech - into homogeneous self-defense and constant self-legitimation of the profession, whether in deontological terms or in a way directed to the new forms of mediation provided by information technologies.

2. Journalism and belief in facts

A second analyzed disposition is characterized by the domain of facts. Reference to the idea of a "reality constituted by facts" and a "factual truth" is recurrent in the arguments of journalists, as exemplified by the statement by Mino Carta:

The journalist, theoretically, offers readers, in my case I always think of readers, the opportunity to confront opinions, to ... listen to versions, and also to know what I call factual truth, in order to inform their own position in relation to the facts of life and the world..¹²

To problematize the universe of "facts" as a discourse to legitimize journalism, Jorge Furtado brings to the center of the cinematographic narrative cases selected by the Brazilian media that intend the modus operandi of the field and question some of its most expensive symbolic values - starting with the necessary belief in the factuality argument. One of the cases comically portrayed in the plot of the feature film is that of "Bolinha de Papel". In 2010, Brazilian media reported that then governor of São Paulo and presidential candidate, José Serra, had been submitted to a tomography after he was allegedly beaten by a group of leftist militants. However, five different television cameras presented by the filmmaker reveal that the politician was probably only hit by a small paperball - possibly from a security guard on his own team. In this context, urged to speak, the agents end up legitimizing, based on their dispositions, the manifestation of their practices based on the interpretations they grant to the case. Among the arguments, a very crystallized and shared symbolic value is established by

¹² Quote by Mino Carta: Transcription excerpt: (05:40-05:43).

professionals: attachment to factuality. This valuation - or *modus operandi* in reference to the practices - becomes apparent in responses from Leandro Fortes and Renata Lo Prete to the question "how sure should a journalist be before publishing a news story?":

100% [sure]. Otherwise, it is not journalistic information! This is a ... journalistic work handles that ... 100%.¹³

In principle 100% [sure], in reality it is more complicated than that, and it always involves some dose of gambling, in which sometimes you can stumble even acting on what you consider to be your best judgment.¹⁴

The idea of factuality is again emphasized by journalists at different points in the documentary. In other words, it is a point of view according to which a journalist must necessarily act in the search for "truths" that are verifiable in a phenomenal reality. Leandro Fortes argues:

It is our working tool, it is the fact, everything else, the language, the editing, it is flourish. Our... our basic element of work is factual truth.¹⁵

Entering the domain of "interpretation", Maurício Dias develops a parallel argument by recognizing the facts, but assuming that there are mediations responsible for the slanting of occurrences:

I don't believe that there is a brute fact of nature. "Take this fact there, collect it and such. Plant it! Ah, everything is interpretation."¹⁶

It is emphasized, therefore, that the factuality argument present in the speeches of the interviewed professionals integrates a broader historical discourse of journalism's self-legitimation practiced as a form of symbolic capital incorporated by the agents. For Pierre Bourdieu (1997; 2019), all social fields simultaneously possess structural homologies and particularities in the distribution of specific capitals. They are, therefore, spaces of force in which there are dominant and dominated, agents with greater or lesser autonomy, conflicts and concentrations of power in the dispute for the maintenance (orthodoxy) or subversion (heterodoxy) of the legitimate rules. The

¹³ Quote by Leandro Fortes. Transcription excerpt: (21:33-21:39).

¹⁴ Quote by Renata Lo Prete. Transcription excerpt: (21:43-21:59).

¹⁵ Quote by Leandro Fortes. Transcription excerpt: (01:06:31-01:06:42).

¹⁶ Quote by Maurício Dias. Transcription excerpt: (01:06:42-01:06:52).

properties of the field, in turn, are established by the specific habitus of their agents; by doxa (the consensual relationship, a set of shared beliefs); and nomos (the fundamental laws and principles of division that govern these social spaces).

Hence, the testimonies presented in the documentary are relevant for a reflection on the categories of perception of the social world built by the professional *ethos* of journalists. Although Jorge Furtado employs a work of European dramaturgy from the 17th century as a background narrative for the documentary, the contemporary vision of the agents chosen as representation of “respected journalists” - to use the terms of the filmmaker himself – refers back to some hegemonic paradigms - a kind of field orthodoxy - introduced in the Western model of journalism, especially from the end of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th century: the necessary belief in facts as a guarantee of journalistic reliability and the emergence of objectivity as a professional ideology (Schudson, 1978). They are, moreover, elements of a professional *ethos* that have not casually shown themselves to be present in the field's self-legitimation discourse in the face of contemporary crises of its credibility status (Träsel, Lisboa & Reis, 2018; Silva & Ibanhes, 2018) ¹⁷

3. Non-legitimized practices: anti-journalism

In addition to the aforementioned practices of “responsible journalism”, the debate presented in “*O Mercado de Notícias*” about possible news not prone to be of “public interest” - or, in terms of the film itself, the so-called “anti-journalism” - dialogues with the Bourdieusian concept of bus facts. For Pierre Bourdieu (1997a), in a reference to French journalism, bus facts support news that are not important for the collective interest, but that are disseminated frequently and eloquently by the journalistic field. The sociologist reiterates that the futility of the facts and the constant display on the news prevent the field from stopping, on the other hand, to address themes of “real social relevance”:

¹⁷ It is important to mention that the documentary, from 2014, predates the mass dissemination of contemporary strategies of disinformation called “fake news”, which constitute a distinctive landmark in the year 2016, following the electoral campaign of Donald Trump in the United States and the Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom. In analytical terms, this article stems from a previous research, concluded in 2017, which also predates the influence of disinformation strategies in the Brazilian presidential election of 2018 and its subsequent impact in the field of journalism (c.f. Pedro Neto, 2017). However one of the most pertinent elements of the documentary under scrutiny refers exactly to the ante-position of discussions which would gain ground in academia the following years.

Bus facts are facts that, as it is said, should not shock anyone, do not involve dispute, do not divide, form consensus, interest everyone, but in such a way that they do not touch on anything important. Variety news consists of this elementary, rudimentary kind of information that is very important because it interests everyone without consequences and because it takes time, time that could be used to say something else. [...] It is such that these futile things are in fact very important insofar as they hide precious things. (Bourdieu, 1997, p. 23).

In practical terms, the core of the argument presented in the statements of journalists in "*O Mercado de Notícias*" points to the existence of "bus facts" - as understood in the Bourdieusian typology - in the news from Brazil's political coverage; that is, they refer to the treatment - implicit or explicit - that political events receive from journalistic approaches not necessarily based on the "public interest". Pierre Bourdieu's reflection resonates in the critical statements of experienced journalists in the field - who therefore hold a consolidated cultural capital - such as Mino Carta and Geneton Moraes Neto. Explicitly, the journalists' statements express the field's awareness of their legitimation values, incorporated into *habitus* from an *ethos*, which contributes to building - in a deontological junction - the profession's self-defense:

So this aspiration [for the extraordinary] that meets a bombastic headline leads the journalist to value facts that do not deserve that headline.¹⁸

That gap that exists between the force of reality and reality transcribed later in the newspapers or on TV, there is often an abyss between these two things and this testifies against journalism and I would even say that it is a risk to the survival of journalism.¹⁹

The professional *ethos* manifests itself, therefore, as a principle responsible for structuring the agents' values, dispositions and representations and for guiding their conduct - or even as an element responsible for the agents' practical and evaluative premises and choices, derived from the social experience, but that do not correspond to the strict conception of ethics (Peters, 2009). Contradictorily, however, the standardization instituted in the journalistic field as "news criteria" historically contributes to events discussed in the public media space being more closely linked to the journalists' own worldview - or, even more severely, to the communication media owners' view - than to an eventual "collective interest" (Silva, 2013). It sounds interesting enough, therefore, that in the midst of yet another argument for self-

¹⁸ Quote by Mino Carta. Transcription excerpt: (52:47- 52:48).

¹⁹ Quote by Geneton Moraes Neto. Transcription excerpt: (52:49-53:07).

legitimizing practices, the documentary highlights this peculiar form of self-legitimation of agents under the aegis of “anti-journalism”.

Some possible considerations

As shown by the account of American historian Robert Darnton (1990) about his youth as a reporter exposed in the epigraph that opens the article, to recognize based on an empirical observation the shared symbolic values, the categories of thought, the customs and the ways of seeing the social world from the professional *ethos* of journalists allows for a broader understanding of the field's mechanisms of operation. Pierre Bourdieu's sociological thinking has served as a rich framework to support studies in the area of Theories of Journalism, since it provides theoretical and conceptual elements to think about the specificities of the media universe, its *modus operandi* and its intrinsic problems - or still, in the words of Darnton (1990, p. 96), its “previous cultural conceptions”.

In this scenario, applying the Bourdieusian concept of *ethos* based on categories of analysis taken from the documentary “*O Mercado de Notícias*”, constitutes a challenge due to the narrative peculiarities of the documentary's cinematic language. The interface between Pierre Bourdieu's *Theory of Practice* and Jorge Furtado's production, however, allows for some pertinent observations regarding the constitution of the journalistic field. The narrative options applied to the documentary, which includes testimonies from strategically selected journalists, the contemporary editing of a dramaturgical play from the 17th century and the precise interventions of the filmmaker, are too multifaceted to be exhausted in one article. However, they allow for a complex reading that exposes the contradictions of social agents in the complex game of cultural capital within the journalistic field.

The interviewed journalists show, in the analyzed testimonies, their strategies regarding technological changes and political disputes that have strained the legitimate rules shared by agents within the journalistic field. It is noticeable that, for them, the solution to the upheavals in the profession's deontological codes is based on the reaffirmation and legitimation of principles considered to be “good journalism”. Dispositions, in turn, are based on the journalists' self-image as socially legitimated agents for the construction of news based on the reliability of an investigation in the search for facts.

It is understood that, although variables of heterogeneity are found among the agents interviewed - such as gender, generational circumstances, differences in political

opinions and individual and professional trajectories - there is a good deal of homogeneity in matters tangible to the historical ways of doing and reflecting on journalistic practice. Thus, even in the scope of the dissimilarity of views on journalism presented by the interviewees and the documentary filmmaker (either by direct intervention or by cuts from the play), a cohesion of values can be identified that refer back to: a historical discourse of self-legitimation of the profession; a self-defense against extrinsic tension coming from the social world; and a constant self-criticism among peers (aversion to anti-journalism) - essential factors for understanding the contemporary crisis in symbolic contracts and in the status of journalism's credibility.

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RESUMO:

O artigo realiza uma análise das disposições, percepções e valores dos jornalistas entrevistados no documentário brasileiro "O Mercado de Notícias" (Jorge Furtado/2014/94 min). Volta-se, para tanto, ao arcabouço teórico-conceitual oriundo do pensamento sociológico de Pierre Bourdieu. São estudados a partir de categorizações alguns dos principais extratos dos depoimentos dos 13 agentes profissionais convidados pelo cineasta para explicar suas representações sobre o campo jornalístico.

PALAVRAS-CHAVES: Ethos jornalísticos; O Mercado de Notícias; Pierre Bourdieu.

RESUMEN:

El artículo analiza las disposiciones, percepciones y valores de los periodistas entrevistados en el documental brasileño "O Mercado de Notícias" ["El mercado de las noticias"] (Jorge Furtado/2014/94 min). El análisis se basa, por lo tanto, en el marco teórico-conceptual del pensamiento sociológico de Pierre Bourdieu. Sobre la base de categorizaciones, se estudian algunos de los principales extractos de los testimonios de los 13 agentes profesionales invitados por el cineasta para explicar sus representaciones sobre el campo periodístico.

PALABRAS-CLAVES: Ethos periodístico; El Mercado de las Noticias; Pierre Bourdieu.