


## INNOVATION AND SUSTAINABILITY IN NEW ECONOMIC JOURNALISTIC ARRANGEMENTS IN SANTA CATARINA

INOVAÇÃO E SUSTENTABILIDADE EM NOVOS ARRANJOS ECONÔMICOS JORNALÍSTICOS DE SANTA CATARINA  
INNOVACIÓN Y SOSTENIBILIDAD EN NUEVOS PROYECTOS ECONÓMICOS PERIODÍSTICOS EN SANTA CATARINA

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### ABSTRACT

This paper investigates 20 digital native news arrangements in Santa Catarina. The exploratory research aims to find elements on how these arrangements perceive themselves as innovative or not, and how this is strained by the ways in which these initiatives are financed. Results show that part of the researched arrangements can be considered innovative as they are settled down in news deserts and, therefore, meet an information shortage for local populations. On the other hand, economic weaknesses can limit and jeopardize the useful life of these organizations.

**KEYWORDS:** Economic journalistic arrangements; Innovation in journalism; Financial sustainability.

## Introduction

Whether to fill new market niches, open new working spaces for journalists outside the traditional media, or fill informational voids in news deserts, a profusion of journalistic initiatives have breathed new life into the Brazilian media ecosystem in recent years. Usually small to medium-sized, these groups are faced with an impasse: the possibility of innovating in different areas of journalism and the difficulty of putting what they want into practice, especially due to financial limitations. Within this scenario, this paper investigates how innovation is understood by 20 journalistic arrangements in Santa Catarina, organized according to their different levels of income and sustainability.

The results presented here are part of a larger investigation whose pilot study was conducted by the Communication & Labor Research Center (CPCT), under the

coordination by Professor Roseli Figaro, at the University of São Paulo (USP). Published in 2018, the report identified, through exploratory research, 170 Brazilian arrangements, and analyzed 70 originating from the metropolitan region of São Paulo area. The work conducted focus groups with a sample of the arrangements to discuss broader issues regarding the crisis in journalism and the profession's financing, among other topics.

The study conducted in São Paulo was replicated in other Brazilian states to analyze how journalistic arrangements work in different locations<sup>1</sup>. In Santa Catarina, the team of researchers - two of whom have authored this article<sup>2</sup> – began the investigation stage in early 2020, based on CPCT's methodological protocol. The results of the exploratory phase partially integrate this research<sup>3</sup>, focusing on two categories of analysis: innovation and sustainability.

It is in our interest to observe which aspects of innovating are recovered by the arrangements when they reflect on their own work, and in what way the groups' financial situation can shape this practice. There is not necessarily a causal relationship between the two categories (the lower the income, the "less" innovation, for example), since the study methodology does not allow making such inferences. However, hints are given on how they may be intertwined, according to the data obtained through the interviewees' answers. We compared the analysis with different typologies of the concept of media innovation, which encompasses aspects ranging from production, distribution, and consumption to organizational, social, and business-model changes in journalism (BLEYEN et al., 2014; DOGRUEL, 2014; FLORES, 2017). We also considered the political and economic conformations that structure the journalism field itself and have an impact on innovation processes (FRANCISCATO; SILVA, 2020).

Beforehand, it is important to define what we mean by "new economic arrangements of a journalist's work": these are initiatives that range from micro and small businesses to non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, collectives, or any other groups of communication and journalism workers (FIGARO, 2018, p. 19-20). The emphasis on the organizational model, rather than on the qualifiers that are usually attributed to these groups (such as "alternative" or "independent"), avoids classifying

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<sup>1</sup> This is the case of Ceará, which published a report with general data from the research (Costa et al., 2020). Researchers from Amapá, Minas Gerais, Goiás, Rio Grande do Norte, and Tocantins are also involved in studies on arrangements in their regions.

<sup>2</sup> In addition to Dairan Paul and Natasha Ramos, the Santa Catarina phase of the project also includes doctoral students Andressa Kikuti and Suelyn da Luz, master's student Jefferson Sousa, and professor Jacques Mick. We take this opportunity to thank doctoral student Rafael Venuto, who participated in the initial stage of the study involving data collection. All researchers are affiliated with the Graduate Program in Journalism at the Federal University of Santa Catarina (PPGJOR/UFSC).

<sup>3</sup> The overall research results are condensed in an article submitted to another scientific journal to be published in August 2021.

them in advance by means of relational concepts. However, to better delimit the arrangements, Figaro (2018) considers that they could represent an employability alternative for journalists, being also committed "to the democratization of the communication media and to society".

The general characteristics found in São Paulo state's arrangements (2018) include: 1) the predominance of young journalists; 2) the digital native nature; 3) coverage performed in conjunction with other arrangements; 4) preponderant, but non-homogenous, adherence to progressive values, in dispute with further adherence to individualistic and entrepreneurial values; 5) volunteer work as the rule, rather than the exception. CPCT researchers concluded that the greatest challenge for the arrangements lies in finding sustainable forms of financing that extend their useful lives.

There is a fragile economic scenario that drives different acts of "arranging themselves" in the groups' daily routine. From the perspective of ergology - which assumes work as necessarily creative and innovative action -, these are strategies and solutions created to cope with day-to-day work, renormalizing the norm and prescription (SCHWARTZ, 2000). An illustrative case of "arranging oneself" is that of the "virtual newsrooms" researched by Silva (2019, p. 121). Unable to rent a physical space due to lack of funds, journalists from São Paulo-based arrangements have created groups on instant messaging applications. It is not only a way to organize work, says the author, "but also a place where innovations in journalistic practices take place", with the potential to configure "new attributions and roles in the virtual newsroom". On the other hand, the frequent use of applications makes professionals increasingly dependent on technologies, dissolves fixed workdays and intensifies them, diluting time divisions<sup>4</sup>.

In this regard, arrangements linked to hyperlocal coverage or to specific causes may even embody "the spirits of innovation and transgression" (CHRISTOFOLETTI, 2019, p. 82), but this does not mean that their mere existence will solve the crisis of journalism. As previous studies have pointed out, the neoliberal context of labor flexibilization contradicts collective organization models, such as cooperatives (GROHMANN, 2020), hinders technical and aesthetic advances in collectives (ABREU, 2019), maintains the demand for multitasking professionals (SILVA, 2019), and does not necessarily break with the hierarchy of traditional newsrooms (SILVA, 2017). In a rather unstable economic environment, isolated funding actions (such as donations, subscriptions, or fundraising

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<sup>4</sup> If this feature was previously restricted to arrangements that adopted virtual newsrooms, the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic brought the same effects to traditional newspaper workers, who began to incorporate the use of instant messengers with more intensity (Figaro, 2020).

campaigns) do not always reverse the useful and not very perennial life of these arrangements (CHRISTOFOLETTI, 2019).

Thus, this article is organized in three parts. In the first, we present different perspectives on the innovation studies applied to journalism, problematizing the concept and adherence to the field. Next, we explain the methodological steps of the research and discuss the data from 20 new journalistic economic arrangements in Santa Catarina, focusing on the groups' financial sustainability with what they consider to be innovative in their work.

### **Innovation in Journalism**

Finding a definition for innovation in journalism is not an easy task. Whatever the view adopted by different authors, the particularities of the field must be taken into consideration, that is, the perishable and cultural nature of the media product, the creative nature of the profession, the organizational structure of news companies, and their social role. "Media innovations contribute to processes of economic and social change and, therefore, encompass features of both economic and social innovations" (DOGRUEL, 2014, p. 19).

Thus, the concept of innovation, borrowed from other fields such as economics and administration, needs adaptations to be used for media products due to their specificities. Also, because the act of innovating takes place in a field of disputes, as Franciscato and Silva (2020) remind us, since political and economic agents influence and structure the processes of innovation in journalism and, more generally, in the media industry. In this respect, there are scenarios and contexts that are more favorable than others for innovation. Such interpretation seeks to get rid of discursive formulas that attribute to the individual an intrinsic "innovative" or "entrepreneurial spirit" (GROHMANN, 2017), as if mere voluntarism on the part of an agent would be enough to put any innovative acts into practice.

Based on theoretical frameworks from the fields of Social Sciences and Humanities, particularly Communication and Philosophy, Rossetti (2013) shows that the idea of innovation is not a new idea which arises due to technology. In fact, the idea of innovation goes back as far as Aristotle, and the notion of change is contained in it. The author proposes categories of innovation linked to what she calls the effect or the act of innovation. As an effect, "innovation indicates the new product itself and concerns both the new thing that arises from the act of innovating and the subject that innovates"; as an act, "in innovation, the process or action that generates the new and concerns the

action of innovating, the action of making new or renewing is privileged" (ROSSETTI, 2013, p. 65).

Storsul and Krumsvik (2013) corroborate the idea of innovation as change presented by Rossetti (2013), but while the latter approaches innovation as an effect or an act, the former think of media innovation from dimensions of change. Adapting Francis and Bessant's (2005) 4 Ps of innovation, Storsul and Krumsvik (2013, p. 16-17) establish four dimensions of innovation in the media context, namely: 1) product (creation or improvement of a new product), 2) process (new methods around news work, whether internal or external to the newsroom), 3) position (how the product is positioned or framed), and 4) paradigmatic (which includes changes in an organization's mindset, values, and business models). In addition to these, because according to the authors the 4 Ps are unable to classify all media innovations, they have added a fifth dimension of change: social innovation. "The innovative use of media and communication services for social purposes does not necessarily imply new products or services but could also concern using existing services or products creatively to promote social objectives" (STORSUL; KRUMSVIK, 2013, p. 17).

In a complementary view, Lindmark et al. (2013, p. 131) state that media innovations should be categorized under: 1) content (innovations in the message itself or in a new narrative form), 2) consumption (new ways of consuming content), 3) production and distribution (changes in how to produce, reproduce, distribute or display content) and 4) business model (new business models, including new ways of organizing the industry). Considering the two perspectives on media innovation, it is possible to draw a parallel, in which the categories "content" and "consumption" relate to the "product" dimension; "production and distribution", to "process"; and "business model", to "paradigmatic" (NUNES; CANAVILHAS, 2020).

In his typologies stemming from innovation journalism, Flores (2017, p. 170) describes three of them that somehow relate to the dimensions and categorizations described by the authors cited above: 1) content and narrative, 2) technology and format, and 3) business model. Categories 1) and 2) have a greater identification directly linked to journalism products, while category 3) relates more closely to the journalism production process. Thus, these typologies, dimensions, and categories indicate that media innovations encompass not only new content or technological products, but also organizational and social changes, new services, and new business models.

From economic, managerial, and historical perspectives, Dogruel (2014, p. 24) analyzes the characteristics of media innovations and classifies them into eight attributes

(Chart 1) that frame them as distinct types of innovation, “both as objects of research and with respect to their development process”.

**Chart 1** Characteristics of media innovation.

	Media innovations as research objects		Media innovations as processes
1	Continuous need for novelty	5	Interconnection of the innovation and diffusion/ appropriation phases
2	Media innovations as high-risk products and processes Limited predictability of media innovation	6	Media innovation processes require a long period of time
3	Close interaction between intangible (creative) and technological/organizational aspects	7	Close interactions between media innovation and established media
4	Overlapping media innovations as product and process	8	Media innovations contribute to processes of economic and social change and satisfy the attributes of both economic and social innovation

Source: Dogruel (2014, p. 15).

The following are also analyzed, by the author, as distinctive attributes of media innovations:

The interactions of media innovations with pre-existing media (e.g., convergence/intermedia processes), the importance of user involvement, the classification of innovations both as product innovations and as social and economic innovation processes [...] (DOGRUEL, 2014, p. 24).

For the author, it is essential to analyze the processes of media innovation from a specific viewpoint that considers the field’s needs. Similarly, Bleyen et al. (2014) argue that one of the distinguishing points of innovation in the journalism industry is the change in content, a point that is little or not discussed in the literature on the concept coming from other fields. “[...] traditional definitions (and indicators) overlook creative activities that lead to aesthetic, educational and entertainment renewal” (p. 32).

Within this perspective, the authors present a typology of media innovations (Table 1) that considers the interdependence between process, product, content, organization, and technology. One of the differentials of this typology - also pointed out by Dogruel (2014) - is the importance of the consumption and media category, which is placed between process and product. According to the authors, the idea of this category is, on one hand, to observe how a product is placed on the market for the public and, on the other, how the public interacts and experiences the product received. Nowadays, the

involvement of users is of paramount importance when it comes to media innovations, especially in journalism, considering the current digital context of disruptive innovations (CHRISTENSEN, 2011), in which readers have taken a much more active role than before.

**Chart 2** Typology of media innovations.

Process			Product	
Business model	Production and distribution	Consumption and media	Form	Nucleus
A new feature of a business model, including a new organization of an industry	A new way to create, produce, reproduce, distribute, or commercialize a content	A new way to consume a related content or service	A new stylistic resource	A new topic or message

Source: Bleyen et al. (2014).

To survive in such a market of radical changes, media companies need to innovate in their products, processes, positioning, and paradigms. Not by chance, these organizations are increasingly engaged in the search for sustainable business models for online services (STORSUL; KRUMSVIK, 2013). According to Küng (2015, apud CASERO-RIPOLLÉS; MARCOS-GARCÍA; ALONSO-MUÑOZ, 2020), discovering and seizing opportunities and developing new products and services are two pillars of innovation that apply to journalism. It is not so much a matter of incorporating digital technology into news production, but of using it creatively and efficiently to renew journalistic content (JARVIS, 2014).

### **Data on the new journalistic economic arrangements in Santa Catarina**

As is the case with the pilot research conducted by Figaro (2018) and replicated by Costa et al. (2020) in the context of Ceará, this is exploratory research (Gil, 2008). We sought a general diagnosis by grouping as many elements as possible in order to characterize the empirical object studied, thus composing a sample that will be later further explored.

Following the CPCT methodological protocol, we adapted the snowball technique to identify the first arrangements in the state of Santa Catarina. Initially, the project's researchers contacted coordinators of journalism programs in the most populous cities

in the state<sup>5</sup>, so that they could indicate organizations that were possibly characterized as new arrangements. The second stage complemented the data through a form created on Google Forms, which was published both in the researchers' personal profiles and in the official channels of the Graduate Program in Journalism at UFSC. This document requested more suggestions for journalistic arrangements in the state. After identifying them, information available on the arrangements' websites and social media was collected to fill in the categories already established in the CPCT study. As not all data were readily available, it was necessary to contact the persons responsible for the arrangements, both to obtain information and to confirm possible inaccuracies in the findings on the websites and other digital platforms for these initiatives.

As stated, this article focused on five information categories obtained in the project on arrangements in Santa Catarina: 1) Do professionals consider themselves innovative? 2) Do professionals consider themselves entrepreneurs? 3) How are the arrangements supported? / What is their source of funding? 4) What is the arrangements' income? 6) What is the arrangements' legal status?<sup>6</sup>

The 20 journalistic arrangements from Santa Catarina investigated here are divided among ten cities in the inner state region and in the capital. Twelve operate in Florianópolis: *Desacato*<sup>7</sup> (since 2007), *Catarina Lab*<sup>8</sup> (2018), *Cientista que virou mãe*<sup>9</sup> (2009), *Floripa Centro*<sup>10</sup> (2019), *Folha da Cidade*<sup>11</sup> (2020), *Jornal do Veneno*<sup>12</sup> (2020), *Maruim*<sup>13</sup> (2014), *Portal Catarinas*<sup>14</sup> (2016), *Repórter Popular*<sup>15</sup> (2007), *Subversiv@s*<sup>16</sup> (no foundation date available), *Tribuna Universitária*<sup>17</sup> (2019) and *UFSC à Esquerda*<sup>18</sup> (2013). The others are from various cities in inner Santa Catarina state: *Economia SC*<sup>19</sup> (2019),

<sup>5</sup> Besides the capital city, Florianópolis, 12 other cities in Santa Catarina with more than 100 thousand inhabitants were listed: Joinville, Blumenau, São José, Chapecó, Itajaí, Criciúma, Jaraguá do Sul, Palhoça, Lages, Balneário Camboriú, Brusque, and Tubarão.

<sup>6</sup> The other study categories included: contact data (website/platform, e-mail, social media, headquarters address, and person in charge), whether they were journalism producers, whether they were journalists, the introductory text, self-denomination, whether they were collectives, how long they had existed, whether they were linked to social, political, cultural, or religious movements, a defined public, periodicity, and whether they were active in other activities besides the arrangement.

<sup>7</sup> Available at: <http://desacato.info>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>8</sup> Available at: <https://catarinalab.com>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Available at: <http://www.cientistaqueviroumae.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>10</sup> Available at: <https://floripacentro.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>11</sup> Available at: <https://folhacidade.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>12</sup> Available at: <http://comidasaudavelpratodos.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>13</sup> Available at: <http://maruim.org>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>14</sup> Available at: <http://catarinas.info>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>15</sup> Available at: <http://reporterpopular.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>16</sup> The arrangement's first publication dates from 2006, but there is no mention of its founding date in the website presentation. Available at: <http://subversivos.libertar.org>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>17</sup> Available at: <https://tribunauniversitaria.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>18</sup> Available at: <https://ufscasquerda.com>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>19</sup> Available at: <https://www.economiasc.com>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.



from Blumenau; *Artemísia*<sup>20</sup> (2019), from Chapecó; *Tabelando*<sup>21</sup> (2017), from Criciúma; *Folha Norte*<sup>22</sup> (2019), operating in Garuva, Itapoá, São Francisco do Sul, Araquari and Campo Alegre; *O Mirante*<sup>23</sup> (2017), from Joinville; *Diversar*<sup>24</sup>, from Itajaí; *Portal Ponte Notícias*<sup>25</sup> (2018), operating in Mafra and Rio Negro; and *Estopim*<sup>26</sup> (2011), from Palhoça.

During data collection, which took place in the first half of 2020, the *Diversar* arrangement had paused its activities due to the sanitary crisis. The website was updated again in February 2021. Besides it, only *Estopim* had permanently suspended work, since December 2019 - despite this, it was included in the sample because it is part of the state's media ecosystem, and also because it is part of the arrangements' very ephemeral nature, as previous research has attested (Figaro, 2018; Deuze; Witschge, 2020). Two of the arrangements (*UFSC à Esquerda* and *Jornal do Veneno*) did not respond to the second-phase contact via email; therefore, the data obtained for this article refers exclusively to what was collected on their websites and social media.

### Self-perceptions of innovation and entrepreneurship in the arrangements

As previously discussed, the meanings of innovation are not detached from political and economic dimensions (DOGRUEL, 2014; ROSSETI, 2013). The media's concentration and oligopoly, or the relationship of agents with the fields of education, civil society and government, for example, are fields that structure and can affect the processes of innovation in journalism (FRANCISCISCATO; SILVA, 2020). Such considerations help in the reflection on the respondents' answers, as they draw attention to the context in which the participants are placed.

Thus, we can understand some of the elements that emerge in the arrangements' answers when asked if they consider their work innovative. Six (30%) representatives answered the question negatively, 12 (60%) answered affirmatively, and three (*Floriipa Centro*, *Catarina Lab*, and *Portal Catarinas*) did not specify why they considered themselves innovative.

Among those who responded affirmatively, four made direct mention between innovation and local journalism. Given the scarcity of vehicles in the vicinity, the mere

<sup>20</sup> Available at: <https://revistaartemisias.com>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>21</sup> The arrangement concentrates most of its activities on Facebook, although there is a *Tabelando's* editorial on a partner's website: <http://www.engeplus.com.br/editoria/tabelando>. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/tabelandoec>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>22</sup> Available at: <http://www.folhanortesc.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>23</sup> Available at: <https://omirantejoinville.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>24</sup> Available at: <http://diversar.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>25</sup> Available at: <http://portalponte.com.br>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

<sup>26</sup> *Estopim* is the only arrangement surveyed that is no longer active. Its website is offline, but it still maintains a Facebook profile. Available at: <https://www.facebook.com/estopim.coletivo>. Retrieved on: April 13, 2021.

existence of a journalistic arrangement was already considered innovative by the respondents. This is the case of *Folha Norte*, which stated: "For a big city, it would not be an innovation. But since we operate in small municipalities, where, many times, there are no trained journalists, information quality is an innovative issue".

Another example is *Artemísia*, which does not consider itself innovative, but "a novelty", because, in the region, "cultural journalism is rarely produced"<sup>27</sup>. The same association is repeated in the answers given by *O Mirante* ("We do nothing different from traditional journalism. However, we consider ourselves innovative in journalism in the city of Joinville") and *Portal Ponte Notícia* ("For the region, innovation is not depending directly on articles sent by press agencies"). From these statements, it is possible to understand that what the arrangements produce has an "innovation effect that is present in the subject" – "when innovation is in the subject, the theoretical focus or social appropriation may be new" (ROSSETI, 2013, p. 65).

Among the other arrangements that answered affirmatively, innovation is associated with content format or presentation (*Desacato* and *Tabelando*) -, being, therefore, linked to the "product-innovation dimension" (STORSUL; KRUMSVIK, 2013) -, to the arrangement's specialization (*Economia SC*) and the formation of an alternative identity (*Estopim*) - both related to the paradigmatic dimension discussed by Storsul and Krumsvik (2013) -, and, finally, to the collaborative work with other independent media (*Folha da Cidade*), which would be aligned with the social dimension of innovation (STORSUL; KRUMSVIK, 2013).

In the CPCT's and PraxisJor's studies, the data on innovation were also obtained from the arrangements' self-declarations. We consider that this does not allow a direct comparison with the responding initiatives from Santa Catarina, both because of the methodology and the limited space to be considered in the arrangements' presentation texts. However, the low visibility of the concept observed in two studies mentioned is an indicative fact. Of the 70 arrangements in São Paulo state, 90% (63) do not mention "innovation". The same thing occurs in Ceará, where 85.7% of the arrangements do not make references to either innovation or entrepreneurship (COSTA et al., 2020).

Until then, the innovation suggested by part of Santa Catarina's arrangements seems tied to their work in a context of a "news desert", that is, of information scarcity. Therefore, these arrangements' innovative character lies in the idea of change discussed by Rossetti (2013) and Storsul and Krumsvik (2013): it represents a novelty, an additional

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<sup>27</sup> Because it is common in studies in the field (ROSSETI, 2013), we consider the association made between "innovation" and "novelty" by *Artemísia* to be affirmative.

vehicle in the journalistic ecosystem, and it is mainly related to the economic and social context in which they are engaged.

In this respect, innovation stems more from the idea of “arranging oneself” as a result of creative and imaginative human activity, according to the ergologic approach (SCHWARTZ, 2000). However, from other authors’ point of view (STORSUL; KRUMSVIK, 2013; LINDMARK et al., 2013; FLORES, 2017; DOGRUEL, 2014; BLEYEN et al., 2014), it would be appropriate to analyze whether the arrangements’ product is also innovative because, even if they do not mention innovation associated with what they produce, this does not mean that, in fact, their products are not innovative to some extent.

Combined with the idea of a “news desert” and “information scarcity”, it is also noticeable that, in the respondents’ answers, innovation is associated with their location, with the territoriality mark. This result had already been pointed out in the self-definitions by Ceará’s arrangements, which also showed a strong link to regionalism. In the case of the groups studied in São Paulo, the arrangements’ identity appears more strongly associated with the suburbs. In Santa Catarina’s arrangements, the innovation associated with “novelty”, as *Artemísia* Magazine responded, concerns the idea of providing information in geographical contexts of low supply as well as the valorization of the location, such as the *Diversar* arrangement, which states that it prioritizes the cultural agenda of artists from the city of Itajaí, in the absence of a journalism that can provide for such an editorial. This proximity to communities can be understood as a strategy to link the arrangements to their target audience, a journalistic purpose advocated by authors such as Jarvis (2014).

However, as Jerónimo, Correia and Gradim (2020) point out, normatively approaching community journalism as a “mission” of journalism can make one lose sight of the concreteness and material conditions that make the journalistic practice possible. As the authors conclude, based on a study in Portugal, the lack of willingness to engage journalists with communities is not always a mere voluntary issue concerning professionals, but rather a question of available resources to practice journalism. For this reason, the survey presented here also sought to discuss aspects related to the arrangements’ financial sustainability, identifying possible elements that provide clues for understanding how the groups’ innovation is limited or driven by their financial aspects.

Of the 20 arrangements in Santa Catarina, ten (50%) responded that they considered themselves to be entrepreneurs. Of the other half, six (30%) did not regard themselves as entrepreneurs, and four (20%) did not answer this question. This finding contrasts with the context in São Paulo, where 65 arrangements (92.8%) did not identify

themselves as entrepreneurs (Figaro, 2018). Santa Catarina also diverges from Ceará's results, in which most initiatives (85.7%) did not describe themselves as entrepreneurial and/or innovative (Costa et al., 2020).

The identifications with entrepreneurship in Santa Catarina's arrangements showed various answers:

"We [are] not necessarily entrepreneurs, but it is a fact that we undertake something" (*Catarinas Portal*).

"Yes, I had been planning economiasc.com for months before I officially launched it. Maycon [another founder] has undertaken other companies" (*Economia SC*).

"In terms of investing working time, money, and an idea applied as a business, yes, [the arrangement] has that entrepreneurial spirit. But I don't think I have a very good nose for it" (*Diversar*).

"The question of entrepreneurship is important to mention. We now have subscribers, until then, we did not. And this is important because we have the newspaper's bills, the domain, the corporate taxes, and expenses to produce the reports (transportation). The newspaper offers products to the population, such as native advertising, advertorials, banners" (*Folha Norte SC*).

"Although we see the work as a type of mission, and we set out to do it with a very low prospect of financial success, we see it as a business. We have a product, we have an audience, and we have suppliers. So, turning this small business into a sustainable one, one that pays wages and reaches new markets, is something we want and work for. To that extent, yes, we are entrepreneurs" (*O Mirante*).

We observed that the idea of entrepreneurship often appears associated with the issue of financing the arrangement. The goal of achieving sustainability and the possibility of, thereby, increasing dedication to the arrangement prevailed among the answers. Thus, contrarily to the romanticized vision of an entrepreneur as a figure who carries in himself heroic elements (SCHUMPETER, 1961; 1997), the entrepreneurship engendered by these actors would be born out of necessity, in search of financial sustainability, which coincides with the objective of remuneration for the work dedicated to the initiative in question.

Another relation with entrepreneurship occurs in the statement of their legal statuses. Of the total, 11 (55%) reported having the National Registry of Legal Entities (CNPJ), with six (30%) being individual micro entrepreneurs (MEI); two (10%) being companies; one (5%), an association; one (5%), a cooperative; and one (5%), a non-profit organization. Of the other nine arrangements, four (20%) did not have a declared legal status, and five (25%) did not answer. Among those that reported not having a legal status is *Folha da Cidade*, which claimed to make its subscription campaign possible through a partnership with *Associação Coletivo de Jornalismo Maruim*.

The significant number of arrangements that reported being an MEI in Santa Catarina indicates the connection of such a legal status with freelance work, or other types of service provision. *O Mirante* stated that “one of the journalists was an MEI and would issue invoices for the newspaper, but this was never necessary”. According to the initiative, “after the pandemic, the goal is to establish a microenterprise, with the admission of a new partner.

The number of MEIs in the sample also points to what Dardot and Laval (2016) call the “enterprise-man” and to the fact that journalists are increasingly “called upon to embrace and incorporate an ‘entrepreneurial’ mindset, where each individual becomes a self-directed brand or company” (DEUZE; WITSCHGE, 2016, p. 9).

### Financing and sustainability

The data on the arrangements’ forms of support were obtained through two complementary questions: “How do you support yourselves?” and “What are your funding sources?”. The majority, 13 (65%), reported having at least one funding source, although it was not constant. Of the other seven arrangements, four (20%) did not respond and three (15%) reported having no funding sources at the time of the study. Of those with no sources of revenue, *Artemisia Magazine* informed that it intended to raise collective funding, but, for the moment, support came from its “own resources”.

**Table 1** Number of income sources of Santa Catarina’s arrangements.

Have one source or more	Do not have income sources	Did not answer
13 (65%) of the arrangements	03 (15%) of the arrangements	04 (20%) of the arrangements

Source: designed by the authors.

*Estopim* claimed to have tested fundraising campaigns through social media and friends, “without many results”. *Diversar* replied that there was no income raised from March to July 2020 (the period of the arrangement’s activity). The arrangement described that it invested (its own funds) in the development of their website and visual identity, and that the goal was to start a low-cost subscription system, with conversion of benefits to subscribers (exclusive raffles, discounts at concert venues, cultural gifts) in the second half of the year, but that “the pandemic brought down the plan” and postponed work continuity. These answers can illustrate that, despite the intention to promote the

arrangement's profitability in the context of Santa Catarina, conjunctural factors of personal, social and planning nature for the implementation of funding sources can ultimately interfere in the arrangement's publication regime or even in its existence.

Of those who reported having at least one source of income, the fundraising types identified were different. Among the respondents that rely on funding from the support of their audiences, there are crowdfunding campaigns, recurrent collective and monthly funding, donations from readers and entities (individuals and legal entities), systems such as Eduzz and Google AdSense, and monthly subscriptions to the Apoia.se website, including rewards for supporters.

There were arrangements that also mentioned funding from partnerships with companies, which includes sponsorship according to plans established by the arrangement, ads and banners on the websites, publication of sponsored content, native advertising and advertorials<sup>28</sup>. The sale of products was also cited as another financing method.

Finally, the professionals' volunteer work and own resources were mentioned, which may indicate that even in the arrangements that have funding sources, the resources obtained are often insufficient to pay bills and remunerate the people involved in the activities. For example, *Folha da Cidade* informed that all the journalists "have another source of income". *Tribuna Universitária* replied that the arrangement "is not yet self-sustainable".

The insufficiency of the revenue obtained from funding sources is reflected in the answers concerning the arrangements' level of income. In this category, we observed that, although most of the arrangements reported at least one funding source, 11 of the 20 (55%) did not want to declare the level of income achieved or responded that they could not estimate it. Low transparency regarding the revenue obtained is recurrent among new journalistic arrangements in Brazil. Sembramedia's report (2017) also showed that the publishers did not want to inform their monthly revenue, among which Brazilians were the majority. Of the ten media that did not provide such data to the study, six were from Brazil (SEMBRAMEDIA, 2017).

**Table 2** What is the monthly income of Santa Catarina's arrangements?

Declared	Do not have a significant income	Not willing to declare
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<sup>28</sup> Text related to a company's brand or product.

05 (25%) of the arrangements	02 (10%) of the arrangements	11 (55%) of the arrangements
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Source: designed by the authors.

Of the nine remaining arrangements, five (25%) informed their monthly income; two (10%) reported having no significant income, and another two (10%) did not answer the questionnaire. Among the five arrangements that informed their revenues, the income levels varied from R\$ 1,000 to R\$ 3,000 per month. The amounts informed by the arrangements (R\$ 1,000, R\$ 1,045, R\$ 1,625, R\$ 2,470, and R\$ 3,000) were not exact and may vary from one month to the next.

**Table 3** Monthly revenue levels of Santa Catarina's arrangements.

From R\$ 1 thousand to R\$ 2 thousand (3 arrangements)	From R\$ 2 thousand to R\$ 3 thousand (2 arrangements)
R\$ 1,000 ( <i>Folha da Cidade</i> )	R\$ 2,470 ( <i>Economia SC</i> ) <sup>29</sup>
R\$ 1,045 ( <i>Folha Norte SC</i> )	R\$ 3 thousand ( <i>Portal Floripa Centro</i> )
R\$ 1,625 ( <i>O Mirante</i> )	

Source: designed by the authors.

In the arrangement with the highest reported income, the funding sources came only from advertising (banners and ads on the website), while in the arrangement with the lowest income range, the only source was readers' donations. In the intermediate revenue ranges (R\$ 1,045 and R\$ 2,470), the arrangements combine funding sources: reader support (crowdfunding and subscriptions) and advertising (banners, sponsored content, native advertising and advertorials). The intermediate value between the latter two, R\$ 1,625, belongs to the arrangement whose revenue is obtained only by recurring collective funding through the Apoia.se website with rewards according to the contribution range.

### Concluding remarks

If the act of innovating implies introducing something new into the socioeconomic system (STORSUL; KRUMSVIK, 2013) - even if not necessarily an invention, but a

<sup>29</sup> Amount corresponding to the sum of R\$ 470, raised by recurring collective funding through the Apoia.se platform (consulted on Nov. 21, 2020), and R\$ 2 thousand, declared by the arrangement advertising revenue.

combination of existing ideas, skills, and resources (SCHUMPETER, 1961; 1997) -, at least part of the journalistic arrangements in Santa Catarina can be considered innovative to some extent. Especially those that bet on regional journalism and are located in a context with a limited supply of information and a diversity of journalistic vehicles. In this regard, the emergence of these arrangements, in particular, can be interpreted as a response to local citizens' need regarding their basic right to be informed, which would frame such innovations within the scope of their social dimension.

Nevertheless, others of the studied initiatives have specialized in market niches because they have found a relevant space for their work, despite the fact that similar vehicles already existed in their cities. This is the case of the cultural journalism practiced by *Artemísia* and *Diversar*. Thus, they represent a competitive advantage in the local market, which would be one of the effects of innovation in the media (GARCÍA AVILÉS et al., 2018).

On the other hand, innovation is also conditioned to the availability of existing resources, which weakens the arrangements' work. As the analysis data showed, although there is an intention and effort on the part of the arrangements' representatives to think of and implement funding forms, the resources collected from such revenue sources are still insufficient to ensure the sustainability of projects. "Traditionally, in the field of industrial production, it would be natural to agree that it is innovative to produce something cheaper, and faster, even if with less quality; however, can the same thought be applied to journalism or communication?" (SILVEIRA, 2020, p. 161).

The fact that Santa Catarina's arrangement with the highest monthly revenue range obtains its income through advertising corroborates the study conducted on São Paulo's arrangements, for which "advertising occupies a place that is, by no means, negligible" (FIGARO, 2018, p. 74). This finding further corroborates the difficulty that new arrangements have to build revenue sources that differ from those already implemented and consolidated by traditional media and journalism companies.

In any case, we have so far argued that journalistic innovation is not only related to a dimension of business models or to the introduction of technologies. As Franciscato (2010, p. 12) states, the interference of technology in the scope of journalism does not merely refer to "industrial modernization, but it is also characterized as a contribution that modifies the routines and work processes of journalists, as well as the profile and quality of the journalistic product". In this respect, reducing innovation only to the business model or to the technological issue would be a discursive formula that operates to "legitimize and crystallize some practices at the expense of others, or to select, among the myriad of journalistic practices, which ones would be 'innovative par excellence'"



(GROHMANN 2017, p. 223), which would invisibilize initiatives such as those of the arrangements themselves. Still, from the theoretical perspective of ergology, any given human work has a creative and imaginative dimension (SCHWARTZ, 2000), being a social innovation in itself (GROHMANN, 2017).

The results of the analysis show that this theoretical view converges with the “arranging” of initiatives that work under precarious conditions. They also dialogue with the international research conducted by Deuze and Witchge (2020) on startups from 11 countries, in which the eagerness for experimentation goes hand in hand with the uncertainty about the economic future of organizations. Even so, the authors consider that the work of startups (understood here as an unfolding of journalistic arrangements) may be pioneering and innovative in certain contexts, precisely because the meanings of practices change according to political, economic, cultural, and geographical contingencies. Thus, following the example of the initiatives in Santa Catarina, the commitment to traditional norms and definitions of journalism can be innovative as it fills a social need for information.

One of the research potentials to be explored by subsequent studies is the investigation on the innovation in products offered by the investigated journalistic arrangements. The data presented here are based on what was reported by the respondents themselves - which involves the risk of obtaining answers that are desirable to the researcher and/or the respondents themselves, each with his/her own interests. Future research can circumvent that limitation and broaden the scope of analysis by conducting content observations to measure more meanings of innovation regarding what is produced by the arrangements.

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**RESUMO:**

O artigo investiga 20 arranjos jornalísticos nativos digitais de Santa Catarina. A pesquisa exploratória tem por objetivo a busca de elementos sobre como arranjos se percebem como inovadores ou não, e de que forma isso é tensionado pelas formas de financiamento dessas iniciativas. Os resultados apontam que parte dos arranjos pesquisados podem ser considerados inovadores à medida que estão instalados em desertos de notícia e, portanto, suprem uma carência informativa de populações locais. Por outro lado, fragilidades econômicas podem limitar e colocar em xeque a vida útil das organizações.

**PALAVRAS-CHAVES:** Arranjos econômicos jornalísticos; Inovação no jornalismo; Sustentabilidade financeira.

**RESUMEN:**

El artículo investiga 20 proyectos periodísticos nativos digitales en Santa Catarina. La investigación exploratoria tiene como objetivo encontrar elementos sobre cómo los proyectos se perciben a sí mismos como innovadores o no, y cómo esto se ve afectado por las formas en que se financian estas iniciativas. Los resultados muestran que parte de los arreglos investigados pueden considerarse innovadores ya que están instalados en desiertos de noticias y, por lo tanto, proporcionan una escasez de información a las poblaciones locales. Por otro lado, las debilidades económicas pueden limitar y comprometer la vida útil de las organizaciones.

**PALABRAS-CLAVES:** Proyectos económicos periodísticos; Innovación en periodismo; Estabilidad financiera.