

THE BARBS OF THE JONATAS SANTOS CASE: circulation of images in narratives of the unimaginable

AS FARPAS DO CASO JONATAS SANTOS: circulação de imagens em narrativas do inimaginável

LOS DARDOS DEL CASO JONATAS SANTOS: circulación de imágenes en narrativas de lo inimaginable

João Damasio da Silva Neto

PhD in Communication Sciences (Unisinos), Master in Communication (UFG), and Bachelor in Journalism (Faculdade Araguaia). Associate Professor in the Graduate Program in Technologies, Communication, and Education at the Federal University of Uberlândia (PPGCE/UFU). Researcher at Narra – Research Group on Narrative, Culture, and Temporality. Cultural producer and coordinator of scientific dissemination at UFU.

joaodamasio16@gmail.com



0000-0002-3505-5699

Suianne Gonçalves de Souza

Bachelor in Journalism from Federal University of Uberlândia (UFU). Researcher at Narra - Research Group on Narrative, Culture and Temporality. Communication manager at Instituto Semear.

suiannegoncalvesdesouza@hotmail.com



0009-0009-6828-2204

Mailing address: Av. João Naves de Ávila, 2121, Bloco 1S, Sala 33, Santa Mônica, Uberlândia, MG, Brazil, ZIP Code: 38400-902.

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ABSTRACT

The present article analyzes the images circulating in the media coverage of the case of Jonatas Santos, a child murdered in a situation of agrarian conflicts in Brazil on February 10, 2022, in Roncadorzinho, in the rural area of Barreiras (PE). Drawing on Didi-Huberman (2020), Mondzain (2013; 2016), and Rosa (2017; 2019), we seek to understand the icons that emerge in the coverage of the case and the iconic operations that constitute Jonatas' image as a symbol of massacres in rural areas, even as it returns to the realm of the unimaginable in the face of the condition of agrarian conflicts in Brazil as an everyday catastrophe.

KEYWORDS: Journalism; Image; Circulation; Narrative; Agrarian conflicts.

Introduction

This work presents the discussions resulting from our research¹ on the circulation of images in narratives of the unimaginable. Our initial proposal was to explore the process of image circulation from narratives about massacres in the Brazilian countryside², in order to understand how these situations of vulnerability and social invisibility contrast with the current reality of media exacerbation of images. We understand that these narratives are of the order of the unimaginable — the adjective we socially attribute to barbarism and extermination, especially so as not to come into contact with the pain of others (Sontag, 2003; Didi-Huberman, 2020).

¹ A preliminary version of this text was presented and discussed at the 31st Annual Meeting of the Brazilian National Association of Graduate Programs in Communication (Compós) in the working group "Communication and Sociability". The author expresses gratitude for the valuable feedback received on the work, which contributed to its development. Thanks to the editors and reviewers of Observatório for a meticulous and thoughtful review process.

² Countryside massacres are collective murders resulting from agrarian conflicts, according to documentation from the Pastoral Land Commission (CPT).

It is interesting to look specifically at images because, in these cases, they challenge us conceptually and politically. There are "images despite everything," testifying "against any and all unimaginable" (Didi-Huberman, 2020, p. 33). In other words, images have the power to show and demand a look, even when we would not even want to imagine the catastrophe. Thus, we formulated a first guiding question: what iconicities³ emerge in the coverage and narratives of massacres in the countryside?

For the present study, we selected a single case. We took as a starting point the records made by the Comissão Pastoral da Terra (CPT)⁴ and, from an exploration of the occurrences of the last year (2022), we focused on the attempted massacre suffered by a family of squatters⁵ in the rural area of Barreiras (PE), which ended up victimizing Jonatas de Oliveira Santos, a nine-year-old child.

The unimaginable presents itself. Jonatas de Oliveira Santos was murdered at the height of his condition of social vulnerability, related to an order of daily catastrophes (Leal & Gomes, 2020) in the reality of children who grow up amid agrarian conflicts in Brazil. First, the case draws attention for violating the imaginaries of untouchable childhood and quiet rural life, mobilizing deep social structures capable of constituting shock-images (Sontag, 2003), emptying senses, or totem-images⁶, those with some force of social mobilization (Rosa, 2017; 2019).

However, already in the survey of the corpus, we noticed how restricted the circulation of the case was between the struggle waged by the CPT and the local media coverage, generating another concern about the mobilization capacity of these images. Observing the journalistic coverage and the social developments of the case, our question became more specific and extended into two: What iconicity emerges in the circulation of images of Jonatas's case? And how does it consolidate him as a symbol (totem-image) of violence in the countryside?

Before better developing the concepts used in the research, it will be important to take the methodological step of "configuring the case" to understand the dynamics

³ As will be detailed below, the concept of iconicity (Mondzain, 2013) refers us to image operations, to the way in which images are thought of and socially elaborated or, even, to image politics.

⁴ The CPT has been monitoring these cases since 1985, resulting in an annual report called "Conflicts in the Countryside".

⁵ Farmers who occupy small areas of vacant or unproductive land, having legal possession of it.

⁶ Concept formulated by Rosa (2017; 2019). These are images that, through their media circulation, become totems or symbols, beyond the events to which they initially refer.

present in the circulation⁷ of these images. Then, we will go through the narrative constituted in the coverage of the case chronologically to, finally, analyze the iconic operations that emerge in this narrative, such as the activation of other images and imaginaries.

Jonatas de Oliveira Santos: configuring the case

The case of Jonatas de Oliveira Santos vividly illustrates the conflicts in the Brazilian countryside, which involve issues of land tenure, use, and distribution. As already discussed, these conflicts can arise from various origins, such as disputes over property, access to natural resources, land use rights, historical claims, and expropriation, among others. They have deep roots in the country's history and economy, largely due to the concentration of land and the lack of full implementation of agrarian reforms, which has led to an increase in violence and massacres in the countryside, often aggravated by recent political and economic factors. These conflicts are not limited to rural areas, also occurring in urban environments and involving a variety of actors, such as landowners, farmers, traditional communities, companies, and local and national governments (Comissão Pastoral da Terra [CPT], 2023).

Despite the significant influence that such conflicts exert on Brazilian society, they are often not publicized, recorded, or receive any kind of monitoring from government agencies. Among the organizations that play the role of regulating these conflicts, the Comissão Pastoral da Terra annually publishes a report, called "Conflitos no Campo Brasil" (Conflicts in the Brazilian Countryside), with data on violence, assassinations, and manifestations related to agrarian issues. Among the 47 cases of assassinations recorded in the report for the year 2022, that of Jonatas Santos stands out. A nine-year-old boy who was brutally murdered in February of that year in the rural area of Barreiras, Pernambuco.

Later investigations show us that the crime occurred when seven masked men invaded the family's home, first shooting Jonatas's father, Geovane da Silva Santos, who was grazed on the shoulder, and then shooting Jonatas, who died while trying to hide under a bed with his mother. According to later investigations, the murder would have been a retaliation by a group of drug traffickers against Geovane, who refused to sell his land. It is important to note that Jonatas's father was one of the community's lead-

⁷ Circulation is an instance of attribution of values in the communicative process, referring to the intervals between the senses in play, beyond the actions of producers (what the vehicles say) and receivers (what the public recognizes) (Rosa, 2017; 2019).

ers, president of the local Family Farmers Association, and that the family had already suffered other threats previously. Furthermore, the Roncadorzinho region, where the family's property is located, had already been the target of previous conflicts and regional agencies had already warned about the increase in these conflicts in the area, but only after Jonas's death did the government create the State Program for the Prevention of Agrarian and Collective Conflicts, demonstrating the impact of the repercussion of the event.

According to the CPT's 2022 report, Jonas was the only child killed that year in conflicts in the countryside. Four other teenagers, between 12 and 18 years old, were also murdered and are represented in the report, showing how child and adolescent experiences in the countryside are touched and annulled by violence in the countryside.

Our corpus is not just in the representation constituted by a newspaper or in the understandings of the recipients, but in the circulation (Rosa, 2017). Therefore, our corpus is not restricted to a specific type of media or textual genre, but includes news, articles, and reports in digital and television media, as well as images, illustrations, and montages on websites and social networks. Taking this perspective of circulation, the aim is to analyze not just a specific representation, but the iconicity that emerges in the social and media elaboration of the case. In particular, it is understood here that Jonas's case is configured by necessarily mobilizing two major imaginaries: life in the countryside and childhood.

The first imaginary aspect starts from the observation that this is a case related to the issue of land conflicts, defined by the National Council of Justice (CNJ) as "actions of resistance and confrontation that happen in different social contexts in the rural sphere involving the struggle for land, water, rights and for the means of work or production." Cases like Jonas's remind us of the relevance that conflicts in the countryside have as part of the formation of the Brazilian rural environment. These conflicts are crossed by political, social, and economic issues that have intensified in recent years. According to data analyzed in the last reports of murders due to conflicts in the countryside raised by the CPT, it is possible to observe a gradual increase in the number of deaths since 2018, reaching the number of 47 assassinations in 2022 throughout the country, including that of Jonas. Despite playing an essential role in the formation of the Brazilian countryside, such cases still do not have the proper visibility and understanding (CPT, 2023).

The second imaginary aspect refers to the fact that Jonas was only a nine-year-old child when he was murdered. The circulation of images of children in the me-

dia is already quite problematic. According to the Child and Adolescent Journalism Collective (Colo), in the journalistic field and outside it, childhood is relegated to a non-place, being ignored or excluded. According to articles and initiatives raised by the collective, it is possible to perceive that not only is there an absence of listening and active participation of children in the media, but also an attempt at manipulation to be able to represent what is desired using the image of children and adolescents (Furtado & Doretto, 2020).

This situation gets even worse when it comes to childhood in a situation of vulnerability, such as the cases studied by Rosa (2017; 2019), which we will relate later, about children socially and medially violated in situations such as migratory crises and urban violence in large centers. It is necessary to highlight how these situations can be even different from the case of Jonatas, whose situation of vulnerability is related to the daily catastrophe of conflicts in the countryside.

From this configuration of the case, contextualized regarding the imaginaries about violence in the countryside and child vulnerability, the present work proposes to analyze different materialities of this event, seeking to understand if and how his case is consolidated as a symbol of violence in the countryside and of child vulnerability in catastrophic situations. That is, we seek to understand what iconicity emerges in the case of Jonatas and if it consolidates him as a symbol of violence in the countryside.

Daily catastrophes in the Brazilian countryside

We have already highlighted how the images of Jonatas's case, in the different materialities analyzed, compose imaginaries of child violence and violence in the countryside, even though these narratives are relegated to erasure. We understand that this is an issue inserted in the debate about daily catastrophes (Leal & Gomes, 2020), a concept that may cause strangeness to the reader, since a catastrophe would be the moment of rupture with the daily, when something unexpected affects, generally in a negative way, the entire context that is observed. In this sense, it is possible to analyze that an assassination like Jonatas's is indeed a catastrophic event, which is constituted at the moment there is a rupture with the daily.

However, Leal and Gomes (2020) explain that catastrophes are not isolated events, but happenings that distance themselves from what is socially considered as "the normal daily life." Therefore, we understand that catastrophe ceases to be what we understand as a great specific "event," to assume the role of an open happening.

Catastrophe in daily life ceases to be an “event,” a specific fact, and becomes a “happening,” a movement, an open displacement, which has ideological, episodic, existential, and temporal aspects, among others, whose contours have not yet been sufficiently explored, remaining enigmatic and intriguing (Leal & Gomes, 2020, p. 36).

Thus, we seek to situate how catastrophe is built in the context in which we are inserted, but also the way in which narratives are part of this construction over time. We understand here the reality of violence and massacres in the countryside as a reality of daily catastrophes, this is because cases of assassinations like Jonatas's are not isolated events, but a set of happenings within the violence in the countryside. Even if Jonatas's assassination can be considered a great catastrophe, a specific event, it is not isolated. According to the CPT's documentation sector, the Dom Tomás Balduino Documentation Center, which has more than 420,000 pages of digitized and organized documents, in 2022 alone, 47 people were murdered because of conflicts in the countryside, 12 more people than in the previous year.

Thus we can see that the case of Jonatas Santos is an open happening that is unfolding in time and is influenced by a series of historical, cultural, ideological, economic, and social aspects that involve massacres in the countryside and agrarian conflicts. Jonatas's case is a daily catastrophe that we see and that looks at us, instigating us to question which images and imaginaries will constitute this narrative and what their effects will be on each other.

Journalism and the circulation of images of children

According to the second article of Law No. 8069, people up to twelve years old are considered children and those between 12 and 18 are adolescents. Therefore, analyzing the case of Jonatas and the assassinations in the CPT report in 2022, we can state that he was the only child murdered that year, while four other people between 12 and 18 were victims of assassination in this period, thus being part of the same imaginary that affects the childhood and youth of people in the countryside.

Taking as a starting point that these different age groups are also impacted by social issues, whether related to violence in the countryside or other issues of vulnerability, such as migratory processes, armed conflicts, and wars, the debate about children and adolescents in the media is necessary. The number of studies and organizations that are dedicated to understanding the representation and participation of chil-

dren in journalistic media is restricted. The Child and Adolescent Journalism Collective (Colo) is one of the organizations that performs an analysis of this theme.

The collective seeks to understand not only the representation of children, but their participation in the communicative media and how the production of content specifically aimed at this group occurs. Among the various works compiled by Colo, the results obtained by Furtado and Doretto (2020) are of great relevance to the present research, in which it is analyzed how the editorial manuals of large media outlets in Brazil guide the use and representation of children and their images in journalistic materials.

According to Furtado and Doretto (2020), media outlets generally do not recognize children as citizens, but only as people protected by law. For the authors, this means that children are socially silenced and used as symbols. "This happens because they are considered by adults as innocent and unprotected beings - which gives them an idyllic character, in relation to the vices of adulthood -, producing often stereotyped representations" (Furtado & Doretto, 2020, p. 34).

From the initial understanding of how children are recognized by the media in a place of non-citizenship and assume a much more instrumental role, we also seek to perceive how childhood and youth are represented in situations of vulnerability. If in a first analysis children are seen, most of the time, as "innocent and unprotected beings," when we get to the representations of children in situations of helplessness, they become even stronger symbols of violence and neglect.

Rosa (2019), for example, evidenced how the images of the boy Aylan Kurdi, who died in 2015 due to the migratory issue in Syria, were consolidated as a totem-image, one that cannot be broken and resists time, being protected by the collectivity. The author discusses that the circulation process of this image does not allow other images to compete with its strength. Taking Aylan Kurdi as an example, the photograph of his body washed up from the sea to the beach is often invoked to illustrate the war in Syria.

These images would be recognized for their capacity for phantasmagoria, when an image ends up acting as a ghost of other images produced later, acquiring posthumous lives. As observed by Rosa (2017), this phantasmagoria happens, for example, with the reappearance of the photographs of Aylan Kurdi in the images of Omran Daqneesh and Aya, which resonate as new faces of the conflict in the Middle East years later.

Appropriating these discussions for the case of Jonatas, we have at first the recognition of him as a child who is protected by law and, therefore, is not listened to in the media while he still has the chance to talk about his reality. However, in a second moment, we try to understand if Jonatas becomes a symbol of child violence in the countryside and, if this happens, in what way his images begin to circulate, becoming part of other narratives of violence.

Refuting unimagination

When talking about images, we are interested here in the theoretical perspectives of Didi-Huberman (2020) and Mondzain (2013; 2016). The first author points to the emergence of images as a way of supplying what thought is incapable of imagining: "the image arises where thought – 'reflection,' as we so rightly say – seems impossible, or at least suspended: stupefied, dazed" (Didi-Huberman, 2020, p. 52).

In the book "Images Despite Everything," Didi-Huberman (2020) analyzes four photographs taken by members of the Sonderkommando, from Auschwitz-Birkenau, carried out with the support of the Polish resistance, in 1944. The clandestine photos record a part of the process of gassing and extermination of the Jewish population. Throughout the book, the author tries to show what the lives of these people were like, the fears and horrors to which they were subjected by being forced to participate in the process of erasing the trace of the existence of their own people.

Based on these descriptions and precisely because of them, Didi-Huberman draws attention to the fact that, in the midst of so much barbarism, the members of the Sonderkommando appealed to the image and had the courage to make these photographic records so that perhaps people could know some of the things that happened in Auschwitz and be able to imagine the atrocities that happened in the concentration and extermination camps. Thus, he argues that we have the duty to analyze these photographs to "combat" the Nazis' attempt to erase all traces of what they subjected the Jews to in these places (Didi-Huberman, 2020, p. 96).

In this way, also in our mediatized society, we frequently choose to produce images, so that the unimaginable perhaps becomes increasingly unlikely. The unimaginable, however, does not refer only to the existence of images, as it remains in force in the refusal to look and think about them. In the circulation of the images of Jonatas's case, the refusal to analyze the images would cause his assassination to be placed as something unimaginable, impossible to happen. That is why it is necessary to ask about

iconicity: what imagistic operations are implied when the images of Jonas circulate (or not)?

The philosopher Marie José Mondzain (2013) argues that images are not only visual representations, but actors in the cultural and social context, who have an active presence in the imaginary formation of reality. The main aspect of the concept of image would be its strength to resemble its referent, constituting a power that can and must be thought about, managed, and disputed.

Mondzain (2013) argues that "the greatness and misery of all places of vision" is related to "all our iconicities," that is, to the ways we think about images and their operations in the world. For her, asking about iconicity is to rescue the "speculative and political force" of the image (p. 227).

During the interview "Image, Subject, and Power," Mondzain (2016, p. 180) states that the image (in the singular) is actually the generic term that designates the genus whose species would then be the icon and idol, so that they designate a relationship (as in the Greek verb *eikon*) and not an object (as it would be in the semiotic understanding):

I call "visibilities" the way in which objects that are still waiting for their qualification by a look appear in the field of the visible. I will call "image" the fragile way of appearance of a constitutive appearance for subjective looks, in a subjectivization of the look. The "image" is effectively, in my lexicon, what constitutes the subject. The *eikon* (icon) is the way of appearance of signs that allows them to be constituted to allow the sharing of the symbolic. The "idol" is the way in which the question of desire can completely sink and annihilate itself, when the desire to see gives itself the object of its complete satisfaction, let's say, of its enjoyment (Mondzain, 2016, p. 180).

In such a way, when we ask "what iconicity emerges in the circulation of Jonas's case?", we are asking about the set of imaginary operations evoked by the visual representations or by the visibilities of the boy. Such visibilities are the photographs, montages, and posts that will be analyzed.

Given this understanding of the image, Damasio (forthcoming) proposes that iconicity is not just the thought of each institution or each subject about visibilities, but, with mediatization, circulation itself is a movement of qualification about images. For Rosa (2017), the circulation process is a dynamic of forming values of the imaginary.

This is because the imaginary would be nothing more than the circulation of meanings as a “collective work” done “over time” (Damasio, forthcoming). In the perspective of these authors, although media images, at times, exceed certain ethical limits or are criticized for the excess of visualities, the circulation of images in mediatization contributes to an elaboration of the imaginaries that are associated with them.

This perspective also brings us a specific methodological approach about the image. In addition to the chronological analysis of the coverage of Jonatas's case, we are interested in the relationship between the images in circulation with each other and with other imaginaries, as a dimension capable of revealing iconicity. The model for this would be in works like the Mnemosyne Atlas⁸ and other image plates, made in several other cultural contexts, that propose a reflection on how the approximation of images brings to light different aspects of the images and summons imaginaries. According to Damasio (forthcoming), “in a certain way, all image production must be impregnated with meaning, therefore, with other images” (p. 7).

In this sense, returning to the imaginaries of children in a situation of vulnerability and massacres in the countryside, in the circulation of these, the assumption is present that the “photographs and videos summon deep social structures, activating interior images already consolidated in the social” (Rosa, 2019, p. 22). This is the process that, through circulation, reinforces references to totem-images.

Thus, in addition to understanding what iconicity emerges from the case, we set ourselves the auxiliary question of understanding if the images of Jonatas configure a totem-image. For this, we will seek to understand the materialities to be analyzed not individually, derived from each other or completely opposed, but as productions that, despite using different imagistic reproductions, activate the imaginary about a catastrophe that would otherwise be considered unimaginable.

Iconicity of Jonatas's case

Given the problematization presented, we seek to understand which icons emerge in the case of Jonatas Santos, a nine-year-old boy victim of murder and violence in the countryside, and how they consolidate him as a symbol of this violence. After detailing the procedures adopted, we will advance on two analytical movements, one based on the chronology of the coverage, the other on the iconic relationships observed.

⁸ Atlas Mnemosyne is an unfinished work, in which Aby Warburg assembled several image boards, proposing a study of culture strictly through the study of images and the relationships between them.

For this, we approached various materialities in circulation about the case, through searches with the hashtags #Roncadorzinho #JustiçaPorJonathas and by the links and sources found with each new materiality accessed. We obtained a corpus that was constituted by monitoring the circulation of the case, from the first news about the murder on February 11, 2022 (the morning after the night of the occurrence) to a post with an explanatory montage made a year later, on February 10, 2023, both through the Instagram account of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra – Nordeste 2 (@cptne2).

There was no need or intention for exhaustion regarding these materialities, as it was not an analysis of all the content, but a follow-up of the case, followed by the study of its images. In such a way, initially, only three textualities were raised for this work, which objectively exemplify the process of elaborating the imaginary about Jonatas's case, from its initial condition in journalism, passing through the moment when it acquires density as an icon in dispute of meanings, until it finally becomes a symbol of the struggle for land. Throughout this first analysis, several issues were perceived that touch on debates about violence in the countryside and that wound the imaginary of untouchable childhood, something that for better understanding also demanded the analysis of other publications related to the case.

In such a way, we raised a total of 20 materialities that transit between reports, articles, news, podcasts, videos, and photos, present on news portals, online newspapers and magazines, in addition to the official CPT portal and the social network of the Comissão Pastoral da Terra Nordeste 2 (@cptne2) on Instagram. For this second look, we considered more than the type of materiality, place of publication, and contextualization carried out by the vehicle. At this moment, we turn our gaze to who inserts each image into circulation and in what way they use the icons of violence in the countryside and the imaginary of the fragility of childhood to build the narrative about Jonatas.

These materialities were observed according to the coverage of the case in its chronology, presenting the narrative path from the indexical condition to the symbolic condition of the images used. Subsequently, we properly analyzed the iconicity of Jonatas's case from the iconic operations observed, paying attention to the relationship between images and imaginaries.

Case coverage: from index to symbol

In a chronological analysis of the materialities of Jonatas's case, it is possible to perceive a movement that arises from the indexicality of the factual towards the consolidation of Jonatas's image as a symbol of violence in the countryside. The day after

Jonatas's death, on February 11, 2022, the news was released in three posts on the Comissão Pastoral da Terra's⁹ Instagram, with images of the house after the attack. In the comments on the post, several people tag profiles of politicians, celebrities, and journalistic outlets to give visibility to the case.

But, at this first moment, only two reports are registered. One, published in the online newspaper Brasil de Fato, with the title "Child is killed in an attack on a community leader's family, in the south forest of Pernambuco,"¹⁰ and the other on the CPT's own portal, "Nine-year-old child is murdered by gunshot; boy was the son of a leadership of Engenho Roncadorzinho, in the South Forest of PE."¹¹

In these first publications, it is noted that the image of Jonatas is not placed as something main, in addition, the term "the child" is widely used to refer to Jonatas, in a movement of distancing from the case that actually prioritizes the information transmitted and its connection with agrarian conflicts.

This distancing is perceived in the headlines and captions that bring the reader's focus to the event that "a nine-year-old child was murdered," but this choice is also noticeable in the images. Two of these materialities, the report in Brasil de Fato and a post on the CPT's Instagram, highlight the crime scene using images of the room, then of the bed where Jonatas would have hidden and finally of the bullet on the floor.

The images used throughout this first narrative already present us with the first aspect of iconicity of Jonatas's case, which we seek to gather and highlight with the montage procedure (Figure 1). In the text, the images are distributed throughout the report, but, for the purpose of analysis, it is interesting to note how the montage of the images side by side (Damasio, forthcoming) formally generates the close-up effect induced by the news editing, which privileges an indexical image – that is, a sequence of photographs with the indices of the violence that occurred, based on the material produced by CPT pastoral agents.

Immediately following the news of the crime, the funeral gains prominence. It is also important to note that the other post on the CPT's¹² Instagram and the news pub-

⁹ Available at: https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ1tAZxM87_/. Accessed on: August 16, 2023.

¹⁰ Available at: <https://www.brasildefatope.com.br/2022/02/11/crianca-e-morta-em-ataque-a-familia-de-lidercomunitario-na-mata-sul-de-pernambuco>. Accessed on: August 16, 2023.

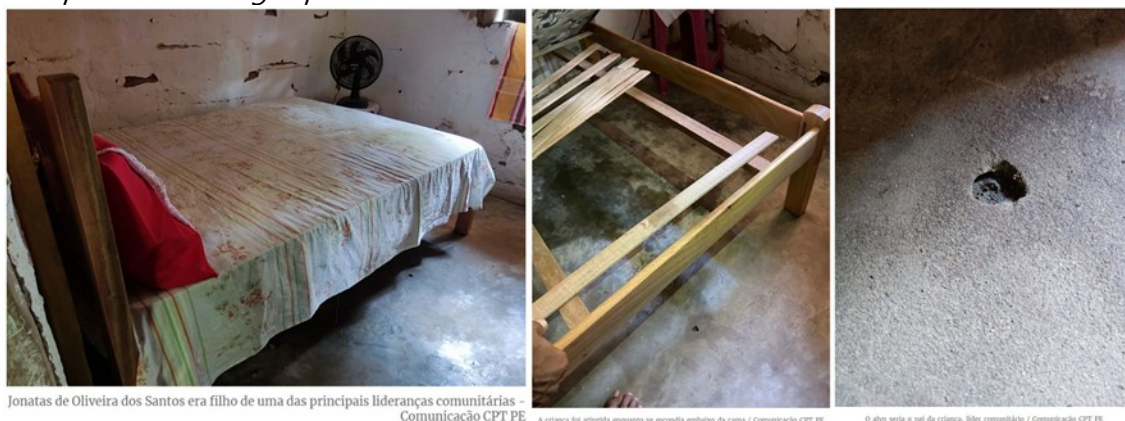
¹¹ Available at: <https://www.cptnacional.org.br/publicacoes/noticias/conflitos-no-campo/5923-urgente-criancade-nove-anos-e-assassinada-a-tiros-menino-era-filho-de-lideranca-do-engenho-roncadorzinho-na-mata-sul-depe>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

¹² Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CZ1y7BwsqgO/>. Accessed on: August 16, 2023.

lished on its portal¹³ use the same image: a photo of Jonatas's funeral, where in the foreground we see a barbed wire fence close to the ground and, in the background, out of focus, are the people who went to the funeral. The image is also accompanied by a title and caption, which are inscribed over the photograph in striking colors (Figure 2).

Figure 1

Compilation of images presented in the Brasil de Fato news



Source: From Brasil de Fato / Rodrigo (2022).

Figure 2

Image of Jonatas's funeral in a CPT post



Source: Taken from CPT's Instagram (2022).

¹³ Available at: <https://www.cptnacional.org.br/publicacoes/noticias/conflitos-no-campo/5923-urgente-criancade-nove-anos-e-assassinada-a-tiros-menino-era-filho-de-lideranca-do-engenho-roncadorzinho-na-mata-sul-de-pe>. Accessed on: August 16, 2023.

lished by G1, on February 17, and which, despite this image being the main one, the focus is still on explaining the motivation for the crime and the agrarian conflicts.

Figure 3

Image of Jonatas Santos



Source: Taken from G1 / César (2022).

The following report, titled "Two men are arrested and one adolescent is apprehended for suspected involvement in the death of a rural leader's son in Barreiros,"¹⁸ was published by G1 on the same day as the previous one and puts the image of a downcast Jonatas in the spotlight, while discussing the apprehension of the suspects in Jonatas's death and how the crime would have happened. On February 18, the CPT inserts new contents into circulation. There were three posts on Instagram and a news story on the organization's portal. The first¹⁹ publication on Instagram brings images of the Act for Justice and Peace in the Countryside, while the second²⁰ shows photos of the hearing with the then governor, Paulo Câmara, to establish measures to combat violence in the region. Both publications only mention Jonatas in the caption and use the hashtag #JustiçaPorJonatas.

¹⁸ Available at: <https://g1.globo.com/pe/peernambuco/noticia/2022/02/17/capturados-por-suspeita-deenvolvimento-no-assassinato-de-filho-de-lider-rural-em-barreiros.ghtml>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

¹⁹ Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CaI29PCp2ml/>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

²⁰ Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CaJIs1MXSi/>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

The third²¹ publication made on the same day on the CPT's Instagram can be considered a dissemination of the news "Case of the boy killed in PE: Two men were arrested and a minor was apprehended," published on the CPT's²² portal. In these two materialities, the same image was used repeatedly, but this time the organization edited the image, inserting a title and a short caption over the photo that say that two suspects in the assassination were arrested. At this moment, the focus was on transmitting news about the case, but we already perceive that this image of Jonatas carries with it the indices of violence and the agrarian issue presented in the first news about the case.

The next publications only happen on February 22. It is the report "Without an owner, former mill owners' lands generate bloody conflict in PE,"²³ published in UOL, and the republication of this content on the CPT's²⁴ portal, under the same title and a post on the organization's Instagram. At this moment, the image of Jonatas multiplies. The highlight is given to different children protesting for justice for his death (Figure 4). We see several photos of Jonatas repeated on the posters that the children are holding, in addition, the report also recalls the images of Jonatas's house and the bullet hole in the floor, a way of recalling the indices of violence and connecting them to the children in the protest.

Figure 4

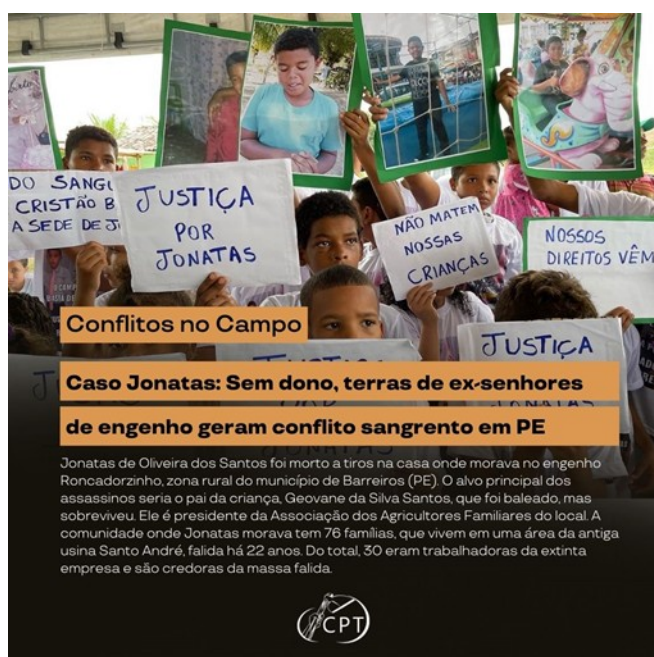
Image of children protesting for justice for Jonatas's assassination

²¹ Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CalX9H5Ppyz/>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

²² Available at: <https://www.cptnacional.org.br/publicacoes/noticias/conflitos-no-campo/5936-caso-domenino-morto-em-pe-dois-homens-foram-presos-e-um-menor-foi-aprendido>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

²³ Available at: <https://noticias.uol.com.br/colunas/carlos-madeiro/2022/02/22/sem-dono-terras-de-exsenhores-de-engenho-geram-conflito-sangrento-em-pe.htm>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

²⁴ Available at: <https://www.cptnacional.org.br/publicacoes/noticias/conflitos-no-campo/5939-caso-jonatassem-dono-terras-de-ex-senhores-de-engenho-geram-conflito-sangrento-em-pe>. Accessed on: June 30, 2023.



Source: Taken from CPT / Madero (2022).

We then arrive at the article "Jonatas and the Massacre in the Countryside,"²⁵ by Gabriel Lui and Renato Sérgio de Lima, published in Piauí magazine on February 25. Here, a symbolic leap occurs regarding the images. As it is no longer a text of the informative or news genre, the article does not use images of Jonatas, of the protests or acts, of the family, of the house where the assassination happened or of the indices of this violent crime. It only shows a graphic illustration, in which a faceless body appears fallen on the floor, next to a deflated soccer ball, framed by two barbed wire threads, all elements in the magazine's color palette.

We perceive here a movement not of distancing from Jonatas, as happens in the first materialities presented, but the idea that it is not necessary to use the images of the coverage to invoke the imaginary of violence in the countryside, of childhood, and of Jonatas. The article, in fact, goes beyond the case, as it discusses the broader topic of the land issue and violence in the countryside, not the crime, the suspects, or acts for Jonatas's death. The case is brought as a hook, a symbol of this violence, so that it can be debated.

²⁵ Available at: <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/jonatas-e-o-massacre-no-campo/>. Accessed on: June 30, 2023.

Figure 5

Illustration present in the Piauí article about Jonatas's case



Source: Taken from Piauí / Lui e Lima (2022).

Finally, the last materiality raised for analysis of the case was a post²⁶ made on the Comissão Pastoral da Terra's Instagram a year after the event, on February 10, 2023, in memory of Jonatas's death. The post is a montage of photos of Jonatas and the children in the protest for his death. In all the photos, a green filter is used and over some of the images the organization places explanatory texts about the case. It is also worth noting here that the hashtags #JustiçaPorJonatas are used again.

Figure 6

Post in memory of one year of Jonatas's death



²⁶ Available at: <https://www.instagram.com/p/CaSDGXMO9r/>. Accessed on: October 28, 2023.

Source: Taken from CPT's Instagram / CPTNE2 (2023).

Observing each of the materialities in their order of publication, we were able to observe a process in which indices of violence are initially brought (the images of the crime scene, the bullet hole in the floor and then the blood on the bag). These initial materialities present a tendency to approach Jonatas's story in a more impersonal way, as they present the events in a direct and objective way, bringing photos that do not refer the reader to Jonatas, but rather to scenes of violence and even to the latifundium issue.

Then, the force of Jonatas's images emerges, evoking his representativeness for the land issue. It is possible to observe this movement when the photo of Jonatas looking down is repeated in several materialities. The violence, previously indexical, is actually associated with Jonatas in a process to transform him into a symbol of this violence.

This symbol is then consolidated when his images open space for other representations that, despite not showing his body directly, as in the cases of the illustration in Piauí and the publications with photos of the children in the protest. However, the consolidation of Jonatas de Oliveira Santos as a symbol of violence in the countryside does not stop at materialities exclusive to his case. As previously discussed by the present work, the process of circulation and elaboration of imaginaries goes beyond and rescues cases and materialities with different levels of similarity, making use of them for the formation of their meanings and contributing to the formation of others.

Jonatas as a symbol of massacres in the countryside: the holes, poverty, barbs, and the child

The follow-up of the case coverage has allowed us to highlight, so far, the images in circulation in a chronological perspective. On the other hand, when we ask about the iconicity that emerges in the circulation of the images of Jonatas's case, we need to go beyond the analysis of the coverage. From this moment on, we will seek to understand the iconic operations at play, that is, the circulation between images and imaginaries, according to the heuristic activated in this study (Damasio, forthcoming; Didi-Huberman, 2020; Mondzain, 2013 and 2016; Rosa, 2017 and 2019).

To understand the iconicity of Jonatas's case, it is necessary, first, to highlight the icons that constitute this narrative. In this sense, at first, we observe in the case the indices of violence in a very latent way, such as the bullet holes that were fired and the

blood at the crime scene. Despite not being direct photographs of the crime that occurred, they are indices of this violence and a mark that it actually happened. However, the violence does not remain attached to these icons, it is identified in the representations of the environment in which the crime occurred, Jonatas's room and house.

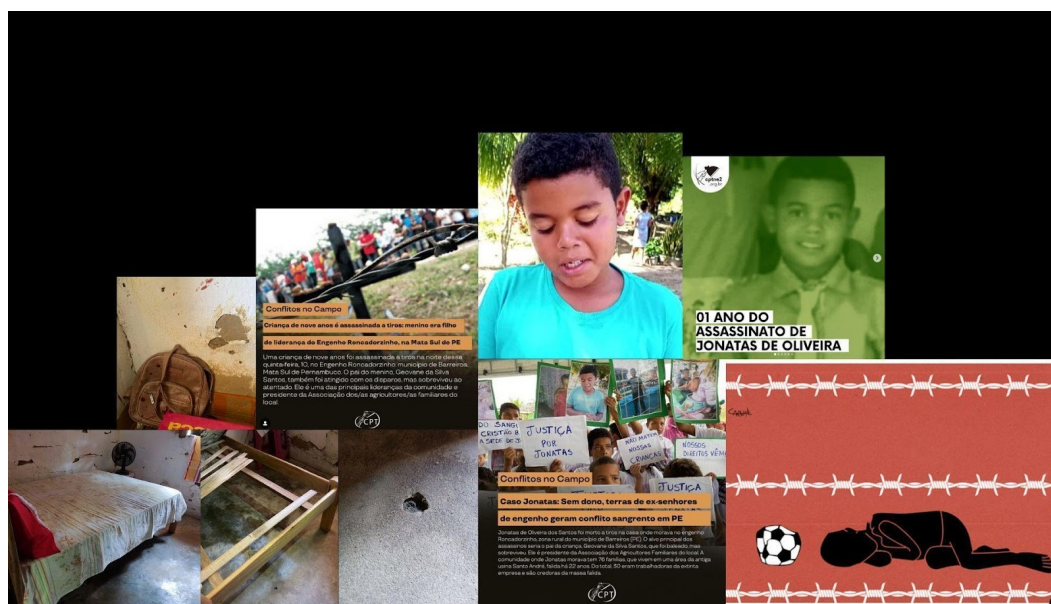
In this sense, we observe violence linked to the concept of daily catastrophes, this is because we have the understanding that the reality in which Jonatas lived was permeated by countless violences, whether they were aggressions and threats or social and economic violence. On this aspect, we observe the repetition of photographs of the family's house facade and the bed where Jonatas hid as icons of poverty and violence in the countryside.

This aspect is still reiterated by the reproduction of the barbed wire, an icon already highlighted previously in this work. The barbed wire appears here as something that recalls the rural reality, but it is also an element strongly remembered when we talk about concentration camps, being repeated in several films and documentaries about the event. Therefore, the images that use this element in Jonatas's case are attributed as symbols of violence and the countryside simultaneously.

Another icon revealing the iconicity of the case is related to childhood. In addition to the fact that Jonatas was a nine-year-old child and, therefore, already evokes the imaginary of childhood, we observe that he also constitutes an icon in his own case. This happens mainly in the materialities that address the protests for justice for Jonatas's death, in which his photo appears on several posters that other children are holding. He appears as an icon and the representation of several children, who are similar to Jonatas, in the protest are almost the replication of this icon.

Figure 7

Iconography of the case – the holes, poverty, barbs, and the child



Thus, as we see in Figure 7, the iconography of the case can be synthesized in the images of the bullet holes that leave so many gaps and marks of violence; the poverty that characterizes the context of vulnerability of those who live in the midst of conflicts in the countryside; the barbs that relate a characteristic of the rural (fences) and an imaginary of injury and violence; and the child, when their body becomes an image. When the image of Jonatas appears, all the previous meanings were already consolidated and are related to him, generating the phenomenon of the imaginary known as symbolic pregnancy²⁷ (Didi-Huberman, 2020).

A Process of Totemization

As we considered previously, symbolic pregnancy makes the images of Jonatas's case appropriate other imaginaries, both about violence in the countryside and about child violence. Jonatas's images carry with them structures prior to them, evoking the images of other children in a situation of vulnerability. Therefore, we can relate them to other images of child violence, such as the case of Thiago Menezes (a 13-year-old boy killed in the West Zone of Rio de Janeiro)²⁸, or the case of Ágatha

²⁷ The concept of symbolic pregnancy was used by Didi-Huberman and other image theorists, but was initially proposed by Ernest Cassirer as the capacity that images have to impregnate themselves with other images and acquire symbolic strength and effectiveness.

²⁸ Teenager Thiago Menezes Flausino was shot to death in Cidade de Deus, in Rio's West Zone, in the early hours of August 7, 2023. His case received widespread attention due to the violence of the murder and the production of moving images of his funeral.

tory issue, they cannot achieve the same symbolic force as the original photograph of Aylan Kurdi.

Thus, this process of totem-images, of rescuing meanings from other imaginaries and appropriating them for the elaboration of imaginaries, inhibits other productions that escape the main meaning put into circulation (Rosa, 2017). The author calls this the phantasmagoria capacity of images, that is, when an image acts as a ghost of other images produced later, acquiring posthumous lives.

Those other images of children, therefore, adhere to the case of Jonatas through a phantasmagoria (Rosa, 2017). At the same time, Jonatas also becomes part of this imaginary, in a process in which childhood considered untouchable is stained and brought into extreme contexts of violence.

The circulation of images, photos, illustrations, and montages in Jonatas's case constitutes an iconicity related to violence in the countryside and childhood. In other words, these materialities are part of the formation of imaginaries about violence in the countryside, land conflicts, and the reality of children in a situation of vulnerability. In this way, the absence of these images and representations or the refusal to analyze them causes Jonatas's assassination to return to the field of the unimaginable.

The return of the unimaginable in the daily catastrophe of conflicts in the countryside

Even when being part of an imaginary of violence against children, the difference in the visibility given to Jonatas's case is noticeable: the reality of his assassination is as cruel and inhumane as the reality of the assassinations of Thiago and Ágatha and the death of Aylan Kurdi, but his case is little remembered and little recognized as a violence against a child that must be combated as much as any other.

Unlike the cases of Ágatha and Thiago, who are victims of police violence in Rio de Janeiro, a topic of great debate in Brazil; and still very distant from Aylan Kurdi, whose case had a worldwide repercussion and whose photos even consolidated themselves as totem-images (Rosa, 2017; 2019), Jonatas's case resonates locally, in his territory and in the media of entities, such as the CPT. This is even stranger if we remember that, according to the survey carried out by the CPT, Jonatas was the only child (under 12) murdered in an attempted massacre in the countryside. The criterion of newsworthiness and the motto for social mobilization are present, but the repercussion does not come.

A hypothesis to be questioned takes us back to the finding that violence in the countryside is unfortunately not a topic of debate that gains prominence in the country, especially due to the opposition of hegemonic agribusiness agents involved in the land disputes. That is why, when we identify that Jonatas becomes a symbol of conflicts in the countryside, we also question to what extent he is in fact configured as a totem-image, capable of mobilizing visual, narrative, and imaginary operations that affect the daily catastrophe of conflicts in the countryside.

At first, we thought that perhaps the case was too shocking to be totemized, since the unimaginable walks alongside the shock-image (Sontag, 2003), the one that explicitly violence and suffering, having the power to shock and awaken emotions in spectators. They are images that have the potential to raise awareness, but that also lead to the trivialization of suffering, as it is unimaginable. But, as we could see, the images of Jonatas's case do not have the crudeness and the element of shock criticized by Susan Sontag (2003), because, although there are indices of violence, they do not show direct records of it.

So, in addition to that, we also question the validity of the configuration of Jonatas's image as a totem-image, that is, a symbol of violence in the countryside. Following Rosa's definition (2019), in the case of totem-images, "the image is configured in the fact itself, and the references made to it are, in fact, made in relation to the image." We do not recognize this expressively in Jonatas's images, since there is no valorization of a specific image or representation that is capable of acting alone as a symbol of child violence in agrarian conflicts in society in general.

In a more territorialized way, the repercussion of Jonatas's case and the circulation of his images in different media influenced acts, movements, and even the creation of the State Program for the Prevention of Agrarian and Collective Conflicts, carried out by Governor Paulo Câmara (PSB), who signed a decree allocating R\$ 2 million in investment and is within the scope of the Secretariat of Justice and Human Rights, with the aim of concentrating public policy to support people threatened in causes such as rural conflicts. In addition, on August 19, 2022, with the force that the protests gained, the government of Pernambuco decreed the expropriation of Engenho Roncadorzinho in favor of the families residing in the locality. In this way, it is evident that the images of the case as a whole symbolize and elaborate something about this violence, to the point of influencing real movements in society.

Final considerations

Our study aimed to understand the place of images in the reconfiguration/reimagination of a daily catastrophe – not just the catastrophic event of Jonatas's assassination, but the reality of struggle and oppression that in fact put him in this situation. For this, we sought to answer the following questions: What iconicity emerges in the circulation of images of Jonatas's case? And how does it consolidate him as a symbol (totem-image) of violence in the countryside?

Through Didi-Huberman's (2020) perspective on the importance of images against the unimaginable that we have to deal with as a society, we understand that the photos and representations of Jonatas's case place us before the imaginaries of violence in the countryside and against children in a situation of vulnerability. We also understand how Jonatas's images evoke other imaginaries and are part of the construction of so many others. In a way, the circulation of Jonatas's images goes beyond the paradigm of shock photos (Sontag, 2003).

We conclude the analysis of Jonatas's case with the understanding that there is an evolution in Jonatas's representation, chronologically and anachronistically, that goes from a factual event to becoming a symbol in the fight against violence in the countryside. We observe that the images associated with the case transmitted not only an isolated event, but established connections with agrarian violence and especially with other forms of child violence.

Thus, Jonata's case proved to be a representative element, instigating debates and actions, becoming a significant symbol of violence in rural areas. The circulation of these images reveals the power of visual representations in the construction of social narratives and their role in raising awareness and mobilizing on urgent issues, such as child violence and the struggle for justice in the countryside. In the case studied, the iconicity of Jonatas's case inverts the terms: his images do not just witness a murder, but elaborate the daily catastrophe of conflicts in the countryside.

We recognize that Jonata's case is permeated by countless other issues, such as the ethical and legal debate on the dissemination of his images, the social and regional issue briefly discussed in the analysis topics, and still many other cases of violence and child representation in journalistic media. In the present work, we do not propose to exhaust the debate issues about the case and violence in the countryside, but to instigate the discussion of it so that cases like Jonatas's are no longer a daily reality to which other children can be exposed in the future.

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RESUMO

O presente artigo analisa as imagens em circulação na cobertura midiática do caso de Jonas Santos, criança assassinada em uma situação de conflitos agrários no Brasil, no dia 10 de fevereiro de 2022, em Roncadorzinho, na zona rural de Barreiras (PE). Com base em Didi-Huberman (2020), Mondzain (2013; 2016) e Rosa (2017; 2019), buscamos compreender os ícones que emergem na cobertura do caso e as operações icônicas que constituem a imagem de Jonas como um símbolo das massacres no campo, embora retorne ao campo do inimaginável diante da condição dos conflitos agrários no Brasil como uma catástrofe cotidiana.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Jornalismo; Imagem; Circulação; Narrativa; Conflitos agrários

RESUMEN

El presente artículo analiza las imágenes que circulan en la cobertura mediática del caso de Jonas Santos, un niño asesinado en una situación de conflictos agrarios en Brasil el 10 de febrero de 2022, en Roncadorzinho, en la zona rural de Barreiras (PE). Basándonos en Didi-Huberman (2020), Mondzain (2013; 2016) y Rosa (2017; 2019), buscamos comprender los íconos que emergen en la cobertura del caso y las operaciones icónicas que constituyen la imagen de Jonas como un símbolo de las masacres en el campo, aunque regresa al ámbito de lo inimaginable ante la condición de los conflictos agrarios en Brasil como una catástrofe cotidiana.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Periodismo; Imagen; Circulación; Narrativo; Conflictos agrarios.