JOURNALISTIC INFORMATION

As Mediated by Communications Institutions

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ABSTRACT   In this study we present reflections from the Brazilian section of the research group studying The Hybridization and Creation of Media Genres, comprising researchers from Brazil, France, Canada and the Reunion Islands, involving 25 researchers in 10 different research centers. In the case of Brazil, we are working at the University of Brasilia (UnB) with a specific focus on "journalistic information mediated by communications institutions"). The epistemological design of the research is the theory of agenda-setting conceived as a reverse movement, that is, agenda-setting carried out backwards, from outside newsrooms to inside them by means of strategies developed and maintained by communications advisers, by Non-Governmental Organizationss that carry out advocacy with the media and by means of the media and other institutions that produce content for the conventional media at such a high level of specialization that they may be called 'source media'.

The legitimacy of journalism as a field of knowledge recognized as acting socially in the operational system it is involved in, tends to move towards the field of communicational hybridism without clear boundaries. Extending journalistic competences to the area of institutional communication is an attempt to replace the work of conventional journalism within the routines of news production. And it is within this area that forms of action and of influence affecting journalistic production entrusted to an institutionalized system of mediation are legitimized.[2]

Our work is founded on the hypothesis of the muddling up of the field of journalism (BOURDIEU, 1983,1997) based on a set of observations that are more or less shared by journalists and certain scholars (UTARD, 2003:66) concerning the phenomena of porosity and

contamination between practices that had traditionally been separated in the field of communication.

In the Brazilian context of the dissemination of information, a new actor stands out that is different from the traditional media. Among the communication media, both public and private, new vehicles of information are offered by professional and social organizations and even sectors of government. These are media maintained and administered by social actors that, until now, have only been performing the role of 'sources of information'. For this reason, we shall call them 'Source Media'.[3] These sources are, to a large extent, true political organizations. They act in the same way as interest groups which appear in the public area performing the role of political actors.[4] One aim of these groups is to have public visibility since in order to intervene in the public area in this post-modern period, it is necessary to be included in the 'media agenda'.

The press, traditionally perceived as an external spectator of events, is beginning to lose its complete domination of the information scene, and public opinion is starting to rely on information that has been collected, selected, editorially treated, filtered and disseminated by social entities or movements with corporate interests. Thus, this new media could also be classified as a 'Corporate Media', an information media that is concerned, nevertheless, not only with transmitting 'intra-corporate' information but mainly with filling the agenda with the sectorial point of view of general events. It is a vehicle that offers society the perspective of the socio-political segment that supports it and also allows it to have a role in the creation of the public sector. This phenomenon brings to the sphere of the media a diversity that is rare in the Brazilian scene and little known in other parts of the planet.

Along with a powerful commercial press and an extremely precarious public system, which practically are limited to being the spokesmen of power, the 'source media' try to interfere in the newsmaking process and in the creation of collective images, mainly in the opinion-making sector.

The organization of media apparatus to schedule, coerce or even replace the press is not new for it has been a typical phenomenon at specific moments in history. What we are focusing on here is the organization of large-scale systems for mediation, agenda-setting and advocacy within a democratic context and to meet the challenge of possible changes. Political, economic and public areas of power have begun to require their own professionalized structures to 'offer' content to private companies and to interfere directly in agenda-setting.

The 'source media' today have available, for example, printed and electronic newspapers and radio stations such as that of the MST (Landless Rural Workers' Movement). Public opinion may obtain information from the radio stations of the army and of the two houses of the National Congress - the Chamber of Deputies and the Federal Senate. Several municipal and state legislatures also have their own television stations as well as newspapers and news agencies. At the corporate level, the National Confederations of Industries and Transportation operate their own television channels. Entities such as the Sole Workers' Central Organization (Central Única dos Trabalhadores - CUT) the Brazilian Bar Association (Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil - OAB) and the Federal Medical Council (Conselho Federal de Medicina - CFM), as well as feminist and homosexual movements, are active both via cable and/or satellite. In the area of religion, the neo-Pentecostal Universal Church of the Kingdom of God owns the third largest national open television network and the largest circulation weekly magazine in Brazil (1.5 million copies). To communicate with the 125.5 million Catholics, the Catholic Church has 190 radio stations and six television networks broadcasting throughout the entire country.[5]

This phenomenon also includes the production of magazines and radio and TV programs as well as various news agencies, some of which specialize in disseminating to the traditional media material already formatted for immediate broadcasting/publication. These are the so-called 'radio releases' and 'electronic releases' that do away with the need for radio and TV stations to employ journalists. These services are eagerly accepted by the traditional media because, as well as having satisfactory content, they reduce costs by requiring less human resources in the newsrooms.

The rise of the 'source media' may be seen as a process of transformation of journalism - a phenomenon resulting from structural or transitory factors[6] - caused by the socio-cultural structure of Brazil. Another option would be to see them as the fruit of the maturation of a historical process of acquisition by these sources of communication techniques and tools described by Schlesinger[7] as the 'professionalization of sources'. Regardless of the theoretical approach adopted, certain doubts remain. How may we classify information disseminated by the 'source media'? Journalism? Propaganda? Would it be better to include it in the field of Public Relations or even lobbying? How does the professional working in this area fit in? If journalists are not working for a vehicle of communication with a traditional format, do they cease to be journalists?

Because these media are linked to institutional communication strategies and seek to have influence on the public sphere, may we class those working in them as being a cross between journalists and lobbyists, a kind of 'influence journalist'? Or perhaps an 'interested informer', to use the phrase coined in the 1970s by the Uruguayan Olarreaga to define professionals "who are connected to the event and are interested in giving it publicity".[8] How much credibility does information have with the public if it is disseminated by this type of media? There are many such questions and we do not intend to provide a full and definitive answer but rather to provide elements for a debate on this situation.

The Brazilian Scenario

In Brazil, the combination of certain factors, among which we would highlight the political situation, the profile of the historical development of human resources in journalism, of the trade union movement, the technical development of the instruments of communication and, in particular, the discontent with the state of the existing 'agenda', have helped to shape a particular scenario. This scenario is fertile ground for the birth and proliferation of a press maintained by sources, a corporate press that has begun to act in parallel with the classic press. Historically, this scenario has been formed, among other factors, by society's need to inform and be informed without being controlled by the military dictatorship, by a strong media monopoly, by a statute that guaranteed journalists their professional standing even outside journalistic newsrooms, by an economic crisis that forced the press to reduce its professional staff, and by the introduction of new technologies.

In the years of the military dictatorship (1964-85) opposition political forces, faced with a press that was censored, that censored itself or was even a partisan of the regime, sought within the area of institutional communication, especially in the heart of trade union, religious and community organizations (where the thinking of the left found the largest number of sympathizers and militants) a place from which to attempt to affect the content of the 'agenda' proposed by the system.[9] The 1980s were the first years in which Decree No. 83,284/79 was applied, which gave the description 'journalistic' to a range of activities regardless of where they were carried out. Legal protection for the presence of journalists in institutional communications favored the migration of reporters who carried with them the values and the journalistic techniques they had accumulated in the newsrooms.[10] The sum of these elements meant that,

even at the beginning of the 1980s, the institutional communications structures of the entities cited acted as a counterpoint to the 'official agenda' as expressed by traditional press. This institutional press took its place in Brazil as did the *presse de gauche* in France and sowed the seed which gave birth to a new model of institutional communication.

In order to understand this phenomenon we must place it within the historical and professional development of journalism. Because of the large number of regulations, professional communication activities in Brazil suffer severe restrictions from a legal point of view. These professional restrictions arise from a model of legal organization of the Brazilian labor market which, in the case of Social Communication, gave rise to four distinct careers: Journalism, Advertising, Radio and Public Relations.

The professional situation therefore is decided by academic training and not by employment profile. Thus, a person who studied journalism at the university will always be a journalist even though he or she works in another profession. This characteristic, linked with the specific functions of each of the areas of social communication, results in a large part of the job offers, both in public sectors (governments, administration and government-owned companies) and private (including NGOs and civil organizations), will be reserved for journalists, as happens in civil service examinations in the area of communication, many of these examinations requiring a degree and professional registration as a journalist, as prerequisites.

In Brazil, the area of journalism is institutionalized and legitimized through legal structures (labor laws regulating the practice of journalism, university degrees, trade union campaigns) and pragmatic rules that are the result of agreements established within the routines of production. In Brasilia there is a rich source of hundreds of high-level professionals scattered among various categories which interconnect and meet at tenuous frontiers in the network of daily journalistic production, sharing the same fields. Journalism and communication are almost synonymous and those working in these fields work sometimes in one and sometimes in the other. But they all describe themselves as journalists because their profession is decided by the degree they obtained in communications faculties, specializing in journalism, which is registered at the Labor Ministry and is required by employers so that they may practice their profession. But in recent years, for various reasons examined here, the area of journalism *per se* has been shrinking in comparison to the area

of communication (in other words, communication advisers working for private companies or public institutions).

The role of the communication advisory structures has assumed a vital importance in the industrial process of news production. It is difficult to identify what is the cause and what is the consequence. History indicates that, on one hand, the media have reduced the size of their teams, done away with specialized journalistic coverage, dispensed with professionals specializing in topics felt to be of secondary editorial importance in terms of the new commercial paradigm, and have begun to act in these areas working almost entirely with institutional information. In certain areas, almost all news production has begun to be asserted, or at least mediated, by the sources themselves.

The reduction in the numbers of journalists has sharpened the interest on the part of various institutions in guaranteeing exposure in the media. In 1986, institutional communication structures within the private sector were responsible for employing numbers equivalent to the total amount of journalists working for all the radio and television stations, newspapers and magazines in the country, around 10,000 professionals on each side of the counter, some of them working on both sides at the same time. Journalists who, in the past, had been excellent reporters specialized in the areas of health, education or in legal, environmental and indigenous matters and even in the areas of economics and politics, still worked in the same areas but on the other side of the news. Today they are responsible for providing the media in a general way with information that in the past would have been reserved for one single media.

In contrast to what has happened in other countries, the corporate aspect of Brazilian journalism, that is the National Federation of Journalists (Federação Nacional de Jornalistas - FENAJ), and trade unions, does not oppose the new structure. On the contrary, it has defended the idea that the area of press advisers should perform journalistic functions and should thus be staffed only by those who are professionally registered. It could be said that journalists have taken over an area that already existed, through which passed advertising and public relations personnel, journalists and jacks-of-all-trades without any training, and have constructed a new territory. Just like the militants of the MST, journalists have invaded, set up camp in and taken over an area that they felt to be theirs by right. Moreover, journalists and their representative entities have combined forces to make the State, society and journalists themselves accept the activities related to communication advisory services as a 'field of journalism'.

The development of communication technologies and the increased activity of public and private advisory services have therefore forced a re-contextualization of the area of professional competencies. Journalism is one of these areas, constituted as a specialized competence in the field of social narratives (Bourdieu and Rodrigues). Produced within a strongly institutionalized system, defined by specific labor laws and specialized academic training, journalism is migrating towards an environment of mixed competences shared by various professionals. In an article entitled "In crisis, journalism seeks new roles" published on the website *Comunique-se* (8/27/2004), columnist Carlos Chaparro states:

> Today society is protected by institutions that perform the role of watching over the carrying out the aims that are characteristic of democracy. For example: the Public Prosecutor Service, the consumer protection agencies (Procons), the Parliamentary Inquiries, the Task Forces, the Regulatory Agencies and so many other entities. In one way or another, all of these institutions have taken on functions and actions which journalism previously believed were its own. This has brought about the identity crisis that affects us. This is the issue that requires urgent discussion: what are the role, functions and actions of journalism, not in a dictatorship but in a democracy, as it stands at the moment?[11]

According to Labor Ministry data for 2002, a period of economic instability for the Brazilian press, journalists described as "outside newsrooms"[12] experienced employment stability which their colleagues in the newsrooms did not have. While newspapers and magazines reduced their journalistic staff by 18.55% and radio and television stations took on only 1.88% more staff, private sector press advisory services increased their staff by 16.46%. This indicates that even at times of economic crisis, Brazilian sources do not cease to develop strategic actions to influence the process of constructing information. In this sense, different professional structures are created that work as real factories in the pre-production and pre-development of content that will impinge upon the agenda of the traditional media.

According to the *Comunique-se* report, clients in the areas of health and technology and computing (46.49% and 40.54% of the clients belong to these areas) are those who most seek out the work of institutional communication agencies. The Third Sector is in third place with 32.97%, while the automobile sector has only 17.84% of the agency accounts and is among those sectors of the economy that least contract communication work. According to the executive secretary of Abracom, Carlos Carvalho,

quoted in the same report, it is more advantageous for institutions to outsource this service than to create their own internal structures since the agencies can offer a wider range of services.[13]

The same columnist quoted above recognizes that there exists something more than just a reflection of a situation of recession in the newsrooms. Journalistic activity itself is undergoing changes in its appearance:

> [...] organized society has broadened and sharpened its ability to intervene directly in the political and social world by means of NGOs and an infinite number of entities in all areas of human activity. With one detail, that has profoundly changed the nature of journalism: what characterizes the power to act of modern institutions is the ability and competence to use news as a form of intervention. That is, the ability and competence to create and disseminate news content which previously seemed to belong to the newsrooms.

> Those who, among us journalists, do not recognize the new face of the world of news, or do not like it, have missed the passing of time. It is surprising that among us journalists there are still those who feel it would be preferable to have a society without these institutions which are today watching over the essence of democracy and that, in their place, there should be a kind of journalism that would even function as a police force, the so-called 'fourth power', supposedly the guardian of democratic ideas - as if this were possible and desirable.

Journalism: a mine field

The conceptual construction of this study requires the use of Bourdieu's[14] field theory to analyze the interference and hybridization found in the field of journalism that seems to us to be mined with outside interference. The journalistic companies have lost their monopoly of news-production. The sources have created their own media and try to interfere in the work of the conventional media; they are the 'source media', in Sant'Anna's words.[15] And when these sources pour forth from the structured political power that rules the country, the different genres become mixed together, their functions are turned upside down, challenges and the play of interests become opaque and indistinguishable to society in general. It is not clear who the symbolic capital of the different fields in operation belongs to. If for Bourdieu, symbolic capital is superior to other types of capital because it gives meaning to the world and permeates all fields, who does the 'power to make people believe'

belong to - the 'source media' or journalists in the conventional media? And if journalism's power to 'make people believe' is diluted in different forms of activity, from the agency reporter to the press adviser, from the specialized journalist to the journalist/employee who has passed a civil service examination and works for the State, whom do we believe?

The power to 'make people believe' is linked to journalism's image of credibility and this is still the greatest capital in the field of journalism. Apparently, all segments of journalism performed in the sphere of power or of private businesses claim credibility, but can they all claim this legitimately?

The field of journalism is important in the social world because it has a real monopoly of the instruments of production and large-scale dissemination of events that can influence other fields. The field of journalism is a universe built on opposites which at the same time are both objective and subjective; every newspaper and every journalist has a place in a network of strategies.

Field theory is very useful here to explain this phenomenon. A 'field' is a universe in which the characteristics of the producer are defined by his or her position in relation to production and by the position he or she occupies in specific areas of objective relationships.[16] The field of journalism should be understood as a system defined by restraints and pressures at three different levels: the legal (press laws, professional regulations, etc.); that which is constructed by means of professional techniques and finally, the group formed by economic concerns.[17] We would add two more groups in particular: that of professional ideological aspects and that of socio-cultural aspects. Field theory allows us to allocate relatively autonomous social space limited by the extent to which participants adhere to a set of values. Conventions of behavioral practices between actors such as, in the case of journalism, the use of 'off the record material', the anonymity of sources and ethical precepts, constitute the 'capital', the idea that allocates the symbolic, economic, etc. resources.[18]

The political field enters the field of journalism in particular through the power of government bodies that have a monopoly of legitimate information (official sources). As Stuart Hall points out, this omnipotence does not exactly belong to the media. The latter is just one instrument used by powerful social groups. These 'accredited sources' are granted not only the ability to specify what topics the press will cover, but also the respective line of approach, the angle and also the position of being

constantly present in the process of the progress of and reaction to journalistic coverage of the topics proposed by them. These are what the author calls "first definers" or "primary definers".[19]

Lima (1993: 15) starts from the hypothesis that the practice of journalism in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, has a unique aspect. It has "its own routines and subcultures" and a type of journalism that he calls "official" as a result of the special fact that Brasilia is home to the three branches of the Republic. Journalism in Brasilia was born together with the city which, in turn, was born when the Federal capital was transferred from Rio de Janeiro.

According to Lima, the concentration of journalists in capital cities, headquarters of government bureaucracy, reinforces the general tendency, both professional and administrative in journalism, of favoring institutional stable sources, in other words, official sources. In Brazil this tendency was even stronger during the 21 years of the military regime since the centralization of power and the direct or indirect censorship gave journalists no other alternative.

It is by means of journalists that politicians achieve public visibility. In other words, no visibility is possible without the media. And what do the source media, belonging to public institutions or private businesses seek if it is not to give visibility to their actions, which the 'gatekeepers' do not always notice if left to their own devices? It is clear that the larger the media audience, the greater the effect of the desired visibility. We know that the field of journalism is under pressure from the economic field by means of audience ratings. But this field also exerts strong pressure on other fields, mainly the political field where nothing is done without vested interests and where what is hidden does not exist, unless what is hidden means prevarication.

For this reason journalism has always been national since in Brasilia (the Federal District) are concentrated branches of the most important newspapers in the country, which operate as a means of disseminating political facts directly connected to government decisions. Even though branch office newsrooms have 'shrunk' in the last 10 years, those professionals working in the branches are among the best paid journalists in the country.

The institutional communication sector today represents more than 40% of the local journalism market, estimated at consisting of 6,000 professionally registered journalists.[20] This is one of the largest concentrations of professional people in the country, equivalent to

one per 334 inhabitants. Just in the media (radio, TV, news agency and newspaper) of the Chamber of Deputies and the Senate, there are more than 200 journalists without counting those who are working individually for congressmen and political parties. There are also hundreds of advertising and public relations people who are working for the communication agencies of public entities and who, in one way or another, have an impact on producing material utilized by the media.

Transition and hybridization

The migration of journalists to the advisory sector and the attraction of civil service examinations may be explained in part by the crisis of media companies, almost all of which are in debt, and by the precarious nature of working conditions offered in the newsrooms.

Faced with working days that can last for 12 hours, reduced salaries, the lack of stable contracts accompanied by formal registration of employees´ work books (companies prefer to hire firms instead of individuals), professional journalists, whether young recent graduates or weary veterans, are all rushing for government positions. At this time of transition and migration it is becoming necessary for the academic field to investigate the events that are affecting journalism as a profession that has historically been built as a result of the changes that have occurred in the field of journalism and which are affecting the status and identity of the journalist.

The new journalist is a hybrid professional with the profile of a chameleon, sometimes identified with the newsroom routines, sometimes as a press adviser, sometimes as a journalist/employee. He or she may also be 'producing content' for an Internet website in a private company, in an NGO or working in the context of 'advocacy' of the public and/or socio-humanitarian causes. Perhaps he or she is no longer even performing typical journalistic functions (reporting, writing, editing and publishing) but has become a high-level and well-paid professional whose specialty is to be an 'articulator' with the press.

From the legal aspect, Brazilian labor courts have made contradictory decisions, sometimes recognizing press advisers as journalists, sometimes not giving them those rights. In order to clear up these contradictions once and for all, at the request of Fenaj, a bill is undergoing consideration by the Brazilian Congress which will include the function of press adviser among those reserved for journalists.[21]

But, as journalist Ricardo Noblat[22] points out, the problem is not restricted to legal interpretation; the press adviser cannot be considered to be a journalist because he or she does not have the independence necessary to practice journalism. This claim has re-ignited controversy between defenders and critics of this professional inclusion.

Leaving aside the numerous traditional definitions of journalism, we shall simplify the question and say that journalism is investigative and produces news for the public consumer of commercial media, while the press adviser produces guidelines, whether or not in the form of press releases, resulting from a very complex activity but which may be summarized as being a task consisting in helping the client to decide what is news or not and to have a close relationship with the press.

According to Hartz[23] this is where much of the confusion arises. The cultural tradition that comes from training and is fed by continual experience in the profession is in some cases translated into a pride in belonging to the profession. In other cases this background may serve as a bargaining counter to gain prestige with clients. And perhaps in some cases the two hypotheses are mixed. Leaving subjectivism aside, Hartz believes that journalists' unions increase the confusion by wanting to maintain the two types of professionals as members.

But it is Philip Schlesinger (1992) who questions the idea of the 'media-centrism' of studies focusing on the view of journalism as the single active protagonist in the production of information. Schlesinger invites us to reflect on the professionalization of sources and ability of the latter to develop a strategic rationality based on anticipating journalistic routines and practices in order to provide 'ready-to-publish' material.

The Struggle for a Space in the Public Sphere

The existence of alternative mechanisms to disseminate ideas, values, messages and concepts should be seen as a search for space in the public sphere, as a dispute to win a piece, big or small, hegemonic or not, of a place in the sun in our contemporary society. Our reference point is the struggle for a space within the public sphere, along the lines defined by Habermas (1992: 195). According to the latter, the objectives of the dispute are the media and the content of the messages disseminated. The conflict we refer to may be of an ideological nature. If, in normal language, all words are already seen as instruments of combat, as Bourdieu specified (2002: 12), the mechanisms of mass diffusion of information take on therefore a much more strategic aspect. Those who

have legitimating strength, who have access to the resources that create and guarantee this symbolic power, the means of communication, have the advantage of symbolic power.[24]

Even before the existence of electronic means of communication, Marx and Engels already associated the ability to produce information and disseminate ideas with the relationship between social classes. For them the dominant ideas in the public sphere are those of the dominant class. The class that owns material power at the heart of society is at the same time the dominant intellectual power of that society.[25] Modernising Marxist terminology we may say that dominant ideas make up the 'agenda' and that the class that holds material power in society also has more resources to influence the process of 'agenda-setting'.[26]

Thus we learn that the struggle for the content of the agenda is contained in Marx's writings since it represents in fact a dispute for predominance within the public sphere of certain ideas. Because of this predominance, these ideas can influence, among other effects, the definition of official policy, favoring or hindering this or that social sector. Control of the communication media and of the symbolic currents takes on "a crucial role as instruments of power in modern societies",[27] since they define the material practices, forms and the meaning of money, time and space and set the rules of the social game.[28] In short, being part of the agenda is an attempt to ensure an ideological reference point in a society.

At a time when the means of communication are becoming battlefields, 'setting the agenda' is now done based on different agenda-setting initiatives. Dissemination of content is at the center of this conflict and technological development has provided the communications media with the strategic potential to influence the public sphere. The work of the media and the ability of citizens to influence the public sphere are directly linked.[29] When modern society made strategic use of the communication media, it developed the ideal conditions for organized groups to become key players in the process of shaping the public sphere. This characteristic is stronger among groups than among individual citizens.[30]

The importance of political marketing techniques and public relations in the process of building content disseminated by the the mass communications media has been pointed out for many years.[31] Bourdieu states that "production of representations of the social world, which is a basic dimension of the political struggle, is almost a monopoly of the intellectuals". The other part of this monopoly, we would say, is in the hands of economic forces. They all act as spokesmen defending group

interests. Thus, if in the Marxist view the dominant ideology expresses the interests of the dominant group (the ideas that comprise the ideology are paradigms that articulate the ambitions, interests and decisions of the socially dominant groups within a particular historical period) and if the means of communication are key parts of the mechanism that makes those dominant concepts prevail within the social sphere, it therefore becomes strategically important to control them or at least to influence the content that has been disseminated to the masses by the media.

Guareschi (2004: 64) points out that in society three types of power regularly co-exist: the economic, based on the means of production; the political, based on the hegemony of social relationships; and the symbolic, "whose base is the legitimizing power and which represents today one of the most important, owing mainly to the development of the communication media". In Brazil the nature of the country has produced a symbiosis of these powers because the political class controls most of the mass communication media, mainly radio and TV, which in the past were political bargaining chips and at the same time, when the politicians are not actually their owners, they represent the interests of the economic class on the national stage.

There are many occasions in contemporary Brazilian history when the press has shown partiality. In order to further its own interests or those of others, it has disguised or ignored the reality of events, disseminating false information or simply ignoring topics that went against the interests of the hegemonic classes. As the author observes, this helped to develop a growing awareness among the organized sectors of Brazilian society.[32]

In order to analyze today´s journalism it is useful to study the effects of economic forces on the production of information.[33] It is also useful to study the effects of political forces although here and there the two coincide. Analysis of the dissemination of information cannot be founded on innocent bases as it is a strategic weapon. In addition to the political and social control aspects already mentioned, the system works through commercial parameters in which the prevailing viewpoint involves the creation of mass audiences and increased billing. In other words, information is treated as merchandise and is at the same time the target of the activities of various ideological fields.

The idea of the 'agenda'[34] may be understood as being the dissemination of a set of themes, values and concepts propagated in a prioritized and favored manner by the communication media. The 'agenda' is the result of a battle fought by the forces of action and reaction. Research has shown that the opinions of the majority of society are influenced by the opinions

of a very small group of social actors who have facilities for making their ideas known.[35] In the process of 'agenda-setting' the communication media not only choose the topics to be debated by society but also, more seriously, influence the values, opinions and feelings that individuals will have concerning the world around them.[36]

Communication, with the weapons it has developed, represents a strategic arsenal in this conflict. This set of information hanging over and passing through the social environment is capable of exercising pressure and influence on political, economic and social powers. We can say, by means of this warlike metaphor, that the instruments of communication, depending on their situational and structural complexities, can develop guerrilla activities or even large-scale combat, openly and frontally. To parody Becker[37], the media 'agenda' is, like social reality, the fruit of actions that provoke the confrontation of social actors.

Hybridization of Genres

The concept of genre adopted in this study is based on the supposition that in the exercise of social practices[38], including journalism, discourse genres are used. According to Bakhtin (2003:261), "all the various fields of human activity are linked to the use of language". The effective use of language occurs in the form of statements associated with the particular conditions and aims of each field. Thus, each area of language use possesses 'relatively stable types' of statements: the discourse genres.

The discourse genre, according to Bakhtin, is characterized by three elements: thematic content, linguistic style and compositional structure. These are not static instruments; on the contrary, they are malleable, dynamic and plastic events. As Bakhtin (op. cit.) emphasizes: "the wealth and diversity of discourse genres are infinite because the possibilities of multiform human activities are endless".

The hybrid products, with "codes that are ever more turbid, volatile and lacking defined shapes" (UTARD, 2001) are, from the point of view of discourse practices, chances for creative production and reconfiguration of genres (PINHEIRO, 2002). In this sense, hybrid products (or mixed genres) would result from a mixing of genres based on the idea of mobility and/or confrontation between two or more genre systems.

Analogous to the processes of mixing discourse genres, the creation of hybrid professional categories within journalism is formed both by the social practices that surround it and also by the power relationships. Thus, studies on the hybridization of professional genres may be better

analyzed from the point of view of a dialectical relationship between the structural conditions of society and the actions of media producers as actors inserted in the social process.

The objective conditions for this phenomenon are inserted into the context of the reshaping of capitalism through the formation of a 'network society' or 'knowledge society' (CASTELLS, 1999; ORTEGA and HUMANES, 2001) in which the media have come to occupy a new space among power relationships. This is what Octavio Ianni (1988) states when he attributes to the communication media the function of the "Electronic Prince", because they possess political hegemony in society, a role formerly performed by the political party, the "Modern Prince" of Gramscian theory.

Like the "Electronic Prince", the media would be able to articulate their own characteristics (*virtu*) to suit the socio-political conditions (*fortuna*) in which they act. In this sense, the communication media would adapt to a social context identified by the emergence of the new digital technologies, by the phenomenon of globalization and by the reconfiguration of 'classical' social institutions by bringing political disputes within the territory of the media.

In this context it is possible to understand the strategy for wining over public opinion on the part of political institutions and social movements by creating their own communication media, the source media. When they try to interfere with the guidelines of the conventional media by disseminating a political-governmental agenda, these institutions recognize the preponderant role of the 'electronic prince' as an instrument for exercising political hegemony. That is, just as the Catholic Church tried to enter the political party system at the end of the 19th century with the aim of taking part in hegemonic disputes within Italian society (Gramsci, 1980), other social groups are now "becoming media" and also providing journalistic-style news and information.

Journalists are therefore losing their monopoly on news production. Other professions historically linked to the area of communication are advancing on the frontiers that used to define journalism. This is explained in part by the social position that the media occupy today, and also by the very vagueness of the limits of the profession of journalism.

This precarious status has traditionally been seen as a strategy for maintaining and expanding the professional territory of journalism and a way for the profession to adapt its field to social change. This does not, however, eliminate the risk of the profession fragmenting or disappearing. In the present scenario journalists do not have a monopoly of professional

practices built up over time and defined in law. And even its legitimacy in the public eye – as social mediators, belonging to a 'fourth estate' – is now also being contested. Thus, nothing guarantees that journalists can survive this process of hybridization of genres between journalism and communication.

On the other hand it is possible to defend, as do the Spanish authors Ortega and Humanes (2001) the idea that journalism is "something more" than a profession in decline. Indeed, the social role of journalists is not restricted only to producing abundant contextualized information. When they link up with hegemonic political institutions, with the new 'princes', journalists become real "organic intellectuals" (GRAMSCI, 1979). Their status and social function are based on the manner in which they relate to and integrate with the communicative confusion that has taken over media corporations. As intellectuals, journalists create a reality that they want to control, but which is beyond their intentions. The journalist's function is, therefore, to systematize the production and distribution of culture based on inescapable principles of behavior – production routines – that work in the same way as scientific paradigms.

Thus the processes of mixing professional and discursive genres represent not the end of a profession but the collapse of a myth: the archetype of the liberal journalist, a figure that perhaps never existed (ORTEGA and HUMANES, 2001). The end of the monopoly of the production and dissemination of information (hastened along even more by the advent of the Internet) points only to the need for revaluing the journalist's political role (MORETZSOHN, 2002). Indeed, to the extent that relations between the media and political institutions are becoming increasingly turbid, there is even more need for the journalist to resolve an old contradiction.

The Perspective of Inter-subjectivity

From what has been explained up to this point, it becomes necessary to carry out an exploratory exercise in terms of perspective, taking into account the actors and tendencies involved in this process of transformation of journalism, especially in relation to those professional practices described as journalistic.

Part of the crisis today´s journalism is going through is due to the conflicts concerning what may be legitimately termed the 'practice of journalism' and which involves at least three trends: the first, which we shall call 'liberal', sees journalism as a practice that is intrinsic to freedom

of expression and which, for that reason, should not be controlled nor regulated, under penalty of restricting a basic right proclaimed by many normative and legal institutions but especially by what has been established in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

The second trend, the 'corporative' one, sees the right of association and self-regulation within a paid civil practice to which technical knowledge and ethical principals contribute, as being equally legitimate.

The third, which we shall call 'inter-subjective', is an emerging category, a synthesis of the previous two but which presupposes different degrees of technical, institutional and ethical organization in order to provide society with information services, especially taking into account the fact that public interest cannot remain solely at the mercy of agents that exploit information as a commercial product. Transmitting information and ideas (freely and without interference) was, and always will be, a basic precept of democratic life. Different levels of technical and productive rationalization have, however, followed each other during the technical and productive development of societies, making information a product requiring high production costs and thus offering difficult and restrictive access at best, influenced by the costs of acquiring and maintaining radio and television equipment or even paying for copies or subscriptions to newspapers, magazines and now electronic services including the Internet.

From the citizen's perspective, if we assume that he or she takes an equidistant position, there would be a greater diversity of information if, instead of an antithesis between 'investigative journalism' and 'institutional journalism', they complemented each other. They both have their original sins, indelible marks of their origin: the former is defined by the logic of its news-values and therefore a marketing logic. Information that is in the public interest, as we know, does not always appeal to the market because it is not always 'interesting'. The latter is defined by business and organizational, in short institutional, interest. In other words, it is born stamped with the mark of involvement even if it is a mark of involvement with social and public causes.

We may say that the two types of journalism co-exist in terms of mutual rejection or at best, suspicion. The 'investigative' journalists deny the authenticity and therefore the legitimacy of the 'corporative' journaliss. The 'corporative' journalists (or advisors, or lobbyists, or 'advocates' of the most varied causes), allege that the commercial media select only those facts and information that will guarantee readership, audiences and advertising sponsors. In Brazil large-scale institutional

information systems have been set up to act in a complementary way alongside the commercial media and even taking the part of the latter, supplying without charge and spontaneously material that the latter has generally not gone to the trouble of directly covering. Nevertheless, apart from the 'original sins' that show the origin of the information and services constructed around them, we may suppose that this very co-existence might be capable of generating complementary offers that would thus be favorable to a diversification of information since, strictly speaking, the 'investigative' and the 'institutional' systems do not intend to compete but to present themselves as alternatives to each other, which suggests the hypothesis that, from this abstract but real *locus*, which is the citizen, there might exist a function that is not antithetical but cooperative, between the systems of 'information' (journalistic, investigative or denunciatory) and of 'communication' (institutional, promotional or advertising) thus creating a form of moderation resulting from the checks and balances.

We must also bear in mind that certain aspects of the 'public agenda' that require 'information' and 'communication' transcend the environments of newsrooms and organizations and acquire a global dimension or, on a more philosophical semantic level, a universal one. This is what happens, for example, with the global construction of agendas concerning the environment, natural resources, collective risks and the technical, technological and scientific questions that affect the planet and humanity. In the face of these questions that are of such relevant interest and have such wide application, corporate and identity conflicts become less important while the dramatic nature of the 'events' will not economize in terms of language, narrative and support, as shown by the very complementary nature that already exists in the launching of large-scale public campaigns to which both the institutional formats and the investigative, advertising and commercial (including 'merchandising') contribute. At given moments in the media we will encounter economic and commercial initiatives sponsoring socially mobilizing events and actions. As certain writers have already pointed out (some critically), even large-scale humanitarian movements end up by relying on media and promotional support that at times even degenerates into a spectacle.

Conclusions

This article, produced by a group of researchers who have transversal and complementary views on the theme of journalistic information produced outside the newsrooms, does not intend to present a conclusion. The research is still ongoing and we would prefer to give some indications of concluding perspectives. We know that society daily produces events and occurrences which, in the world of journalism, can be turned into news if there is public interest. But the criteria of newsworthiness between conventional journalism (private sector media) and source media journalism (government, NGOs, social movements), do not always coincide. Our research allows us to state that, from the point of view of the citizen (the receiver of news) there is a desire to see a complementary relationship between the two types of journalism. On the one hand investigative (denunciatory) journalism and on the other, institutional (advertising) journalism produced for corporations or organized public and state entities, in the most recent media phenomenon such as the 'source media'.

As for journalists, they continue to be privileged mediators in the public area revisited by Walton (1997: 380), since they move through all the areas: from the common area (circulation and expression), to the public area (discussion) and the political area (decision).

NOTES

1   Professors/researchers belonging to SOJOR (the Journalism and Society Study Group) of the Faculty of Communication of the University of Brasilia (UnB) who belong to the REJ (Network for Journalism Studies, France).

2   In April, 2002 the Brazilian Association of Communications Agencies - Abracom, (www.abracom.org.br) - was founded in Brazil, bringing together 66 firms that provide services in the press advisory, communications consultancy, public relations, event promotion, seminars and workshops, and institutional publicity areas, among others This body aims to consolidate and broaden the market for communications agencies "following high standards of professionalization and business competence".

3   SANT'ANNA, Francisco, 2005.SANT'ANNA, Francisco, 2005.

4   OFFERLÉ, Michel, 1994, p.47.

5   The *Folha Universal* claims a print-run of 1.250 million copies per edition. The Catholic Church also runs the website www.catolicanet.com.br that receives more than 600,000 hits per month and sends messages to 70,000 Catholics per day. (CAMPBELL, Ulisses, *in* Correio Braziliense, 2/29/2004. p. 14).

6   CHARRON, Jean-Marie e BONVILLE, Jean *in* Communication – vol.17, Quebec, 1996, p.17.

7   SCHLESINGER, Philip *in* Resseaux n° 51, 1992, p. 75-99.

8   OLARREAGA, Manuel, 1971, *apud* BELTRÃO, Luiz, 1980, p.87.

9   The option for institutional communications structures led subsequently to the decadence of the so-called 'dwarf press', which also had an effect on the political scenario with the content it conveyed.

10   The criterion of social change, of the transformation of profiles and of professional areas caused by social, economic and cultural situations that create new 'frontiers' to be occupied, is also valid. (RUELLAN, Denis, 1993, p. 47).

11   http://www.comunique-se.com.br/ dated 27/08/2004.

12   By 'outside newsrooms' is meant press advisory services, companies producing video, photojournalism and editing publications in journalistic format, etc.

13   Cf. Jornal Brasileiro de Ciências da Comunicação, Year 7, N. 261 - São Bernardo do Campo, São Paulo, Brazil – August, 2004.

14   According to Bourdieu, field theory enables us to perceive the particular in the general and the general in the particular.

15   SANT'ANNA, Francisco, 2005.

16   BOURDIEU, Pierre, 2002, p. 82 (Trans. the authors).

17   RIEFFEL, Rémy, 1984, p.24.

18   NEVEU, Erik, 2001, p. 36.

19 For more details, see HALL, Stuart et al., 1978 and HALL, Stuart, in: TRAQUINA, Nelson (org.), 1993, pp. 224-248.

20 Data from the Professional Journalists Union of the Federal District, 2000.

21 In 2005, the committees for Labor and Social Action and the Constitution and Justice Committee of the Chamber of Deputies unanimously approved the bill updating regulations concerning journalists. The bill is an initiative of the National Federation of Journalists (Fenaj) and had been in the Chamber since 1995. At the start of 2003 it was re-presented. Bill 708/03 is now waiting to be voted on by the Federal Senate. The bill updates various journalistic functions that were not included in the existing legislation, such as the functions of the press adviser.

22 Article published in the journal *Comunicação Empresarial*, of Aberje, and on the site *Comunique-se.*

23 Journalist and director of Hartz – article « Comunicação Corporativa » published on the site of Observatório da Imprensa, 7/2/2003 (www.observatoriodaimprensa.org.br).

24 GUARESCHI, Pedrinho and others, 2000, p. 64.

25 THOMPSON, John B., 1995, p. 54.

26 Here we adopt the terminology created by Nelson Traquina to express in Portuguese the English idea of *agenda-setting.*

27 THOMPSON, John B., 1995, p. 45.

28 HARVEY, David, 1993, p. 207.

29 SCHLESINGER, Philip and TUMBER, Howard, 1995, p.8.

30 HABERMAS, J., 1992, p. 207.

31 Op.Cit.

32 Op.Cit., p. 68.

33 CHAMPAGNE, Patrick e MARCHETTI, Dominique *in* Actes de la Recherche en sciences sociales, 2000, p. 4.

34 J.B. MANHREIM defines 'agenda' as being "the temporal or spatial areas where, within publications or broadcasts available to the public, topics, actors, events, images and points of view are gathered." *apud* SCHLESINGER, Philip and TUMBER, 1995.

35 McCOMBS, Maxwell E; and SHAW, Donald L., in TRAQUINA, N. (org.), 2000.

36 MARSHALL, Leandro, 2003, p.56.

37 BECKER, Howard, 1985, Chap. 8.

38 Practices are habitual methods in specific time and space, in which people use material or symbolic resources in order to act together in the world. They are a connecting point between abstract structures (and their mechanisms) and concrete events; between 'society' and people who are living their lives. (CHOULIARAKI and FAIRCLOUGH, 1999: 21). CHOULIARAKI, Lilie; FAIRCLOUGH, Norman *Discourse in late modernity: rethinking Critical Discourse Analysis.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1999.

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