

The work of journalists and its contradictions: a crisis ontology¹

O trabalho do jornalista e suas contradições: uma ontologia da crise

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ABSTRACT

This article investigates tendencies that currently guide the practice of journalism, for the sake of understanding mutations in the realm of journalistic work. By exploring the news production sphere, it becomes possible to map contradictions within journalism, emphasizing the way singular, particular, and universal dimensions interact in the objective framework of the crisis affecting the field. Such as many other professions, historically altered and often extinguished by new productive forces, journalism became a fragmented and unstable practice. The neo-liberal entrepreneurship affects both the journalists' subjectivity and professional projects as the role of news information in contemporary hegemonic sociability.

Keywords: Theory of Journalism, crisis, work

RESUMO

O artigo investiga as tendências que orientam a prática jornalística hoje, buscando compreender as mutações no mundo do trabalho do jornalista. Ao explorar a esfera da produção noticiosa, torna-se possível cartografar as contradições no interior do jornalismo, ressaltando como as dimensões singulares, particulares e universais interagem na moldura objetiva da crise que afeta o campo. Como muitas outras profissões, alteradas historicamente e muitas vezes extintas por novas forças produtivas, o jornalismo tem se tornado uma prática fragmentada e instável, sendo que o empreendedorismo neoliberal afeta tanto a subjetividade do repórter e de seus projetos profissionais quanto o papel da informação jornalística na sociabilidade hegemônica contemporânea.

Palavras-chave: Teoria do Jornalismo, crise, trabalho

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ONTOLOGY OF JOURNALISM

THERE IS A DEEP malaise in the field of global journalism. Structural changes affect the professional category and the way of capitalizing the news trade, until then a commercial practice regarded as relatively stable. “Crisis” is a word constantly recited, sometimes to describe the insecurity face a new historical moment in the news praxis (Ramonet, 2012; Serrano, 2013; Salaverría, 2015), sometimes to present new possibilities that would expand the space of journalism in various forms (Deuze; Witschge, 2015). Others decree a total redefinition of this practice, in which both the models and the verification and production tasks should adapt to new molecular rules of the communicational game in a digital age, what could boost the news production (Anderson; Bell; Shirky, 2013). Technological innovations are mostly described as the impeller of this undefinition process, and their social and economic dimensions are little explored.

In such panorama, recovering critical strands that can understand the social process to which this crisis connects is essential, since the goal of understanding the movement of concrete reality and the subjects’ motivations makes it possible to address the phenomena without risk of basing them in abstract typologies. Accepting the existing dialectic between phenomenon and essence (Kosik, 2002; Lukács, 2013) allows us to escape, through ontological criticism, from equivocated syntheses, leading to an understanding of the crisis in the scope of social relations and class disputes. In this sense, thinking the crisis via historical materialism means identifying the internal conditions that are responsible for it, i.e., which antagonistic tensions integrate the same dynamics and how these conflicts impose a cumulative level of disruption that can create moments of change.

Williams (1979) introduces a way of investigating culture and communication as productive spheres of values and ideas, which are forming and formed by society, demonstrating the role of information products on the relationships among men. The journalism *groundwork* influences, therefore, the news dissemination, considering that communicational objectification of information passes through elaborations developed in work activities. Charaudeau (2015) reserves a special space to the productive axis in his design of an information machinery, hence consolidating the discursive problematic also in a movement headed by social agents. Working world of these communicators, the locus of journalistic production becomes an epicenter for the contradictions that engender the current crisis and, analyzing ontologically, it allows us to scrutinize this praxis objectification. It is in the work of journalists and its contradictions that we can face “what was left alive in this whole machinery” (Marcondes Filho, 2009: 133).

An ontology of journalism must pay attention, thus, to the dynamic between objectivity and subjectivity, in which the composing of a scientific research object includes the search for its internal constitution – the human activity. “Journalism is, therefore, a praxis that has an objective and subjective foundation, both regarding the content to be worked [...] as the seizure and transformation of such content” (Pontes, 2015: 363). In this study line on journalism, we aim to rebuild the existing relations among the journalist working world, news production, the capital sociometabolism² crisis, and the power relations intending to govern subjectivities to maintain the exploratory order.

Mosco (1999) shows the importance of work to understand the economic circuit, placing journalism as an object that deserves attention in the debate on cultural goods production. “Political economy is also characterized by an interest in studying the social entirety, or the totality of social relations forming the economic, political, social, and cultural fields” (Ibid.: 99). The debt to historical materialism of the Political Economy of Communication (EPC) allows us to categorize the journalism world as a particularity of the social complex and, moreover, it puts the Marxist ontological criticism as an indispensable theoretical support to think journalism today. Given this context, the binomial of communication and work also arises as a fruitful reading alternative about journalism problems (Figaro, 2013).

The attention to totality, far from being a project connected only to the Marxist tradition, inspires studies such as those of Shoemaker and Vos (2011), in which the levels of influence on the journalistic meaning pertain the individual acts of journalists, their routines and work practices, the organization to which they belong, the socio-institutional level of influences (groups, governments, propaganda), and the very social system and its cultural and ideological variables. However, it is noted that even in recent readings on the journalistic activity based on such layer systematization, such as seen in Deuze and Witschge (2016), totality loses an essential element to dialectics – the contradiction. The political and economic system that structures material life disappears in a fragmented totality, leading journalism to miss its essence as a forming/formed pole of the concrete social universality.

In this article, we aim to explore the tendencies that currently guide the journalistic practices, driving efforts to understand the changes in the working world of journalists. Exploring the news production, it becomes possible to emphasize the contradictions within journalism, highlighting how the social system levels, organizations, routines, and individuals interact in the objective framework of crisis, expressed in individual, particular, and universal dimensions (Genro Filho, 2012). Before it, however, we describe

² To Mészáros (2002), the system of capital organically structures the society functioning, controlling its metabolism, i.e., organizing the internal working of its social dynamics.



how the journalism, as a product of modernity, is shaken when its foundations go through social upheavals. Finally, it is realized that “these forces are contradictory, riddled with surprise twists and turns, and meet, to varying degrees and at varying levels of intensity and strength, resistance, and counter-forces” (Wayne, 2003: 3).

JOURNALISM AND MODERN SOCIETY IN CRISIS

It is difficult to separate the journalism from events that composed the so-called modern society. Even when considering its forms of expressions while handwritten sheets in the 13th century, aimed to meet the most immediate mercantile economic needs in countries such as Germany and Italy; and not ignoring the first forms of periodic papers already circulating (Thompson, 1998) at the beginning of the 17th century (Moretzsohn, 2007); it is undeniable that the journalism model we know, linked to the notion of press, is a product of social and historical changes that flourish in the 19th century.

The development of journalism and its material basis, the press, is harnessed to the development history of the capitalist society. “The control of ideas and information dissemination means [...] is a fight in which organizations and people of the most diverse social, cultural, and political situations appear, corresponding to differences in interests and aspirations” (Sodré, 1999: 1). The consolidation of journalism was responsible for the magnitude of the journalistic phenomenon, as well as for the news worker professionalization. Concentration in large oligopolies and financial control by advertisers cemented the press as an important stakeholder in the circulation of industrial products, being an arm of the capital in its performance. Connected via propaganda to the value of news use, several other products are traded, making the journalistic production part of the capital circulation.

Trading of news and the expansion of new mass media means can be singled out as incubators of this social practice. Both the enlightenment project of universal knowledge expansion, passing through the political transformation from the French Revolution, as well as the maturation of the capitalist model of economic production promoted by the Industrial Revolution are central aspects of the rise of modern Western society, to which journalism is overlapped. “Journalism became a business with an increasing number of owners, who began to publish newspapers intending to make a profit, and the central objective would be the expansion of circulation” (Traquina, 2005: 36). In addition to circulating the very merchandise ‘newspaper’, the news also disseminate other goods, especially through advertising and behavior models tied to consumption.

The split proposed by Marcondes Filho (2009) is informative about the transition of a literary and political journalism, present until mid-1830s, to a commercial practice in process of industrialization, with a verifiable mass expression by the broad increase in drawings. Such period, pointed as second journalism, brings to the scene the specialized professional, a worker focused on the dissemination of news, whose production impeller is the value of exchange. “The activity that started with heated, emotional, and relatively anarchistic political-literary discussions, now began to constitute as a great capitalist venture” (Ibid.: 20).

It is in this phase that the foundational principles of this praxis emerge: the news as central object, the search for the scoop, impersonality, the view of journalism as a public service, the search for the truth... The journalistic identity is also present when an obligation of reporting news first-hand becomes the professional activity bonus. Only that “the professionalization of a sector that established itself as a new business, with monopolies and oligopolies, placated the changing aspirations, to become a power in itself – especially a power to maintain *status quo*” (Figaro, 2014: 25). Connected to the intellectual labor, a new field was born – the journalism (Bourdieu, 1997), able to offer to a mass public information considered relevant for the individuals to govern themselves (Kovach; Rosenstiel, 2003) in a liberal and democratic society.

On the other hand, to Marcondes Filho (2009), the third journalism amplifies the monopolist press. Media conglomerates arise from the unbridled expansion of advertising resources, which are disseminated through the golden age of global capitalism (Hobsbawn, 1995) after World War II. The fourth journalism closes the historical model, showing the impact of electronic and interactive information since the 1970s, the crisis of written press, and the emergence of an internet ecosystem. Pessimistic and with a certain dose of nihilism, Marcondes Filho (2009) points out the journalism crisis as resulting from a collapse of humanism and the lack of ideologies, an aftermath of the Fall of the Berlin Wall and advent of a neo-liberal society.

Supported by Lage (2011), we can synthesize that journalism arises from a vital political necessity, amid disputes of society projects, and specializes as a Taylorist assembly line technique in which journalists are responsible for delivering a finished product to modern society. “If the 17th and 18th centuries were the realm of publishing journalism, and the 19th century of the educator and sensationalist one, the 20th century was the era of testimony-journalism” (Ibid.: 21). Information becomes essential to the people’s lives and, with the arrival of modern technologies, the ways to disseminate and elaborate these contents are multiplied. The working world of a journalist reconfigures itself as



passive and active agent of capital changes and tensions, contradictorily altering trade and use values of this merchandise.

However, it is important not to confuse press with capitalism, the production mode that generated it, since, as shown by Genro Filho (2012), with informative journalism is inaugurated a new knowledge modality that enhances human-generic practices, even though it paradoxically has a bourgeois applicability. The author discusses the economic and functional analysis of journalism, which ignores the continuities and discontinuities of the phenomenon in its inner contradictions. Genro Filho (2012) condemns the premises in these reflections, grounded, without ontological criticism, on the irrevocable permanence in the capital metabolism, since this view “cannot, either, consider the issues of class struggle, of ruling classes ideological hegemony in the journalistic production, and of internal contradictions of that process” (Ibid.: 33).

The sociometabolic system of capital reproduction (Mészáros, 2002) produced, in its history, a social need for news, logically accommodated in its economic and ideological bases but able to elaborate as value of use a new form of knowing reality, extending the reach of human relations as a genre (Genro Filho, 2012). The recognition of this potential, however, does not omit the fact that social changes resulting from a profound crisis permeate the contemporary world, something also understood by Eagleton (2005), Jameson (1998), Harvey (1993) and Mészáros (2002). A closer author to journalism studies, Wolton (1999) foretells a press crisis as part of a larger one, whose conditions are economical, technical, and political. The role of journalist in this context is crucial.

Marcondes Filho (2009) sees three factors as focusing on journalistic work: disenchantment with humanism and with the possibility of enlightenment through reason; social ideologies meta-reports crisis (a view which is close to postmodernism); and the advent of post-history (a world with no enemies, and feelings of nothingness, a Nietzschean teleological void amplitude). A material basis that can help to experience this blunt shock in the *zeitgeist*, however, should be perceived in the very materiality of the capital development and its contradictions (Harvey, 2016), as well as in the victory of a massively enabled neo-liberal government (Dardot; Laval, 2016). The credibility of journalism as a professional practice and public service is constantly affected in times of flexible capitalism.

Any phenomenon or process goes through a crisis when the old ways no longer comply or correspond to the new content, and are broken without even having set new ways; hence, crisis are the own transitional phases (Sodré, 1999: 391).

This crisis moment of modern sociability affects the social totality, overlapping the journalistic praxis. Far from believing there is a perennial stability for the sector professionals – something never fully guaranteed (Lopes, 2011; Neveau, 2006; Schudson, 2010) –, we see that the journalist's work faces a tidal wave, presenting a new scenario that allows, given its centrality, mapping the journalistic production in the 21st century.

PRODUCTIVE RESTRUCTURING AND CAPITALISM: POSTFORDISM IN THE NEWSROOMS

The 20th century was marked by important transitions in the capitalist mode of production. Given our little space here, it would be virtually impossible to present the key features of this process. It is worth pointing out that many authors sought to update the analysis of Marx (2013) on capital, being emphasized here the studies of Mészáros (2002) and Harvey (2016), as well as the reflection around productive restructuring analyzed by contemporary Brazilian authors such as Braga (2004), Antunes (1999), Frederico and Teixeira (2008), and Alves (2011). Facts such as the recession of the 1970s and the introduction of a new pattern of capitalist accumulation are highlighted by these thinkers, who consider the changes in the working world a result from the new regime of flexible accumulation.

The transformations on productive forces and the role of technology in this process are part of the expansion of this organic system of social reproduction. “The capital places the very production of wealth as production presupposition and, consequently, the universal development of productive forces, the continuous revolution of the existing assumptions” (Marx, 2011: 723). Harvey's (2016) metaphor on the system of capital is appropriate: it is the engine of the society we live in, the locomotive of the social order.

Research demonstrates the value theory remains topical, and unraveled the mutations of capital at the end of the last century and beginning of this one, expanding the locus of criticism to the seizure of the technology role and its relationship with labor force (Fuchs, 2008; Huws, 2013). The journalist, as part of the class-that-works-for-a-living (Antunes, 1999), has gone through a set of such changes. In this sense, Harvey (2016: 102) shows the central node of this contradiction:

Control over worker and work process has always been crucial to the ability of capital in sustaining profitability and capital accumulation. Throughout its whole history, capital invented, innovated, and adopted technological forms,



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whose main objective is to improve control over work, both in work process as in labor market.

The technological transformation, with its spatiotemporal alteration and extensive productive relocation, altered, from the end of the 1970s, the social life and the working world, making large extracts of the population become disposable. Structural unemployment and restructuring of productive park added to the ideological and political ascension of neo-liberalism, which enhances the notion of free-market, a position that impacts regulatory devices and professional's symbolic imagery, especially of journalists.

A study by Fonseca (2005) presented an important contribution to understanding the transition of an essentially Taylorist mode of news production to the so-called post Fordism (also presented as Toyotism). The impacts of the rearticulated capital socio-metabolism can be seen in the volatilization and flexibilization of the working environment, journalist's professional practice, and the news itself. It can also be said that

technology forces its rhythm and logic to the work relations, defining new professionals, new work ethics, in short, a new world, which barely offers glimpses of what we called, in the past, of "journalism" (Marcondes Filho, 2009: 37).

The hegemony of a Toyotist production model intensified the work exploitation, resizing the expropriation spectrum given by the capitalist order. "New techniques of workforce managing, added to commercial liberation and new forms of techno-scientific domination, stressed the centralizing, destructive, and discriminating character of this process" (Antunes, 1999: 34). Media industries start to pursue the model of multiple tasks and platforms, requiring an unorthodox and multi-functional professional as part of the organizational innovations.

To maintain revenue and public in the hazy scenario of new media, journalistic companies turned to content, sound, and image operators for PCs, tablets, cell phones etc., in addition to providers of other technological services. Thus, they demand, on the edge, real-time multimedia professionals and, on the top, executives who combine information and marketing for the creation of new products (Braga; Aguiar; Bergamaschi, 2014: 126)

There is a clear reorientation of the journalistic enterprise, as well as of the work management, replacing more rigid forms of assembly line for

a flexible logic that reorganizes the work and productive routines. “In the relentless economic warfare that dominates the entire communicational sector, journalists, despite the smiles and good speeches, are often ‘meat for information’” (Wolton, 1999: 217). The growing oligopolies in media, as part of a system capable of enlarging the informational power of the historically dominant block (Gramsci, 2011), evidences, in the same process, the productive park readjustment to their interests

Media conglomerates have the ownership of production means, technological infrastructure, and logistic bases, giving them prominence in the processes of material and immaterial production. The concentration of productive processes, global distribution, and trading schemes around a handful of corporate groups is intended to ensure the largest domain possible over the manufacturing, processing, commercialization, and distribution of products and services, materially increasing the profitability (Moraes, 2016: 111).

This tendency of conglomerates gestation is part of the concentration of capitals, an element that – along with the welfare state crisis, the increased privatizations and work flexibilization, the expansion of the financial logic that follows the trend of interest rate decrease define the moment of crisis. Some changes in journalists’ work management are highlighted already in the 1990s, such as the arrival of computers and internet at newsrooms. With a remarkable expansion since the 1970s, newspapers explicitly assume their vocation as companies, something that transpires in the *Projeto Folha* of the 1980s, moment at which the news is effectively understood as a lucrative commodity. The monopolistic stage of capital is expressed in the passage of the 1960s to the 1970s, when in fact a “consciousness industry” (Enzensberger, 2003) gains ground in Brazil.

The late 1990s put in motion changes arising from the ascension of the flexible model of capitalist accumulation. The panorama of recent technologies globalization promotes, along with the widespread commercialization of journalistic products, a professional fragmentation and multiple precarious forms of employment and remuneration. “The journalist has to know the schedule, determine the information, write the text and, if necessary, edit the article in the templates: titrate, select pictures, subtitle, propose graphics, illustrations etc.” (Fonseca, 2005: 333). Work journeys broaden with the advent of social networks and mobile computers; working at home environment also arises in the news production; the freelancers become the desirable professional type for communication companies. Unions lose their fighting powers and the professional category (with the loss of diploma requirement) suffers a jactitation. As pointed



out by Nonato (2013), journalists are information artisans who work long hours without any bond insurance in labor relations, often involved in companies not necessarily linked to communication.

Although we may agree with Deuze and Witschge (2015) that the newsroom has lost its centrality as investigation locus of the journalistic work in a moment of professional flexibilization, we cannot underestimate the control companies have over work management, and the relatively stable control over production. Even journalists who operate outside the direct control of media conglomerates and companies orbit about the central influence of the consciousness industry and, at the end, of the algorithms dominating social networks and virtual environments. Freelance journalism, young journalists' entrepreneurship, and the overall precariousness of the profession are, therefore, active mechanisms of the journalism crisis.

Even authors who question the existence of such crisis such as Leal, Jácome, and Manna (2014) recognize a change of the model in vogue. Adherence, however, to an idea of molecular *liquid* society, in which any rational and universal project of social change arises from the day agenda, undermines the commitment to the class struggle and the role of journalism in this historical context, a perspective that also clouds the theoretical horizon of Deuze and Witschge (2015). This happens because capitalism is naturalized as the only society possible (Wood, 1996) and the phenomenal surface, considerably obvious, that we live a new sociability experience, takes the place of the essence represented by the capitalism dynamics in these times of complex cooperation (Frederico; Teixeira, 2008).

The journalistic work networks existing at this crisis moment, for some, come from a post-industrial society (Anderson; Bell; Shirky, 2013) and need to be critically investigated for a real understanding of journalism in contemporary times. To accomplish this purpose, it is essential to approach the work activity of these professionals. Nonetheless, "their work is insecure, their salary is limited, the audience confidence is precarious, and its period extends beyond the limits of a printing or broadcasting deadline" (Deuze; Witschge, 2015: 22). Technologies, rather than helping the labor activity, as many believe, have an applicability that intensified labor exploitation, increasing the control over the time and life of the journalist. Communication technologies and their distinct applications represent the apex of contemporary capitalism, being part of it.

The transforming power of these technologies promises to move us towards a new social existence, which is overcoming the old one. However, from a critical perspective, the critical emancipation depends not on transformations in

technological structures but, more specifically, on transformations of the political systems and private power structures, within which those are incorporated (Ampuja, 2015: 65-66).

Well, every technology is socially marked and, far from neutral, it invigorates sociabilities and entangle forms of material production. Paradoxically, as human expressions, they can also possess civilizational potential if under the correct social direction. The myth of a society only guided and produced by technological advancements, as if those were automatically subjects of history, should be discarded from any concrete analysis of contemporary journalism.

JOURNALIST PRECARIZATION AND THE NEOSUBJECT: THE ALIENATION

White women, under 35 years of age, college undergraduates with specializations, who work for several clients, perform in many media, and have fragile and precarious labor ties: these were the characteristics of most journalists, based on a research by the Communication and Work Research Center (CPCT) of the University of São Paulo (Figaro, 2013). Considering that four out of ten Brazilian journalists reside and work in São Paulo, there are, mostly, characteristics that are analogous to those of the national totality inferred in the research by Mick and Lima (2013). In these data, a work whose journey ranges from functions of accessor to reporter is presented, in which activities are developed in different platforms, susceptible to constant changes of functions and outlets – expressing the changes of a mutational process in the working world. The journalist is obliged to assume a multi-functional character in this new reality. Precariousness in work relations is also evident in the current conformation of the labor market, with the burden of product responsibility falling even more on journalists.

Data regarding hiring forms, work journey extension and “flexibility”, number of jobs accumulate throughout career life, and multi-functionality seem to reinforce the researchers’ discoveries on the journalistic work precariousness (Mick; Lima, 2013: 88).

It is noticeable, in the analysis of Figaro (2013), the ever-growing demand for wider tasks from journalists, constantly required to adapt themselves to unusual work situations on different topics and agendas, which need to be handled to meet a clientele established in increasingly diverse niches. Instability in salaries and working hours also varies at the boss will.

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In such a context, journalistic ethics and deontology of the profession become increasingly “provisional” (Costa, 2009) and are handled according to the *order made to the salesclerk*. The most expressive contradiction lies between the ideals cultivated around the role of information for democratic citizenship and a professional practice that is extremely mercantile and precarious.

Uncertainty marks this new moment of the news worker. Analyzing the speech of a freelancer, Figaro (2013) shows the information professionals find themselves in a situation of unceasing capture of customers, spending a large amount of time negotiating their workforce. They end up assuming the role of self-employees, always looking for a business of economic viability. Mick and Lima (2013) demonstrate that more than 40% of the journalists work from 8 to 12 hours, and about 5% work more than 12 hours a day. Official registration reaches only 60% of the professionals. “The Superman suit does not fit in today’s journalist anymore. He prefers to wear the costume of circumstance, which allows him to survive professionally whatever the performance space, whether public or private sector” (Adghirni, 2012: 77).

The dramatic calls of activity explored by Figaro (2013) using ergology reveal that, nevertheless, professionals live the class experience in a contradictory process of tensions, assimilations, but also resistances, what shows the heft of the working world on the elaboration of worldviews. Tensions in the labor market, constantly frustrated expectations regarding the profession, and a university education without enough intellectual density are present in the narratives of journalists’ life trajectories. A conflict between the ideal values of the profession and its daily practice shows through the interviewees’ speeches, as the romantic³ aspect of the profession seems to lose space (Figaro, 2013: 60). Being a knowledge work (Huws, 2013; Mosco, 2012), the journalism, while a secondary teleology, i.e., a materialization of a prior ideation for directing the conduct of others (Lukács, 2013), depends a lot on this worker subjectivity but also on institutional discourses (and practices) that influence the news creation in a productive routine.

According to Mick and Lima (2013), most journalists are not in an Union (74.8%), and do not militate in organizations and associations (65.6%) but most of them considers themselves leftists (25.1%) and central-leftists (22.7%), considering that 30% of interviewees did not want to state their positions in the political and ideological spectrum. Rothberg (2010) verified, in his research with Brazilian journalists, a prevailing adherence to journalistic quality parameters, in which there is compliance with the plurality of voices in news production. But it is also easy to notice that the interviewees, when questioned on the necessity to adjust their work to political positions of the media outlets, do

³ We refer here to the heroic presuppositions of the journalistic activity, understood as an impartial reporting that is compromised with the public, a fourth-power that can potentiate humanized forms of collective life; in short, the reporter as a democracy keeper.

not feel pressured, perhaps for implicitly agreeing (via self-censorship) with ideologically compromised editorial lines. Also, 77% of the journalists never or rarely feel obliged to assume the worldview of their outlets, while 21% are always or almost always led to do it. The data shows the construction of a professional type, required by the market, which is more adherent, almost chameleonic, capable of always giving the best to the company.

A profession with a clear generational prejudice was established in the last few years since 59% of the journalists are under 30 years old (Mick; Lima, 2013). It seems that the copious worker reserve and the ease in lowering salaries by firing former reporters (with an expensive career plan) encourages this behavior. Another factor is the cultural one: a mass of young people, with a more plastic and flexible formation, familiar with the latest technologies – products of a hedonistic capitalism –, is more adherent to this new polyvalent journalism. “The replacement of veteran journalists by other younger ones is a recurring practice. The newly formed is malleable and adapts more easily to political and editorial rules, as well as to lower salaries in the professional scale” (Adghirni, 2012: 76). A testimony collected by Figaro (2013: 118) in a group with focus on journalists reveals this tendency:

A boy, 20-something, is exactly the product they put on the market. A boy who runs away from a critical discussion of ethics, of journalism, because he does not have... He left school, had no training, he may even have a notion, but goes into the market and enters a boss neurosis that has no...

Although depoliticization is very compressed on the tradition of a professional set marked by impersonal and objective agents, resulting from the journalist informative model as a witness to the facts (Lage, 2011), a new framework of de-ideologization transpires in the productive restructuring and its subjectivity transformations, exemplified by the Toyotism and flexibility that are appropriating the journalism.

The “sitting” journalism phenomenon is another variable of the journalist’s work today. Dependent on public relations to search for data and documents on the network, the reporter experiences less and less his schedule from a direct relation. Internet, by diminishing spaces and boosting the time, reconfigured the relationship of journalists and sources, as well as their role as information mediators. In this volatility and fluidly cooperation among different stakeholders, the journalist abdicates of his most pressing task: ascertain the raw material of news with quality. Since they are accessible 24/7, the journalists are daily run over by the work, and never turn off.



Organizational changes have been expanding the electronic mediations between chiefs and reporters. With flexible command lines, the notion of freedom given to the individual producer is highlighted as a greater possibility of free action. “Revulsion to bureaucratic routine and the pursuit of flexibility have produced new structures of power and control, instead of creating conditions to set us free” (Sennett, 2009: 54). Routine breaks, and the apparent autonomy given to journalists, exacerbate, from a subjective point of view, the capture of worker’s subjectivity (Alves, 2011), that is, a conscience control method aided by technologies. In a testimony given to Figaro (2013), a “journalist who works at home” dreams of working in a newsroom and of official registration since her professional schedule is unlimited, fast-paced, and without a horizon of assuring prospects. This worker managed to understand the harm in being a freelancer, dissolving the myth of individual freedom and expanded pleasure, which is a clear control form of this professional’s subjectivity.

The new capitalism spirit has triumphantly recovered the egalitarian and non-hierarchical rhetoric of 1968, presenting itself as a successful libertarian revolt against oppressive social organizations – characteristic of corporate capitalism and real socialism. A new libertarian spirit is synthesized by capitalists who use sport clothes and are “cool”, such as Bill Gates and the creators of the ice cream Ben & Jerrys (Žižek, 2011: 56).

Work and domestic life, leisure and job assignments, entertainment and production mix together, generating problems in subjectivity that often compromise the journalists’ mental health, the major symptom being stress. According to Heloani (2006), there is a naturalization of the deterioration in working life quality. In a research with 44 journalists in São Paulo, he reasoned that

organizational practices brought, as a harmful side effect, not only the corrosion of certain basic values but mainly the division of the idea of life quality and work excellence. Thus, happiness is always postponed and, as a result, also the time for family, children, leisure, and love. Some even claim that outside the workplace they only do the indispensable, missing time for dating (Ibid.: 194).

The global crisis in the working world, whose peculiarities are experienced by journalists, matches the transformations within the capitalist society, in which the neo-liberal prescriptions were presented as a new form of global rationality; hence, capable of directing the workers to the notion of self-entrepreneurship, where success or failure seems to be solely determined by individual effort.

“The neo-liberal management of the company, internalizing the market coercion, introduces uncertainty and brutal competition, and make the subjects assume themselves as personal failures, a shame, a devaluation” (Dardot; Laval, 2016: 363). Individual’s personality is tainted, and he becomes the neosubject: a singular being of neo-liberal rationality, whose social relations environment is replaced by the sum of individual transactions. This personality fragmentation is suitable to a type of short-term capitalism, which developed in its exploratory mechanisms the ability to command the desire. The competition spirit, which appropriates a logic that is next to those of sporting competitions, as in the metaphor of Dardot and Laval (2016), is present in the new technical rationality, in which the worker governs itself within a context of coercion internalization. “To be a ‘self-entrepreneur’ means to be the optimal instrument of one’s own social and professional success” (Ibid.: 350).

It is impossible not to mention here the concept of alienation, as isolated, instrumentalized, individualized journalists, in constant competition (while value exchange products), are reduced to fragments in an increasingly corrosive global working division. The profitability of capital happens “at expenses of the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of the workers it employs” (Harvey, 2016: 121). The success of productive restructuring processes with the insertion of flexible routines and a new cartography of the working class, enshrined in the Toyotist model, also enlarge processes within the subject mentality.

An activity is alienated when it takes the form of a separation or opposition between “means” and “ends”, “public life” and “private life”, “being” and “having”, and between “doing” and “thinking”. In this alienated opposition, “public life”, “being”, and “doing” are subordinated as simple means to the alienated end of “private life” (“private enjoyment”), “having”, and “thinking” (Mészáros, 2005: 167-168).

This subjectivity alienation is also, as explained in the Marxist reading, an alienation of the produced, expressed objectivity, here understood as the news production. Even in cases in which journalism has not adhered to monolithic institutions, by assuming themselves as entrepreneurs and business men reporters in activity have joined strange forms of news praxis such as the magnification of Infotainment, vulgar emotivism, excessive singularizing due to the immediate time hegemony, and the deviation of critical functions, like presenting the social contradictions of economic and political systems. The early-mentioned crisis of modernity finds its corollary in the professional working crisis of the journalist – a neosubject searching



for earnings and income, battling for survival in a habitat organized by the dictates of flexible accumulation.

Degradation of the relationships men-material world, men-men, and men-humankind implies a heartbreaking global paradigm of the sociometabolic system in crisis, that attacks, without perceptible obstacles, the journalist working world. A fundamental mediation of social life, such work goes through a deadlock. Journalism as knowledge is in an earthquake because the crisis of the subjects who elaborate news is cemented on its own value, generating uncertainty about this practice.

FINAL REMARKS

The social metabolism crisis, in its whole, materially affects the working world. Journalists, hostages of such changes, have become extremely precarious workers of news production forms that were unsettled by the new mechanism of global surplus value, the capitalism in times of computerization. Such as many other professions, altered and often extinguished by new productive forces, journalism became a fragmented and unstable practice. The neo-liberal entrepreneurship affects both the journalists' subjectivity and professional projects as the role of news information in contemporary hegemonic sociability.

Technological changes have sharpened the collectively produced publication of information. The exclusivity of journalism as the publisher of unique reality aspects decreases, in this sense, with the overwhelming arrival of new characters on the scene. In the media, increasingly more space is given to stakeholders, from the so-called *prosumers*⁴ (producers/consumers) to the witness citizens – those who, with a smartphone in hands, expose everyday facts on social networks. However, this information rarely manages to transcend the immediate time, little contributing to fulfill the journalistic mission of knowledge production.

In this crisis of the journalistic realm, contradictory features appear concerning the expansion of communicative channels for a variety of subjects and the ideological fragility of this use, considering that technological innovations are never created without a class mark to direct them. On the other hand, a fragmented morphology of the journalists' work implies material difficulties in drafting an enlightened journalism, "against the facts" (Moretzsohn, 2007), since an increasingly weakened professional, without class solidarity, tends to succumb to the hegemonic political interests. Also, a fact is that the neo-liberal rationality takes advantage of the historical moment of uncertainty to expand its influence, gaining ground on the journalists' worldview.

⁴ The terms characterizes the new profile of network users, a consumer who is no longer passive and becomes a potential content producer. More details on Ramonet (2012).

The crisis axiom is also expressed in the power disputes around its direction, as amidst the class struggle its positive impacts are taken by the productive force owners. In a context of crisis, the historically dominant block establishes its position, reworking the control methods over newsrooms, reducing workforce costs and expenditure on employees' rights, and disassembling resistance structures of journalists. A professional sector already disrupted by unbridled competition finds a fertile soil in the absence of critical consciousness on the part of reporters themselves. The contradictory expressions of various influence levels such as the economic and social system, organizations, and productive routines manifest on the journalist working sphere, putting the current field as an arena of mutations in unceasing movement.

We sought, through a look on the journalistic production axis, to understand some aspects concerning the configuration of the crisis. Reflections about the circulation of this merchandise, which would involve broadening the study on this narrative potential and the current panorama of the predominant news receiver in our societies, are also fundamental to a total explaining of a journalism ontology. However, given that the particularity of the news praxis can never be removed from the global panorama of a systemic crisis that affects production-circulation-reception and, accepting that the production site is decisive in the concrete existence of journalistic meanings; it is believed that exploring the journalistic work contradictions highlights a range of problems we should face in the struggle for a critical and emancipating journalism. A transforming news praxis will never be product of a society that abandoned the individuals' emancipation, but one of the weapons to end it.

Marx's journalism provides a central example of his praxis, the unity of theory and practice, that animated his life. It is also full of examples of what journalism can be when it rises above the conventions that sometimes contribute to proficient writing but often make it difficult to practice the principles that guided his work. These include complete commitment, whatever the cost, to freedom of expression and opposition to censorship, complete belief in journalism as a political calling, and an unrelenting focus on the serious issues facing the world (Mosco, 2012: 575).

A renewed journalism implies, in the spirit of Marx, an effective fight to give visibility to critical problems of the world, assuming itself as something greater than a profession or trade, but as an emancipatory praxis, whose vocation is to overcome the capitalist order contradictions.

Collective experiments of news production that is critical to the defamiliarization and fetishization processes of the current metabolic system



of social reproduction, as well as non-hegemonic initiatives of journalistic production, are part of this necessary horizon. However, without the organization of subjects who can materially promote human escapes from the vilification and exploration processes given by social barbarism, no transformation process can sustain itself. Journalism can and should be on the side of alternative social movements, being itself a possible progressive laboratory of transforming ideas that are capable to influence on the broad clarification of the need for fighting. ■

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