

Journalistic ethics in the first decade of this century: a mapping of occurrences¹

Ética jornalística na primeira década do século XXI: um mapeamento de ocorrências

La ética periodística en la primera década del siglo XXI: un mapeo de ocurrencias

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Abstract *This work presents a mapping of how the issue of journalistic ethics was described in the period 2001 to 2010 on the website of Observatório da Imprensa (OI), the most traditional vehicle for critical media in Latin America. This research focuses on potential impacts of technological advances in the practice of journalists and professional conduct in support of their choices and behaviours. We are interested in analyzing how ethical bases of journalism have been changing in recent years, and if there is a scaling of these values with the raising of new information and communication technologies.*

Keywords: *Ethical values. Ethical dilemmas. Conduct of journalists. Deontology. New technologies.*

Resumo *O trabalho apresenta um mapeamento de como o tema da ética jornalística foi descrito no período de 2001 a 2010 no site do Observatório da Imprensa (OI), o mais tradicional veículo de crítica de mídia da América Latina. Esta pesquisa se concentra em possíveis impactos dos avanços*

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tecnológicos no exercício profissional dos jornalistas e na sustentação deontológica de suas escolhas e condutas. Interessa-nos analisar como as bases éticas do jornalismo vêm se modificando nos últimos anos, e se há um redimensionamento desses valores com a emergência de novas tecnologias de informação e comunicação.

Palavras-chave: *Valores éticos. Dilemas éticos. Conduta dos jornalistas. Deontologia. Novas tecnologias.*

Resumen *Este trabajo presenta un mapeo de cómo el tema de la ética periodística se describe en el período 2001 a 2010 en la página web del Observatório de Imprensa (OI), el más tradicional mediawatcher en América Latina. Esta investigación se centra en los impactos potenciales de los avances tecnológicos en la práctica de los periodistas y de conducta profesional en apoyo de sus decisiones y comportamientos. Estamos interesados en analizar la forma cómo la base ética del periodismo han ido cambiando en los últimos años con la aparición de nuevas tecnologías de información y comunicación.*

Palabras-clave: *Valores éticos. Dilemas éticos. Conducta de los periodistas. Deontología. nuevas tecnologías.*

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In which way do the transformations provoked by the new information and communication technologies translate into the journalists' conducts? How does the technological development have an incidence on these professionals' ethics? These two questionings motivated us to seek to understand better how the journalistic ethics and its environment organize themselves nowadays. As a parameter we took the occurrences of ethical errors, the emergence of dilemmas in the profession, scandals and polemic cases that occurred in the first decade of the 21st century. The length of the period permits a minimum sedimentation of elements which help to compose the ethical scenario in the profession, something which allows us to see how the journalists' behaviours are altered by the reconfiguration of their work routines, environment and contexts. It is obvious that the period we consider is not totalizing, but it enables a sample of the phenomena connected with the topic.

A mapping of occurrences in the field of professional ethics is an important stage for the modernization of the scenario, but other incursions are also necessary, such as the identification of the predominant ethical values, the observance of their validity according to rules consecrated by the category, the systematization of the main debates on the conducts in the professional environment and the consequent reorganization of the components of an emerging ethics that is in phase of consolidation. We are particularly involved in these tasks⁴, but for the scope of this study, we will present the main lines of a mapping of the occurrences which deal with journalistic ethics.

It is not excessive to affirm that the technological development in the communication field and the broadening of expression possibilities provoked transformations in the forms of human sociability and communicability. These changes seem to extend themselves uninter-

⁴ These efforts are foreseen in the research "Redimensionamento de valores éticos no jornalismo a partir de impactos tecnológicos" ["Re-dimensioning of ethical values in journalism related to technological impacts"], initiated in 2010 and which extend until 2013, with recourses of the CNPq. Some results are to be found in CHRISTOFOLETTI (2011), CHRISTOFOLETTI; OLIVEIRA (2011) and KARAM; CHRISTOFOLETTI (2011).

ruptedly in the present days, to the extent that the public is presented tools and systems which stimulate the participation in the communicative process. Relations sites, blogs, microblogs, file sharing services, among others, have permitted not only the massive access to the potentialities of the internet but they have also shaken traditional formalities in communication

In the professional sphere and in the world of the journalistic work, at least four factors were determinant for perceptible changes: a) systems which facilitate the publications of contents on the internet appeared; b) the access to primary sources of information was broadened; c) some stages in the process of information production could be reduced; d) alternatives to find sources and publics without the mediation of thirds were created. That is to say, tasks which were exclusively the tasks of professional journalists were decentralized, thus permitting that any other users of the system could perform them on any level. With five clicks and free of charge, the subject can create a blog, a means of communication in which he can put the contents he produces, adapts or reproduces; in a few seconds, the blogger can access database to which only the journalists had access before; without mediators the blogger creates his audiences, connects himself to his sources of information.

Combined or acting in an isolated way, the four factors mentioned above provoke discussions about the importance, necessity and function of journalists nowadays. The common citizen does not depend anymore on journalistic channels in order to feel harmonized with the facts of everyday life. In an extreme way one could dispense with this professional contingent.

Apart from the exaggerations, three planes are commonly observed with regard to the new configuration: a) changes of the journalist's profile and the necessity of his rapid adaptation to new roles, aspects exploited by Gillmor (2004), Deuze (2006), Palacios (2007), Salavería & Avilés (2008), and Mancini (2011), among others; b) modernizations in the challenges and ethical concerns in this domain, topics

treated by Friend & Singer (2007), Ess (2009) and Foreman (2010), for example; c) structural transformations and a virtual fall of journalism, reflection made by authors such as Meyer (2007), Scherer (2008-2009) and Bird (2009).

This complex scenario stimulates investigations concerning the technological advances, but has also political, social and deontological implications. The political and social implications are connected with the fields of citizenship, with democracy and with the right of communication. That is to say, the supposedly universal access to the internet, the multiplication of sources of information and the concrete possibilities given to the public to follow the political acts strengthen the subjects in the social tissue and reinforce the dimension of the democratic pact. Such deployments are very stimulating from the analytical point of view, but we are not interested in this at the moment. We concentrate our attention on the impacts of the technological advances on the journalists' professional practice and on the deontological maintenance of their choices and conducts. We are interested in analysing how the basic values of journalism have changed during the last years, since the common user has at his disposal means which are similar to those of the journalist, but he does not have the same deontological duties.

An observatory of the movements in the field of ethics

In order to effectuate a mapping of the occurrences in the field of ethics in this domain, we had recourse to the website of the Observatório da Imprensa (OI) [Press Observatory]⁵, a Brazilian project, which is the oldest experience of media criticism of Latin America. Created in 1996, by the Laboratório de Estudos Avançados em Jornalismo (Labjor)⁶ [Lab-

⁵ <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br>

⁶ Details of the beginning of the project are narrated by Egypto & Malin (2008).

oratory of Advanced Studies in Journalism] the OI already appeared as an internet vehicle. The *World Wide Web* was taking its first steps in Brazil and in April of that year the first edition, which would be Brazil's main media-watcher⁷, was published, with an uninterrupted update on the internet. Subsequently, the OI also got a new weekly TV program and daily commentaries on the radio, all transmitted by public broadcast stations. As Egypto & Malin attest it, "the OI was converted into a success story done with Franciscan means and powerful concepts" (2008, p. 178).

In the meantime, the OI has been developing the characteristics of a debate arena (cf. ALBUQUERQUE; LADEIRA; SILVA, 2001), with the publication of articles written by citizens and professionals of this area and of the newscast directed to this field. According to Braga (2006), the OI makes an "effort to include interlocution", stamped on the "diversification of thematic topics and of the kinds of approaches of the journalistic questions, by extending the focus to other media, by searching varied approaches in the relationships between questions of the press and questions of society and by addressing the speeches to diversified publics" (2006, p. 132).

Without losing sight of the longevity of the experience, its success, its influence and absorption on the journalism and communication market and also taking into consideration the accumulated elements that have been constructed during these seventeen years of circulation, we took the OI as a database for the mapping of occurrences about ethics.

In the period under research, the website published 52463 texts in 517 editions, namely:

⁷ Obviously the Observatório da Imprensa is not the only channel of analysis and criticism of the Brazilian media. Ângela Loures undertakes what she calls a "short story of media criticism in Brazil". Confer other actors and chapters of this narrative in Loures (2008).

Tabela 1 - Data of publication of the Observatório da Imprensa between 2001 and 2010.

| Year | Numbering of the editions | Editions | Published articles |
|------|---------------------------|----------|--------------------|
| 2001 | de 105 a 152 | 47 | 4454 |
| 2002 | de 153 a 204 | 52 | 5059 |
| 2003 | de 205 a 257 | 53 | 5333 |
| 2004 | de 258 a 309 | 52 | 5200 |
| 2005 | de 310 a 361 | 52 | 5161 |
| 2006 | de 362 a 413 | 52 | 4934 |
| 2007 | de 414 a 465 | 52 | 5195 |
| 2008 | de 466 a 518 | 53 | 5434 |
| 2009 | de 519 a 570 | 52 | 6128 |
| 2010 | de 571 a 622 | 52 | 5565 |
| - | - | 517 | 52463 |

Source: Data computed from the OI website.

The more than fifty-two thousand articles are distributed over fourteen sections, with opinative, analytical and informative texts. Braga (2006, p. 111) proposes an organizational frame of the sections in the OI, suggesting that there be a “nucleus of press criticism”, surrounded by nucleuses of “complementary objects of observation”, of “interaction with formation sectors”, of “articulation with society/readers”, of “critical articulation between the press and society”, and of “what is being published about the topic ‘press’”.

After successive pre-tests for data collection, we chose to work with four sections only – *Press in Question*, *Journal of Debates*, *Monitor of the Press* and *E-news* –, because we understood that these spaces reunite the texts which dealt with thematic topics of ethics and with aspects related to the technologies in this area. Using Braga’s scheme, we examined the nucleuses “press criticism”, “complementary objects of observation”, “critical articulation between the press and society” and “what is being

published about the topic ‘press’”, which guarantees us a wide and balanced range of opinative, analytical and informative contents

The methodological procedures of the occurrences collection followed the steps pointed out by Bardin (1977) and Krippendorff (1990) in the contents analysis. All the texts published in the defined sections in the determined period were separated in order to be read; we made a selection of the articles which deal with the topic of journalistic ethics⁸. Values, principles, conducts, slips, errors, abuses, crimes, violations, concerns, tendencies, deviations, recommendations, deontological codes, cases and concepts connected with the topic were used in order to identify the texts. At the end of the data collection, we got to a set of 1059 texts which dealt with the topic, which provoked a new reading of the *corpus* in order to identify coincidences, thematic affinities and conceptual proximities. After this stage, we began to formulate categories which could reorganize the data so that we could observe the occurrences more neatly. The list, which was being composed – for different reasons – became a list of the journalists’ “sins”, of vices and violations of ethical norms.

To get to the categories, we had recourse to authors who already listed vices, such as Meyer (1989), Hulteng (1990), Goodwin (1993), Karam (1997), Marcondes Filho (2000), Ward (2004), Keeble (2006) and Bucci (2000; 2009). The list exceeded twenty classes, to which we added others, totalizing thirty categories. They do not exhaust the topics of journalistic ethics, but we understand that they cover almost all the cases.

A map of the occurrences about ethics

The survey of the concerned period identified 1059 texts in the four sections of the OI which deal explicitly and directly with journalistic ethics. These unities were read and classified in the 30 categories mentioned

⁸ We are grateful to Monique Paloma Teixeira Nunes, scholarship holder of scientific initiation (Pibic-CNPq) and to the Master’s student Cândida de Oliveira, who acted in the data collection on the website in 2010 and 2011.

Table 1 - Categories for occurrence analysis

| | | | | |
|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|---|
| Imprecision | Incorrectness | Distortion of the information | Manipulation of picture | Leak in source secrecy |
| Partiality or disequilibrium | Invasion of privacy | Plagiarism | Sensationalism | Censorship |
| Self-censorship | To obtain advantages as a journalist | To conceal sources, versions or data | Offence | Calumny |
| Defamation | To receive gifts or favours | To accept bribery | To prevent the manifestation of divergent opinions | To accumulate functions as a press officer and as a journalist simultaneously |
| Prejudice | To listen only to one of the sides | To steal documents | To use false identities/To conceal | To use hidden cameras |
| To record declarations without the authorization of the source | To use a fake of social networks to produce subject matter | To violate private e-mails | Not rectifying an article when there is an error | To use the social networks to propagate erroneous news |

Source: Classes reunited by the author.

above during the reorganization of the material. In different cases, we perceived that one and the same occurrence fitted in more than one category, such as the story of a piece of news published by Associated Press in 2003 about the death of two North-American soldiers in Baghdad. The US Army accused the agency of divulging false, unilateral and sensationalist news⁹. In similar situations, the same text got more than one category, which made the number of analysis unities reach 1241.

It is important to mention two aspects: a) although the data collection was carried out on a Brazilian website, the data are not restricted to

⁹ The report brought non official information and information from unknown witnesses about decapitations and mutilations of two soldiers, with crimes committed by a group in Baghdad. The information were contested afterwards by the Army, that would have attributed the deaths to the fire occurred in the vehicle in which were the victims. This unity of the corpus was inserted into the categories "Incorrectness", "Sensationalism or exaggeration in the coverage" and "To listen to only one of the sides". More information in "Exército acusa AP de espalhar artigo contestado" [The Army accuses AP to propagate contested article, available on <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/mo021220032.htm>. Access on 02/02/2012.

Brazil; b) a mapping of this kind is always incomplete, since it takes into consideration the mentions made by the authors who feed the system. The map is not the territory, but a representation, a sample of it.

After the classification of the texts, we still chose to regroup the occurrences in order to facilitate the data analysis. We divided the thirty categories into six groups:

Table 2 - Groups and categories per percentage of occurrence.

| Group | Categories | Occurrence |
|---|--|------------|
| G1 – Aspects directly connected to the vehiculated information | . Imprecision = 78 cases . Incorrectness = 138 cases . Distortion = 179 cases . To conceal sources, versions, information = 90 cases | 39% |
| G2 – Vices of journalistic coverage | . Partiality or disequilibrium = 163 . Sensationalism or exaggeration = 102 . Prejudice = 19 . To listen only to one of the sides = 17 | 24,2% |
| G3 – Forms of the prevention of the information flux | . Censorship = 181 . Self-censorship = 16 . To prevent divergent manifestations = 2 | 16,1% |
| G4 – Ethical errors which coincide with press crimes | . To offend = 22 . To slander = 31 . To defame = 70 | 10% |
| G5 – Occurrences connected to the new media and to the new technologies | . Manipulation of picture = 17 . Invasion of privacy = 31 . Plagiarism = 17 . Hidden cameras = 04 . To record declarations without the authorization of the source = 08 . To use a fake to produce subject matter = 03 . To violate e-mails and telephone calls = 03 . To use networks to disseminate false information = 01 | 6,8% |
| G6 – Other deviations of the journalists' conduct | . Leaks in the source secrecy = 10 . To obtain advantages as a journalist = 05 . To receive gifts = 04 . To accept bribery = 02 . To accumulate the functions of a journalist and of a press officer = 04 . To steal documents = 02 . To use a false identity to lie by affirming not to be a journalist = 11 . Not rectifying an article when there is an error = 11 | 3,9% |

Source: Data collected and organized by the author from the website of the Observatório da Imprensa.

G1 embraces four categories which translate the special characteristics of the vehiculated journalistic information: imprecision, incorrectness, distortion or omission of its parts. That is to say, the occurrences of this first group evoke ethics when the news/information is inexact, falsified, tainted or incomplete, when the communicated contents contradicts conditions which are considered basic and initial for the activity of journalism.

The categories of G1 labelled almost 40% of the *corpus*, which signals the concern of the authors published in the OI about these errors and even more the importance that this arena attributes to these values, practically not negotiable within the plane of the journalists' ethical conduct. Since historically the journalistic discourse has been developed based upon corollaries such as that of truth and of faithfulness in the narration of the events, exchanged, incorrect, by halves, or absent data are not tolerated. "Incorrectness" and "imprecision" maintain a certain kinship and sometimes they are equivocally treated as synonyms. The reporter can relate a correct episode, but with information which does not precisely correspond to what happened, as in the first reports of the case of the Brazilian who was killed by Scotland Yard in London, confounded with a terrorist. In January of 2006, within only two days, Brazilian newspapers gave three different versions about the number of policemen who were accused of Jean Charles de Menezes' death¹⁰.

"Incorrectness" is an error of major proportions, this was the case when the English daily newspaper *Daily Telegraph* published an article in 2009 saying that women who consumed alcohol were more susceptible to be raped, information which was disavowed immediately afterwards by the newspaper itself, which would have committed an "error of edition"¹¹. It is a case of "incorrectness" when the newspaper incorrectly identifies someone in the caption of a photograph. As an example we can cite the Columbian *El Tiempo* that in 2008 pointed out the Ecuadorian

¹⁰ The criticism is done by Uriano Mota, on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos.asp?cod=365FDS002> Acesso em 12/12/2011.

¹¹ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/jornal_pede_desculpas_por_afirmacao_machista Access on 12/12/2011.

minister Gustavo Larrea at the side of the *guerrillero* Raúl Reyes and had to apologize¹². In 2004, it was Associated Press' turn to be obliged to retract false news. The article related the fall of a meteorite near the Olympia, Washington. Actually it was a piece of information hoaxed by the source, a man who said that he was an astronomy professor, information which was published without the check expected from the agency¹³.

But “incorrectness” and “imprecision” can also be translated into “distortion”, for instance when there are errors of translation in news agencies texts¹⁴ or when the information seems to be deliberately distorted, such as in the coverage of *Folha de S. Paulo*, in 2009, of the Cesare Battisti case¹⁵, or in the same daily newspaper, in a meeting of the Partido dos Trabalhadores [Workers' Party], in February 2003¹⁶. Examples of this practice are the pictures transmitted by Russian broadcast stations about protests in Russia in 2007, attenuating the police's violence¹⁷, and the report of the *Time* of 2004 about India's disposition to give territorial concession of the region of Kashmir to Pakistan¹⁸.

Informative distortion also occurs when the context is not given, when data, sources or versions are eliminated. In 2001, Pedro Antonio

¹² See note on: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/morre_o_escritor_arthur_c_clarke Access on 19/12/2011.

¹³ See details on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/ap-se-desculpa-por-noticia-falsa> Acesso em 29/11/2011.

¹⁴ Luis Weis draws the attention to a case occurred in 2003, when *O Estado de S. Paulo* translated an article by Richard Cohen, of *Washington Post*, committing an error of translation. Translating imprecisely into Portuguese, the newspaper published the sentence “*uma atitude de cavalheiro no sentido das liberdades civis*” [“*A gentleman's attitude in the sense of civil liberties*”] instead of “*uma atitude arrogante em relação às liberdades civis [an arrogant attitude] (cavalier, in English) with regard to civil liberties*”] It is not a catastrophic error, but the imprecision taints the meaning of the text, generating other understandings, lighter ones. More details on <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/iq170620032.htm> Access on 09/01/2012.

¹⁵ The complaint is from Celso Lungaretti, for whom *Folha* is exceeding all the limits of journalistic ethics”: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/folha_espermeia_deforma_e_distorce Access on 09/01/2012.

¹⁶ Luiz Antonio Magalhães affirms that *Folha de S. Paulo* divulged a headline saying that José Genoíno and José Dirceu intended to expel some “radicals” of the PT, when there was actually no more than a declaration by Genoíno saying that in the next meeting, he would propose a public admonition to the senator Heloísa Helena for having been absent at the election of the president of the Senate. More details on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/iq120220034.htm> Access on 15/02/2012.

¹⁷ See on: <http://observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/emissoras-distorcem-protestos-antigoverno>

¹⁸ Indian officers accused the director of the subsidiary of the magazine in New Delhi, Alex Perry, of distorting facts reported to him by a government civil servant. The explosive region of Kashmir is being disputed by India and Pakistan. Mores details on <http://observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/time-tem-materia-questionada-na-india> Access on 16/02/2012.

Dourado de Rezende accuses the magazine *Veja* of publishing an article about the problems of Microsoft with the North-American justice, omitting important facts of the process which condemned the software company for monopoly¹⁹. In the same year Lúcio Flávio Pinto criticized a headline of the daily newspaper *O Liberal*, saying that the State of Pará had more employments than the State of Amazonas, information which would only make sense if absolute numbers and not the percentage relative to the population²⁰ were taken into consideration. In 2004, Alberto Dines, of the OI, accused the magazine *Época* of omitting the source which had handed in the videotape that discovered the bribery case involving the then president of Loterj –Loteria do Estado do Rio de Janeiro [Brazil's State Lottery of Rio de Janeiro], Waldomiro Diniz, and the *bicheiro* Carlos “Cachoeira” Augusto Ramos²¹. [*bicheiro*: boss of the *jogo do bicho*: animal game: illegal gambling game]. In 2006, part of the Brazilian press is criticized for omitting information of the public opinion poll favourable to the then president of the republic Lula²²; in the same month of January, Fabiano Reis pointed out that the media seemed to ignore the true causes of the closure of three meat packing factories in the State of Mato Grosso do Sul, attributing the responsibility to the foot and mouth disease. According to the author, financial problems of the companies were concealed from the public²³.

More frequent and visible in this mapping, the occurrences categorized in G1 mainly point out the characteristics of the vehiculated information, that is to say, the elements of the product already manufactured, packed and distributed. Obviously the concerns about the news are important, but they seem to contribute to the opacity of the fact that there

¹⁹ See on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/eno211120011.htm> Access on 27/11/2011.

²⁰ In the context, the State of Pará would have an employment for each 27 inhabitants and the State of Amazonas of each 12 inhabitants. See details on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/iq211120013.htm> Access on 27/11/2011.

²¹ Although the pictures are of the year 2002, they were published two years later, the time of Dines' criticism. See on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/o-que-interessa-e-iluminar-a-area-cinzenta> Access on 27/11/2011.

²² Details on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos.asp?cod=365IMQ002> Access on 28/11/2011.

²³ See on: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/a-culpa-nao-foi-da-aftosa> Access on 28/11/2011.to

are subjects involved in the processes of the production of journalistic information, like oblivion does. In this sense, the occurrences of the G2 shed light on various coverage vices “partiality”, “sensationalism or exaggeration”, “prejudice” and “to listen only to one of the sides”.

Responsible for almost a quarter of the mapped cases in that decade, this second category group points out some errors such as tendentious information, the appeal to more primitive and immediate instincts of the human being, the unilateral approach of an event and the temptation of journalists and vehicles to act like judges in polemical and litigious situations.

“Partiality” was one of the most identified errors in the *corpus*, appearing in 163 cases, frequency which signals the concern about the equilibrium in the coverage and the reinforcement (veiled) of a journalistic value which was recurrently questioned: impartiality. This contradiction feeds many controversies in the professional category and at university; this is why we will not discuss this aspect. We are more interested in mentioning some cases in which “partiality” is taken as a starting point and a support for a discussion about the expected conduct of journalists. There are cases in which a particular vehicle is taxed with being partial in its approach, like the magazine *Veja*, which, in 2009, was “arbitrary” when it accused some politicians of bribery and *Folha de S. Paulo* when it classified the Brazilian military dictatorship as “*ditabranda*” [“*dictasoft*”]²⁴. But there are broader accusations without distinction of media: for example the “tendentious” coverage of Brazilian media about the *Lei de Biossegurança* [Law of Bio-security]²⁵, and that of the North-American media about the presidential elections in the United States, both in 2008²⁶.

“Partiality” and “to listen only to one of the sides” are frequently connected, as we can see on the portal Terra, which was unilateral in a subject matter about the action of opposition parties at the Tribunal Su-

²⁴ These startling cases are cited by Luciano Martins Costa on: http://www.oobservatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/a_selecao_arbitraria_da_imprensa Access on 01/12/2011.

²⁵ See http://www.oobservatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/a_imprensa_no_embate_entre_humanismo_e_religiao Access on 01/12/2011.

²⁶ See http://www.oobservatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/cobertura_parcial_credibilidade_em_xeque Access on 02/12/2011.

perior Eleitoral [Supreme Electoral Court] against president Lula because of anticipated campaigns, or in a similar subject matter of the daily newspaper *O Globo*, mentioned by Mauricio Caleiro in 2010²⁷. Or in 2003, when *Folha de S. Paulo* published a letter written by the president of the Comissão de Constituição e Justiça da Câmara Federal [Commission of Constitution and Justice of the Federal Chamber], Luiz Eduardo Greenhalgh, who disavowed a report published about the interrogation of one of the suspects of assassinating Celso Daniel²⁸, where the prisoner accused Greenhalgh of torture. According to Luiz Eduardo Magalhães, the newspaper listened only to the plaintiff and did not verify information from any other person who was present at the interrogation²⁹.

“Sensationalism” and “prejudice” are two other coverage vices that are evident in this mapping. Exaggeration and the appeal to more superficial emotions are being quite criticized in the arena of the OI, like in the cases of health coverage. This was the case of yellow fever in 2008³⁰ and of swine flu (H1N1) in 2009, when the media were questioned about their position. In “*O Globo veste marrom*” [“*O Globo* is wearing brown”, from the expression: *imprensa marrom* [brown press], which means sensationalist press]³¹ and “*A notícia e a tentação do alarmismo*” [The news and the temptation of alarmism], Luciano Martins Costa analyzes the exaggerated tendency in the newsrooms, whereas Celso Lungaretti, Gabriel Perissé and Michel Arbache have recourse to puns in order to show the dimension of the panic stamped on the news: “*A epidemia do alarmismo jornalístico*” [The epidemic of journalistic alarmism]³², “*O apocalipse, a pandemídia*” [The apocalypse, the “*pandemídia*”]³³ and

²⁷ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/a_imprensa_e_as_campanhas_antecipadas Access on 03/12/2011.

²⁸ Celso Daniel was mayor of Santo André (SP), when he was assassinated in 2002. Motivations and instigators are still unknown, but there are suspicions, including the involvement of politicians of the mayor’s party, the PT.

²⁹ See: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/fd301220033.htm> Access on 20/01/2012.

³⁰ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/jornalismo_que_mata Access on 20/01/2012.

³¹ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/o_globo_veste_marrom Access on 02/12/2011.

³² See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/a_epidemia_do_alarmismo_jornalístico Access on 02/12/2011.

³³ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/o_apocalipse_a_pandemídia Access on 03/12/2011.

“Confundindo pandemia com pandemônio” [“Confounding pandemic with pandemonium”]³⁴, respectively. Luiz Antonio Magalhães, in a sneering tone – “*Cadê a gripe que estava aqui?*” [“Where is the flu that was here?”] – wants the *ombudsman* of *Folha de S. Paulo*, Carlos Eduardo Lins da Silva, to recognize publicly that the newspaper had given a “*barriga vexaminosa*” [“a shameful belly”; from the expression in journalistic slang: “*levar barriga*: to divulge false news] by publishing on the first page the information that, within two months, H1N1 would contaminate 35 million people in Brazil, which fortunately it did not happen. In 2010, Celso Lungaretti would retrospectively sum up that the “epidemic was actually bad journalism”³⁵.

As prejudicial as “sensationalism”, the tendency to prejudice also disseminates itself. Three examples in 2002: even before the end of the enquiry of the death of the singer Cássia Eller, the magazine *Veja* published on the cover that the drugs had made one more victim³⁶. Afterwards the investigation showed that she had suffered a cardiac infarction. In 2005, Luiz Weis attacked the *Jornal Nacional* [newscast] (TV Globo), *Veja* and *O Estado de S. Paulo*, which in a frenzy of “*denuncismo* [denouncism]”, treated the people registered in the Comissão Parlamentar de Inquérito dos Correios [Parliamentary Commission of Enquiry of the Postal Office Services] as guilty “It is this old plague of the media to condemn shouting and to absolve, or what is equivalent, whispering”³⁷. In 2007, *News of the World* published a subject matter accusing Alin Turcu of having planned to sequester the singer Victoria Beckham and her children, a fact which justice did not prove and which obliged the newspaper to make a formal apology³⁸.

³⁴ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/confundindo_pandemia_com_pandemonio Access on 03/12/2011.

³⁵ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/a_epidemia_era_mesmo_de_mau_jornalismo Access on 03/12/2011.

³⁶ See: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/iq160120025.htm> Access on 04/12/2011.

³⁷ See: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/entra-escandalo-sai-escdalo-e-os-erros-ficam> Access on 04/12/2011.

³⁸ See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/tabloide_britanico_se_desculpa_por_acusacao Access on 04/12/2011.

It is curious to perceive that in the occurrences of the G2, the coverage vices are similar to generalized behaviours, widely disseminated in the production teams and not isolated attitudes of an agent or other. The vices emerge like crystallized customs, which cross the newsrooms. The origin of the error is not to be seen, names are not mentioned, the sequence of decision makings which led to the adoption of a partial, exaggerated or condemning tone is being ignored. Once more, we experience a deletion of the roots of the ethical error.

The third group of occurrences of the mapping reunites categories which converge towards forms of the prevention of the information flux: “censorship”, “self-censorship” and “to prevent divergent manifestations”. Mostly the texts in the OI denounce forms of muzzling by politicians³⁹, Pentagon⁴⁰, justice⁴¹, regulating commissions⁴² and the more closed governments such as those of Iran⁴³, Sudan⁴⁴, Thailand⁴⁵, Bangladesh⁴⁶. The occurrences also emerge as grievances, reinforcing the character that such practices contradict the nature of journalism and hurt press freedom, a corollary of democratic regimes. It is curious to evidence that censorship always seems to come from outside the newsrooms, from exogenous agents, and almost never from intern operators. Of the 199 registers of the G3, only 9% referred to cases of “self-censorship”⁴⁷ and to actions “to prevent

³⁹ See: http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/news/view/john_mccain_pede_que_obama_tome_imagens_secretas Access on 04/12/2011.

⁴⁰ See: <http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/artigos/mo230120026.htm> Access on 07/12/2011.

⁴¹ See: http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/news/view/outra_vez_a_censura_togada Access on 07/12/2011.

⁴² See: <http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/artigos/mo230120028.htm> Access on 07/12/2011.

⁴³ See: http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/news/view/governo_fecha_publicacoes_prorforma Access on 07/12/2011.

⁴⁴ See: http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/news/view/jornalistas_protestam_contra_censura_com_greve_de_fome (Access on 04/12/2011) and http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/news/view/jornais_do_sudoeste_enfrentam_onda_de_repressao Access on 04/12/2011.

⁴⁵ See: http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/news/view/governo_ameaca_liberdade_na_internet Access on 07/12/2011.

⁴⁶ See: http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/news/view/midia_censurada_sob_estado_de_sitio Access on 07/12/2011.

⁴⁷ An example is the pact the major North American scientific publications did in 2003, omitting the publication of articles which could “threaten national security”, such as details of virus with virtual use in biological wars. See: <http://www.observatoriodaimpresa.com.br/artigos/mo2602200393.htm> Access on 07/12/2011.

divergent manifestations”⁴⁸, disparity which signals the difficulty (or unwillingness?) to reveal and discuss cases in which the agent who interrupts the informative flux is the journalist himself.

For methodological questions, we reunited in the fourth group the occurrences which coincided with the so-called press crimes: “offence” (an attempt on somebody’s honour), “calumny” (to falsely impute a crime to somebody) and “defamation” (to maculate the professional reputation of others)⁴⁹. In the collected cases, the errors oscillate between the juridical and ethical spheres, blurring the limits between what the law prohibits and what prevents the norm of professional conduct. Since such frontiers are very diaphanous and the debates complex, we are not going to detail the G4, which will allow us to do it on some other occasion. However, we could not omit to mention this one, which can be an interesting way to discuss journalistic ethics in the present time.

Another emergent bias concerns the occurrences connected with the new media and technologies, which we reunited in the G5: “manipulation of picture”, “invasion of privacy”, “plagiarism”, “hidden cameras”, “recording of declarations without the authorization of the source”, “to use a fake to make subject matter”, “to violate e-mails and telephone calls” and “to use the social networks in order to disseminate false information”. The five last categories are still not very frequent in the *corpus* we collected in the OI between 2001 and 2010, but its presence already indicates embryonic concerns about these practices, since to discover them or to determine their conditions is still quite difficult. In compensation, the debates on ethical limits of the treatment of static or moving pictures⁵⁰, on the authorship of reports and the reutilization of contents

⁴⁸ The post September 11th hysteria led publications such as *Veja* simply to adopt the viewpoint of the United States, silencing other voices: <http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/artigos/iq101020013.htm> Acesso em 07/12/2011.

⁴⁹ In Brazilian legislation, these crimes are typified in Código Penal [Penal Code] and they were foreseen in the Lei de Imprensa (Lei nº 5250/67), [Press Law] extinguished in 2009. There are called “*crimes de imprensa*” [press crimes] or “*crimes de opinião*” [opinion crimes].

⁵⁰ There are vehicles which recognize having extrapolated, such as *El Nuevo Herald*, which in 2006 manipulated two photographs in order to simulate that Cuban policemen were ignoring prostitutes who were waving at tourists. See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/jornal_admite_manipulacao_de_imagens Access on 11/01/2012.

from thirds⁵¹, and on the public-private frontiers attract great attention⁵². These topics are hypertrophied by the more and more ubiquitous internet, by the facilitating systems of edition of digital material and by the phenomenon of the social networks. It is obvious that before these three factors, there were already concerns about the appropriation of other peoples' s texts and pictures, about the respect of privacy and the use of cheating methods in order to get information. The new technologies did not create these dilemmas; they only modernized the old questions.

A sixth group of registers embraces other conduct deviations, which, in some cases, border on the criminal area. In fact "to accept bribery" can mean corruption, "to steal documents" can be equivalent to undue appropriation" and "to use false identity/to lie, saying that you are not a journalist" can be translated as ideological falsity. The other categories of the G6 are confined to the sphere of the journalist' s actuation, but their occurrences are rare, in comparison with other classes of this mapping. "Leaks in the source secrecy" "to obtain advantages as a journalist", "to receive gifts", "to accumulate the functions of a journalist and of a press officer" in the same area in which he works and "not rectifying the subject matter when there were errors", together they represent 2, 7% of the collected registers. As an example of what happened with part of the G3, the rarity of the mentions can indicate the little frequency, its difficult identification or even the unwillingness of the subjects to relate such cases or to discuss them. The determination of these motivations transcends the scope of this article, but it is extremely interesting for whom dedicates himself to discussing the meanders of the ethical configuration in professional journalism

⁵¹ The cases such as those of Jason Blair (*The New York Times*) and Stephen Glass (*The New Republic*) became famous, they invented stories and copied whole passages of subject matters written by colleagues, but they were not the only ones... http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/cresce_o_numero_de_fraudadores_descobertos Access on 11/01/2012.

⁵² The more common occurrences of invasion of privacy are linked to the actuation of *paparazzi*, such as on http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/namorada_do_principe_denuncia_jornal_por_foto (Access on 11/01/2012). But and when is the e-mail exchange of two ministers of the Supremo Tribunal Federal [Supreme Court] captured? See: http://www.observatoriodaimprensa.com.br/news/view/exposicao_de_misérias_e_riquezas_humanas Access on 20/01/2012.

The presentation of the analysis categories, of the groupings of these registers and the quick glance at the main modalities of the errors that were collected in the period demonstrate part of the work to which we dedicated ourselves during the last three years. The mapping of the ways in which journalistic ethics has been presenting itself in the first decade of this century does not exhaust itself in a limited space such as this, but our objective to present a panoramic vision leads us to detail its aspects afterwards. As we already said, a map is not a territory, but a sample, a representation. It is limited from the very start, but it is useful to have a notion of the whole set. We can affirm that, in the first decade of this century, the journalistic ethics, observed from the website of the Observatório da Imprensa, is a dynamic, fragmented, tense, contradictory ethics, which uses again old dilemmas in new formats and which signals the emergence of new deontological bases. It is an ethics, in which strategies are being used in order to delete the origin of some errors, serving the convenience of part of the agents' community. It is an ethics which is still lacking maturity, willingness to face dilemmas and to transcend values and the persistence in these efforts. Finally an ethics conjugated in the gerund, in continuous movement, desirous to achieve its goals.

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