

INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION TO THE SPECIAL ISSUE:

Journalism in Brazil and Africa: Cross-influences, Developments, and Perspectives

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Journalism in non-Western contexts has emerged under circumstances that often compelled it to peculiar pathways: contributing to anti-colonial movements, fighting against discrimination imposed by the colonial and later on post-colonial elites against local populations, distancing itself from decades of single-party rule and government control on the media sector, while facing unprecedented economic challenges in poverty-stricken countries.

This Special Issue is interested in exploring the conditions within which journalism is practiced and studied in these contexts. More specifically, it looks at the theory and practice of journalism in Africa and Brazil, focusing on the professional practices and institutions in the Global South. It also intends to address journalism's role in shifting global relations and changing media environments. It wishes to explore the range of research, education and praxis issues for journalism in the diverse contexts of Brazil and Africa, with an eye

on the individual tensions and interests that come to the fore when looking at each individually and comparatively.

This Special Issue of **BJR** wished to focus on possible cross-influences between these two geographical entities. But the very limited comparative contributions that the editors received after launching this call demonstrated that there is a huge gap in this field of research. Despite historical links between Brazil and Africa, a shared language between Brazil and no less than five African countries, and even though circulation of information and entertainment (*telenovelas*) has existed for decades between the two entities, very little research has been devoted to comparing developments and perspectives in their media systems, but also to developing theoretical tools that can fertilize the reflexion about a “de-westernized” approach of journalism.

Therefore this issue is a first attempt to present jointly papers about Brazil and about Africa in order to contribute to open up to a globalized approach of journalism research, education and practice. What are the varied contextual influences – social, cultural, political, and economic – that impacts upon journalism in these contexts? How do journalists and journalism scholars in African countries and Brazil perceive journalism, its changing roles and functions and its relationships with various others? What are the constraints that journalists experience in such an environment?

This Special issue is not able to tackle all these issues, but at least some of them can be addressed, and a minimal circulation of data and ideas can be launched starting from this initiative. The first paper, by Juliana Lisboa and Pedro Aguiar, respectively PhD candidates at the Universidade do Vale do Rio dos Sinos and at the Universidade do Estado do Rio de Janeiro attempts to analyse a portion of the information flows between Brazil and five Lusophone countries in Africa (PALOPs in the original acronym): Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, Cape Verde and Sao Tome and Principe. Focusing on the six press agencies of the countries under study, the research tries to trace mutual citations with the Brazilian agency ABr. It shows that Brazilian and African agencies do not have direct relations, but that content related to each other passes through the Portuguese agency Lusa. The authors argue that “the Lusophone space of information circulation resembles a new “triangular trade”,” as all contacts are mediated by the European vertex, just as during the colonial period.

Focusing on the way the Brazilian journalists portray other

Portuguese-speaking nations, the paper by Jose Cristian Goes and Elton Antunes, both from the Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, scrutinizes the content of Brazil's two largest circulation newspapers: *Folha de S. Paulo* and *O Globo*. The study identifies that the sense of a common identity within the Community of Portuguese Language Countries (CPLP in the original acronym) is overshadowed by the economic issues of globalization: not only is the CPLP almost invisible in the newspapers under study, but when they appear, Portugal and Brazil are portrayed as economically superior to poor, corrupt and dictatorial African countries or East Timor, only useful to Brazil when the latter seeks their support in order to get a permanent seat at the UN Security Council.

The other papers provide an insight into the two other main linguistic communities of the African continent: apart from Portuguese, English and French are the two other main languages spoken on the continent, a legacy from the British and French rule that ended at the beginning of the 1960s. The paper by Fatima Abubakre, from the University of Ilorin, in Nigeria, takes a close look to the press coverage of the 2015 presidential electoral campaign in the South-West of the most populated African country. It shows that, ever since the press appeared in that area in 1859, newspapers ownership has always been driven by political motives rather than profit. Since the British colonial rule, and up until now, nearly all newspapers in Nigeria were created in association with a political party and many of them belong to politicians. The study shows to which extent the campaign coverage reflects the political leaning of the newspapers' respective owners.

Eventually, the last paper, by Lassané Yaméogo, researcher from the University of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso, a former French colony, proposes a reflection on the mechanisms and lines of action that maintain gender stereotypes in the newsrooms, and on how female journalists are represented in the media. Drawing from interviews made in two main newspapers, two radio stations and two television stations, the paper demonstrates that women keep being restricted to subaltern positions and to the coverage of social issues referred to as "cute" or "easy". Of course, gender segregation in the newsrooms is also the result of a social dynamic outside of journalism, characterized by preconceptions and prejudice about the position of women in society.

Even though not building on a comparative approach with

Lusophone African countries nor with Brazil, these two papers recall that journalism has to be analysed and understood in the local social, economic and political context where it is practised.

Building on these four case studies, many other research questions can arise, deserving to be addressed in further comparative or in-depth research about journalism practices and the circulation of information and influences beyond the Western world. What new and developing approaches to journalism and journalism education and research are central to the intellectual pursuit of internationalizing journalism and media studies in these contexts? How do journalists contribute to political and social change in both continents? How has journalism adapted to the Internet in access-wise peculiar environments?

Of course, the editors of this special issue would have wished to receive many more proposals, but this limited selection can be viewed as a first attempt to build a South-South bridge across the Atlantic Ocean, a first step in establishing exchanges of knowledge and research that do not have to transit through Europe for disseminating from Brazil to Africa and from Africa to Brazil.