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Journalists' professional self-representations.

A Portuguese perspective based on the contribution made by the sociology of professions.

Abstract

The deregulation of the labour markets and the proliferation of precarious labour contracts are making it more difficult for journalists to retain occupational control of their professional practice and this is in turn forcing them to renegotiate their contract with society (Sennett, 1998; Eide, 2010).

At the same time, journalists' authority as gatekeepers is constantly being eroded and is being replaced by "gatewatching" – a practice underpinned by a more participatory audience that plays the part of content curator. That authority is also being challenged by the redefinition of the barriers between news producers and consumers brought about by the advent en masse of networked journalists.

This is the perspective from which the present article addresses the dynamics of change in the journalist's profession, which are further heightening the uncertainty and angst (Zelizer, 2015) felt in the structures of professional performance (Picard, 2015).

Taking professional self-representation as a starting point and framing it against the background of the leading ideas postulated in the sociology of professions, the article's goal is to paint a picture of the journalistic profession in Portugal and to understand how journalists evaluate that profession, the structures of professionalism and the dynamics of deprofessionalisation and proletarianisation (Larson, 1977), while situating those perceptions within the theory of "ambivalence in professions" (Merton & Barber, 1963/2017; Abbott 1988a).

The primary methodology is quantitative, with longitudinal analyses of the main data gathered from surveys of journalists based on three intentional non-probabilistic samples (2010, 2012, and 2016).

KEY WORDS: Journalism; sociology of professions; profession and professionalism; **ambivalence in professions**; deprofessionalisation and **proletarianisation**; Portugal.

Introduction

In *Cultural Chaos: Journalism and Power in a Globalised World*, McNair (2006, p.xviii) notes that the journalistic environment has become more and more like the weather and the oceans in the age of global warming – turbulent, unpredictable and extreme.

The scenario of deep-reaching transformations in the media ecosystem, brought about by both incremental innovations and radical disruptions (Sádaba, 2016), whose impact on the performance of the journalistic profession has been maximised by the effects of a deep crisis in the sector (Bastos, 2014; Matos, 2017), has resulted in greater uncertainty, occupational precarity (i.e. flexible labour mechanisms such as tertiarisation and subcontracting, also referred to as contingent work) and a disrupted identity (Dantas, 2017; Matos, 2017). This has occurred in a context of transition to an information society and global economy characterised by more precarious living conditions and the segmentation and fragmentation of work (Castells, 2002). The interconnected challenges springing from the impact of informationalism (Castells, 2002) on professional journalism, therefore now require flexible labour mechanisms based on a fundamental restructuring of the division of labour (Compton, 2010). This would introduce new challenges to journalists, who would have to cover more fields of knowledge, perform more tasks and become more versatile. They would have to depend on more and more training and ongoing self-education capable of responding to 1) organisations' needs; 2) growing requirements in terms of professional performance, such as convergent, multifunctional work; 3) the redefinition of the social contract based on rationalisation of direct labour costs and doing 'more with less' and faster, in a scenario of heavier workloads without matching wage increases; and 4) the survival of the profession itself when its expert singularity is faced with the challenges of sub-journalisms that are also vying for the historical role of accredited journalists (Bruns, 2005; Deuze, 2005; Singer, 2010), resulting in the erosion of journalists' authority as gatekeepers (Shoemaker, 1991; Singer, 2008) and more acute deprofessionalisation of their status.

The advent of the internet as a great symbol of the global network society culminated in what Singer (2010), Bruns (2005) and Deuze (2005) called a dramatic conceptual change in journalistic practice, in transition from a more or less coherent industry to a highly varied and diverse range of practices (Deuze, 2017, p.166).

In view of the above, taking account of the scenarios of change and disruption of the journalist's profession, we contextualise the reality of Portuguese journalism in light of the main theories produced by the sociology of professions.

Since 2009, Portugal has gone through the sovereign debt crisis (Louçã, 2012), survived an external intervention and rescue process led by the so-called Troika¹, and readapted to scenarios of austerity. All these transformations, and especially those experienced during a period of economic downturn and adjustment, have had a substantial impact on both people's lives in general and the various professional occupations practised in Portugal, engendering environments of austerity, unemployment and precarity. Journalistic work in Portugal has been no exception and journalists have become subject to constant pressure

¹ The "Troika" was made up of the IMF, the European Commission and the European Central Bank (ECB). The mechanisms employed included the European Financial Stability Facility (EFSF) and the European Financial Stabilisation Mechanism (EFSM).

in their professional practice, with repercussions in terms of the reconfiguration of their work relationships and routines.

The three studies referred to below² are thus an especially useful source of primary data, which we will now analyse longitudinally in an attempt to look at both the way in which journalists see themselves as possessing a specific professional status, and how that status relates to changes in the practice of journalism in Portugal.

We approach the problem from a multidimensional perspective. We have drawn up the following research question: RQ – How can the sociology of professions, mainly through theories of ambivalence in professions (Merton & Barber, 1963/2017; Abbott, 1988a) and the deprofessionalisation and proletarianisation (Larson, 1977) help situate Portuguese journalists' representations of the profession in contexts of change and disruption?

We also drew up four subsidiary research questions. SR1 – What is Portuguese journalists' position on credentialism, monopolies and professional accreditation? SR2 - What is their position on two-directional and collaborative dynamics boosted by participative audiences? SR3 – What is their position on decentralized markets of horizontal production (Benkler, 2006) in the form of networked and citizen journalism? SR4 - What is the position of Portuguese journalists on the structures of change in their work, such as multi-skilling and multi-specialized work, and on growing precariousness in journalists' jobs?

The importance of the sociology of professions to an understanding of the journalistic profession

It is important to begin by using a review of the literature on the sociology of professions to get an overview of the journalistic profession, even if “many journalists have resisted labeling theirs as a profession” (Örnebring, 2010, p.568).

Two major lines of thought define the first steps which the sociology of professions took as a discipline in its own right: functionalism in the analysis of professions as a model, and interactionism in the analysis of professions as a process (Rodrigues, 1997).

Larson (1977) described professionalism as a process of closing a market and controlling labour by means of a monopoly, for reasons of self-interest. Larson's ideas were dominated by a pessimistic vision of the future of professions that emphasised a trend towards deprofessionalisation and proletarianisation derived from changes in the conditions under which people work and pursue a profession in organisational contexts (Rodrigues, 2012, p.17).

At the same time, professionalism exists when an organised occupational group acquires both the power to determine who is qualified to engage in what type of activity, thereby preventing others from doing so, and the power to control the criteria for assessing the quality of that professional pursuit (Rodrigues, 2012: 9), in a context in which the most crucial aspect is coalescence into a group (Abbott, 1988b, p.11).

For Rodrigues (2012: 9), this is a way of regulating work and employment based on attaching value to four organisational principles: the formal certification, by diplomas, of scientific knowledge and specific competencies; decision-making autonomy in relation to

² “Desafios do jornalismo/challenges of journalism, 2010”; “Desafios do jornalismo/challenges of journalism, 2012”; “Jornalistas e condições laborais: retratos de uma profissão em transformação/ Journalists and Working Conditions: Portrait of a profession in transformation, 2016”.

higher authority and the way the work is done; self-regulation and closed entry to the labour market; and finally, that the activity should be targeted at problem-solving.

Similarly, Freidson (1986, xii) considers professions “as those occupations that have in common credentials testifying to some degree of higher education and training processes that presupposes exposure to a body of formal knowledge and a professional discipline. Freidson (1994, p.32) suggests that the central issue of professional power lies in the control of work by professional workers themselves, in an opinion that follows contributions by Johnson (1972), an author who defined profession as a method of controlling work.

In addition, Flood (1995) says that occupations defined as professions have been granted the privilege of self-governance and autonomy, while Collins (1990, p.35) declares that “professions are not merely occupations which have achieved closure against market competition; they also have occupational status honour (...) they surround their work with an ideological covering”.

This almost indivisible way of seeing the concepts of profession and professionalisation as dependent on the structures of the certification and monopoly of knowledge leads to that which Merton and Barber (1963/2017) and Abbott (1988a, p.1) call ambivalence in professions, in the sense that to some people there is value in professionals’ knowledge (Svensson, 1990) and the competence with which they resolve concrete problems, while for others the history of professions comes down to a lamentable tale of monopoly, privileges and exploitation.

Merton and Barber (1963/2017) upheld that professions themselves are the subject of ambivalence in that “They are the object of all manner of positive feelings and all manner of negative ones (...) targets of hostility as well as the objects of esteem” (1963/2017, p. 106). This ambivalence is thus also the product of both positive and negative representations of collective groups (Ashfort, Rogers, Pratt & Pradies, 2014).

In some studies, professions are considered to possess a negative social function, inasmuch as the ideology of professionalism is thought to be at the root of the development of mechanisms of social closure and exclusion, giving rise to and reproducing situations of domination, privilege and social and economic inequality (Rodrigues, 2012, p.27), or what Larson (1977) calls a monopoly on the market for professional services.

On the other hand, others highlight the positive social function performed by professions, firstly in the sense that they are based on rule and value systems like those of rationality, knowledge, meritocracy, equal opportunities, social well-being and justice; secondly, because they represent logics of altruistic motivation and action oriented towards the development of knowledge, better-quality services and the defence of the public interest; and thirdly, to quote Rodrigues (2012, p.28), in that “professions are considered to constitute an alternative way of organising work and authority, based on knowledge and not on individual characteristics or inherited resources”. Thus, to some people, the power of professions and professional groups is currently an obstacle to the functioning of the markets and democratic societies while to others it is the only guarantee of the quality of services provided and should therefore be protected from external controls (Rodrigues, 2012, pp.9-10).

This ambivalent, almost aporetic way of looking at professions and professionalisation based on a conceptualisation derived from the sociology of professions is represented in the manner in which some authors (Beckett, 2008, 2010) who talk about the context of the

journalistic profession refer to networked journalism almost as if it were an opportunity, while others (Deuze, 2005; Fidalgo, 2008; Lewis, 2012; Waisbord, 2013; Picard, 2015) are almost reproachful about the impact that citizen journalism has on the exclusive status of journalists' professional identities and their jurisdictional control over the construction of the news, emphasising the journalistic training and experience (Benson, 2008) that are involved in the structures of professionalism. At the end of the day and to put it another way, it is as if, in their most belligerent form, the normative theories of the Gatekeeper (Lewin, 1947; Manning, 1950; Singer, 2008; Shoemaker, 2009; Lewis, 2012) impose themselves on all and any possibility of redefining the structures within which journalists perform their professional role according to the canonical/heraldic vision of three of the four organisational principles that regulate work and employment – i.e. 1) certification, 2) autonomy, and 3) self-regulation and occupational closure under the aegis of the public good and a higher-quality journalism.

In the centre of this discursive ambivalence arising from the debate on accredited journalisms and sub-journalisms that are shaking up the conventional structures of journalistic practice, we find the issue that connects journalistic knowledge to professional dynamics. It is also a discussion that takes place at the intersection between the sociology of professions and the sociology of knowledge and is distinguished by the seminal interpretation of professional journalism as a coherent, structured form of knowledge (Van Dijk, 1980).

This happens because, in accordance with Bourdieu's (2000) theory of knowledge, journalism as a champ/field is a world consisting of a field of actors who are subject to common rules and values. Bourdieu refers to it as a micro-cosmos, a small world of autonomy within the social macro-cosmos, a world of forces that claims for journalism the jurisdiction of practice and journalistic knowledge and the monopoly of the instruments that produce and disseminate information. Tuchman (1988) identifies this micro-cosmos in a similar way. He speaks of the intersection between the sociology of professions and the sociology of knowledge based on a relationship in which a dominant, hegemonic ideology steers the daily packages of tasks, thereby operating as a kind of professional conscience in industries and organisations. Tuchman recalls the work of Shudson, who looked into the development of professionalism in journalism and observed how journalists regarded themselves as professionals whose singularity lay in their ability to “diagnose objectively the ills of the political system, economy and (sometimes) the social system by providing “facts” (Tuchman, 1988, p.612) while reflecting reality.

Benton and Craig (2001), on the other hand, based their work on the Marxist approach to the sociology of knowledge and Merton's philosophical empiricism and practical empiricism in science. They highlighted the dimensions of integrity, objectivity and commitment to the empiric truth as factors legitimising expert knowledge characterised by adherence to a set of technical and moral norms which are peculiar to it.

To a certain extent, lying at the basis of the normative theory of journalism due to its assumption of expert knowledge, is the idea of its singularity, expressed for example 1) in the idea of gatekeeping (Shoemaker, 1991; Singer, 2008), in which “a news gatekeeper automatically assesses how newsworthy a message is by unconsciously comparing its features with those of messages that are known to be in the category news” (Shoemaker, 1991, p.28)”, recognising what is information and what is accessory (Singer, 2008) and allowing norms to guide their selections (Shoemaker, 1991, p.50); and 2) the idea of a

professional ideology (expressed by Tuchman) based on collective knowledge of the members of a professional group that lays claim to an exclusive status (Zelizer, 2004). For Zelizer (2004, p.6), journalism remains fundamentally different from other sides of cultural analysis due to the fundamentals of its own self-presentation – its predilection for facts, truth and reality, proclaiming invocations of accuracy, self-reflexivity, balance and objectivity capable of ensuring that which Zelizer (1992) calls the authority of the legitimising narrative of its position and status in the interpretative world. Deuze (2008) states that journalists' collective knowledge as an ideology, as discussed by Zelizer, is defined by ideals of public service, objectivity, autonomy, immediacy, and ethics, in a set of values and ethics that Singer (2008, p.62) considers are linked to the dimensions of authenticity, which loosely correlates with the idea of credibility; accountability, which is related to responsibility; and autonomy, or independence (Singer, 2008, p.66).

The many studies in the journalistic field have tended to include a lot of gatekeeper theories that have been interpreted to mean that at the heart of journalism lies the notion of the journalist as a gatekeeper, in a professional community with a strong identity (Traquina: 2004).

On the other hand, a less dogmatic discourse leads to considerations like the idea that it doesn't make sense to see journalists as the only specialists in the area who are capable of fuelling the process (Beckett, 2010). Beckett appears to adhere to the idea that “professions give rise to a lot of criticisms, namely because there are those who consider that credentialism and the closure of labour markets are mechanisms for protecting privileges whose interests conflict with those of others or undermine the public interest (Rodrigues, 2012, p.9). Svensson (2010, p.12) calls this credentialism a “bureaucratic legalistic hierarchy”.

This means that the conflict derived from ambivalence in professions (Merton & Barber, 1963/2017; Abbott, 1988a) is fuelled by that which Rodrigues (2012) sees as social changes and their impact on both the structures and pursuit of working activities and professional groups and their statuses, in a scenario of transmutation that makes it possible to integrate the importance of concepts such as Larson's “deprofessionalisation and proletarianisation” (Larson, 1977) and, in a sense, the mitigation of the power of professional groups (Rodrigues, 2012).

Professional self-representation

The second part of this article takes advantage of a set of primary data which the Communication/Media Observatory (OberCom) in Lisbon produced over the course of seven years in which it sought to study journalism and the phenomenon of a profession in transformation in Portugal. Our longitudinal analysis is based on professional self-representation with regard to questions such as: working conditions; the profession's status; the relationship with citizen journalists; training and credentialism as conditions for pursuit of the profession; continuous specialisation; the economic environment; and future prospects for the profession. The results allow us to situate our study object within the framework of the main theories of the sociology of professions and provide some understanding of continuities, variations and breaks in relation to current theories. Use of the term self-representation leads to one of the dimensions of Goffman's (1990) important

theory of self-presentation, as an essential contribution to an understanding of the different ways in which people manage their-self-image and impressions and the way in which they present them through their actions and performance in the social world, as is the case of professionals who perform daily tasks using rules and rituals that distinguish them from others.

Quantitative Methodology

Samples

The data we used are the result of three online surveys of journalists conducted in 2010, 2012, and 2016.

These anonymous surveys were applied on the basis of intentional non-probabilistic samples using pre-existing databases containing contact details of journalists working for the main media groups in Portugal (Global Media Group, Cofina, Media Capital, Impresa, RTP) and other smaller groups.

The sample for the *Desafios do Jornalismo/Challenges of Journalism, 2010* survey comprised 212 journalists (50.5% male and 49.5% female). Around 71% of the respondents said that they had been working in journalism for more than 10 years. Thirty-three percent worked for the written press, 45.3% in television and 21.7% in radio.

The sample for the *Desafios do Jornalismo/Challenges of Journalism, 2012* survey was made up of 272 journalists (50.4% male and 49.6% female). Around 72% of the respondents said that they had been working in journalism for more than 10 years. A total of 34.1% worked for the written press, 20.8% in television, 16.1% in radio, 19.7% in the exclusively online press and 9.3% in other sectors (such as online radio, news agencies, etc).

A larger survey “*Jornalistas e Condições Laborais: Retrato de uma profissão em transformação/ Journalists and Working Conditions: Portrait of a profession in transformation*” was applied to a total of 1,494 journalists in late 2016 (51.8% male and 48.2% female). Sixty-seven percent of the respondents had been working in journalism for more than 10 years. The multiple-choice answers on the sector in which they worked showed 46.5% in the written press, 15.9% in online journalism, 20.3% in television, 12.4% in radio, 7.6% in the social media and 6.2% in other segments.

The last of the three was the outcome of a joint project involving the Communication/Media Observatory, the Centre for Research and Studies in Sociology (CIES), the Journalists’ Trade Union, and the Journalists’ Professional Licence Committee (CCPJ), all of which are based in Lisbon.

The 2010 and 2012 surveys shared a number of questions, which makes them more comparable with one another. The 2016 survey added new questions and analyses that allow indirect comparisons with its earlier counterparts.

The surveys were applied online using the LimeSurvey (2010 and 2012) and Qualtrics (2016) tools. Respondents to the 2010 and 2012 surveys were required to answer all the questions, whereas in 2016 each question was optional, so the sub-samples varied.

Data analysis

Our data analysis is discussed below. The fact that the various questions were worded differently across the three studies required us to include a sequence in our longitudinal analysis designed to make its results more easily intelligible.

We favoured univariate statistics as a way of separately recording general descriptive traits of a professional group based on the intensity of the overall results, as opposed to analysing the relationship between the variables in question. **Our univariate analyses used categorical nominal and dichotomous variables, categorical ordinal variables and ordinal using a four and five-point Likert scale.**

We also used a bivariate analysis supported by a chi-square test and Cramer's V measure of association to assess differences in the interpretation of future uncertainties and precariousness in the journalist's profession on the basis of the different sectors in which the journalists who took part in the last survey in 2016 worked.

Overview and main results

1. Vocational training

Since 1975 and the introduction of democracy in Portugal, the country's journalistic class has gradually been becoming more aware of how important training is to the profession. Prior to that, journalists could only long for vocational training and capacitation in a country in which there were practically no higher education courses linked to journalism (Mendes, 2012). 1979 saw the definitive introduction of "journalism studies" in Portugal (Mendes, 2012: 70) with the creation of the first tertiary education (licentiate) degree in Media.

The majority (58%) of the 212 respondents to the 2010 survey considered that academic studies ought to be a requisite for entry to the profession.

In the specific case of the printed press, around 67% thought that journalism studies should be mandatory. This is what Mendes (2012, p.136) calls the establishment of training and selection procedures and control over entry to the profession and the ways in which it should be practised.

At the same time, almost all (98.4%) of the 2010 respondents said that the ability to work in the profession should be dependent on an initial internship. It is worth noting that Portuguese law (Ministerial Order no. 3318/99 of 12 May 1999) says that a journalist cannot begin working in the profession without first successfully completing a 12-month internship.

When asked in 2016, a similar question produced polarised results. Half the valid respondents³ considered that specific university training should not be required to work as a journalist, while the other half took the opposite view. There are a number of differences between these results and those obtained in 2010, albeit we should not dismiss the fact that the earlier question was directed at work in the printed-press sector, which possesses some very specific characteristics.

³ of 1217(n)

Having said this, if we look at the training of the 2016 respondents, we see that around 67%⁴ of them had studied Communication Sciences or Journalism – the core academic areas in this field.

2. Professional accreditation

In the last of the surveys conducted in 2016, the professionals who responded⁵ lent weight to the idea that journalists should be linked to an association or trade union which defends their professional interests, in a kind of allusion to Durkheim's (2010) individualisation of the collective consciousness, or the individual who exists in a collective system with common characteristics and knowledge.

Most of the 2016 respondents (84,5%⁶) held a “professional journalist's licence”, which is one of a range of professional accreditation documents that entitle journalists to work in the profession and are issued and can be suspended or revoked by the Journalist's Professional Licence Committee (CCPJ). For example, the Journalist's Professional Licence itself⁷ is the identity document given to full journalists. It officially certifies the name under which the holder works, and enables him/her to pursue the profession and enjoy the specific rights granted to journalists by law.

3. Interaction with news consumers

The great majority (66,7%) of the 2010 respondents looked positively on the possibility of interaction with users and consumers of journalistic affairs. Around 76% of the journalists surveyed in 2012 agreed with the idea that citizens' contributions to the production of opinions derived from the informational process were positive.

4. Networked and citizen journalism

The impact networked journalism is having on conventional news production structures has been defined as the process that is taking the monopoly of information away from journalists, allowing new actors to enter this scenario, on different levels (Fidalgo, 2008). On defining networked journalism as a synthesis of traditional news journalism and the emerging forms of participatory media “through crowd-sourcing, interactivity, hyper-linking, user-generated content and forums [that change] the creation of news from being linear and top-down to a collaborative process”, Beckett (2010) embraces an essentially celebratory view of the phenomenon. He says, “networked journalism is founded on a simple, self-evident truth: we can do more together than we can apart” (Beckett, 2008, foreword).

While the idea advanced by Beckett is controversial, it does provide us with a framework for the respondents' thoughts in the light of the theory of ambivalence in the journalistic

⁴ of 1441(n)

⁵ n=1216

⁶ of 1444(n)

⁷ http://www.ccpj.pt/legisdata/lg_dl_70_08_15_04.htm

profession. Schmitz (2015) calls this ambivalence in identity revisions in the world of journalism a professional identity crisis.

The majority (58.4%) of the journalists surveyed in 2010 considered that it was not expectable that, fifteen years from then, citizen journalism would be integrated into the work of professional journalists.

Equally, 77.5% of the 2012 respondents disagreed with the idea that the information produced by non-journalists on the social networks and new media could be thought of as similar to that produced by journalists.

In 2016, the great majority of respondents (65.4%⁸) took a stance akin to that represented by the bulk of their counterparts in the earlier surveys – in 2012, 77.5% had disagreed with the idea that people who photograph, film or write about an event can be seen as somehow equivalent to journalists.

Similarly, around 65%⁹ of the 2016 respondents said they disagreed with the idea that anyone who applies journalistic techniques and knowledge is comparable to a professional. This result takes us back to the question of specific journalism training, in that the opinion of the majority of respondents suggests that formal certified and accredited knowledge and the credentials to prove it cannot be replaced by the self-taught philosophies argued for by Beckett (2008, 2010). When it really comes down to it, according to Waisbord (2013), the stories that journalists ultimately report legitimise journalism as a profession.

5. Multi-specialised professional work

The results of the 2010 and 2012 surveys showed that the great majority of respondents (75% and 67.4%, respectively) thought that journalists' work was becoming increasingly generalist, as opposed to something done by professionals under a single-specialisation regime. These results fit within the framework of the academic current of thought which argues that multiskilling (Rottwilm, 2014), multi-specialised and convergent (Jenkins, 2006; Micó, 2010; Waisbord, 2013) narrative techniques have become the key techniques of today's journalism.

6. Self-perception of contexts of job insecurity and proletarianisation

The transnational contexts of increased precarity are apparent in the literature on changes in the journalistic profession (Bastos, 2014; Dantas, 2017; Matos, 2017). Unlike others, such as the medical professions, journalism as a profession is a more heterogeneous field (Bourdieu, 2005) in which journalists are more exposed to internal and external pressures and constraints that limit their autonomy and freedom (Reich & Hanitzsch, 2013).

In the 2010 and 2012 surveys, which were carried out at a time when Portugal was going through a period of recession and adjustment, with policies heavily oriented towards budgetary and government austerity, the growing pessimism among professional

⁸of 1217(n)

⁹of 1216(n)

journalists was notable. In fact, between 2010 and 2012 there was a 19.2% rise (from 45.7% in 2010 to 64.9% in 2012) in the number of respondents who thought there were medium-term threats to the continued existence of the media body where they worked.

This perception of threats to the sector was also linked to the increase in the proportion of respondents who were pessimistic about the future of the media body to which they were attached. As an example, 39.3% of the journalists were pessimistic in 2010, whereas this sentiment was expressed by 62.7% of respondents in 2012 – a rise of 23.4 percentage points in just two years.

Four years after the 2012 survey, the views of the 2016 respondents about the future of the journalistic sector were declaredly pessimistic. For around 71%¹⁰ of them, that future will be characterised by a form of professional activity that is increasingly less satisfying and rewarding in personal terms.

In a clear statement of opinion, over 89%¹¹ of the journalists surveyed in 2016 agreed with the idea that journalistic work is going to be increasingly precarious and uncertain in the future; only 2.6% of respondents disagreed. Their answers do not vary significantly on the basis of the medium in which they worked most¹².

At the same time, this insecure professional situation was also reflected in the respondents' low expectations in terms of their condition with regard to employment. Summing up the results, a high percentage (39,2%¹³) of them said (in 2016) they had already been unemployed and around 41%¹⁴ thought it was likely they would become unemployed as journalistic professionals at some point in the future.

Similarly, 80%¹⁵ of the journalists in the 2016 survey thought it unlikely that, if they became unemployed, they would be able to get a new journalism-related job occupation.

The 2016 survey also showed that 56.5%¹⁶ of the respondents were not members of the Journalists' Trade Union (SJ), which is one of the structures that effectively defend the profession's rights and interests. **These figures are even higher in the 2014¹⁷ survey by Garcia, Marmeleira and Matos, who show that more than 80% of the Portuguese journalists surveyed were not trade union members.**

Against this background, it is important to remember a question that is often raised in the sociology of organisations, during analyses of the relationship between job insecurity and trade unionism: are trade unions and federations capable of organising the growing contingent of precarious workers? (e.g. Estanque, 2012). Estanque argues that the in-depth transformations which have rocked labour relations are also being felt in the ways in which trade unions are organised and mobilised. In his view, it is during periods of intense financial crisis that unions are most likely to be attacked by the economically and politically powerful attacks that help create an anti-union stigma in the public sphere (Estanque, 2012). At the end of the day, Estanque's explanation may offer the most obvious reason why relatively few professionals belong to the Journalists' Trade Union.

¹⁰ of 1241(n)

¹¹ of 1238(n)

¹² Crosstab "In the future, journalists' work will be ever more precarious and uncertain" & "Principal work sector" with a Chi-square test association = 0,197 & Cramer's V = 0,197.

¹³ of 1320(n)

¹⁴ of 1306(n)

¹⁵ of 1311(n)

¹⁶ of 1267(n)

¹⁷ "As novas gerações de jornalistas portuguesas"

Discussion:

*The less confident that professionals are about their status,
the less willing they are to tolerate unprofessionalism
(Chadha, 2015).*

The journalists who participated in the studies value the participation and interaction with news consumers, almost as if it were a collateral extension of the result of technological changeability, but nonetheless also consider conditions such as the closed nature of work in the profession, their monopoly on that work, regulation and certification as all being characteristics that remain fundamental to the pursuit of (good) journalistic practices. Not least because if journalists associated themselves with the new journalism, the distance between accredited and self-taught competencies would end up being diluted (Carr-Saunders, 2001, p.40).

The majority of the journalists who responded to the surveys distanced themselves from the idea proposed by van der Haak, Parks and Castells (2012, 2935), who are critical of the way journalism is closed and credentialised: that the emergence of a new professional subject – the citizen or networked journalist – is not a threat to the independence and quality of professional journalism, but rather a release from corporativism and professional control.

In the proposed theory of ambivalence in professions, Portuguese journalists tend to position themselves on the belligerent side regarding the influence of decentralised non-markets, and object in a way to sub-journalisms. In his latest study, in which Portuguese journalists were interviewed, Garcia (et al, 2018: p.51) reminds us that journalists tend to stimulate interaction with readers, in a process that fuels the community. Nonetheless, he (2018, p.71) upholds that the growing sustaining participation of decentralised markets in news production tends to generate enthusiasm mainly among users of networks outside the accredited professional sphere and distrust among those who consider that horizontal participation and the ethos of DIY journalism are not organised in such a way as to benefit the production of information (Garcia, 2018: p.78). The study's authors believe that the fact that professional journalism has succumbed to the advance of decentralised production of contents only favours the commercial side as opposed to the social function of journalism (Garcia, 2018: p.120).

Even if the systems for officially classifying professions undergo recomposition processes derived from the growing phenomena of specialisation and sub-specialisation (Rodrigues, 2012) – something which, in the case of journalism, can for example be defined as multi-specialisation – the journalists' views fit within the framework of both the theories on the positive social function of professions, and the theoretical spectrum of the negative social function of the domination of professions by professionals. This happens because, while on the one hand journalists see their professional activity as dependent on the quality of the service provided in terms of the values of rationality and knowledge, they also consider the structures of credentialism and occupational closure to be important.

The majority of the participating professional journalists thus adhered to the idea that the journalistic profession is still one of the many sectors in which people acknowledge that the progresses achieved at the level of the knowledge [embodied in] and the quality of the services provided cannot be dissociated from the principles of professionalism on which

the organisation of the occupational groups that are predominant in such sectors is based. Similarly, they sided with the idea that a quality service requires a scientific control of the training and an ethical control of the professional practice, both of which are ensured by the peer collective, who are able to provide the so-called institutionalised altruism needed to impose a normative nature on the pursuit of the profession. (Rodrigues, 2012, pp14, 73). Frey (2017, p.18), citing McQuail (2005, p.576), argues that “for journalism, normativity is its legitimization”.

As Rodrigues (2012, p.39) reminds us, 2016 witnessed a milestone that was important in terms of this longstanding call for the consolidation of the professional autonomy of journalists in Portugal, with the discussion surrounding the passage of the law approving the Statute governing Journalists, in the light of the new conditions with regard to tertiary training for entry to the profession and the long and recurrent debate about the possible creation of an Order of Journalists.

The surveys also contradicted Carr-Saunders' (2001) idea that no prior specialisation of an intellectual nature is indispensable to the pursuit of the profession, in that the majority of the respondents to all three considered that specialisation and training in journalism were important in the printed-press sector, as *ad-hoc* conditions for being able to engage in the profession.

However, with the professionals' desire for strong forms of credentialism and closure on the one hand and a reality that doesn't favour them on the other, we should also note the idea that, at the moment, the internal (de)composition of the journalists' professional group is in a way being activated by important changes in the labour market and the conditions under which their profession is being pursued. This is especially the case on three levels: a) the increase in short-term jobs and the emergence of new forms of employment, namely insecure ones (Matos, 2017), and of other contracts such as unpaid internships (Deuze, 2017); b) the adoption and incorporation of principles of economic rationality and efficiency in the provision of professional services, which place limits on the professionals' autonomy (Rodrigues, 2012); and c) the strong tendency towards the breakdown of the conventional structures of the division of labour, namely with the incorporation of polyvalent, multi-specialised ways of working in which the editorial function is integrated into the journalist's work. As Fenton (2010, p.562) reminds us, “forms of multiskilling are common in other deregulated industries and has been argued to lead to a reduction in levels of professionalism”.

Observing these changes and the new conditions governing the relationship between professions and the labour market has led some authors to argue that the phenomenon of professions is being eroded and that there is trend towards a so-called deprofessionalisation, with regard to which they especially highlight processes involving a degradation of professional status (Rodrigues, 2012, p.25) and the end of professional dominance. Sousa and Ferreira (2014) look at this proletarianisation and deprofessionalisation with regard to journalists, while Accardo (2007) compares this new type of proletariat with that of the industrial class.

At the same time, tendencies towards greater cost rationalisation (Martins, 2015) are also influencing job insecurity among journalists (Matos, 2017) pursuing their professional activity. This increase in precarity is the result of a clash with a labour market that is in permanent recession (Rebelo, 2014), and is causing journalists to feel frustrated, pessimistic, bitter and disenchanting in the face of a profession which is still seen in the

public space as one that enjoys a privileged status (Rebelo, 2014), but whose reality is reflected in internship after internship and freelance service-provider arrangements.

In a survey of Portuguese journalists by Garcia, Marmeleira and Matos (2014) half of the respondents said that they had precarious job relationships (i.e. fixed-term contracts) and new contractual relationships involving internships and freelancing were being introduced. This perception of growing precariousness meant that 63.3% of the respondents said that they had considered leaving the profession.

Some authors believe that labour insecurity is being reflected in an ensuing weakness in the profession's code of ethics (Correia, 2006), with a devastating impact on journalistic practices and in terms of what Rodrigues (2012, p.37) calls the bankruptcy of the moral dimension of professional authority.

It is also important to note that the most obvious, singular sign of the existence of a fall-off in what has been a certain feeling of the existence of a journalists' class in Portugal can be found in the reasons why people are not joining, or are leaving, trade unions, despite the fact that unions are, in principle, a structure which is important to the defence of the rights of the professional classes, and journalism is no exception. However, this de-unionisation associated with job insecurity against a background of a crisis in the profession is also weakening the unions' negotiating power, having knock-on effects on what Estanque (2012) defined as anti-union stigma, and complicating the ties between journalists and their unions.

Conclusion

In short, Portuguese journalists' self-representations suggest the defence of professionals as gatekeepers of the process of journalistic work.

Having said this, results that suggest a determined defence of both the knowledge, competencies and credentialism the respondents believe are involved in the quality of the service they provide and of the principle of occupational closure, mean that their choices come close to the classic model of professionalism, in which sectoral institutions regulate the conditions governing entry to and pursuit of a profession.

By positioning itself in relation to the various dimensions of the gatekeeper theory in this way, the self-representation of journalists in Portugal distances itself from the idea – widely disseminated among scholars (Beckett, 2008, 2010; van der Haak, Parks & Castells, 2012) – that the journalist's professional role must reinvent itself as it is being eroded, by embracing the appearance of audiences that curate contents and the so-called networked and citizen journalisms. That self-representation is thus fully reflected in the contributions made by Larson (1977), who emphasises professionalism as a process of closure and control of work by a professional group, but with a pessimistic vision of the profession's insecure and deprofessionalised future, which is reflected in higher precariousness in journalism.

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