

The new rural economy in the discourse about sustainability in the Globo Rural magazine

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Abstract

In this study, we observed the articulation and discursive construction on the theme of ecological-based agriculture in the cover stories of Globo Rural magazine. Our goal is to identify how Globo Rural constructs the discourse on ecological-based agriculture by acting in the tension between the discourses that circulate there. From the paths of meanings combined with the discursive framework, we reflect on the socio-cultural aspects in the magazine's discourse. From them, we note the domination of economic rationality, which seeks to empty the discourse of environmentalism in the magazine politically and ideologically. Thus, we observe the operationalization of the “new rural economy” as a discursive framing of the Globo Rural, based on the market logic of hegemonic rurality and the appropriation of the ecological ideas of some counter-hegemonic ruralities.

Keywords: Journalism. Discursive framework. Specialized magazines. Sustainable agriculture. Globo Rural.

Initial considerations

The emergence of ecological discourse re-signifies the disputes of meanings in several fields, including journalism and ruralities. This transformation displays confrontations of knowledge selected and framed by journalism as a discursive practice, in order to answer the question *what is happening here?* (MORAES, 2015).

Journalism internalizes disputes and social tensions in discursive materiality, using its credibility capital (BERGER, 2003) to assert itself as a transparent and credible actor (BENETTI, 2007). The journalistic discourse on agriculture and ruralities usually circulates through media that legitimize their *discursive ability* on these subjects because they have knowledge of them. That said, this study focuses on specialized journalism in rural areas, examining the logic of a product with its own set of features: the magazine. Although restricted to a target audience niche, specialized journalism allows us to investigate the effects of meaning that circulate in the magazine in relation to the readers, understanding them as subjects inserted in more or less similar social places.

Considering the discursive practices of journalism and the re-signification of ruralities through ecological culture, we understand the relevance of journalism's *discursive know-how* on reporting ecologically-based agriculture to a subject-reader who is interested and/or inserted in ruralities. This enables the reader's mobilization, familiarization with notions of environmentalism, or a posture change toward environmental crisis.

Among the specialized magazines on rural topics, Globo Rural stands out for its 33 years of circulation on Brazilian newsstands and a reader base of 65 thousand people (EDITORA GLOBO, 2015). We delimited the empirical basis to a set of cover stories from issues published between 2016 and 2018, addressing *sustainability in food production*.

Our analytical path is based on the French-current Discourse Analysis (DA) theoretical-methodological device, along with the notion of discursive framing as a device for reflection and analysis, concerning theories of journalism.

Globo Rural's journalistic discourse produces meanings in its relation to other discourses. Concerning the connection between discourses on ruralities and sustainability, journalism assists in the social construction of the reader's reality while legitimizing itself as an institution guided by the value of the present. This includes special attention to developments in public discussion about sustainable consumption and organic food. These points guide the question: *how do the cover stories on ecologically-based agriculture, published in Globo Rural magazine, articulate discursive framework(s)?*

Ruralities, sustainability, and journalism

The Brazilian rural environment is historically a place of clashes, disputes and tensions – traits of a country that was forged from an incomplete peripheral modernization that makes rural cultures hybrid (CANCLINI, 2013).

The theoretical notion of rurality¹ circumscribes the diverse set of modes of organization and social relations in the countryside. In a categorization effort, Moreira (2005) distinguishes hegemonic rurality from counter-hegemonic ruralities. The first one envisions unlimited rural economic development, associated with agribusiness and with the conventional model of production², that is, ruralism (CUBAS, 2012). On the other hand, counter-hegemonic ruralities are often guided by ecological perspectives, centered on the various types of agriculture that are alternative to the conventional model.

The clashes between ruralities are marked by uncertainties of the contemporary conjuncture (ALENCAR; MOREIRA, 2005), visible, for example, in the incorporation of environmental rationality (LEFF, 2009) in counter-hegemonic ruralities and in the consumers' appreciation of sustainable food.

These conditions engender a conflict about the sustainability and the ecological ideals of the environmental movement, structured on new “organizational and political strategies in the face of traditional forms of support and struggle for power” (LEFF, 2009, p. 324). Such conflict promotes a systemic and biocentric look at the world (CAPRA, 2006). The sustainability discourse itself can be taken as a process of clashes between hegemony and counter-hegemonies (ALENCAR; MOREIRA, 2005), which makes this term, popularized by the Brundtland Report³, an environmentalist nebula (LEFF, 2009). Redclift (2002) argues that the terminology is drowned out by the false ideological consensus on socio-environmental complexity, allowing the domination of economic precepts. The author also observes that past agenda conflicts are revamped under the auspices of sustainability. In 2012, with the discussions at Rio+20, the Green Economy was consolidated in the political and marketing scenarios, incorporating and transmuting the notion of sustainable development, as well as preserving the disengagement with real sustainability, starting from the premise of the financialization of natural assets (MORENO, 2013).

1 The use of the word “rurality” in its singular form indicates the set of different ruralities. It is impossible to think of only one rurality operating in rural areas, given the existence of various modes of social organization in these places.

2 Moreira (2005) indicates ruralities as spaces for socialization. When discussing the rural, we must think of it from the perspective of a place where individuals are determined by their identity rather than by their professional practice. Thus, rurality amounts to several traits, from which agricultural practice stands out. In this article, however, the focus is on the rural as a space for development and promotion of agriculture.

3 Presented in 1987 by the United Nations, the report condensed the notion of sustainable development that is defined as “[that which] meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (COMISSÃO MUNDIAL SOBRE MEIO AMBIENTE E DESENVOLVIMENTO, 1991, p. 46, our translation).

Incorporating these principles in ruralities strengthens ecologically-based agriculture (CAPORAL; COSTABEBER, 2015), which brings together modes of production based on social, ethical, and cultural values, contributing to the sustainability of the ecosystem.

Journalistic discourse is defined by the logic of the product in which it is inserted. In the case of this study, it is the magazine logic. Every publication has an editorial project responsible for establishing its discursive place, which is linked to the social place of the vehicle (SCHWAAB, 2013). Because it occupies a discursive place, magazine journalism is characterized by slow, fragmented, iterated, and emotional construction of the meanings that constitute this discourse (BENETTI, 2013).

According to Tavares (2007), magazines focus on interpretations of events that concern the reader and, thus, share values with them. Among these events, environmental crisis becomes a recurring concern in media agendas and, consequently, journalism becomes a mediation field for discursive disputes about current rationality, since sustainability is a concept in dispute (MORAES; FANTE, 2018). Below, we will discuss the theoretical-methodological perspective of this work.

Discourse and journalism: theoretical agencies

DA, a discipline that intertwines linguistics, psychoanalysis, and historical materialism, based on the contributions of Michel Pêcheux, takes as its object of study the processes of discourse production which appropriate the language in a symbolic work, producing meanings about what is said (PÊCHEUX, 1995). Language is considered the material basis and condition of existence for the discursive processes that, in turn, are based on the linguistic system (PÊCHEUX, 2008).

In the materiality of the discourse, the political character is added to the ideological process and its psychoanalytic nature, based on interpellation of the subject, as highlighted by Malidier (2003). Discourse is the material aspect of ideology, and, from the ideological formations (IF), the meanings take hold, so that a proposition can mean in different ways, ruled by different ideological formations (PÊCHEUX, 1995).

Discursive formation (DF) is circumscribed in a given IF, designating “*what can and should be said*” (Pêcheux, 1995, p. 160, emphasis added by the author). In each DF, failures allow new knowledge to circulate, promoting a constant reconfiguration of the formation (INDURSKY, 2007), making its closure unstable (MAINGUENEAU, 1997) and highlighting the contradiction that makes it heterogeneous (ORLANDI, 2007). Every DF is bordered by other DFs, moving according to the ideological disputes that occur between them.

For Pêcheux (1995), all discursive formations are inscribed in a complex and dominant whole that comprehends this notion. This set of previously formulated and forgotten sayings is the interdiscourse. The already-said returns as a possibility of saying from the metaphorical

processes (substitution of a saying, paraphrase, synonymy etc.). With this process as the starting point, the meaning is never literal but susceptible to slips and ruptures (ORLANDI, 2007).

Analyzing the theoretical-methodological device that constitutes DA, we characterize journalism as a discursive practice, that is, according to Charaudeau and Maingueneau (2008), a group that generates texts inserted in certain DFs, building the discourse from a mode of action. This action on the world is given by the mediation of discursive fields and the production of a discourse determined by the assimilated DFs. For Berger (2003), journalism is in the midst of various utterances, constituting its own discursivity. And it is in this relation that journalistic discourse is structured as a constituent of interdiscursive networks (SCHWAAB; ZAMIN, 2014).

This prism brings us to the constructionist perspective of journalism, which asserts that news⁴ assists the reader in his process of social construction of reality⁵. Journalism is socially legitimate because of its discursive know-how, and, more than that, because it presents what is important to know at a specific moment (BENETTI, 2007), ratifying itself as a bearer of current events. By operating on a specific clipping of reality, the journalist turns the news into a refracted image of reality (TRAQUINA, 2008). This vision constitutes important journalistic theories to understand the notion of discursive framing: *agenda-setting* and newsworthiness (or news values). These concepts broaden the perception of journalistic practice and provide a reference to analyze the cognitive schemes within the news framing theory (MORAES, 2015).

News or journalistic framing, according to Leal *et al.* (2010), presents frames that define the most intelligible and pertinent aspects of reality, seeking certain interpretations of a fact. For this, frameworks operate within the scope of cognition to create patterns of selection, emphasis, or exclusion (TRAQUINA, 2008). Observing this dynamic, Moraes (2015, p. 95) defends the idea that “journalistic framing offers meanings, organizing knowledge on a certain theme in a discursive manner”, and, because it is a discursive practice, it is worth naming it as discursive framing.

Journalism’s clipping of the enunciating act is unable to frame the whole, signaling that there is always exclusion and reduction of other meanings that circulate therein (MORAES, 2015). Pêcheux (1995) reflects that the act of erasure is inseparable from the discourse, by constructing meanings in certain ways about an event, which, for Orlandi (2007), is a constitutive silencing. Below, we present the analytical path taken, as well as the discussion of the research results.

Globo Rural’s discourse

Established as a theoretical-methodological framework, DA also functions as an interpretation device. For Orlandi (2007), the analyst must cross the surface of the text, in which

4 The meaning of “news” used here refers to any news clipping of a specific event, and not to the journalistic genre.

5 The notion of social construction of reality, developed by Berger and Luckmann, will serve as the basis for the constructionist vision of journalism. Meditsch (2010, p. 23, our translation) notes that the authors consider journalism “one of the elements that help recognize what reality is”.

language appears transparent and the meanings simply are given. Emphasizing the discursive strategies used by rural-specialized journalism in the interaction and tensions of ruralist and environmentalist discourses, we selected Globo Rural magazine as an object of analysis. It has been published monthly by Editora Globo since October 1985. This vehicle focuses on Brazilian agricultural affairs and on the diversity of the rural.

From the institutional mission's point of view, the magazine presents itself as a reference for agribusiness managers. We hypothesize that Globo Rural magazine, in addition to simply mediating a tension between the ruralist and the environmentalist discourses, tends to incorporate preferentially the ruralist bias, since we have observed these characteristics and considered the following variables: (i) 80% of audience consists of landowners, 74% of which are large and medium landowners who, in turn, belong to the upper (53%) and middle (43%) classes – (EDITORA GLOBO, 2015); (ii) the magazine's mission is to place itself as a reference for agribusiness professionals, who, for Cubas (2012), compose the new facet of ruralism; and (iii) magazine journalism always presents an ideological trend (VILAS BOAS, 1996).

Our clipping comprises three years of Globo Rural: 2016, 2017, and 2018. Seeking a vertical exhaustiveness (ORLANDI, 2007) of the collected material, we delimited our empirical basis around cover stories in which the meanings are centered on sustainable or ecologically-based agricultures. Caporal (2015, p. 283) defines them as

agricultural styles capable of preserving the natural resource base necessary for current and future generations to reproduce socially and economically, and, at the same time, produce healthy and biologically better food.

We selected four texts whose meanings highlight ecologically-based agriculture⁶ as their main subject, and carried out a first analysis movement: we fragmented discursive sequences (DSs) from the corpus' linguistic surface, seeking to cut the thread of discourse (ORLANDI, 2007). We segmented the texts into 102 DSs, each one with a discursive mark⁷ characterizing its paraphrastic relation. Subsequently, we turned our attention to the DSs' discursive regularities, articulated in the repetition of paraphrases and their confluence in paraphrastic families (PFs), that is, networks that comprise the matrix of meanings present in the sequences (MALDIDIER, 2003). In this analytical movement, seven PFs are underlined, grouping the DSs. These paraphrastic families refer to two discursive formations that outline how Globo Rural addresses sustainability in ruralities: DF1 – Market Environmentalism and DF2 – Shallow Ecology (Table 1).

6 We remind, however, that what Globo Rural magazine presents in its discourse as ecologically-based agriculture is not necessarily so.

7 These "discursive marks" can be verified by an indication in italic in each discursive sequence. In addition, another feature employed was the use of brackets to indicate words and expressions mentioned earlier in the text, which are necessary to understand the sequence.

Table 1 – Summarized structure of the analysis

Discursive Formation	Paraphrastic Family	Number of DSs
DF1 – Market Environmentalism	PF1 – Producing sustainably because it brings more profit	23
	PF2 – Producing sustainably because it is a market trend	16
	PF3 – Ecologically-based agriculture is more productive	13
	PF4 – Challenges to ecologically-based production	12
	SUBTOTAL:	64 (62.8%)
DF2 – Shallow Ecology	PF5 – Producing sustainably because of socio-environmental awareness	14
	PF6 – Environmental visionaries	13
	PF7 – Producing sustainably as an alternative to the conventional model	11
	SUBTOTAL:	38 (37.2%)

Source: elaborated by the authors.

In the final stage of the analysis, based on the notion of discursive framing, we analyzed the meanings established in the DFs with the marks of selection, angulation, and emphasis, determined by the social place from which the journalist is authorized to speak (MORAES, 2015).

DF1 – Market Environmentalism

DF1 – Market Environmentalism is composed of reiterations of meanings that indicate a utilitarian stance of the market in relation to the environmental movement. The capitalization of nature is evidenced. This is a result of the appropriation of the natural and its recoding within economic rationality (LEFF, 2006). The intrinsic ecosocial character of what is in fact understood here by environmentalism (LEFF, 2012) is disowned and erased. Ethics relating to posterity is reduced to ethics by a certification that “proves” the sustainable nature of production.

This DF labels itself as related to sustainability, but it is guided by market metrics. The ecologically correct emerges in Globo Rural’s discourse as the effervescence of a “new” market, but that does not contradict the “old,” conventional model. For demonstrative purposes, we selected some DSs with typical discursive marks of this discursive formation.

PF4DS11: *The trajectory [consolidation of organic production’s] required patience and perseverance.*

PF1DS23: *“Organic product orders exceeded all our targets. In 2015, we sold 30% more than expected,”* says Evandro Possamai, Chief Financial Officer.

PF3DS40: Yes, Götsch *produces the best chocolate-making cocoa in the world, at no cost*. No inputs get into the field. Ecological balance, integrated pest management, and fruit variety are the phytosanitary control.

DSs 11, 23, and 40 present distinct views circumscribed in Market Environmentalism. In Globo Rural's discourse, meanings are marked by optimism toward financial results that reveal a growing demand for these products beyond expected, distinguishing organic agriculture as a potential market (DS23). DS40, however, is imbued with a tone of spectacular prodigy. Ecologically-based agriculture is used as a model for changes in the mode of production. These changes are market changes, for they do not require costs and result in greater productivity. The meanings taken from DF1 are based on the discourse of unlimited economic growth (LEFF, 2009). The advantage of sustainable food lies precisely in the profit to be received, which justifies the success of ecologically-based agriculture. DF1 fosters the discursive memory of market challenges perceived under a nostalgic past view (DS11). The meanings related to this affiliation resort to memories of challenges faced when implementing the sustainable production model, praising the virtues of its pioneers. However, in contrast, Globo Rural erases the discursive memory related to the emergence of ecologically-based agriculture as resistance to hegemonic rurality.

DF2 – Shallow Ecology

DF2 – Shallow Ecology encompasses reiterations of meanings that promote more environmental responsibility in people's daily lives, as well as in production and consumption processes. This discursive formation breaks with the economic and profit idealization, so fostered by DF1. Its meanings demand greater care for the land as well as for the Earth, presenting examples of individuals who have taken this initiative. But why *Shallow Ecology*?

This notion, proposed by Capra (2006), contrasts with Deep Ecology, a current that defends a systemic look at the whole. Thus, we understand Shallow Ecology as a discourse that defends the need for greater awareness of the environment. However, this discourse is depoliticized and restricted to a vision that places individual actions as being salvationist, disregarding the intrinsic relationship between human beings and nature.

Some lapses within this discursive formation indicate, however, marks of a systemic vision, typical of Deep Ecology. This shows its heterogeneity, which presents DF1 intersections, as well as signs of other discourses. We selected the following DSs, which we consider representative of discursive formation, from the *corpus*:

PF5DS3: For him, *opting for organic is beyond necessity*.

“When an organic product is simply placed side by side with a conventional product, there is no doubt that, in terms of price, we will be at a disadvantage. But

it has already been proven that, *in the world's largest markets, organic products are a deliberate choice by conscious consumers*", says Liu.

PF6DS43: "*What he [Götsch] said was revolutionary*, and, with his teachings, we started recovering the Semente farm (of Juã's family, with 3 hectares)," he recalls. [Rômulo Araújo, agronomist].

PF7DS82: *The clashes between rural producers and environmentalists are beginning to give way to partnerships* with more positive economic results than those generated by predatory agriculture and extensive livestock farming, both of which are carbon-intensive.

Ecologically-based agriculture is presented as a "new" way of producing and consuming. The latter, evidenced by DS3, celebrates the popularization of ecologically-based agriculture through adherence to environmental awareness among consumers. According to Leff (2012), this stems from the process of ideological and political interpellation of the environmental movement. The emphasis on green production as a trend is verified by consumer consciousness in the largest world markets. While individuals become more critical of the food they consume, rural areas make room for the emergence of rural entrepreneurs – environmental visionaries. Since they are involved in a process of reframing the rural, they are presented as innovators, still poorly understood by adherents of the conventional production model. These farmers' idealism is characterized as "revolutionary" (DS43), representing effervescence in the rural environment.

New perspectives of the future are drawn from the meanings of DS82, with an idea of peace between ideologically opposed groups: large rural producers and environmentalists could partner and end deforestation in the Amazon. The discursive memory of historical conflicts in the region is forgotten and erased. This construction is typical of magazine journalism, which, according to Vilas Boas (1996), seeks to bring brilliance and lightness to the reader, avoiding tension and conflict. Thus, criticism of traditional agriculture is perceived as a lapse, a gap. Globo Rural's discourse aims for unity, peace, and happy endings.

Ruralism and environmentalism are placed in opposing and conflicting ideological formations. Thus, when Globo Rural intervenes in a construction that erases the positions constituted in these IFs, it builds a singular reality, in which the marks of both ideologies are erased in the creation of a third, pacifying path. This rhetorical question moves us during the next steps of this study: to whom is it advantageous to build this path without disputes?

Discursive framework in relation to the magazine's discursive know-how

In the object under analysis, newsworthiness explores the novelty in eco-based agriculture, as well as the growing demand for sustainable food, while agenda-setting operates

on the sustainability of agriculture. The framing angulation is given by the success of this large-scale production model. For this, it acts with an emphasis on the performance of environmental visionaries, idealists who propagate consciousness in agriculture. As a result, a new rural economy constitutes the discursive framework of the *corpus*.

The magazine framework indicates prominent aspects of hegemonic rurality discourse – linked to agribusiness – on ecological ideas, redesigning sustainable agriculture as a new trend. The “basis” for this framework is integrated into the social discourse of increasing sustainable food consumption and into the expectation of social actors who incorporate this concern into agricultural practice. Sustainability is in vogue and presents itself as a positive economic novelty for the field, a profitable business mobilized by a spirit of “agro” passion in Globo Rural’s discourse. Thus, it contrasts with a history of resistance and contraposition by counter-hegemonic ruralities (such as agrarian reform settlements, for example) that have been struggling for decades for the preservation of genetic variety and for a balance between agriculture and the environment.

By emphasizing this framework among others, Globo Rural guides the subject-reader to assimilate that ruralities are increasingly respecting sustainable principles. The framework built presents to the public an emerging agriculture in the rural scenario, although without making the public understand that it is necessary to incorporate sustainability into the conventional model of production. On the contrary, this ecologically-based agriculture meets sufficiently sustainable principles to require structural changes in conventional agriculture.

The new rural economy is a branch of the Green Economy. Leff (2006) warns that this process operates on the capital’s appropriation of the environment, cultural values, and man’s potentialities, converting them into a market force. In this process, small farmers’ knowledge and ecological ideals are emptied to meet the desires of consumers eager for the organic trend, although not always conscious of production conditions.

The framework highlights the natural evolution of alternative agriculture toward agribusiness, an adaptation to the molds and demands of the market. Thus, the growth of green agriculture, that is, agriculture that poses as sustainable but is guided by prospects of short-term economic gains (CAPORAL; COSTABEBER, 2015), causes an optimistic surprise, but does not propose a profound change in relation to the hegemonic ruralist model. In this natural progression, these ecologically-based farms gain ground in the food market, without necessarily being activists or having ethical principles, but only covering a growing demand that makes this economy worth investing in.

Final considerations

Returning to the question that motivated this research: *how do the cover stories on ecologically-based agriculture published in Globo Rural magazine articulate discursive framework(s)?* We can conclude that the new rural economy indicates the possibility of

producing ecologically through the lens of a financial vision. This agriculture ceases to be labeled as activist and alternative, and, thus, ideologically moves into the agribusiness discourse, integrating its market logic. This legitimizes the agenda-setting of these so-called sustainable types of agriculture; after all, they are not opposed to agribusiness in the magazine's journalistic discourse. They appear more frequently in the journalistic agenda, for an increase in sales in this market, although little is said about which consumer groups compose this demand.

Regarding the discursive framework, the monetization of nature by the Green Economy is noted as an important issue that guided the prominence of events, along with the selection arranged by newsworthiness and agenda-setting. The Green Economy ideology seeks to pave a new path of transition to sustainability, which, however, is a new form of capital accumulation that places no limits on the consumption of natural resources. In carrying out this framework, discursive practice is constituted in a scenario in which ecologically-based agriculture only tends to grow. Thus, the sustainability discourse, endowed with environmental, social, and economic aspects, organizes and dominates, by financial orientation, the socio-environmental sphere in the discursive framework of the new rural economy.

We observed that, in the relation between the two DFs evidenced in the analysis, DF1 – Market Environmentalism – and DF2 – Shallow Ecology –, meanings inscribed in an economic rationality emerge, and this rationality is the basis for enabling Globo Rural's framing. Producing sustainably is related to profits and to increased productivity, but also to socio-environmental awareness and idealism in relation to sustainability. Once ideologically emptied, the ecological discourse becomes an essential tool to legitimize the new rural economy. This discursive framework allows circumventing criticism about products that pose as “green,” and are presented as business possibilities.

The value of novelty is related to Globo Rural's enchantment with the economic success of ecological agriculture, as well as to the perception that new ecological ideals affiliate themselves with the dominant ideology logic. In this articulation, sustainability of production and preservation of nature gain prominence, as reiterated by the meanings conveyed by the magazine.

We observed that Globo Rural's discourse institutes the debate about more sustainable agriculture. However, it does not deepen or engage in the theme, minimizing the environmental issue to economic perspectives. The magazine is not committed to complex solutions to solve the environmental crisis. On the contrary, Green Economy and the process of financialization of nature guided Globo Rural's agenda-setting and newsworthiness, with the construction of meanings linked to the discourse of agribusiness and hegemonic rurality.

What is evident is the strength of economic rationality over journalistic practice, which prevents other ways of telling the event. Discursive framing acts in this context. By choosing to highlight the economic aspects of alternative agriculture, historically in a position of resistance to the conventional model, Globo Rural drives the reformulation of discursive disputes for hegemony in rurality and limits journalism's ability to reinvent itself and diversify worldviews.

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Lengert, M. and Moraes, C. H. actively participated in all stages of the manuscript's preparation.

Data availability

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the authors upon request.

Conflict of interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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