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The COP-8 in the Gazeta do Sul's pages: victimism as a journalistic poison

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Abstract

Tobacco is largely responsible for the economy of the Rio Pardo Valley, in Rio Grande do Sul. Faced with this premise, we aim to verify how the most expressive newspaper in this region - *Gazeta do Sul* - discursivizes COP-8, which proposes to debate the control of this crop. Through the lens of Discourse Analysis, particularly the French branch, we analyzed the coverage of COP-8, held in Switzerland in 2018, and tried to identify the way that this subject is equalized in this context. In the end, we noticed that victimism prevails as an almost unisonous meaning in the reports. It was observed that the publication makes use of such a discursive strategy in order to ensure an imagined socioeconomic stability, while erasing antagonistic relations that compete with regard to the issue of tobacco.

Keywords: COP-8. Tobacco. Rio Pardo Valley. Journalism. Discourse Analysis.

A Cop-8 nas folhas da Gazeta do Sul: o vitimismo como veneno jornalístico

Resumo

O tabaco é o principal responsável pela economia do Vale do Rio Pardo, no Rio Grande do Sul. Frente a essa premissa, objetivamos verificar como o jornal de maior expressividade desta região - a *Gazeta do Sul* - discursiviza a COP-8, que se propõe a debater o controle desta cultura. Sob o respaldo da Análise de Discurso, de tendência francesa, analisamos a cobertura da COP-8, realizada em 2018, na Suíça, e procuramos identificar o modo que este assunto se equaliza nesta arena. Ao final, reparamos que o vitimismo prevalece como sentido quase que unissonante nas reportagens. Observamos que a publicação lança mão de tal estratégia discursiva de maneira a garantir uma imaginada estabilidade socioeconômica, enquanto apaga relações antagônicas que concorrem no que diz respeito à questão do tabaco.

Palavras-chave: COP-8. Tabaco. Vale do Rio Pardo. Jornalismo. Análise de Discurso.

COP-8 en las hojas de Gazeta do Sul: como un veneno periodístico

Resumen

El tabaco es el principal responsable de la economía del Vale do Rio Pardo, en Rio Grande do Sul. Frente a esta premisa, pretendemos verificar cómo el periódico más expresivo de esta región - Gazeta do Sul - discursiviza la COP-8, que se propone a debatir el control de esta cultura. Con el apoyo de Discourse Analysis, de tendencia francesa, analizamos la cobertura de la COP-8, realizada en 2018, en Suiza, e intentamos identificar la forma en que este tema se equipara en este ámbito. Al final, notamos que el victimismo prevalece como un sentido casi unívoco en los informes. Observamos que la publicación hace uso de tal estrategia discursiva para garantizar una estabilidad socioeconómica imaginada, al tiempo que borra relaciones antagónicas que compiten en torno al tema del tabaco.

Palabras clave: COP-8. Tabaco. Valle del Río Pardo. Periodismo. Análisis del Discurso.

1 Introduction

To dig up the soil wherein lies one of Brazil's most controversial agricultural commodities – tobacco – always imposes challenges. When this task enters a territory in which this crop represents the propelling engine of not just the economic sphere, but also the social and political ones as well, it is probable to come across even greater dilemmas. From this perspective, our paper seeks to investigate how the event that attempts to find solutions for the control of tobacco in all the world – the “Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control” (COP-8) – crosses the discursive terrain of the *Gazeta do Sul* newspaper. Amongst a conflict of interpretations, there are those that presume itself a threat to the cultivation that sustains the Rio Pardo Valley, wherein the greatest field of tobacco processing in Brazil is located, and the vehicle that grants speech to this territory, whose production conditions can be found intimately connected to, not merely by general contingency of the journalistic model, but by the publication's own characteristics, which the research of Minuzzi and Fausto Neto (2002, p. 123) defends, arguing – with regards to the publication - that the journalistic practice “[...] does not offer greater risks of democratization in the context of the power relations that permeate the agroindustrial tobacco complex”.

This unrest's instrumentalization goes through the following steps: Initially, we situated the “tobacco territory” and how the Conference of the Parties (COP-8) affects this spatiality. Then, we focused on the *Gazeta do Sul*. We identified who this symbolic object is, and what sort of ties it has with tobacco production. Finally, we carried out the empirical research. Oriented by the precepts of the “Discourse Analysis (DA)”, particularly the French branch - and specially, of one of its founders, Michel Pêcheux - we searched through a seven archive corpus (reports and an opinion piece) to shine light upon the interconnections that were realized in the discourse arena. Through this analysis, we are capable of reinforcing, a priori, the conviction that journalism and tobacco (materialized in the COP-8 research) represent important research topics for perceiving the paths of regional development.

2 Tobacco territories: from its particularities to the “Framework Convention” to the Tobacco Control

By “tobacco territory” we mean a certain territorial portion to the south of Brazil, that includes those cities responsible for 96.8% of Brazil’s production, according to data from Afubra (2020). Brazil itself is the leaf’s greatest exporter in all the world and the second greatest producer, behind only China (ANUÁRIO DO TABACO, 2018).

This territory’s historical relationship with tobacco production goes as far back as the XIX century, when regions to the south of the country received German and Italian immigrants. Responsible for the colonization of these places, they were the ones to start the first tobacco plantations, amongst other farms. The relevance that this production started acquiring already on the mercantile economy, caused, decades later, as explained by Silveira (2013), the development of local tobacco processing and cigar fabricating companies, especially in the cities of Santa Cruz do Sul and Venâncio Aires in Rio Grande do Sul. Thus, this product’s production has been realised ever since the first immigrants brought tobacco up until modern times, primarily in small family farms (HOFF, 2014).

The tobacco territory and its cultural practices - which are understood through the lifestyle of its people - allows one to consider how society organizes itself around them in this space, which carries along a slew of meanings. According to Etges (2005):

A territory only exists through the materiality it receives through its usage. More than a simple physical base, a territory carries along the mark of the generations who lived there; it is the result of the political, economical and social conflicts that were had amongst its inhabitants [...], above all, it is the result of the social organization therein created (ETGES, 2005, p. 12).

With that in mind, we understand territory as the usage of a certain space, resulting from the power relations and the social action of multiple actors (FLORES, 2006). It is a space born out of social construction, related to the geographical limits, but not merely them, “it is the result of a social action that, in a concrete and abstract way, appropriates a space (both physically, and symbolically)” (FLORES, 2006, p. 4). In that regard, Etges (2001) adds that the territory is also a field of contradictions between the state and the market and between the social and economic usage of resources.

As such, we took the territory as part of the country’s south region, in the states of Rio Grande do Sul, Santa Catarina and Paraná, but our focus here is directed towards the Rio Pardo Valley region, in Rio Grande do Sul, home to the regional newspaper *Gazeta do Sul*¹ and stage to public discussion on the subject, thanks to its industrial and productive representativity.

If the tobacco production in the south of the country, in small family farms dates back to the XIX century, it is towards the late XX century, around 1970, that the process of agroindustrialization is intensified in the Rio Pardo Valley region. According to Silveira (2013), it occurred through the expansion of cultivation, the

¹

We will deal with the newspaper in more detail later on.

modernization of processing and the increase in the export of tobacco leaves. Dutra and Hilsinger (2013) point out it was during this period that international capital started predominating in the fumiculture, through sales to North-American, German and French companies, which then settled on the region.

The tobacco territory is being structured since the XIX century and society has been organizing itself around this practice. "The expansion of Tobacco cultivation [...] reveals permanent and changed aspects in the way of producing Tobacco with important impacts in the dynamics of spatial organization, socioeconomic relations, and territory usage" (SILVEIRA, 2013, p. 10).

Dutra and Hilsinger (2013) highlight that the expansion and the quality of the production of tobacco in the south of the country are accompanied by a growing economic subordination and technological dependence from the producers to the multinational companies that dominate the global tobacco market and hegemonically control the entire process of agroindustrialization. This occurs due to the organization of the global raw tobacco leaves market, that is arranged under the majoritary domain of a small group of large multinationals that control not only the supply of tobacco, but also its commercialization to the cigar industries (DORNELLES; SILVEIRA, 2013).

The contradictions found within the territory demonstrate the technical and economical subalternity of the small tobacco producers to the exploration of family labour by the agroindustrial capital: "[...] the multinational companies materialize a certain spatial organization according to their interests [...] to the process of reproduction of capital" (DORNELLES; SILVEIRA, 2013, p. 35).

The existence of these companies in the Rio Pardo Valley impacts even in the cities' urban lifestyle, such as, for instance, with the strong presence of foreigners, who reside in the region due to their jobs in the multinationals. Another factor is the number of urban jobs, be they direct, indirect, temporary or permanent. According to Afubra (2020), in Brazil, during the 2017/2018 harvest, there were 678,440 direct jobs in the tobacco plantations and a little over 1,4 million indirect jobs created by the productive chain of tobacco.

Going beyond these economical and entrepreneuring aspects, it is necessary to grasp who is it that produces tobacco. As was said, its farms started as familial productions and they remain as such. Tobacco is produced by family farming and, in the south of Brazil, in 99.2% of the cases, in properties under 50 hectares, and most don't even go beyond 10 hectares (AFUBRA, 2017). According to data from Afubra (2017), the average size of these properties is that of 15.2 hectares per family².

In spite of the great number of jobs and the production's profitability, Dutra and Hilsinger (2013) draw attention to some of the problems caused by the cultivation of tobacco, such as those related to the environmental aspect and to the health of the producer. In regards to the environment, the authors highlight water pollution, thanks to the high rate of pesticides used. As for health, they warn about the producers' intoxication by handling the pesticide and having direct contact with the plant, seeing as the production of tobacco is extremely manual. The authors also mention the underage work in the properties, as a degrading activity.

² We attempted to update this data, however, the last revision made by Afubra regarding these variables occurred in 2017.

It is before this territorial reality that the articulation of the regional actors in regards to the Conference of the Parties (COP) to the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (FCTC) gains relevance. The FCTC is the first international public health treatise, developed through the WHO, between 1999 and 2003. The discussions involved the 192 countries that compose the OMS and the agreement started being effective only in 2005. The Portuguese version of the document, shared by Anvisa, claims the FCTC's objective is to

protect the present and future generations of the devastating sanitary, social, ambiental and economical consequences from the consumption and exposure to the tobacco smoke, providing reference for tobacco's control measures, to be implemented by the Parties in the national, regional and international levels, so as to continuously and substantially reduce the prevalence of the consumption and exposure to the smoke of tobacco (ANVISA, 2009, p. 9).

The convention's text was unanimously approved by all member countries of the WHO in 2003. Amongst the various predicted measures, we will limit ourselves to mentioning the following: the decrease in supply of products derived from tobacco, which includes, the control of smuggling; the restriction of subsidies for the production and manufacture of tobacco; a gradual exchange of tobacco cultivation and support towards other, alternative and economically viable activities for the farmers (ANVISA, 2009).

It is worth noting that, during this process, Brazil was one of the negotiations' leading countries and the second signer of the treaty. However, discussions in the National Congress for the ratification of the text in the country were far from unanimous and involved a variety of agents, amongst them the representatives of the tobacco industries, the tobacco producers, the tobacco control NGOs and the sanitarians, as well the politicians themselves. The treaty was ratified in the country two years later, in 2005, with Brazil being the 100th country to validate the FCTC, just a bit before the date of the first COP (JAQUES, 2010).

The first Conference of the Parties (COP-1) occurred in February 2006, in Geneva. The COP serves as the FCTC's governing body, promoting and regularly reviewing the FCTC's implementation process. The meetings have normally occurred every two years and gather all the signatory countries. During a session, each party is tasked with presenting their progress to the rest, which helps in monitoring the convention. This sharing of experiences also provides the exchange of experiences between the countries, for their implementation processes.

The most recent conference was the COP-8, again in Geneva, Switzerland, in 2018. Previously, these events were realized in Bangkok, Thailand (COP-2, 2007), in Durban, South Africa (COP-3, in 2008), in Punta Del Este, Uruguay (COP-4, in 2010), in Seoul, South Korea (COP-5, in 2012), in Moscow, Russia (COP-6, in 2014), and in New Delhi, India (COP-7, in 2016).

Approved on COP-8 - this paper's subject matter - was a global strategy to strengthen the implementation of the FCTC, as well as measures related to the diversification of crops and towards the promotion of the environment and health. In regards to that last aspect, Brazil has led a proposal that aims to widen the support for the diversification of cultivation, for the protection of the rural

producers' health and the reduction of environmental impacts. Still in this conference, a group of specialists was created, who would be responsible for evaluating the challenges and present the results at COP-9. There was also a request from the Parties to the WHO for the production of a report with researches about electronic cigarettes and heated tobacco³.

It can be identified, based on the particularities of the tobacco territory, embodied on the Rio Pardo Valley, and on Brazil's participation on the FCTC, that the leads and representations in this issue that were made present in the COP's various editions are profuse. And the media is no mere coadjutant. It is what bestows meaning and merit to these participations. *Gazeta do Sul* sent a special reporter to three editions of the encounter: in Moscow, New Delhi and, most recently, in Geneva. He was responsible for producing content for all of the group's platforms. It is about the product of this work we will next turn our attention to. For now, however, we'll strive to study this mediatic agent.

3 The *Gazeta do Sul* newspaper: who is this journalistic character?

The *Gazeta do Sul* newspaper, housed in Santa Cruz do Sul (RS)⁴, is the main product of the Grupo *Gazeta Comunicações*, a company that's amongst the city's 30 greatest. It was founded on January 1st, 1891, as a Brazilian periodical edited in the German language titled *Kolonie*, which in just a short time created a web of correspondents and was considered the greatest German newspaper outside the Porto Alegre–São Leopoldo axis. However, at the end of the World War I, it was prohibited from circulating in this language thanks to the Getúlio Vargas government's nationalization campaign, and it started being printed in Portuguese with a new name: *Gazeta de Santa Cruz* (VOGT; ROMERO, 2010; NORONHA, 2012; PAIM, 2014).

And thus, the first edition of what is nowadays nicknamed *Gazeta* (an abbreviation of *Gazeta do Sul*) was published in January of 1945. Founded by a group led by Francisco José Frantz, in 1956, the company became an anonymous society with dozens of partners, since the newspaper's circulation boundaries already encompassed the Rio Pardo, Jacuí and Taquari valleys (VOGT; ROMERO, 2010; NORONHA, 2012; PAIM, 2014).

Besides the newspaper, the Grupo *Gazeta Comunicações* has the Portal Gaz, with a Publisher specialized in agribusiness and with the radio stations *Gazeta FM 107.9*, focusing on news and sports, *Gazeta FM 101.7*, oriented towards music (hits), *99.7 FM*, an educative station, *98.1 FM (Sobradinho)* and *103.5 FM (Rio Pardo)*. Also part of the Grupo are the “*Fundação Jornalista Francisco José Frantz*” and the *Gazeta da Serra* newspaper, from Sobradinho.

According to Müller (2018), *Gazeta do Sul* is amongst the most read of dailies in inland Rio Grande do Sul, being favored in Santa Cruz by 90% of the people who

³ The information was extracted from the site <https://www.who.int/fctc/cop/sessions/cop8/en/>.

⁴ Santa Cruz do Sul is the state's fifth greatest economy and one of Rio Grande do Sul's greatest cities. With over 126 thousand inhabitants, according to an estimation from IBGE/2010, the city is located in Rio Pardo Valley, in the central region of Rio Grande do Sul, at 155 kilometers from Porto Alegre. MUNICÍPIO DE SANTA CRUZ DO SUL. *Santa Cruz hoje*. Available at: <<http://www.santacruz.rs.gov.br/municipio/santa-cruz-hoje>>. Access on: 28 jan. 2018.

frequently read newspapers. Not only that, it is considered good/great by 83% of the readers, having 11,380 daily subscribers and 9,500 in Santa Cruz, which has an average printing of 15,500 copies on the weekend.

Müller (2018) also certifies that, so as to try to keep up with the process of technological revolution, the Grupo Gazeta de Comunicações implemented, in 2016, a new management model, entitled “Integrated management business”. Based on it, the first step was the integration of the newsrooms, as there was one for the newspaper/digital and another for the radio station. Through this change, a transmediatic logic was adopted, that started respecting the client’s consumption habits.

About the infrastructure, the newsroom has 42 professionals, distributed amongst 18 reporters, 11 editors, 01 reviewer, 04 for images, 04 for typesetting and 04 supporting. About 50 posts are made daily on the digital, with 12 hours of live journalism, plus material recorded for radio, besides the printed paper, with an average of 24 pages and commercial content (MÜLLER, 2018).

In regards to the reforms undertaken, Müller (2018) explains that they propose the expansion of the audience, of the relevancy amongst the local and regional community, of the digital income (a 40% growth in subscriptions) and of some of the already existing products. He also highlights it was sought to reduce the impact from the decrease of printing (in circulation and publicity) and to create new products.

As such, it can be seen that the Grupo Gazeta de Comunicações, of which the newspaper *Gazeta do Sul*, this paper’s subject matter, is part of, embraced the idea of a new layout to facilitate the process of production, considering the changes of habits on the public’s consumption, since, thanks to the internet, people possess an ever greater variety of content sources, and a more spread out attention. This observation is in agreement with Minuzzi e Fausto Neto (2002), when they assure that the *Gazeta do Sul* plays a role of operating the modern public space, because it concretizes its hegemony as a mediatic agent. In other words, to the aforementioned authors, this newspaper does not differentiate itself from other journalistic subjects belonging to other sociocultural and economic contexts, with regards to that fundamental characteristic of modern journalism, which is of the exercise of a certain discursive hegemony.

Still in this perspective, it is important to highlight the thought of Fausto Neto (1999) with regards to this centrality, when he understands media as an element of the modern public space, since it fulfills the role of being its fundamental operator, with competency confined by the social fields to mediate knowledge. As such, the newspaper, Mouillaud claims (2002), consists of a meaning-producing device, becoming present in people’s daily lives, wherein it linguistically constructs a certain reality, through a process in which the subject composes themselves, not in a purely individual manner, but socially, in the constitution of a complex polyphonic chain.

How the “reality” of COP-8 is discursively performed in the device responsible for equalizing the interests that pertain to the matter of tobacco – the *Gazeta do Sul* - is what follows.

4 The Gazeta do Sul and the COP-8: victimism as a journalistic poison

With the theoretical debate concluded, we will now proceed to the analytical phase. Our corpus comprises a set of seven news articles about the COP-8 published in the *Gazeta do Sul*. We opted for a reduced number of texts⁵ for two reasons: one is directly tied to the method utilized here. DA is much more concerned with depth - since it doesn't restrict itself to linguistic materiality - than with quantification. The other, which is no less relevant, is the size pertinent for a scientific article.

As such, following our methodology, we stress that within what we are calling a "set", there are headlines, which are called cover, reports⁶ and a brief opinative text, presented in the column "*Fala, leitor*" [Voice of the Reader]. They date to 23 August 2018, 19 September 2018, 1 October 2018, 2 October 2018, 4 October 2018, 5 October 2018 and 8 October 2018. It is clear they do not restrict themselves to the event's period - from October 1 to October 6 - but rather attempt to accompany some previous or posterior repercussions.

The first discursive manifestation from *Gazeta do Sul* - on 23 August 2018 - about the topic is the synopsis of how it presents itself in the near totality of the examined archives: it is dominated by a victimistic discourse. The two discourse sequences (DSs) below demonstrate:

*Tobacco restriction*⁷ DS1

"For now, we still have no idea what'll be discussed. We only know that after the COP-8 there'll be a meeting to discuss the fight against cigarette smuggling across the world", he says. DS2

DS1 is the report's running head, thus, it is a sort of trigger to position the fact inside a given perspective. As for the DS2, it is a citation from the president of the Sectorial Chamber of the Productive Chain of Tobacco, Romeu Schneider. In both of them, the event that advocates for the "control of tobacco" is held responsible, whether by reducing its actions to the limitation of the product that, sociohistorically speaking, defines the region, or by being neglecting in sharing the details that will be debated there.

The same situation repeats itself - and with even greater vehemence - when the COP-8 opening approaches. In the September 19, 2018 edition, there are various aspects that confess:

Once more, the Brazilian delegation adopts a hard stance against tobacco, in a decision taken behind closed doors DS3

The Brazilian agenda for the COP-8 was decided by the Comissão Nacional para Implementação da Convenção-Quadro para o Controle do Tabaco (Coniq) [National Commission for the Implementation of the Framework

⁵ We could have opted for the examination of the past COPs, however, we saw - though it was intuitively, rather than scientifically - a certain significant regularity in the reports produced about these events on the *Gazeta do Sul*.

⁶ The reports were explored in their totality (headline, running head, subhead, text, captions, and box), with the exception of the photographs, which would deserve a study all for themselves.

⁷ All parts judged exemplary of our points will be marked in italics.

Convention for Tobacco Control] and still hasn't been communicated to the productive chain, leaving it blind and apprehensive. DS4

[...] Coniq defined Brazil's agenda behind closed doors. DS5

Gazeta do Sul spares no efforts in denouncing the entities' stances – Coniq's, in particular – that will participate in the conference, tasked with the defense of the Framework Convention. The symbolic representation is one of rivalry, which is to say, on one side lies the villains (Coniq as one of the most expressive forces in a Brazilian context) and on the other, the victim – the tobacco industry.

To be a victim, in interdiscourse, is to be localized in a social position of being passive, of being an object rather than a protagonist. As such, the “productive chain”, in positioning itself – by means of discourse from the main mediatic actor in the region – outside of the COP-8 discussion, becomes morally innocent of its actions. Settling into this discursive position is a way, according to Orlandi (2002, p. 14), “of erasing meanings, of silencing oneself and of producing the non-meaning where it shows something threatening”. In the discursive stratagem employed by the *Gazeta*, there is an emptying – a non-meaning – of the heart of the COP-8 (the combat against tobacco) in detriment of a semantic collection that puts the focus on the industry's suffering.

But it is during the occurrence of the event that the newspaper, licensed in textualizing the present with the privilege of credibility, reveals that which in the discursive process gains materiality thanks to a place with supposedly no obligation to informative speech.

Figure 1: The coverage's sponsors



Source: *Gazeta do Sul*, 2018.

The image displayed at the top of the pages dedicated to the COP-8's coverage denounces the institutions that, in reality, sponsored the travel of one of the newspaper's correspondents to Geneva. It is no mere appendix inserted by the journalist/editor's whim. It, through the unsaid (or the intersaid, considering journalistic speech organizes itself based on the impression of impartiality), guarantees the entire development of the narrative about the subject. With the exception of the Universidade de Santa Cruz do Sul (Unisc), all other entities have ties with the issue of tobacco. To be more precise: they have interests (especially economic) in maintaining – with little to no caution – the expansion of tobacco growth.

The work that denounces how the cigarette industry proceeds, titled *Roucos e sufocados*, widens our understanding with regards to the role Afubra, for instance, plays.

Afubrinha entered this world. And remains silent. Maybe it is better that way: a closed mouth catches no flies. He says nothing, but plays nice, walking through the tobacco-producing cities. Afubrinha is somewhat like *Zé Gotinha*. The *Zé Gotinha* of tobacco. A vase with eyes, mouth, nose and a few little branches growing at the top of his head. Cute.

It is the mascot of yet another smoke screen project. During the 80's, the environment entered the list of planetary concerns. But the tobacco producers needed the trees to fill the belly of the kilns used to dry the leaves. As such, in 1991 Afubra created the *Verde é Vida* [Green is Life]. The growing cost of firewood was becoming a threat for the sector, as the trees refused to go through the insatiable maw of the kilns. The industry has always known that costs and dissatisfaction form an inseparable couple. (PERES, SILVA NETO, 2018, p. 141).

The semiotic figure naturalizes the above institutions as the only ones implicated in the effective defense of the cause. And this gesture becomes even more noticeable when reporter Romar Behling (special correspondent) notes that “the presence of people linked to the *anti-tobacco non-governmental organizations* (NGOs) was clear, also already foreseeing their actions through the week” (DS6). Since the NGOs are discursively strange “bodies” to the COP discussions, they consubstantiate the newspaper victimistic position. It should be noted, then, that this is not a natural victimism, but rather, a manipulatory one, that matches the *Gazeta* conditions of production.

the ‘enunciative act’ is not understood as a ‘free activity’ in which the subjects construct, in whatever way, their possibilities of meanings. Quite the opposite, it is made before certain conditions defined by the negotiations that such social fields realize to operate the discourse production. (FAUSTO NETO, 2003, p. 125,).

In the ideological dispute spontaneously intrinsic to the COP-8, the *Gazeta* – as a public space designated to produce a certain interpretation of reality, but also as a piece of a larger capitalistic engine – does not hesitate to, once more, highlight the insignificance and the contempt for those who present themselves as the “legitimate” representatives of the productive chain (this is what’s implicit). It functions as a discursive cloak able to cover the allegations of the NGOs’ – juxtaposed by the *Gazeta* as the opposite pole, the “illegitimate”. Which is refreshed in the articles that cover the Conference’s ending.

Once more, Brazil goes to the Conference of the Parties willing to fight against the production of tobacco and cigarettes in its own country. Until proven otherwise, these are legal activities that contribute immensely to Southern Brazil’s socioeconomy. The sector cannot be treated in this manner. (DS7)

Brazil leads chant against tobacco in the very first day (DS8)

The result is that the pronouncements of the Brazilian leads of the anti-tobacco movement had the spotlight. And the effort to demonstrate that Brazil was in the frontline of the actions to inhibit the consumption of cigarettes was visible. (DS9)

Yesterday morning, some members of the group even got a credential for access to the setting of the morning plenary, though the document took a long time to be prepared, after multiple attempts of sending the personal data of the interest via the internet to the address provided in the concierge, whose reception was never being confirmed. (DS10)

The Brazil of the DSs 7 and 8 is not the same as the one of the entourage that went to Switzerland. In it, the “chant” is pro-tobacco, with “socioeconomy” as its pretext. Incidentally, DS7 is the fragment of a section titled *Fala, leitor* [Voice of the Reader]. It is recruited to fertilize even further the soil of victimism, insofar as it confines the content of the COP-8 to the persecutory aspect. A state that becomes more remarkable when the publication avaliates the COP.

COP ends without offering a voice to the sector (DS11)

Sector claims that the industry is target of persecution (DS12)

The “becoming the victim” was the method the newspaper – which is no mere symbolic prosthesis, as the roots it has burrowed in the region branch subterraneously towards the “ground” of the tobacco industries⁸ – found to give visibility to the political aspect. What is that aspect? It is the one we – under the writings of Pêcheux (2009) – denominated journalistic poison. The author, alluding to G. Klaus, assures that “[...] words are weapons, poisons or tranquilizers [...]” (PECHÊUX, 2009, p. 257). As such, the poison metaphor sustains our arguments because it acts as a discursive “substance” capable of “killing” (repressing) any initiative with diversification as its aim, since it conflicts with the interests of the tobacco industry, which under the protection of the *Gazeta* has its semantic thickness elongated, not rarely being characterized as the “productive chain of tobacco”, precisely as a way of not compromising the most priceless thing for the journalistic word, its credibility.

As such, victimism as a journalistic poison – which we advocate - positions itself in a perspective such that it closes itself to the latency of the object, that isolates itself before its pulsionality. It works in a game of light and shadow, avoiding the absence of other meanings. It results, as stated by Gadet and Pêcheux (2004), in the contention of the forms of subversion of the political order, whose materiality, given by the *Gazeta*, is victimistic. There is - these authors argue - a “ceaseless vigilance of all that – internally or externally – risks questioning the artificial construction of its union and inverting the web of its obligations” (2004, p. 31).

⁸ The sizable publicitary investment of the industries in the newspaper editions is quite notorious. Indeed, even full page ads are frequent. The *Gazeta* Publisher, branch of the Grupo *Gazeta* – as was pointed out previously – also develops the *Anuário do Tabaco* [Tobacco Yearbook], published where these companies are the greatest announcers.

Thusly, the findings that the political and ideological exercise control over the *Gazeta do Sul*'s news production are clear. However, the type of “vigilance” – proven by the examination of the DSs – shows the option for this poison might not be of any therapeutic utility for the region's (ultimately sustentable) development, but it is for the *Gazeta do Sul* company.

Why, if it is necessary for regional development to occur, to, in the opinion of Etges and Degrandi (2013, p. 2), “be alert to the horizontal dimension of the process, to know in depth the region, to identify its potentialities and construct tools of social cohesion around common goals of the population involved”, then it would seem as if the newspaper's discourse goes in the opposite direction. One of the main tools (above all else, because of its journalistic, and, as such, credible character) of social representation positions itself as a sort of obstacle against the formation of some other form of organizing the territory (ETGES; DEGRANDI, 2013).

We have noticed that the *Gazeta*, in discoursing about the COP-8 event, does not encourage (at best) an imaginary “other”, that escapes the tobacco chain as one of the few economic possibilities for the region. As such, the paradigm of vertical development and as a synonym of economic growth continues to be maintained, in which equity, social justice succumb to interests that are strictly economical.

5 Final Considerations

After digging through the soil of tobacco so as to identify the meanings discoursivized by the *Gazeta do Sul* newspaper in reporting on the Eighth Session of the Conference of the Parties to the WHO Framework Convention for Tobacco Control (COP-8), we found – taking into account our corpus's specificity, which, from our perspective, does not diminish the validity of our points, but rather, opens the windows for future studies - the prevalence of victimism almost unissonantly in the journalistic texts.

There is, in the tobacco territory to the south of Brazil, as we discussed at the start of this article, a conjecture of duality, wherein one culture, and all of its productive and industrial, on one hand, represent profits and productivity, and on the other, presents grave ambiental, social and health consequences – not to mention those that affect the consumer themselves. We consider this dualism illustrative of two development models: one based on the idea of economic growth, exclusively, and the other concerned with different dimensions, not restricting itself to economy, but seeking an ambiental equilibrium and the protection of rights. In this coverage in particular, the regional newspaper analysed would be a bit more inclined to associate with the first.

In the “Rio Pardo Valley”, integral part of the tobacco territory we presented, the readers of the region's main newspaper are introduced to a very clear mensagem, considering the discoveries made through discourse analysis: if to the tobacco territory lies the role of a victim, the FCTC must then be the villain.

Understanding the newspaper as a meaning-producing tool, as we have already exposed, and thus, actor of the construction of a given reality, the coverage of the COP-8 has what we have identified in our analysis as an emptying of meanings with regards to the fight against tobacco, opting instead for an approach

that grants voice to the interests of the tobacco industry. The newspaper's communication model is oriented towards economic development. It is neglectful of the social and ambiental aspects.

Finally, we highlight that our understanding of this victimistic discourse goes beyond the discourse sequences identified in the seven analysed texts. It springs from an entire multidimensional and multiscale comprehension of the tobacco territory, specially of the Rio Pardo Valley, which possesses firm and deep roots in its soil, with regards to the production of tobacco, to the industries and its efficient defense mechanisms.

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