

## **JOURNALISM IN THE CONTEXT OF A SANITARY CRISIS: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE JOB AND JOURNALISTS' EXPECTATIONS**

**Carlos Camponez**

Centro de Estudos Interdisciplinares, Faculdade de Letras, Universidade de Coimbra, Coimbra, Portugal

**Madalena Oliveira**

Centro de Estudos de Comunicação e Sociedade, Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade do Minho, Braga, Portugal

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### **ABSTRACT**

The economic difficulties of media companies, ethical-deontological lapses, technological progress and the globalisation of information flows have been seen as the main factors of the contemporary crisis in journalism. With repercussions on working conditions and the public image of journalists, these variables are, however, only the most visible face of threats to an activity that, according to Nelson Traquina (2002), has a symbiotic relationship with democracy. Beyond these economic, social and cultural circumstances are also the expectations of the professionals themselves. In an occupation so often described as passionate, the professional situation seems to be less and less rewarding, not only due to the decrease in job opportunities, with newsrooms increasingly empty, but also due to the lack of perspective on career progression. This is one of the results of the "Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic", conducted between May and June 2020. With a particular focus on reading journalists' expectations, in this article we analyse the symbolic representations of a job that founded its social legitimacy on an idea of public service. Based on studies about the profession and its representations, we tried to find answers to understand why the acceptance of precariousness and abandonment of the profession can still be understood as places of resistance.

### **KEYWORDS**

representations, expectations, journalism, crisis, media economy

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## **JORNALISMO EM CONTEXTO DE CRISE SANITÁRIA: REPRESENTAÇÕES DA PROFISSÃO E EXPECTATIVAS DOS JORNALISTAS**

### **RESUMO**

As dificuldades económicas das empresas mediáticas, as derrapagens ético-deontológicas, o progresso tecnológico e a globalização dos fluxos de informação têm sido encarados como os principais fatores da crise contemporânea do jornalismo. Com repercussões nas condições de trabalho e na imagem pública dos jornalistas, estas variáveis são, no entanto, apenas a face mais visível das ameaças a uma atividade que tem, segundo Nelson Traquina (2002), uma relação simbiótica com a democracia. Na extensão destas circunstâncias económicas, sociais e culturais estão também as expectativas dos próprios profissionais. Numa ocupação tantas vezes descrita como apaixonante, a situação profissional parece ser cada vez menos gratificante, não

só pela diminuição das oportunidades de trabalho, com redações cada vez mais esvaziadas, mas também pela falta de perspectiva de progressão na carreira. Este é um dos resultados do “Estudo Sobre os Efeitos do Estado de Emergência no Jornalismo no Contexto da Pandemia Covid-19”, realizado entre maio e junho de 2020. Com um enfoque particular na leitura das expectativas dos jornalistas, neste artigo analisamos as representações simbólicas de uma profissão que fundou a sua legitimidade social numa ideia de serviço público. A partir de estudos acerca da profissão e das suas representações, procurámos encontrar respostas para compreender a razão pela qual a aceitação da precarização e o abandono da profissão podem ser entendidos, ainda assim, como lugares de resistência.

#### PALAVRAS-CHAVE

representações, expectativas, jornalismo, crise, economia dos média

## INTRODUCTION

Journalism studies, which, actually, predate the formalisation of the field of communication sciences that currently comprises them, have produced a diversity of views on journalism and journalists, focused on production practices, discourses, narrative genres and strategies, effects of the news, professional profiles, and matters of ethical and deontological regulation. Marked by the recognition that journalism is a complex activity — intellectual, and creative, which, according to Nelson Traquina (2002), “goes largely beyond the mastery of journalistic techniques” (p. 11) — with great social responsibilities, studies on journalism, however, have been relegating to a second place the reflection on journalists’ representations, expectations, and experiences in the profession. The fact that it is a subjective dimension, sometimes even mystifying, about journalism’s representations, might justify this belittlement. Besides, the study of this dimension implies differentiated, lengthy methodological approaches which, some of the times, present uncertain results, when compared to other more objectifying analyses of the social-professional status of journalists.

Despite not being specifically its goal, the “Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic”, carried out between May and June 2020, within the Inter-University Network for Studies on Journalists, sought to understand what were journalists’ perceptions and expectations about their professional future. In spite of focusing on the impact caused by a particular moment of crisis, which has also affected media companies, results showed, however, that the feeling of dissatisfaction is not new and that the covid-19 pandemic only aggravated a pre-existing feeling of a professional group which has long lived under stress and threat.

The results of this study, answered by 13.3% of the 6,678 journalists registered, at that time, at the Comissão da Carteira Profissional de Jornalista (Journalists’ Professional License Committee), make us wonder what it could mean for journalism to turn into an activity with no perspectives of career progression and distant from the motivations

that once made many choose it in hopes of feeling fulfilled, to the point of considering abandoning it. That is why the path we set out to follow was to find out what representations mean to journalists and how they are being submerged under economic concerns, increasingly more present in the media and newsrooms, which are looked at as places of (un)fulfilment. When it comes to journalism, an occupation whose professional ideology became one of its main points of social legitimacy, reflecting about journalists' perceptions might allow to “unveil” one of the hidden faces of what is known as journalism crisis... or why it presents itself as constantly in crisis — of legitimacy, identity, credibility, and trust (Fidalgo, 2004, p. 64).

### JOURNALISM'S ETHICAL AND SACRALISED REPRESENTATIONS

The study of journalists' representations and expectations regarding their profession constitutes a place of confrontation between the ideologies of people who have chosen journalism in order to feel professionally fulfilled and the way this actually works out. However, these ideologies cannot be understood as merely subjective looks: they are part of social representations, which, in the case of journalism, establish a social pact of communication between professionals, companies, public and social institutions; they are the expression of normative principles of the profession and social expectations that constitute a materialised communicational pact, namely into ethical codes, style books, laws, some of them of constitutional nature. A large part of public debates on journalism, as well as the emergence of new individual and collective representations, depend on the daily updating of that communicational pact.

The perception on the power of the ways of social representation in professions is present in the concerns of sociology's founders. Examples of this are Weber and Durkheim's studies on religious traditions and the importance of ethical and moral representations in professions and in the world of economy. By resuming these studies, as well as more recent sociological approaches about the sacred origins of professional knowledge, Broddason (1994) sought to emphasise the importance of the symbolic dimension of social representations on professions, applying them, namely, to journalism. Broddason argues that some professions, in industrialised societies, retain a sacred dimension, of power and service, which emanated from the role of the clergy in ancient societies, as are the cases of journalism and medicine, particular objects of his study (Broddason, 1994, p. 231). The profession's “vital need” for society, a sense of service, self-sacrifice, abnegation or the voluntarism of professionals, are evocative of certain aspects of this sacred representation of professions and, when it comes to journalism, it is translated into the idea that journalists are always on duty, like priests or doctors (Broddason, 1994, p. 239). He writes:

journalists, much like priests and doctors, have to endure long and irregular hours and their work never seems to leave them ( ... ). The fact that it can

be extremely dangerous is demonstrated by the fate of those who paid with their lives the effort to expose corruption or tyranny. Therefore, there seems to be little doubt that many journalists render a “selfless service” and also show noble self-sacrifice. (Broddason, 1994, pp. 239–240)

Analysing the French case, as much as it differs from Broddason’s approach, it is interesting to notice how Gilles Feyel (2003) considers that the ethical discourse about journalism was already so consolidated during the French Revolution that, according to him, it is legitimate to wonder whether it was “the true cornerstone on which journalism rests” (pp. 75–76). To the author, the idea of “journalists’ social function”, which gives the profession “dignity and societal esteem”, is based on this ethical dimension (Feyel, 2003, pp. 75–76). Within an interview with the author of *La Place du Discours sur l’Éthique Dans la Construction de l’Espace et de l’Identité Professionnel des Journalistes* (The Place of Discourse on the Ethics in the Construction of Journalists’ Professional Identity), Feyel notices how in the “long history of journalism” ethical questions are repeatedly raised, and according to him, for an essential reason: because ethics is “the only ‘legitimate’ basis for the function of the *gazetier* of the journalist” (Prodhomme, 2005, p. 62). Jane Singer (2014) shares a similar idea, given that she advocates that “ethical principles are used not only to suggest how journalists should behave, but also to define what they are” (p. 49).

Similarly, Otto Groth (1960/2011), who identified, in the Netherlands of the 18th century, the first traces of journalism as a profession, through a “news press”, states that journalism, either in Germany, or the other American-European culture countries, was not able to develop a knowledge and “professional *ethos* whose concepts and requirements were not based merely on the social” (p. 329). Even so, Groth recalls the words of publicist Leo Woerl, in 1881, to whom journalism was part of the “most essential crafts”, like those “that move outside the social organism as in the old days the priest, the blacksmith, dentists, gypsies and actors” (Groth, 1960/2011, p. 406).

## THE PUBLIC AS A LEGITIMISING FORCE

The anchoring of journalism’s professional legitimacy in its social function is greatly connected to the notion of public service. Journalism as a needed service in democratic societies is one of the cornerstones of journalism’s ideology and of how it presents itself symbolically, inside and out of the profession. The idea of public service pervades many of journalism’s deontological codes, which are considered to be one of the tools of affirmation of its values and professional nature. *Journalist’s Creed*, a document written by Walter Williams, the first dean of the School of Journalism at the University of Missouri, founded in 1908, mentions public service, in the very first few lines, pointing it out as one of the cornerstones of the profession:

I believe in the profession of journalism. I believe that the public journal is a public trust; that all connected with it are, to the full measure of their

responsibility, trustees for the public; that acceptance of lesser service than the public service is a betrayal of this trust. (Farrar, 1998, p. 203)

Ferenczi (1996), Ruellan (1997) and Delporte's (1999) studies on journalism professionals in France show how the legitimisation and the institutionalisation of the profession, in the first half of the 20th century, were always anchored in the idea of journalists and journalism as public trustees, public opinion guides, servants of the truth and justice, and public interest advocates. According to Denis Ruellan (1997), journalists seem to have kept two essential aspects of their professional identity on behalf of those values: "a creative profession, notwithstanding its paid condition; an activity necessarily free, in the name of collective interest" (p. 98). That is probably why, to the author, journalism is "more than an activity: it is a group" (Ruellan, 2004, p. 9).

These representations of journalism are also documented in Portugal, through references to discourses and texts by journalists from the first and early second half of the 20th century. By using expressions such as "priesthood", "mystique", "spirit of service and mission" (Sobreira, 2003, pp. 123–126), these mentions make this profession something more than an activity where one earns a salary (Sousa, 2011, p. 14).

Certainly, these statements reflect the context of an "elite" of journalists committed to the affirmation and acknowledgement of the profession, not always in sync with the situation and awareness of most anonymous professionals. Well, journalists are not necessarily known for their good reputation (Groth, 1960/2011). The history of journalism is also full of unflattering references to journalists (Oliveira, 2016). Balzac (1843/1998) spoke of journalists as scribblers. José Agostinho Macedo (1821) called them "periodiqueiros" (small-time reporters). And Gustav Freytag (1852/1988) exposed them as a professional group that used to lean to either side, according to their best interest. In Portuguese literature, Eça de Queiroz (1900) recognised journalists as promoters of frivolous value judgements, vanity, and intolerance — three social sins, which, according to the novelist, kill society from a moral point of view.

Journalists' image is also not immune to the erosion of credibility caused by successive slippages, even as a result of media transformations (Meyer, 2004/2007; Ruellan, 2011; Woodrow, 1991/1996). Nevertheless, Broddason still emphasises that even these cases are seen as the expression of deviant ways of practicing the profession (Broddason, 1994, p. 240), a situation that reflects how professional elites are able to influence representation, both inside the newsrooms and publicly (Rieffel, 1984; Santos-Sainz, 2006). This ambivalent dimension of hero and villain in the representations about journalism and its social status is quite evident in Max Weber's (1946/1982) expression when he refers to journalists as a sort of "pariah caste" (p. 117).

Seeking to clarify the true scope of Max Weber's expression, Gilles Bastin (2013) points out the fact that the concept expresses a dimension far more complex than mere social segregation. According to Bastin, the figure of the pariah, in Weber, is constituted

by a double and paradoxical dimension. On the one hand, it is a personality split between its social status and its convictions, capable, therefore, of self-consciously embrace certain ethical values, regardless of the daily pressures to conform to a “rationalised” and “disenchanted” world, to use Weberian terms (Bastin, 2013, p. 221). On the other hand, it is also a personality capable of, socially, and as a result of their experience of injustice, contributing to the rediscovery/re-enchantment of the meaning of one’s actions, in a rationalised context (Bastin, 2013, pp. 221–222). According to Márcia Santos (2017), the split caused by the pariah status “also expresses the condition of an ethical resistance to the loss of ‘personality’ faced with the daily pressure in a rationalised world”, making journalists able to play “an important role in questioning the world as it seems to be” (pp. 443–444). In this sense, it might be important to go back to Weber’s (1946/1982) words, according to which he seems to state a certain admiration about journalists:

it is no small matter that one must express oneself promptly and convincingly about this and that, on all conceivable problems of life, whatever the “market” happens to demand, and this without becoming absolutely shallow and above all without losing one’s dignity by baring oneself, a thing which has merciless results. It is not astonishing that there are many journalists who have become human failures and worthless men. Rather, it is astonishing that, despite all this, this very stratum includes such a great number of valuable and quite genuine men, a fact that outsiders would not easily guess. (p. 120)

Weber’s statement refers us to the ambivalent nature of the profession of journalist, symbolically endowed with autonomy and an ethos directed towards public responsibility, but predominantly carried on by employees of companies operating in the market. According to Jay Rosen (2000), this double dimension was for a long time sealed by a contract between journalists and entrepreneurs. Journalists’ autonomy would be based on a commitment of objectivity in the handling of news, with these refraining from interfering by using their own political convictions and, in return, getting from entrepreneurs all the independence necessary to carry out the news coverage of events. Another usual way to represent this contract is through the idea of a dividing wall between media administrations and newsrooms. But, as Meyer (2004/2007), and Blanchot and Padioleau (2003) have demonstrated, this balance was deeply changed with the end of the “large families independent capitalism”, in the last decades of the 19th century, and the emergence of a “technostructure managerial capitalism”, as well as new logics of media “funding” (Miranda, 2018, p. 127). These new logics seem to raise new challenges for journalism, with its ways of representation on the brink of myth, of a “false awareness”, which confronts naïve ideals with the reality of daily routines (Deuze, 2007; Evetts, 2014).

## JOURNALISTS' ECONOMIC CONDITIONS, WORK, REPRESENTATIONS, AND EXPECTATIONS

We mentioned earlier the importance of journalism's representations in its historical process of social acknowledgement and building of its professional status. Now, we intend to reflect on the strength of those representations, in a context where media's economic decisions have been having a decisive role in the *deprofessionalisation* and proletarianisation of journalism, reducing more and more the space for autonomy and personal fulfilment of journalists within the newsrooms.

Resuming a study by Morris Janowitz on the military career, Tunstall (1971) draws a parallel with journalists, by trying to demonstrate how both professions attract people who reject daily routines and follow idealist causes. Despite this, according to the author, both journalists and the military end up being submerged by reality and, although idealism does not disappear altogether, it tends to take the form of sentimentalism. Although they consider themselves "above basic commercialism", their views on the profession end up resenting it due to what they "consider to be a low wage and high level of insecurity", elements that weaken professionals' traditional ideology when they are confronted with the reality of their occupations (Tunstall, 1971, pp. 72–73).

Tunstall's observation reflects the condition of British journalists in the early 1970s. Nevertheless, the consecutive studies on journalists carried out in the US, over the past decades, also show that the economic and working conditions have been taking on a growing place in their concerns. In fact, as the media business shifted, journalists started valuing even more economic conditions in the assessment of their level of satisfaction with the profession, to the detriment of closer aspects to what Tunstall identifies as ideological elements, related to professional autonomy in the production of information.

D. H. Heaver and G. C. Wilhot (1996) point out that the early 1980s mark "the beginning of the end of a romantic vision of the profession" (p. 90), a situation that can already be seen in the 1990s, a time when the level of satisfaction, among American journalists, was lower than in other professions. In this study, employment security or low wages are identified as threatening elements to journalists' autonomy, as they are left more vulnerable to financial temptation from politicians (Heaver & Wilhot, 1996, pp. 99–101). Editorial and media management policies, low wages and the lack of opportunities of career progression are seen as the main factors to determine journalists' level of dissatisfaction concerning their profession (Heaver & Wilhot, 1996, p. 105). This situation contrasts with previous surveys (1971, 1981, 1992) in which journalists' satisfaction with the profession had more to do with editorial policies and topics connected to professional autonomy, information treatment, and remains a constant in the 20th century (Heaver et al., 2007; Willnat & Weaver, 2014).

Comparing the kind of reasons cited by journalists as determinant to their professional satisfaction, it is verified that they changed significantly in three decades of studies (1971, 1981, 1992). The element that stands out is wages. This is only not so visible when

it comes to press journalists, where news treatment is still identified as the most sensitive element (Heaver & Wilhot, 1996, p. 107). A low morale and employment satisfaction tend to go hand in hand with continued news about cuts and layoffs identified by the economic downturn, as noted years later by Heaver et al. (2007).

By 2013, the tendency of dissatisfaction with the profession continued to be confirmed and 59.7% of journalists considered that the profession was going down on the wrong path, identifying the fall in profits, online media, cuts and the emptying of newsrooms, the crisis of the business model, as well as rushed news, as the main threats to the future of journalism (Willnat & Weaver, 2014). These conclusions, however, should be nuanced when thought on a global scale. In this regard, the study by Willnat and Heaver (2012, p. 534), which analysed 22 countries around the world, refers that the levels of satisfaction with the profession vary greatly, as do the determining factors for this satisfaction.

#### EXPECTATIONS IN TIMES OF PANDEMIC

As we pointed out before, the history of journalism has faced some ambiguities in terms of social representations. If, on the one hand, the activity is recognised as necessary for guaranteeing the universal right to access good quality information, on the other hand, it is viewed with a certain disdain. Even though journalism is associated with the noble purpose of divulging events, researching and analysing matters of public interest, the media have been a relatively poorly recognised sector and little protected from the effects of the globalisation of information flows. Made worse by the economic crisis media companies, in general, are facing, the framework in which journalists operate has also not benefitted from conditions that favour a forward-looking perspective for professionals.

The pandemic crisis which began in February/March 2020 stirred a growing interest of the public for journalistic contents. However, the impact of new working conditions and the loss of revenue of media groups did not provide journalists with good prospects. On the contrary, it worsened their already frail professional situation, with negative repercussions on short and medium-term expectations. Not feeling very confident they will be able to advance in their careers, Portuguese journalists admit today the possibility of abandoning the profession as more likely. For an activity which can be best characterised by its spirit of resilience and sense of mission, the perceptions disclosed in the “Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency on Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic” are alarming signals for a sector which will hardly continue to be the best trade in the world.

In a profession that is usually so desired, recognising “you can change life” may be an indicator that you will not keep it at “any price”. Although journalism is not merely a job, rather a work associated with a calling and a certain commitment to the public, the



conditions for carrying it out will have a significant impact on the sense of service which, with some romanticism, is usually attributed to journalists. It is bearing this assumption in mind that one interprets the results of the section “expectations” of the survey answered by 890 Portuguese journalists, 799 of which still active in journalism (as a permanent or secondary activity). Even if the data do not allow for interpretations, it would not be unreasonable to guess some rapport between the way the future is viewed and the level of trust one can get from working conditions (changed), if not in direct terms of pay or loss of employment, at least in terms of routines.

Considering that this study’s questions were based on two moments — before and after the state of emergency declaration (SED; in March 2020) —, it is understandable that the abrupt changes, which hit also media companies at the pandemic crisis, may have resulted as a reality shock and increased the awareness of the frailties of the profession in Portugal. This may perhaps be the reason why the possibility of abandoning the activity became likely or very likely for 45% of the respondents, which represents an increase of about 20% when comparing the two periods (Table 1)<sup>1</sup>. With no significant variations between male and female or between different age groups (although with greater evidence among younger people), the possibility of a change in profession is slightly more pronounced in journalists working in the press than in other media, and also more evident among journalists working in regional media, where the number of professionals who began to consider likely or very likely leaving the activity practically doubled. Also journalists with more precarious ties (such as trainees and service providers, therefore without a contract) are amongst the less confident, with photographers and image reporters, more than copywriters or reporters, as those who seem to regard this outcome as likely or very likely.

	BEFORE THE SED		AFTER THE SED	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very likely	28	3.5	114	14.3
Likely	189	23.7	245	30.7
Not very likely	347	43.4	300	37.5
Unlikely	217	27.2	107	13.4
Does not know / does not answer	18	2.3	33	4.1
Total	799	100%	799	100%

**Table 1** Comparison of the Perceptions on the Likelihood of Abandoning the Profession Before and After the SED

<sup>1</sup> Although the questionnaire was answered by 890 journalists, in the tables of this article *n* sums up 799, which corresponds to the total number of respondents who declared to have journalism as main or secondary activity.

In a “poor paid” professional — most half the journalists declared earning less than € 1,000 gross — it is also relevant their fear of losing their jobs. The data show that the number of professionals that reported the possibility of losing their jobs as high or very high has increased fivefold (Table 2). These data are indifferent to the gender variable, but appear more manifestly among younger people and especially the age group between 41 and 50, that is, those who are in the fullest of their active life. If this perception is transversal to all media, even though with a particular preponderance among press professionals, regional media were once again the ones that recorded the widest variation of answers, which comes to prove that this must be the most economically vulnerable sector.

	BEFORE THE SED		AFTER THE SED	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very high	7	0.9	93	11.6
High	36	4.5	123	15.4
Medium	148	27.4	208	18.4
Low	219	35.7	147	14.4
Very low	285	18.5	115	26.0
Does not know / does not answer	13	1.6	37	4.6
Does not apply	91	11.4	76	9.5
Total	799	100%	799	100%

**Table 2** Comparison of the Perceptions on the Probability of Losing Their Job as Journalists in the Short Term, Before and After the SED

The possibility of losing their job becomes even more dramatic when one assesses their perception of being able to find another job in the activity. Well, with the declaration of the first state of emergency, the percentage of journalists who recognised as low or very low the possibility of a new opportunity in this sector, after losing their job, increased to 83.5% (Table 3). In this respect, women are more pessimistic than men, as are professionals in the age group of 41 to 50; the number of younger journalists (under 30) with little prospect of new employment in journalism has almost doubled. Despite, again, regional media seemed to inspire greater concern, with more expressive variations in both periods regarding new job opportunities, the professionals who most doubt the possibility of returning to work as journalists in case they lose their jobs are those working in national media. In a more detailed analysis based on working condition, pessimism is clearly transversal, in spite of affecting more visibly reporters, editors/coordinators and

editors-in-chief/managing editors, groups in which more than 86% of the professionals consider the possibility of finding a new job after being fired to be low or very low.

	BEFORE THE SED		AFTER THE SED	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very high	13	1.6	9	1.1
High	59	7.4	15	1.9
Medium	232	29	69	8.6
Low	291	36.4	162	20.3
Very low	181	22.7	505	63.2
Does not know / does not answer	23	2.9	39	4.9
Total	799	100%	799	100%

**Table 3** Comparison of Perceptions on the Probability of Finding a New Job in Journalism While Being Unemployed Before and After the SED

Even if phenomena such as deprofessionalisation do not help to make journalism a strongly structured career and that public recognition is not absolutely dependent on the position one occupies, the lack of confidence in progression is also symptomatic of the lack of future prospects. Even though expectations of improving one's professional situation were not that expressive before the state of emergency declaration, they got far worse in the beginning of the pandemic crisis, with 77.6% of journalists considering progress in the career not very likely or unlikely (Table 4). The worsening of this perception hits men and women equally, but has a major impact on younger professionals and on those who work for the press and at regional media. Except for trainees, to whom expectations of progress are still relatively high — which can be understood by the fact that remaining in the activity depends on the transition from internship to a consolidated professional condition — when it comes to all the other categories more than half of the journalists seem sceptical about the possibility of professional advancement.

	BEFORE THE SED		AFTER THE SED	
	<i>n</i>	%	<i>n</i>	%
Very likely	48	6.0	22	2.6
Likely	229	28.6	122	15.3
Not very likely	332	41.5	337	42.2
Unlikely	171	21.4	283	35.4

Does not know / does not answer	19	2.4	35	4.4
Total	799	100%	799	100%

**Table 4** Comparison of Perceptions on the Probability of Advancing in the Career of Journalist Before and After the SED

Overall, the results from the carried out survey (see also Garcia et al., 2021; Miranda et al., 2021), which aimed to analyse the situation of Portuguese journalists during a critical moment for media companies, have a dramatic component that results from the first state of emergency in Portugal, as consequence of the covid-19 pandemic. If we ignore this particular circumstance, they reaffirm, roughly speaking, the results of previous surveys (Crespo et al., 2017; Pacheco & Freitas, 2014). This trend is also in line with the concerns felt both in Portugal and in Europe, since the 1990s (Camponez, 2012, pp. 388–390). The levels of satisfaction with the profession have decreased among the Portuguese journalists (Crespo et al., 2017, p. 34). The deterioration of work relationships, namely more precarious and uncertain labour ties, low wages, the lack of perspective on career progression, stress conditions at work, and overwork with repercussions on the personal and family lives of journalists are elements of disappointment and disenchantment with the profession which make them consider abandoning it (Crespo et al., 2017, pp. 25–26; Pacheco & Freitas, 2014, p. 31).

Between representations and reality, it is legitimate to ask ourselves — as states a journalist in Nuno Matos' (2020) study among former journalists on the causes for abandoning the profession — who abandons what: are journalists who abandon the profession or is it the profession that abandons journalists?

## CONCLUSION

The changes of the business model and the conditions for producing the news, which took place in the last decades of the 20th century, may call into question the definition of the Bureau International du Travail (1928, as cited in Jones, 1980) when, in 1928, it stated, in defence of the intellectual status of journalists' work, that, “more than the economic crises, crises which take place in the field of ideas cruelly hit journalists in their livelihood” (pp.12–13). On the contrary, the scenario presented to us in the “Study on the Effects of the State of Emergency in Journalism in the Context of the Covid-19 Pandemic”, and in the researches and surveys that we have gathered in this regard seems to show that the new reality of the current business models and of production of information in the media impose themselves in order to submerge the symbolic dimension and the intellectual values of the profession. Precariousness, low wages and underpaid work, the absence of the notion of career or the possibility of career advancement, the

impossibility of finding employment alternatives in the labour market, trap journalism between the hammer and the anvil: between increasingly bureaucratic and poorly paid work, as a result of the rationalisation of work and the so-called media business model crisis; and social responsibility resulting from a(n) (alleged) commitment of the profession with values of public service and democracy.

Journalism's symbolic and ideological dimension as public service cannot be seen as mere subjectivity or false socio-professional awareness. Surely this dimension should not be neglected. However, and regardless of what we think about it, journalism's representations are more than mere subjectivities: they are reflected in codes of ethics, in regulations and legal documents, central to democratic systems. It is, therefore, justified that journalism crises can also be felt as part of democracy's crises. In Portugal, the economic crisis caused by the covid-19 pandemic — with consequences not yet fully understood — added to 2008 and 2011 world crises, weakening the media, launching them into restructuring programmes, redundancies and even precipitating the closure of a few.

Although journalism crises are far from being a contemporary phenomenon, journalists' livelihood may not have had such impact on journalism ideals as today, creating a “disorientation mood”, capable of changing its ethos (Garcia & Meireles, 2017, pp. 165–167).

Our study on the Portuguese case shows the importance of deepening and systematising the dimension of representations and expectations in researches about journalists in Portugal, especially in a profession that finds in its symbolic aspects an important way of justifying itself socially and politically. In this sense, the analysis of socio-professional expectations or their obliteration may be understood as the confrontation between being and must be, between the commitment on which journalism bases its legitimacy and the socio-professional conditions of its realisation. This confrontation can provide us with answers for the root causes of the current crisis in journalism or why journalism is in a constant internal crisis.

Journalism is one of the professions with the particularity of performing publicly while playing its own social role, in the media, reinforcing its symbolic power and the ability of drawing in young populations. This dimension will explain why approaches individually committed to the profession allow that the journalism of the future may be “invented” by new “pariah castes”, in the Weberian sense, which, regardless of the working conditions, insist on making of this profession “a passion project” (Deuze & Witschge, 2020, pp. 4–5). Nevertheless, in a situation of growing non-conformity between professional representations of journalism and reality, it is no wonder that, for many, the abandonment of the profession is also the ultimate place of resistance.

**Translation: Helena Antunes**

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## BIOGRAPHIC NOTES

Carlos Camponez is assistant professor at the Faculty of Letters, Coimbra University, and researcher at the Centre for 20th Century Interdisciplinary Studies of that university, where he founded and currently edits the *Mediapolis, Revista de Comunicação, Jornalismo e Espaço Público*. He has been developing research in areas such as regional journalism, ethics and journalism deontology, and studying journalists' socioprofessional context. He is member of the Executive Board of the Portuguese Association of Communication Sciences (Sopcom), journalis (503A) and member of the committee of Journalists' Trade Union.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0832-7174>

Email: [carlos.camponez@fl.uc.pt](mailto:carlos.camponez@fl.uc.pt)

Address: Universidade de Coimbra – Largo da Porta Férrea, 3004-530 Coimbra, Portugal

Madalena Oliveira was awarded a PhD in communication sciences by the University of Minho, where she lectures on Semiotics, Communication and Languages, Journalism and Sound Journalism. She is also a research member of the Communication and Society Research Centre, where she coordinates the electronic publications (non-periodic editions) and the Observatory of Science, Communication and Culture Policies. Her research is focused on areas such as journalism criticism, sound culture and radio studies. Currently she is vice-president of the Portuguese Association of Communication Sciences (Sopcom) and of the Institute of Social Sciences at the University of Minho.

ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8866-0000>

Email: [madalena.oliveira@ics.uminho.pt](mailto:madalena.oliveira@ics.uminho.pt)



Address: Instituto de Ciências Sociais, Universidade do Minho, Campus de Gualtar, 4710-057 Braga, Portugal

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