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Non-fiction narrative podcasts: an overview of the Brazilian production

Podcasts narrativos de não ficção: um olhar sobre a produção brasileira

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Abstract:

This text seeks to provide an overview of the development and current production of non-fiction narrative podcasts in Brazil. To this end, it initially presents a definition of the genre, highlighting its origin in radio journalism in the United States. Next, this production is contextualized in relation to Brazilian radio and some of the pioneering or most influential productions are listed. Subsequently, we provide a sample of the most recent works. Through this sample, the text seeks to present both the main agents involved in this field of production (large local media groups and larger podcast producers) and the predominant topics of podcasts. The text also seeks to address the significant economic concentration present in this context, the social and political

importance of independent production, and the need for its greater valorization and visibility.

Keywords: podcasts, non-fiction narrative podcasts, narrative journalism, podcasting in Brazil, radio in Brazil.

Resumo:

Esse texto busca oferecer um olhar sobre o desenvolvimento e a produção atual de podcasts narrativos de não ficção no Brasil. Para tanto, ele inicialmente apresenta uma definição do gênero, ressaltando sua origem no rádio jornalismo dos Estados Unidos. A seguir, é feita a contextualização dessa produção em relação ao rádio brasileiro e são elencadas algumas das produções pioneiras ou mais influentes. Na sequência, é oferecida uma amostra dos trabalhos mais recentes. Através dessa amostra, o texto busca apresentar tanto os principais agentes envolvidos nesse campo de produção (grandes grupos de comunicação locais e produtoras de podcasts de maior porte) quanto os temas predominantes dos podcasts. O texto busca ainda apontar para a significativa concentração econômica presente nesse cenário, para a importância social e política da produção independente e para a necessidade de sua maior valorização e visibilização.

Palavras-chave: podcasts, podcasts narrativos de não ficção, jornalismo narrativo, podcasting no Brasil, rádio no Brasil.

1. INTRODUCTION

The stories that we do are really character-driven, that they follow the same structure, a literary structure, that a fiction story might. The story needs one character, a character that you identify with, who interacts with other characters in a very specific way, and there's conflict, change, and resolution (and not necessarily always the resolution part) inherent to the story and the characters change and they grow and they learn something new, and surprising (Abel and Glass, 2012, p. 03).

The above quote presents a statement by Ira Glass in relation to *This American Life (TAL)*, the show he conceived and launched, in 1995, through the public station WBEZ of

Chicago. The quote provides some important indications about the origin and characteristics of what we would come to define, about twenty years later, as a non-fiction narrative podcast¹. This “character” mentioned by Glass—usually the narrator, who presents to us the story without the “solemn impersonality of the ‘voice of God,’ nor the objective posture of the reporter” (Detoni, 2018, p. 37)— would acquire major importance especially after the rise of the *Serial* podcast, the most famous spin-off of *TAL*². While *TAL* had as one of its main characteristics to have autonomous episodes, usually produced by different producers, *Serial*, as its own name suggests, focused its first and most famous season on a single criminal case. That enabled a more in-depth investigation of this case and an even more prolonged bond between the narrator/character and the listeners.

Created by Sarah Koenig in 2014, *Serial* became a true watershed in the history of podcasting, ushering in a new “golden age of audio” (Ganesh, March 05, 2016) and inspiring the production, in different countries and languages, of shows that provide “the feeling that the reporter or host is our intelligent and interesting substitute, showing interesting and fun ideas, people and perspectives that we have never heard before” (McCauley, 2005, p. 128).

In a previous text, we have already pointed out the strong relation of *TAL*—and, therefore, of the entire tradition of non-fiction narrative podcasts derived from this program—to New Journalism (Vicente and Soares, 2021). This relation is already evident in Ira Glass' very description of the show, as provided above. Thus, it does not matter where a non-fiction narrative podcast is produced. If it is inspired by the tradition of *TAL*, *Serial*, *Radio Ambulante* or any of their many successors, it will most likely feature some element of the “literary structure” proposed by Glass and will be “conducted by characters.” This is also the case for practically all podcasts of the genre that will be presented here.

¹ The term “non-fiction narrative podcast” has a broad meaning in Spain, which can include “documentaries, news reports, *true crime*, essays, news, and self-help or self-improvement podcasts” (Pedrero, 2023). However, for the purposes of this text, the term will be used more consistently with the definition of Ira Glass.

² I also want to mention here the *Radio Ambulante* podcast—the remarkable creation of Daniel Alarcón that emerged in 2011—as another important successor to the tradition of *This American Life*.

As the purpose of this text is to provide an overview of this production in Brazil, the presentation of a set of non-fiction narrative podcasts that is representative of the way this tradition was established and developed in the country was the priority adopted. Thus, the text provides only a reduced discussion on the development and organization of Brazilian radio before shifting the focus to this issue.

The set of podcasts that will be presented below followed two main guidelines. The first guideline was to try to demonstrate the presence of large companies in this production space, with emphasis on the operation of Grupo Globo, the largest media group in Brazil and Latin America. The intention, in this case, is to point out the growing economic concentration and its possible consequences in a production field traditionally occupied by small companies and individual producers. The second guideline was to seek to provide a set of podcasts and producers that expressed thematic diversity and the main social and political concerns that mobilize the productions, with emphasis on environmental, racial and gender issues. The selection also sought to cover productions that had greater repercussion with the public or that stood out through awards³.

2. RADIO AND PODCASTING IN BRASIL

Although relating podcasts and radio seems obvious, this issue becomes more complex in the case of non-fiction narrative productions. In the United States, as seen above, *TAL* was produced by a public station and it can easily be related (as well as most of the productions it inspired) to the show production and distribution culture of the *National Public Radio*, the United States public radio network, established in 1970 (McCauley, 2005). However, when this tradition spreads to other countries, through podcasts, it tends to develop without any connection to local radio.

One such example is the case of Spain. We know that *Podium Podcast*, created in 2016, was one of the first business initiatives for the production of local narrative podcasts (fiction and non-fiction). *Podium* was created by Grupo Prisa, owner of Cadena SER, the most important radio network in Spain (Cazalla, 2017). However, talking about the

³ I thank Aline Hack, producer and researcher in the area, for the various listening suggestions that helped me define the podcasts that would be presented here.

objectives of *Podium Podcast*, its director, María Jesús Espinosa de los Monteros, highlighted, in 2018, the intention to dissociate it from radio and pursue “formal innovation in narrative,” favoring “preferably timeless content, with a universal vocation and with the best possible sound quality” (Espinosa de los Monteros, Personal communication, March 3, 2018).

In the case of Brazil, I believe we can say that this dissociation of non-fiction narrative podcasts in relation to local radio was even more significant. Brazilian radio developed according to a commercial model. However, differently from the United States or Spain, this model was not based on grid networks, but on isolated stations. In this context, and especially with the growth of television in the 1960s, we had an almost absolute predominance of stations that broadcast their programming live (especially recorded music and news), without much space for investment in more complex shows. This model persisted even after the creation of the first broadcasting networks in the 1980s (Ortriwano, 1985) and remains to this day. Thus, talking about radio journalism in Brazil, Ferraz and Gambaro point out that

we value, in the market and in academia, information in a “hard news” model, with live coverage on the one hand and, on the other hand, expert opinions and interviews supported by hasty agendas. The speed of production, which characterizes the radio as an informational vehicle, is also the reason for the insignificant presence of more elaborate modes of production (Ferraz and Gambaro, 2020, p. 157).

One of the consequences of this process is the almost complete absence, in the programming of journalistic stations, of pre-recorded shows, such as long news reports and radio documentaries. Therefore, it would not be possible to affirm that, in Brazilian radio, any pre-existing tradition can be pointed out as a bridge connecting to the production of non-fiction narrative podcasts.

Even in relation to the production of talk show podcasts, the first outstanding productions emerged from independent producers and not from the initiative of stations or large media groups. Journalism began to gain space in the podcast universe mainly through talk shows, which remain to date as some of the most listened to in the

Brazilian podosphere. A pioneering show that should be highlighted was *Mamilos; diálogos de peito aberto*⁴, 2014, an interview podcast hosted by advertising managers Juliana Wallauer and Cris Bartis. *Mamilos* features two aspects that seem to characterize the production of Brazilian podcasts. The first aspect is the numerous shows produced and hosted by women, often with feminine and/or feminist themes (Hack, 2019; Soares and Vicente, 2021). The second aspect is the significant amount of podcasts focused on journalism—especially interview and debate podcasts—although many of them are created and hosted by non-journalists.

This seems to demonstrate the existence of an informational demand from society that has not been met by traditional journalism and, therefore, is now supplied through podcasts. Reinforcing this hypothesis, it is worth noting that, in recent years, podcasting has become an important space for the activity of peripheral journalistic collectives⁵ (Soares and Vicente, 2023) and that interview shows hosted by peripheral communicators are among the most listened to in the country.

These characteristics, as we will see, are also reflected in Brazil's production of non-fiction narrative podcasts.

3. BRAZIL'S FIRST NON-FICTION NARRATIVE PODCASTS

Indicating a pioneering work is always complex, especially in a production space as decentralized as that of podcasts. In any case, Ivan Mizanzuk can certainly be mentioned as one of the trailblazers in the creation of non-fiction narrative podcasts in Brazil. Mizanzuk created his first podcast in 2011 (Anticast), but it was not a narrative podcast. However, in 2015 he created “Projeto Humanos,” seeking to explore “storytelling, popularly used in US podcasts such as *Radiolab*, *This American Life* and *Serial*” (Mizanzuk, no date). Its first season, released in the same year, featured the story of Lili Jaffe, a Yugoslav Jewish Holocaust survivor living in Brazil. Mizanzuk also offered an online storytelling course and even produced the second and third seasons of Projeto

⁴ <https://www.b9.com.br/shows/mamilos/>

⁵In this specific case, these are journalistic production collectives present in the peripheries of large Brazilian urban centers and focused on social, political and cultural issues that most directly affect this portion of the population—composed predominantly of Afro-descendants and immigrants.

Humanos (2015 and 2016) with the support of students and collaborators. These two seasons consisted of episodes with single stories.

The fourth season, *O Caso Evandro*, was released in 2018 as a result of a two-year research and was entirely focused on a single Brazilian criminal case. It addressed the kidnapping and murder of a 6-year-old boy⁶ and had enormous success: it obtained 5 million plays as of May 2020 and became the first Brazilian production to have its rights acquired for a video version. In 2021, the series was launched by Globoplay, a video streaming platform owned by Grupo Globo.

After *O Caso Evandro*, Mizanzuk also addressed crimes against children in the following seasons of Projeto Humanos: *Altamira*, in 2022; and *O Caso Leandro Bossi*, in 2023. Thus, in addition to being a pioneer in non-fiction narrative podcasts, Mizanzuk also helped build interest in Brazil for *true crime* podcasts, following a trend that is also observed in other countries (such as the United States, Spain, Mexico, etc.).

Another fundamental reference for the Brazilian production of non-fiction narrative podcasts is *Vozes: histórias e reflexões*⁷, broadcast by Rádio CBN in São Paulo⁸. Created by Gabriela Viana, the podcast started in November 2018 and followed the model of episodes focused on single topics. One of these episodes (*LGBTfobia, medo de quê?*) was one of the winners of the 2019 edition of the Vladimir Herzog award, the most important award in Brazilian journalism⁹. Illustrating the distance between the Brazilian radio tradition and non-fiction narrative podcasts, *Vozes* was never included in CBN's normal programming, being released exclusively as a podcast. The production had 39 episodes, the last of which was released in July 2022.

Another production that can be classified as groundbreaking is *O presidente da semana*¹⁰, created and hosted in 2018 by Rodrigo Vizeu for *Folha de São Paulo*, the most important newspaper in the country. The series was based on the *Presidential* podcast

⁶ The case, which occurred in 1992, involved accusations of black magic, child sacrifice, police torture and had enormous repercussions.

⁷ <https://open.spotify.com/show/57K7uCdQclznW3JeYBG0d>

⁸ The station is part of the CBN Network, belonging to Grupo Globo. The network operates in the all news format with its own 4 stations in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Brasília and Belo Horizonte, in addition to several affiliated stations.

⁹ <https://premiolvladimirherzog.org/lgbtfobia-medo-de-que/>

¹⁰ <https://open.spotify.com/show/7M32AKysUDCeEa3EjnmQN>

of the US newspaper Washington Post and featured, in each weekly episode, a president of the country's history. It was the first non-fiction narrative podcast of the newspaper, which had started its own podcast production that same year.

Also, 2018 saw the creation of *37 Graus*¹¹, a scientific dissemination narrative podcast created by Sarah Azoubel and Bia Guimarães. They hosted the podcast, which focused each episode on a single topic. The following year, it became the first Brazilian podcast selected for the Google Podcast Creator Program¹².

Completing the group of non-fiction narrative podcasts that I include here as those that defined the directions of this genre in Brazil, we have a slightly more recent production: *Praia dos Ossos*¹³, of 2020. The series, with 8 episodes, revisits one of the most well-known cases of femicide in the country, the murder of Ângela Diniz by her then boyfriend Doca Street on December 30, 1976. The podcast addresses the crime and Doca's trial, which resulted in a fairly lenient sentence for the defendant (the sentence was later overturned in a new trial). *Praia dos Ossos* had its rights acquired by Amazon Prime for the production of a video series with no scheduled release date¹⁴.

All these productions are characterized by the presence of the narrators as their main characters. They also ended up highlighting those who would become some of the most important professionals and companies in the segment, helping to determine the direction of the Brazilian production of non-fiction narrative podcasts.

4. THE CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

The presentation of the current situation, as already pointed out, seeks to establish an opposition between independent producers and large groups, in addition to emphasizing the thematic diversity of such production. Among the large groups, Grupo Globo is certainly the most prominent. The Group owns TV Globo, the most important broadcast television station in the country. It also operates in the areas of pay television,

¹¹ <https://open.spotify.com/show/5dvalmeT4P8oIWcPfoM9GT>

¹² Google Podcast Creator Program is a partnership between Google and PRX.

¹³ <https://open.spotify.com/episode/6MQIVJa59hnOoOx043WYz9>

¹⁴ <https://cinebuzz.uol.com.br/noticias/series/prai-dos-ossos-serie-sobre-o-caso-angela-diniz-sera-lancada-pelo-prime-video-diz-jornalista.phtml>

radio, streaming and editorial production. The Group makes its non-fiction narrative podcasts available mainly through its Globoplay platform, which also includes its video series¹⁵. Unlike the latter, podcasts are not treated as premium content, can be accessed for free, and are also available on other platforms. Thus, they also work as part of the platform's strategy for advertising exclusive content. Among the podcasts produced by Grupo Globo, we can highlight:

- *Vale o escrito*¹⁶: Podcast series in 4 episodes, released in November 2023, *Vale o escrito* is a cross-media production that accompanies the eponymous video series. This is a journalistic investigation into “jogo do bicho,” an illegal gambling practice that rose in Brazil in the 19th century and was controlled by criminal families. The series focuses on the bloody feud between two of these families. The podcast features additional content in relation to the video series.
- *Color vs Color*¹⁷: Released in August 2023, the podcast has 8 episodes and is a co-production of Globoplay and Radio Novelo. The series revisits the corruption scandal that led to the impeachment of then president Fernando Collor de Mello in October 1992. As the main whistleblower in the process was Pedro Collor de Mello, Fernando's brother, the series reconstructs the history of the family and the confrontations between them.
- *A República das Milícias*¹⁸: Series in 8 episodes, released in August 2021, which is also a co-production of Radio Novelo and Globoplay. It is based on the book of the same name by Bruno Paes Manso and investigates the operation of militias—criminal factions composed of members and former members of the Brazilian firefighters, police and armed forces, which control vast areas of Rio de Janeiro. It is hosted by Bruno Paes Manso himself.

In addition, the following can also be mentioned among the podcasts produced by Globoplay: *Linha Direta Podcast*, released in May 2023 along with the television show

¹⁵ <https://globoplay.globo.com/categorias/todos-os-podcasts/>. The Group also makes podcasts available through the CBN Radio (<https://cbn.globoradio.globo.com/servicos/podcast/PODCAST.htm>) and the G1 news portal (<https://g1.globo.com/podcast/>).

¹⁶ <https://open.spotify.com/show/1HA6C6NppXzOVaTV47fjom>

¹⁷ <https://open.spotify.com/show/3K5EMhDHftGy9CWjtqKfKc>

¹⁸ <https://open.spotify.com/show/6rOkNLT6HOZLD4syOMK2xv>

with the same name¹⁹; and *Pico das Marins*, a 2022 series that shows an investigation into the unsolved case of the disappearance of a teenager, which occurred in 1985 during a Boy Scout field trip²⁰.

Another major player in the production of non-fiction narrative podcasts in the country is the aforementioned Radio Novelo. The company was established in 2019 and was initially responsible for the production of the podcasts of Revista Piauí, one of the most important independent journalism vehicles in the country. Radio Novelo's productions include:

- *Crime e Castigo*²¹: Series in 6 episodes, released in 2022. Each episode featured a different criminal case and sought to discuss the relation between revenge and justice through interviews with experts, ex-convicts, victims and relatives.
- *Tempo quente*²²: Podcast in 8 episodes, released in June 2022. The series discusses the climate crisis and Brazil's role in its aggravation—mainly through mining and agribusiness.
- *Jogo de Cartas*²³: Podcast in 7 episodes, released in March 2023, produced in partnership with Instituto Update²⁴ for the Deezer platform. It revisits the story of the “Lipstick Lobby,” a group of women who mobilized to propose gender equity laws during the 1988 constituent assembly.

In addition to these productions, we can also mention *Radio Novelo apresenta*, a weekly podcast with episodes on different topics launched in November 2022; *Projeto Querino*, a 10-episode podcast, launched in June 2022, which revisits the history of Brazil from the perspective of African influence; and *Nenê da Brasilândia*, an 8-episode series, launched in April 2023, about the woman who became one of the main leaders of drug trafficking in São Paulo in the 1970s and 1980s.

¹⁹ The show is also focused on criminal cases.

²⁰ The podcast is directed by Ivan Mizanuk.

²¹ <https://radionovelo.com.br/originais/crimeecastigo/>

²² <https://radionovelo.com.br/originais/tempoquente/alerta-vermelho/>

²³ <https://www.deezer.com/br/show/5767617>

²⁴ The Institute describes itself as an organization focused on strengthening democracy in Latin America, according to <https://www.institutoupdate.org.br/sobre/>, accessed December 12, 2023.

Completing this group of the most important producers, we have Folha de São Paulo, the main newspaper in the country. Founded in 1921, Grupo Folha owns Universo On Line (UOL), one of the most important content portals on the Brazilian internet. The company maintains a significant production of conventional podcasts and narrative podcasts²⁵. Among the latter, its podcasts of note are:

- *A mulher da casa abandonada*²⁶: Series in 7 weekly episodes, launched in June 2022, which became the most successful non-fiction narrative podcast in the country to date. The production reached 7 million downloads even before the release of its final episode, when it became one of the most listened podcasts in the world (Folha de São Paulo, 19 julho 2022). Created and hosted by Chico Felitti, the series begins with the journalist's attempts to approach to the only resident of an abandoned mansion, located in one of the richest neighborhoods in São Paulo. The interest was motivated by the curious figure of the woman and the high value of the property (despite its state of degradation). Throughout the investigation, the journalist discovers that the woman, a Brazilian, had a pending case in the United States justice for the crime of domestic slavery committed against a maid (also Brazilian). The discovery gives a new direction to the case. The podcast was widely commented on social networks and raised important ethical questions about the conduct of its creator (Roig-Franzia, 07/06/2022; Christofolletti, 28/07/2022).
- *O caso das 10.000*²⁷: Podcast in 6 episodes launched in August 2023 that investigates the unfolding of the complaint against the Family Planning Clinic in Campo Grande, in the Cental-West region of the country. The case occurred in 2007 and resulted in what became the largest judicial proceeding on abortion that ever occurred in Brazil.

Having presented some of the productions developed by the main companies in this market, I would like to turn now to what we can define as its independent sector. The

²⁵ Available at: <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/podcasts/>

²⁶ <https://www1.folha.uol.com.br/podcasts/a-mulher-da-casa-abandonada/>.

²⁷ <https://open.spotify.com/episode/5epKLcohUxWZ0FHmeMqI4f>

following productions are the result of the work of smaller companies, independent producers, companies associated with independent journalism, and civil society organizations. Also for this reason, not all the works presented are the result of in-depth journalistic investigations. However, I understand that this broader gamut of productions better expresses the diversity of topics and approaches that exist:

- *Alexandre*²⁸: Series in 6 episodes, released in July 2023, which presents the career of Alexandre de Moraes, justice of the Federal Supreme Court and president of the Brazilian Superior Electoral Court during the 2022 presidential election. The series addresses the role played by the judge in the conduct of the electoral process and the counting of votes, in an environment disturbed by Jair Messias Bolsonaro's attempts to disqualify the elections and not recognize its final result—the victory of Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva. The podcast was created by Trovão Mídia, one of the most important podcast producing companies in the country, in partnership with Piauí magazine.
- *Prato Cheio*²⁹: Investigative podcast that, in its more than 100 episodes, discusses issues related to the food industry. Thus, it critically addresses topics such as pesticides, ultra-processed foods, deforestation and expropriation of indigenous lands, among many others. It was launched in February 2020 and is produced by O Joio e o trigo, a journalistic project created in 2017 to investigate the social, economic and environmental implications of the activities of the food industry.
- *Amazonia sem lei*³⁰: Podcast focused on denouncing land conflicts that occur in the northern region of the country and involve drug trafficking, illegal mining, mining companies and agribusiness. The podcast is produced by Agência Pública, a non-profit organization established in 2018 and focused on the investigation of conflicts in the Amazon. The podcast was launched in June 2021 and, as of December 2023, had 16 episodes.

²⁸ <https://piaui.folha.uol.com.br/radio-piaui/alexandre/>

²⁹ <https://ojoioetrigo.com.br/prato-cheio/>

³⁰ <https://apublica.org/podcast/2023/11/amazonia-sem-lei/>

- *História Preta*³¹: The podcast aims to reclaim the historical memory of the black population in Brazil and in the world. Created in January 2019, it had, at the end of 2023, more than 90 episodes. It was produced by B9 Company, one of the first podcast producing companies in the country.
- *Viver Mumbucar*³²: Podcast launched in June 2023, which presents the members and stories of the³³ Mumbuca quilombola community, located in the region of Jalapão in the state of Tocantins (north of Brazil). It is hosted by Núbia Matos, a member of the community. It is produced by Griô Podcasts, an independent company focused on stories that promote the visibility of blacks, indigenous peoples, women, and LGBT+ people.
- *Corpo especulado*³⁴: The podcast critically examines the relation between science and the female body throughout history, discussing the prejudice and ignorance that often characterize this relation. The show is supported by Instituto Serrapilheira and is produced by Lab37, producing company of the creators of the *37 Graus* podcast. The series was produced in partnership with Revista AzMina, an independent journalistic media outlet focused on covering gender issues. The podcast has 6 episodes and was launched in August 2022.
- *Faxina podcast*³⁵: Podcast mainly featuring stories of Brazilian immigrants living in the United States. It was selected by the Google Podcast Creator Program in 2020. The series was started in March 2020 and is produced independently. Some of its episodes were also produced in English.

5. CONCLUSIONS

I understand that the 15 podcasts presented here demonstrate that the situation of the production of non-fiction narrative podcasts in Brazil is vigorous, with a significant number of podcasts developed from 2022 onwards. Among the positive characteristics

³¹ <https://historiapreta.com.br/podcast/>

³² <https://open.spotify.com/show/4hkcFCbxq3QyPnUejljsM>

³³ Quilombola communities exist in several regions of the country and were originally composed of runaway slaves who took refuge in forest areas and other places that were not accessible to their pursuers.

³⁴ <https://www.37grauspodcast.com/temporadas/corpo-especulado/>

³⁵ <https://www.faxinapodcast.com/>

of this situation, we can point out how vulnerable groups and issues less visible in traditional media have been present in the productions. Accordingly, we note the various issues related to the female universe represented in the sample (femicide, political activism, reproductive rights, etc.), as well as the productions that address issues related to black populations and culture in Brazil. In addition, investigations focused on issues that are contemporary or that have occurred in the recent history of the country, involving topics such as political corruption, environmental crisis and the growth of organized crime, among others, are also very present. Several of these productions feature interesting examples of *slow journalism*, since they involve not only an in-depth journalistic investigation, but also a careful craftsmanship in producing original scripts and musical tracks, recording voiceovers and sound effects, creating sound design, and editing and mixing sound.

However, the sample also raises some concerns. I understand that the most important of these concerns refers to the excessive emphasis on the criminal area, especially on the part of podcasts linked to large producing companies. Although not all of these podcasts can be defined as “sensationalist” and some of them help to expose the evident deficiencies of the Brazilian police apparatus and judicial system; inevitably, this focus on crimes and criminals is also understood as reflecting that the production is directed according to market trends rather than social demands. This issue is compounded by the significant concentration of the production under the control of a few companies and sponsors.

Non-fiction narrative podcasts, by their very nature, require a long process of investigation and a complex production structure, involving different professional skills. Thus, they tend to be associated much more often with producing companies than with isolated individuals and to require a substantial investment of time and money from their producers. The excessive concentration of the production tends to result in its direction toward topics in higher demand on the part of sponsors and platforms, as the emphasis on criminal themes seems to demonstrate. However, it can also imply the opposite, that is, the companies' refusal to fund productions that may negatively affect their interests or those of their sponsors. It is suggestive, in this sense, that most of the

productions present in the sample, focused on criminal themes, were produced by the largest companies mentioned. On the other hand, productions focused on environmental issues and involving criticism of agribusiness—the largest exporting industry and one of the most important economic sectors in the country—are only present in the list as independent productions or, in the case of Radio Novelo, produced with no partnership of major platforms.

Another issue related to concentration refers to the greater capacity of large companies to attract the public. The most evident example is Grupo Globo, which promotes its podcasts through its broadcast television network, pay television channels, the group's publications, and its Globoplay streaming platform. In the Brazilian case, I understand that this asymmetry between independent podcasters and large producing companies is aggravated by the lack of specific awards and a greater number of websites and publications that help the public to learn about (and collectively fund) a broader range of productions. It is also worth considering that the excessive concentration can also pose a risk to the development of the market as a whole, since the cessation or reduction of investments by some of these major players will certainly have a negative impact on the emergence of new podcasts.

As an additional point of reflection, I would like to consider the very question of the presence of the narrator/character in the conduct of the narratives. An important aspect of the personification of the narrator in this “intelligent and interesting” version of the listener as pointed out by MacCauley is the possibility of evoking greater empathy with the stories, leading the listener to greater engagement with the dramas of the characters and the situations described. Awakening this empathy for the “other” is perhaps one of the main social functions assumed by non-fiction narrative podcasts, with the potential for it to become a decisive factor in mobilizing society to overcome crises and remedy injustices.

However, given the logic of the networks, in a context where the quality of a journalistic investigation also ends up being measured by the views and likes it receives, or even by the number of followers of its authors, we—listeners, researchers and producers—must

remain critically attentive to the risk of distortions. Thus, it is always important to assess whether narrative resources are being effectively employed for a better representation of causes and dramas or whether their main focus is on valuing the narrator/character. Furthermore, it is essential to assess whether these same resources are employed in the pursuit of a real change in the ways of feeling and thinking of society, or just to obtain an impact that is sometimes buzzy, but necessarily fleeting, in social networks.

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