

## The social fields in media discourse

**ANDRÉ WOLMER DE MELO**

*Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte  
Pós-Graduação em Estudos da Mídia (PPgEM)  
Brasil  
andrewolmer@gmail.com*

**LUCIANA MIRANDA COSTA**

*Professora  
Universidade Federal  
do Rio Grande do Norte  
Programa de Pós-Graduação em Estudos da Mídia  
(PPgEM)  
Brasil  
lmirandaeua@hotmail.com*



The popular saying claims “there are two sides to every story”. Pierre Bourdieu’s sociophilosophical studies show that’s an understatement: according to him, the social space is complex and divided into numerous interactive fields, where agents and institutions position themselves simultaneously (Bourdieu, 1998). Therefore, every news piece is surrounded by a complex background in which not only two, but multiple social, economic, political and other interests compete (Traquina, 2005; Vizeu, 2005; De Holanda, 2017). The way journalists reflect this context in their stories demonstrates the different influences on the configuration of the informational discourse and brings considerations upon journalism production conditions and impartiality.

This paper is an unfolding of the Masters research entitled “Public Communication and the Environment: the coverage of Brazilian Federal Prosecution Office’s actions against the occupation of environmental preservation areas by salt companies” (Melo, 2022). The aim is to analyze the role of involved social fields in the coverage of Brazilian salt production environmental impacts.

Our geographic scope is directed to the largest producer of salt in the country, the state of Rio Grande do Norte (RN), which holds 95% of national production (“Em crise”, 2015). Brazil, in turn, is the eighth-largest

**Pour citer cet article, to quote this article,  
para citar este artigo :**

André Wolmer de Melo, Luciana Miranda Costa,  
« The *social fields in media* discourse: Brazilian salt  
production environmental issues », *Sur le journal-  
isme, About journalism, Sobre jornalismo* [En ligne,  
online], Vol 11, n°2 - 2022, 15 décembre - decem-  
ber 15 - 15 de dezembro.

URL : <https://doi.org/10.25200/SLJ.v11.n2.2022.465>



producer in the world, according to the United States Geological Survey (Bolen, 2021) with about 7.2 million tons (Mt) produced in 2020, which represents a production value of over US\$57 million. In 2017, Brazil exported 946 thousand tons of salt, mainly to the US (45%), Nigeria (38%) and Cameroon (11%), as well as Uruguay and Paraguay (Agência Nacional de Mineração [ANM], 2018).

This research seeks to understand how the local press reported information about the salt production, which has been the target of legal actions due to the environmental damages caused. Which agents gain media visibility to talk about the environmental and social impacts of this activity? What are the main presumed repercussions of this fact?

To this end, we analyze the coverage of 54 local and national digital media outlets – blogs, news portals and news agencies –, which produced 90 stories about the subject within 2019. The observation focuses on how the social context was represented in the stories and which voices were most frequently quoted as sources.

Environmental protection institutions and scientific experts (Fernandes, 2019; Grupo Técnico de Trabalho para Regularização dos Empreendimentos Salineiros [GT-Sal], 2017; Ministério Público Federal [MPF], 2019a) indicate that the salt piles accumulated by the industries on environmental protection areas are causing a series of damages to the local ecosystem – consisting mainly of mangrove and river estuaries. Therefore, Brazilian Federal Prosecution Office (MPF) in the RN state has taken legal measures to prevent further environmental losses (Fernandes, 2019; GT-Sal, 2017; MPF, 2019a). Meanwhile, producers claim to be taking enough steps to preserve natural resources and continually seek political support to keep exploring the areas, as withdrawing from it would allegedly preclude the entire production (Sindicato das Indústrias de Extração do Sal do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte [Siesal] & Sindicato da Indústria de Moagem e Refino do Sal do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte [Simorsal], 2019).

Bourdieu's concept of social fields, his appointments on social structures and the identification of the different fields involved are key to understanding the social space around this media coverage. His theoretical intake will be applied to the Content Analysis (CA) methodology to identify the rate and relevance of the agents and institutions from the different fields as voices to the informational discourse.

---

**BACKGROUND: BRAZILIAN SALT PRODUCTION'S ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS**

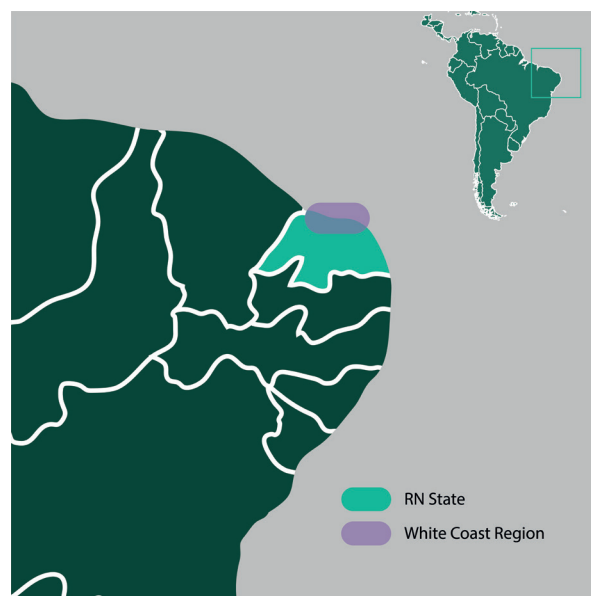
---

Salt consumption is unanimous worldwide (Fernandes, 2019). Besides the daily culinary usage, salt

is a major input for industries such as chemical, medicinal, textile and metallurgical, and it's also useful for snow melting during the winter in northern countries (Fernandes, 2019; “Em crise”, 2015). In Brazil, salt consumption is directed mainly to the animal feeding sector (38%), chemical industry (27%) and culinary and food production (14%) (ANM, 2018).

The country produces over six million tons (Mt) of sea salt yearly, destined to both domestic and external markets (ANM, 2018). As a result of natural environmental conditions, it's a secular activity in the RN state, in the Northeast of the country, where the semi-arid climate and river estuaries surrounded by mangrove makes the area, known as White Coast (Image 1), responsible for no less than 95% of national production, as already highlighted.

**Image 1 :** *Map of the White Coast Region*



Source: produced by the authors.

Since the second half of the 20th century, small extraction sites have been replaced by large mechanized companies in the region (Diniz et al., 2015; Diniz & Vasconcelos, 2016; Fernandes, 2019).

Although an undeniably relevant commodity, the production of sea salt in RN reportedly causes a series of ecological damages (Fernandes, 2019; GT-Sal, 2017; MPF, 2019a). Brazilian federal environmental agency (Instituto Brasileiro do Meio Ambiente e dos Recursos Naturais Renováveis - Ibama) and scientific studies indicate that the historical occupation of the area by salt production activity is gradually occupying permanent environmental preservation areas (called by its Portuguese acronym APP) such as mangrove, water flows margins and dunes, causing socioenvironmental losses (GT-Sal, 2017).

Monitoring these impacts, MPF has made attempts to regularize the salt production in the White Coast area, aiming to keep the industry's economic activity without further environmental damages (MPF, 2019a). Since 2013, the public entity has promoted hearings with salt business owners to try to reach an agreement.

In order to gather further scientific knowledge on the matter, MPF created the Salt Work Group (GT-Sal), consisting of technicians of both Ibama and the local environmental agency (Instituto de Desenvolvimento Sustentável e Meio Ambiente - Idema/RN), to conduct specific studies. As the analysis sustained the damages of the activity to the water flows and mangrove, it also concluded that only 10% of the production occupies APPs (GT-Sal, 2017).

Therefore, MPF suggested the relocation of the salt piles in APPs, which would enable the production to continue without further environmental impacts (MPF, 2019a). However, the representative entities of the salt industry entrepreneurs sustained that removing these piles would preclude the whole production, since they concentrate most of the economic viable salt (Siesal & Simorsal, 2019).

Without an agreement, MPF filed 18 public civil actions against the salt companies in January, 2019 (MPF, 2019a). In the following months, MPF achieved preliminary injunctions ordering the removal of the salt piles in APPs (MPF, 2019b).

However, in June, president Jair Bolsonaro signed a decree recognizing the salt production as a social interest activity, which allows the companies to explore environmental protection areas, after claims of local politicians tied to the salt industry. As a reaction, MPF filed another lawsuit, asking for the annulment of the decree (MPF, 2019c) and also trying to stop the concession of environmental permits to the salt companies (MPF, 2019d). The courts of law haven't yet made a final decision on the matter.

---

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

---

### Environmental Journalism and its sources

Scholars – such as Loureiro and Pacheco (1995); Borges and Tachibana (2005); Costa (2006a); Buell (2009); Zupelari and Wick (2014); Pott and Estrela (2017) – point out the growth in the relevance of environmental defense issues from the 1960s on, mainly in the United States and Europe, and in the 1970s in Brazil. With the emergence of the UN and the holding of meetings of world leaders on the subject, the environment became a central issue in social debate, politics, and economics.

According to Girardi and collaborators (2018), the fact that journalism increasingly addresses environmental issues reflects the development of ecological awareness in Brazil and worldwide. Hansen (2019, p. 21) argues that “the ways in which we, as individuals, citizens, cultures and societies experience, view perceive and value nature and the natural environment” are shaped by media communication. Therefore, Environmental Journalism refers to the work of press professionals, with timeliness and periodicity, defined both by the environmental stories published in the general media and by the vehicles specialized in the environment (Bueno, 2007, p. 34). This journalistic branch, although developing, is not yet consolidated in the world, and even less so in the national press (De Holanda, 2017; Girardi et al., 2018; Bueno, 2013). Girardi and collaborators (2018) defend engagement and investigative spirit as guidelines for Environmental Journalism. Schwaab (2018, pp. 70-71) also states that Environmental Journalism can be considered militant insofar as it defends the socio-environmental logic, dealing with the common good, citizenship, and justice.

To this end, journalists need to know the political, economic, and social issues surrounding the environmental theme, enabling an in-depth and multidimensional journalistic practice, which demands listening to multiple sources related to the subjects (Miguel & Machado, 2019). Nevertheless, many media outlets treat environmental issues from the point of view of other areas, for not having specific environmental editorials (Trigueiro, 2005; De Holanda, 2017; Gern & Lima, 2018; Mourão & Sturm, 2018). Bueno (2013) states that Brazilian environmental journalistic coverage – despite being quantitatively significant – has a tendency to treat environmental themes under a single focus (scientific, economic, or political), which leads to limited approaches without in-depth consideration of the various involved agents and institutions. Gern and Lima (2018, p. 29, our translation) reinforce that “current Journalism still presents, with commendable exceptions, the environmental issue in a restricted, fragmented, poorly contextualized way and marked by marketing biases.” The authors point out the lack of a holistic view on environmental problems, from their interdisciplinary relationship with social, political, economic, and historical aspects. Schwaab (2018) also identifies this simplification of the theme in the press, according to him, in a cosmetic and de-contextualized way, addressing punctual actions, while macro social and political issues are left aside. For Miguel and Machado (2019, p. 286, our translation), “the reductionist view compresses the breadth of the environmental issue and impoverishes discussions that encompass the social, economic, political, and cultural spheres.”

Reiterating these trends, authors such as Hansen (2019) and Friedman (2015) point out that the decontextualization and fragmentation of environmental agendas are accentuated by the cyclical nature of coverage. This lack of constancy leads to an imbalance between the portrayal of journalism and the real global demands (Trigueiro, 2005; Friedman, 2015; Hansen, 2019). Takahashi and collaborators (2018) recall that countries in Latin America and the Caribbean have a distinct context. With ecosystems important for the ecological balance of the entire planet, these multicultural countries face constant political instability and difficulties to enforce environmental legislation, which makes the role of an engaged and productive Environmental Journalism even more relevant. However, the region still has economic, political, and social barriers that limit the space and prominence of environmental issues (Mourão & Sturm, 2018; Takahashi et al., 2018). These limitations were observed, for example, in the studies by Costa (2006b) in the Amazon region, and by Baracho and Costa (2019) in the RN state.

It is relevant to point out, however, that the limitation of sources is not a problem unique to the Environmental Journalism. Harjuniemi (2021), for one, indicates that the informational discourse on economics policy has been dependent on a limited range of elite sources, lacking in pluralism. This view is corroborated by Rios-Rodríguez and Arrese (2021), when analyzing the coverage of the economic crisis in Spain from 2008 to 2015. Looking at the current challenges, Friedman (2015) highlights that changes in the journalism business model and media convergence, with the new reality of digital journalism, bring new demands for news production as whole and for environmental coverage in particular, alongside budget cuts and tighter deadlines. This is also the reality of Brazilian journalism (Maciel, 2006; Sampaio, 2014). On the other hand, the consolidation of the Internet has brought benefits, such as the emergence of several blogs on the environment and new possibilities for multimedia and interactive content production (Friedman, 2015; Miguel and Machado, 2019).

### **Bourdieu's theoretical input: fields, *habitus* and symbolic power**

It's clear that the environmental impacts of RN's salt industry and its related disputes involve a series of agents and institutions from different social positions and with multiple interests in the case, such as: MPF, environmental agencies and social organizations, environmental experts, salt industry's business owners and representative entities, their employees, local communities, political and public figures. Therefore, a

complex network of influences and interests form the context of this media coverage.

Bourdieu's theoretical appointments of social relations and structures can help understand how these interactions reflected in the portals' news pieces, since he proposes an analysis of the domination mechanisms, of the ideas production and of the genesis of conducts to understand social relations (Bourdieu, 1998; Thiry-Cherques, 2006). Thus, applying his theory to journalism allows new approaches to communication research, in order to comprehend external pressures' role on journalistic production and the context of news creation and reception (Miranda, 2005).

To apply these studies to the analysis of the portals' coverage, it is important to review Bourdieu's main concepts about the social structure and its dynamics.

A field is defined by Bourdieu (1998, p. 133, our translation) as "a specific system of objective relations that can be of alliance and/or conflict, competition and/or cooperation, between differentiated, socially defined and instituted positions, independent of the physical existence of the agents that occupy them". Fields are autonomous microcosms in the social world, with specific values, objects, and interests (Bourdieu, 1998; Thiry-Cherques, 2006). They "result from processes of social differentiation, the way of being and knowledge of the world. As such, each field creates its own object (artistic, educational, political, etc.) and its own principle of understanding" (Thiry-Cherques, 2006, p. 6, our translation).

According to Bourdieu (1998), every field has a constant struggle for the definition of the principles of its division and operation, which determines what kinds of capital are more relevant to the individuals in that field. Therefore, the fields can be understood as force fields – since they attract agents to their unique social logic – and struggle fields – as agents are constantly positioning themselves in relation to others (Thiry-Cherques, 2006).

The social space, thus, is the set of the several fields, as dimensions with different principles and kinds of power and capital (Bourdieu, 1998). Costa (2006a, p. 71, our translation) sustains that it is a "plural space, in constant movement, it is the privileged space where the media and politics act. It is where dominant discursive practices coming from different fields of force acquire legitimacy and social visibility".

*Habitus* is another key concept in Bourdieu's studies. It can be defined as "a structuring principle of actions, perceptions and behavior that governs everyday actions, giving them an almost automatic character" (Costa, 2006a, p. 65, our translation).



*Habitus* refers to the sum of attitudes, ideas, and values that are internalized as adequate by social agents and tend to be repeated unquestionably (Bourdieu, 1998). It's not the same as "habit", "custom" or "tradition" because it's not only acquired with social interaction, but it's also the organizing principle of such interaction (Thiry-Cherques, 2006).

Postone et al. (2002) explain that the *habitus* is a simultaneously objective and subjective system, since it creates a mediation between structures and objective conditions (social product), in one hand, and conjunctural situations and practices on the other. It forms a set of individual schemes socially built with the practical experiences and everyday actions (Setton, 2002; Thiry-Cherques, 2006).

Bourdieu (1998) concludes that the interaction of antagonistic or complementary forces, depending on the interests of the occupants, is combined with the *habitus* present in the fields to constitute the social relations.

From this observation, emerges Bourdieu's concept of symbolic power, which is the power to construct reality. Symbols make the consensus about the social world possible, hence contributing to the reproduction of the social order. The author emphasizes that symbolic power is the "invisible power which can only be exercised with the complicity of those who ignore that they are subject to it or even that they exercise it" (Bourdieu, 1998, p. 7-8, our translation).

Therefore, those with more symbolic power build the social reality and use their own building principles to maintain or transform the same social world (Bourdieu, 1998). It is constantly manifested through symbolic violence in the determination of social symbolic systems, such as language, art and religion, reinforcing the differences, prejudices and violence in the social world (Da Silva & De Oliveira, 2017).

## Methodology

To achieve a comprehensive scope to the analysis of the stories, this article follows Laurence Bardin's (2011) Content Analysis (CA) proceedings.

Bardin (2011, p. 30, our translation) defines the CA methodology as "a set of techniques for analyzing communications, which uses systematic and objective procedures to describe the content of messages (...)".

The method's objectivity allows "the inference of knowledge concerning the conditions of production (or, eventually, reception), an inference that uses indicators (quantitative or not)" (Bardin, 2011, p. 38, our translation). Thus, according to Rocha and Deusará

(2005), CA aims at reaching the real meaning of the text when it was written.

CA is based on the description of the analyzed texts, categorized by the higher or lower occurrence of indicators – such as keywords, lexicons, categories, and themes. Beyond considering the indicators' rate and constancy, CA also considers the inferences and implicit meanings these elements bring to the object (Gonçalves, 2016).

Franco (2021) argues that the CA enables a study with a critical approach that recognizes the active role of subjects in the production of knowledge, without losing quality and systematization in data analysis. The methodology starts from a critical and dynamic conception of language, understood as a social construction (Franco, 2021).

To apply CA to this research, the methodological steps proposed by Bardin (2011) were followed:

1. Pre-analysis: documents' selection; floating reading, as the first contact with the texts; review or formulation of the objectives and hypothesis; development of categories and indicators; preparation of the material.
2. Data analysis and categorization;
3. Treatment of the results obtained and interpretation.

Thus, in the first stage, the selection of documents enabled the definition of the research *corpus*, through the survey and selection of news on the subject from the clipping reports from MPF/RN and conference by complementary online research, with the search for news on Google using different keywords. This way, the survey includes all the news from digital vehicles located on the subject, regardless of their relationship with the releases from MPF/RN. Then, the floating reading allowed the revision of the hypotheses and objectives previously defined.

The following phases, of material exploration and treatment and interpretation, unfolded into:

a quantitative analysis, with a deepening of the data regarding the coverage. From these data, a comparison was made between the releases of the MPF/RN and the news, evaluating, in general, how the vehicles reflected the position expressed in the institutional texts (Melo, 2022); application of CA to group the elements of the news, considering, for this article, as main variables of interest, the agents and institutions used as sources and their classification according to the main social field to which they belong.

---

## ANALYSIS

---

### **The fields in the context of RN's salt production environmental issues**

Vanderberghe (1999) and Thiry-Cherques (2006) agree that the delimitation of the fields involved should be free, analytic, according to the agents and institutions interacting in the context. Bourdieu himself analyzed a variety of social fields, such as the scientific, literary, juridical, educational, political and economic. Also, in line with the constant dynamics of the social space, the fields can change and be divided into sub-fields, with similar structure and internal disputes for symbolic power (Thiry-Cherques, 2006).

Based on these precepts, considering the specific social context of the salt industry's environmental issues, during the pre-analysis, we have identified the main fields related to the media coverage to be analyzed: the environmental; the economic, specifically the subfield of RN's salt production; juridical; political and scientific, including the subfield of environmental sciences.

Therefore, to subsidize the observation of the voices and fields highlighted by the coverage, we set out to rapidly explore the main aspects of each field, brought by Bourdieu and other experts. It's important to emphasize that the objective of this analysis is to look into the fields represented in the final news pieces published to the readers, without the intent to analyze the whole social space involved in the matter. As we focus on the results of the coverage, the journalistic production process and the perspective of journalism as a social field itself – also indicated by Bourdieu – aren't deepened in this article, requiring further studies.

### **Environmental field**

As already mentioned above, environment protection is currently a major society concern worldwide, as this consciousness grew from the 1960s onwards (Borges and Tachibana, 2015; Buell, 2009; Loureiro and Pacheco, 1995; Pott and Estrela, 2017; Zupelari and Wick, 2014).

In the social space dynamics, the environmental field is in constant interaction with other social areas. Zupelari and Wick (2014) highlight that the transition to a globalized society brings out fears and insecurities towards the future, linked to environmental concern. Thus, as one of the aspects of the current socioenvironmental crisis, environmental preservation is a challenge to be faced by the contemporary society. Girardi et al. (2018) stress

that the consolidation of scientific evidences of global environmental changes turned the ecological balance a key factor of contemporary social life. Regarding the relation between the environmental and the political fields, various authors state that, despite the undeniable relevance of environmental causes in society, there is still a weak connection between knowledge of the problem and actual political demand for effective change (Egan & Mullin, 2017; Pott & Estrela, 2017; Upton, 2020; Zupelari & Wick, 2014). History confirms that environmental defense measures are more likely to be taken only after great disasters, in Brazil and in the world (Pott & Estrela, 2017).

Borges and Tachibana (2015) point to another relevant relation, between the environmental and the economic fields. According to the authors, business activities are in the center of the exploitation of natural resources and residue generation, with the need of environmental impacts' management to make the activities sustainable and answer properly to social and legal demands (Borges & Tachibana, 2015).

In view of the above, it's possible to identify the main agents and institutions of the environmental field, among others (Costa, 2006a): technicians and governmental institutions responsible for environmental policy; technicians and researchers and their respective research entities; NGOs and environmentalists; national and international financing agencies and its representatives and supporters; politicians and political parties related to the environmental cause; specialized journalists.

### **Scientific field**

Bourdieu (1994, p. 151) states that scientific practice is a social product, based on the collective belief in its principles. He explains that a theory is only consolidated as scientific knowledge if it can overcome present and future criticism (Bourdieu, 2001).

Vaz et al. (2009) emphasize that, nowadays, scientific, technical and sociological developments are deeply and mutually related. According to the authors, the sum of these progress has been continually transforming the contemporary society in many fields, such as the economic, political and cultural ones. Thus, the scientific dimension is focused on the development of other fields in the social space, with great impact on society as a whole (Rosa, 2012).

Bourdieu affirms that the main struggle for symbolic power in this field is for the capital of scientific authority, it is, the social recognition of the agent's technical capacity to speak and legitimately intervene on the discussions of a scientific area (Bourdieu,

1994; 2001). The scientific authority or competence is, so, a combination of the effective technical domain with the political domain of the social relations (Bourdieu, 1994). According to Bourdieu (1994, p. 138, our translation), “it is a particular kind of capital, which can be accumulated and even converted in other kinds according to certain conditions”.

The author also identified that, despite being a consolidated social field, the scientific autonomy is constantly threatened by the influence of religious, political and economic powers (Bourdieu, 2001).

Within the scientific field, the subfield of the environmental sciences links both environmental and scientific areas, formed by researchers of environment and sustainability. The quest for sustainable development involves conflicts of agents in different fields and social positions. Environmental science offers alternatives to the best recognition and management of damages (Miller Jr, 2012).

### Judicial field

Salgado (2006) explains that the role of Justice in contemporary society is related to the theory of the rule-based democracy that aims at guaranteeing fundamental rights. Justice is, thus, the historically conceived idea based on three core principles: equality, liberty and the value of labor (Salgado, 2006).

Judicial agents and institutions, as practitioners of Justice, are of extreme importance to the effectiveness of democracy and social dynamics, clearly influencing a wide range of social fields, providing ethical orientation, mediation, conflict solution and respect to law and constitutional norms (Bourdieu, 2001; Salgado, 2006).

According to Bourdieu (2001), the judicial field, as do other social fields, has its own codes, rituals and formalities, as part of the specific *habitus* in the area. Judicial agents and institutions are successful when agents from other fields recognize their actions and decisions as autonomous and neutral. This credibility reinforces the universality of Law and that their rules and punishments must be accepted and equally applied in society (Bourdieu, 2001; Santos, 2011).

So, the main symbolical capital to be acquired in the judicial field is the judicial authority, corresponding to decision power, and the trusted representation of the public fundamental rights and interests (Bourdieu, 2001; Santos, 2011).

Bourdieu (2001, p. 166, our translation) highlights, though, that Law and jurisprudence reflect “the existent force relations, in which economic determinations

are expressed, particularly in the interests of the dominants”. So, it’s not unusual to find affinity and intense interaction between dominant agents in the juridical field and the holders of public power, especially in the political and economic fields (Bourdieu, 2001; Carlo-magno, 2011).

### Political field

According to Bourdieu (2011, p. 203, our translation), “politics is a struggle for ideas, but an absolutely particular kind of ideas, namely, the force-ideas, ideas that give force by functioning as a mobilizing force”. He states:

There is a genesis of the political field, a social history of the birth of the political field. Things that seem self-evident to us (for example, majority voting) were the product of extremely long historical inventions. Those things that seem to have existed forever are often of recent invention. (Bourdieu, 2011, p. 195, our translation)

According to Maar (2017), politics isn’t active only in big decisive moments, but also in the daily relations, involving State, power, representativeness, participation, ideology, violence. Hence, the political field is in constant interaction with the other social dimensions, existing in unions, courts of law, schools, churches and even in the family homes (Maar, 2017).

Political capital has the peculiarity to be related to notoriety, recognition and reputation (Bourdieu, 2011). So, as an autonomous field in the social space, political agents have their specific *habitus*, and also act according to their own interests and positions in the field, and not only in favor of their voters and supporters, despite the intense interaction with other society areas.

### Economic field

Bourdieu (2005) defines the economic field as the collection of the economic production and trades; the term capital, in this area, relates to the available resources to make the interactions possible in this space (Garcia-Parpet, 2013).

Raud (2007, p. 228, our translation) explains that Bourdieu analyzes the economic field through three dimensions, which were left aside by the classic economic theory: political, historical and social.

In the first place, the political dimension is present in the reflection about the unequal economic agents, the barriers to the entrance of new enterprises in the market and the pow-

er relations present in the economic field (...). Next, the reflections on the existing differences between traditional societies and modern society, as well as the characterization of the economic universe as a universe of belief, slowly constructed and legitimized by a set of social values, highlight the historical dimension. Finally, the social dimension can be found in the analysis of the economic and social conditions of economic dispositions and in the reflection on the economic decision (...) (Raud, 2007, p. 28, our translation)

The interaction between economy and other social fields is stressed by Holton (2013), who affirms that economic factors are key to measuring the well-being of a population and the government's performance, such as economic growth or recession and employment levels.

Bourdieu (2005) also highlights that the connection between the economic and political fields is the most relevant in the social space, since the State has the power to intervene in the market operation rules.

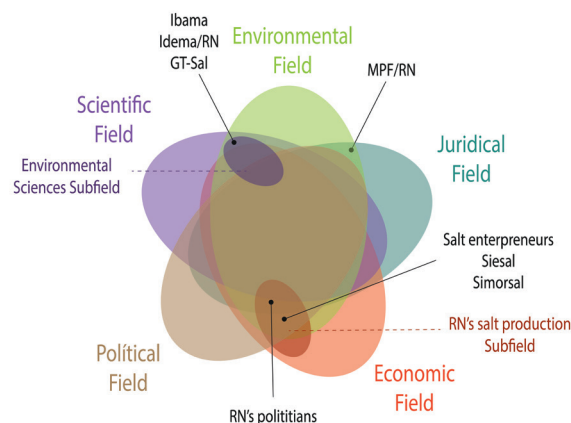
Mancuso (2007) states that this interaction is essential to the maintenance of the political apparatus, since the economic field is a big holder of financial capital. The author observes that the influence of Brazilian entrepreneurs in the definition of the country's political orientations is historically notorious, although it often happens in an undercover manner, making it hard to identify (Mancuso, 2007).

Within the economic field, the subfield of the RN's salt producers has defined its own structure and *habitus* along with the development and mechanization of the salt industry. The main agents and institutions in this subfield are the entrepreneurs controlling the companies, representative entities (such as the unions), employees and economic partners and stakeholders.

### The outlining of the social space by the coverage

It is important to emphasize, again, the complex and dynamic nature of the relations between the fields, as Bourdieu reinforced when analyzing the most varied segments. The following Venn diagram (Graphic 1), as a result of the *corpus* pre-analysis, is an attempt to represent, in a simplified way, a specific point of this intrinsic network of mutual interactions, from the perspective of the coverage context. Thus, the graph does not intend to demonstrate all the social fields involved and their relations, nor all the positions of the agents in the social space, but it visually clarifies the view provided by the media outlets, according to the representation in the stories.

**Graphic 1 :** Overview of the fields and the predominant position of the main agents and institutions involved in the coverage



Source: produced by the authors.

Therefore, the five main fields present in the coverage – environmental, juridical, economic, political and scientific – are demonstrated, overlapping each other and having multiple points of intersection between them. Two subfields relevant to the analysis are also represented: within the economic field, the subfield of salt producers in RN; in the scientific field, in intersection with the environmental, the subfield of environmental sciences. It is worth emphasizing, as stated by Bourdieu, in face of the complexity already highlighted, that the limits of the fields (represented by the colored ellipses) are not well-defined or inflexible. On the contrary, in various social situations, these limits change or blur, such is the interaction between the fields. Graphic 1 also shows the predominant position of the main agents and institutions under analysis. MPF is simultaneously positioned in two fields: the environmental – due to its ever-present goal of defending the environment – and the juridical – because its defense activities are constantly accompanied by legal actions, such as the promotion of hearings and the filing of lawsuits. Within the economic field, the entrepreneurs of the salt industry and their representatives form a subfield of their own, as demonstrated in the previous topic. The politicians involved in the case – including city councilors, mayors, governors, state deputies and RN's federal bench –, typical agents of the political field, often position themselves in great interaction with the economic field and the subfield of RN's salt entrepreneurs, for appearing in their defense on several occasions. Ibama, Idema/RN and GT-Sal represent the scientific field in the context of coverage, more specifically the subfield of environmental sciences, in great interaction with the environmental field. From this vision of the social space by the coverage, we proceed to the study of the news items and its sources.





**Table 1 :** *Main sources in the coverage*

Agent/institution quoted as source	Role in the coverage	Related social field(s)	Number of pieces of news
MPF	Federal Prosecution Office responsible for the legal actions to prevent environmental damages by the salt industry	Environmental/Juridical	70
GT-Sal	Group of technicians responsible for studies of the environmental damages by the salt industry	Environmental/Scientific – subfield of the environmental sciences	40
Emanuel Ferreira	MPF’s prosecutor and author of the legal actions	Environmental/Juridical	44
Victor Queiroga	MPF’s prosecutor and author of the legal actions	Environmental/Juridical	15
Renato Fernandes	Director of the Simorsal union	Economic – subfield of RN’s salt industry	2
Allyson Bezerra	RN’s congressman	Political	4
Siesal and Simorsal	Salt producers’ unions	Economic – subfield of RN’s salt industry	10
Francisco Ferreira Souto Filho	President of Siesal union	Economic – subfield of RN’s salt industry	6
Beto Rosado	RN’s congressman	Political	3

Source: produced by the authors, adapted from Melo (2022).

This can be noted in De Fato’s piece about MPF’s request to suspend the issuing of permits to the salt industry (“MPF quer suspender”, 2019). Although the story criticizes MPF, stating that “RN salt industry is under threat”, the portal did not neglect to include MPF’s arguments on the matter, as the text reads: “According to a public civil action (ACP) filed by MPF, the decree 9824-19 was based on a false motive, contradicts principles, and puts the environment and local communities at risk” (“MPF quer suspender”, 2019, our translation, emphasis added).

MPF’s highlight as a source could be expected, since its press releases were the starting point for covering the subject in 80% of the stories and 44 news items copied the press office’s texts, as shown in the quantitative analysis. As a result, some stories narrated the facts solely through MPF’s arguments. This is demonstrated in the news piece by *Agora RN*, in which MPF and its prosecutors are mentioned eight times, as in the following excerpts:

*The Federal Prosecution Office (MPF) has filed public civil actions against 18 salt companies in Rio Grande do Norte. (...) The authors of the actions, the prosecutors Emanuel Ferreira and Victor Queiroga, note that «it is at stake (...) the environmental regularization of no less than 2 thousand hectares of irregular occupation of permanent preservation areas...» (...) Reinforcing MPF’s concern, the actions ask for a period of four years to be granted to the companies to complete the removal of the APPs, which can be extended for an equal period. (“MPF entra com ações”, 2019, our translation, emphasis added)*

Along with MPF itself, prosecutors Emanuel Ferreira (44 times) and Victor Queiroga (15 times) were also significantly quoted in the stories. The quotes were made easily available to the journalists, as they were recurrent in the press releases.

The frequent mention of prosecutors demonstrates what Bourdieu (2001) has indicated about the great social trust in the agents who hold power in the juridical field. As occupants of important positions in the legal area, they had their symbolic power of legal authority also valued in other social fields, which translated into their acceptance as reliable journalistic sources.

Moreover, it can be stated that MPF also influenced the appearance of GT-Sal in the stories, since the group was mentioned in four out of the five releases spread by the prosecution office. Besides the 40 times the GT-Sal was directly quoted, it was also mentioned by MPF in other occasions, as in this excerpt from G1 RN (2019):

The prosecution office requires the companies not only to vacate the areas, but also to promote some compensations, starting with the elaboration of Recovery Plans of Degraded Areas (Prads), *according to what has already been mapped and suggested by the Salt Working Group (GT-Sal)*. (“MPF quer retirada”, 2019a, our translation, emphasis added)

In the same way that MPF based its actions on GT-Sal’s studies as a technical and scientific basis, the newsrooms also sought this support, as shown in these news items from Mossoró Hoje: “*Technical studies* have pointed out that approximately three thousand hectares of permanent preservation areas (mainly mangroves) are irregularly occupied by salt companies in Rio Grande do Norte” (“MPF entra com ação”, 2019, our translation, emphasis added) and “*Formed by specialists* from Idema and Ibama (at the request of the MPF), this team [GT-Sal] *elaborated an extensive report* on the subject” (“MPF quer retirada”, 2019b, our translation, emphasis added)

This confirms what was said by Rosa (2012) about the scientific field being directed to the development of other social areas and the relevance of the symbolic capital of scientific authority even among other social fields, as Bourdieu (1994) stated.

On the other hand, summing up the salt producers with their unions and respective representatives, they were used as sources in 18 news items. Although this number indicates that a significant part of the portals heard the voices of the salt industry and took it into consideration in the informational discourse, it was clearly less quoted than MPF.

It is relevant to note, however, that political agents mentioned as sources appeared repeatedly in defense of the interests of the salt industry, as can be seen in the excerpt below:

With the change in the Federal Government, *Beto Rosado* [RN’s congressman] *presented a new indication* n° 464/2019. “The threat began in 2013 and has been generating immense legal insecurity to the salt activity, inhibiting investments and generating distrust. *If it were not for this decree, the activity would reach a true collapse (...)*”, he said. (“Decreto reconhece”, 2019, our translation, emphasis added)

This defense exemplifies the relation between the political and economic fields, which was pointed by Bourdieu (2005) and Garcia-Parpet (2013) as the main interaction to the society, capable of changing the rules of market and of defining public policies.

Analyzing the distribution of sources according to the field in which they are positioned in the social space, as shown in Table 1, allows further understanding about the interaction between these social dimensions and their representation in the portals’ pieces.

**Table 2 : Sources categorized by social fields**

Field	Total of sources used (excluding repetitions in a same news item)*
Environmental	173
Juridical	141
Scientific	23
Economic	24
Political	44

\*Sources related to more than one social field are counted as one source from each of these fields.

Source: Melo, 2022.

The table makes it clear that, in this symbolic fight for space in the media, the environmental and juridical fields – where MPF is positioned – had a wide advantage (quoted in 173 and 141 stories, respectively). As already shown, these fields were supported by the scientific one, which was cited as a source 23 times. The difference becomes evident when comparing them with the incidence of sources coming from the political (44) and economic (24) fields.

This prominence of the environmental agents and institutions reinforces the indication of many authors – such as Pott and Estrela (2007); Zupelari and Wick (2014) – regarding the growth and consolidation of the environmental field in the contemporary society.

---

## CONCLUSION

---

Applying Bourdieu's concepts to the context of the journalistic coverage allows better understanding of the complexity of the social structures and the relations between the main agents with different interests in the environmental issues of the Brazilian salt production, specifically in the RN state. From the optics of the intersections surrounding the environmental, economic, juridical, political and scientific fields within the social space, it is possible to observe how these relations influenced the digital media outlets' informational discourse.

As previously observed by the authors, considering all digital media that reported this subject in 2019, 80% of the news were tied to MPF's press releases. This reflected in the MPF's notoriety in the coverage: the entity and its agents were the main source for the newsrooms, the voice with more space to defend its interests. This also reassures the credibility of MPF and its prosecutors among the local media. The fact that institutional arguments were reproduced by the portals indicates a successful press office strategy. To the newsrooms, on the other hand, giving up the processes of interpretation and transformation of the content generates the weakening of the relationship with readers and raises questions of ethics and credibility.

Moreover, MPF also shaped the characterization of other agents and institutions involved, such as the GT-Sal, which had significant presence on the coverage and was mentioned regularly by MPF as the scientific basis of the entity's actions.

Therefore, analyzing the incidence of sources from the economic and political fields, it can be stated that these social dimensions were superposed by the environmental, juridical and scientific fields in the representation of the context in the coverage.

It was clear that the relation between the political and economic fields had an impact on the companies' environmental issues, since political agents came to the aid of the industry, with the signing of a beneficial presidential decree. Nevertheless, this important influence of the political agents wasn't widely translated as sources in the news pieces.

Analyzing the sources listened by the digital vehicles shows that only a limited amount of the interested voices were considered in the stories, in an unbalanced manner. This content limitation may be partially explained by MPF's press office influence, which involves a series of factors, such as the fast routine of the digital journalism and structure and staff available in the newsrooms, that require further studies to be better understood.

It can also be observed that agents with less symbolic capital in the social space had no opportunity to voice their points of view in the coverage, such as salt industries' workers, local communities and environmental activists.

As a result, the 90 stories published in 2019 did cover the main facts of the subject throughout the year. However, some news items carried only MPF's points of views, while others – on fewer occasions – presented solely the arguments of the salt producers. In these stories, the news vehicles failed to include the different sides involved in the issue. Overall, they fell short in the representation of the diverse voices relevant to the subject and presented a partial view of the complex social context.

---

*Soumis le 27-09-2021*  
*Accepté le 04-08-2022*



## RÉFÉRENCES

- Agência Nacional de Mineração. (2018). *Sumário mineral brasileiro*. Departamento Nacional de Produção Mineral.
- Baracho, N. B. & Costa, G. C. (2019) Análise da sensibilidade do jornalismo ambiental em Rio Grande do Norte. *Mutações*, 10(17), 99 – 108. Retrieved from <https://www.periodicos.ufam.edu.br/index.php/relem/article/view/6646>
- Bardin, L. (2011). *Análise de conteúdo*. Edições 70.
- Bollen, W. P. (2021). Salt. In *Mineral Commodity Summaries 2021*, pp. 138-139. Washington, DC: United States Geological Survey. Retrieved from <https://pubs.usgs.gov/periodicals/mcs2021/mcs2021.pdf>
- Borges, F. H. & Tachibana, W. K. (2015). A evolução da preocupação ambiental e seus reflexos no ambiente dos negócios: uma abordagem histórica. *Proceedings of the 25th Encontro Nacional de Engenharia de Produção*, Porto Alegre, 25, 5235–5242. Retrieved from [http://www.abepro.org.br/biblioteca/enegep2005\\_enegep1005\\_1433.pdf](http://www.abepro.org.br/biblioteca/enegep2005_enegep1005_1433.pdf)
- Bourdieu, P. (1994). El campo científico. *Redes: revista de estudios sociales de la ciencia*, 1(2), 129–160. Retrieved from <http://ridaa.unq.edu.ar/handle/20.500.11807/317>
- Bourdieu, P. (1998). *O poder simbólico*. Bertrand Brasil.
- Bourdieu, P. (2001). *Para uma sociologia da ciência*. Edições 70.
- Bourdieu, P. (2005). O campo econômico. *Política & Sociedade*, 4(6), 15–57. <https://doi.org/10.5007/%25x>
- Bourdieu, P. (2011). O campo político. *Revista Brasileira de Ciência Política*, 5, 193–216. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-33522011000100008>
- Buell, L. (2009) *The future of environmental criticism: environmental crisis and literary imagination*. John Wiley & Sons.
- Bueno, W. C. (2007) Jornalismo ambiental: explorando além do conceito. *Desenvolvimento e Meio Ambiente*, 15, 33 – 44. Retrieved from <https://revistas.ufpr.br/made/article/view/11897>
- Bueno, W. C. (2013). Assessoria de imprensa e complexidade: superando os equívocos da teoria e da prática tradicionais. *Proceedings of the Encontro Anual da Compós*, Salvador, 22, 1-17.
- Carlomagno, M. C. (2011). Constituindo realidades: sobre a força do direito de Pierre Bourdieu. *Revista da Faculdade de Letras da Universidade do Porto*, 22, 245–249. Retrieved from <https://ler.letras.up.pt/uploads/ficheiros/9910.pdf>
- Costa, L. M. (2006a). *Comunicação e Meio Ambiente: a análise das campanhas de prevenção a incêndios florestais na Amazônia*. UFPA; NAEA.
- Costa, L. M. (2006b) O esverdeamento da imprensa. *Estudos em Jornalismo e Mídia*, 3(2), 42 –54.
- Da Silva, L. F. & De Oliveira, L. (2017) O Papel da Violência Simbólica na Sociedade por Pierre Bourdieu. *Revista FSA*, 14(3), 161-174. <http://dx.doi.org/10.12819/2017.14.3.9>
- De Holanda, J. S. P. (2017) *Ventos do desenvolvimento: o início da cobertura sobre energia eólica no jornal Tribuna do Norte* [Masters Dissertation, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte]. RI UFRN. Retrieved from <https://repositorio.ufrn.br/handle/123456789/23600>
- Decreto reconhece sal como bem social. (2019, June 4). *Tribuna do Norte*. <http://www.tribunadonorte.com.br/noticia/decreto-reconhece-sal-como-bem-social/450116>
- Diniz, M. T. M., Vasconcelos, F. P. & Martins, M. B. (2015). Inovação tecnológica na produção brasileira de sal marinho e as alterações socioterritoriais dela decorrentes: uma análise sob a ótica da teoria do empreendedorismo de Schumpeter. *Sociedade & Natureza*, 27(3), 421–438. <https://doi.org/10.1590/1982-451320150305>
- Diniz, M. T. M. & Vasconcelos, F. P. (2016) Por que o Nordeste produz sal marinho? Estudo analógico do potencial do clima. *Caderno de Geografia*, 26(2), 355–379. <https://doi.org/10.5752/p.2318-2962.2016v26nesp2p355>
- Egan, P. J. & Mullin, M. (2017) Climate change: US public opinion. *Annual Review of Political Science*, 20, 209–227. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-polisci-051215-022857>
- Em crise no Brasil, indústria salineira do RN aposta na exportação. *G1 RN*. (2015, April 9). <http://g1.globo.com/rn/rio-grande-do-norte/noticia/2015/04/em-crise-no-brasil-industria-salineira-do-rn-aposta-na-exportacao.html>
- Fernandes, R. T. V. (2019). *Atividade salineira em manguezais do semiárido: impactos ambientais e reflexos econômicos da recuperação ou compensação ambiental das áreas degradadas* [Doctoral Dissertation, Universidade Federal Rural do Semi-Árido]. Repositório Ufersa. Retrieved from <http://repositorio.ufersa.edu.br/handle/prefix/3737>
- Franco, M. L. P. B. (2021) *Análise de Conteúdo*. Autores Associados.
- Friedman, S. M. (2015) The changing face of environmental journalism in the United States. In Hansen, A. & Cox, R. (eds.). *The Routledge handbook of environment and communication*. Routledge, 144 – 157.
- Garcia-Parpet, M. A. (2013). Sociologia da economia de Pierre Bourdieu. *Sociologia & Antropologia*, 3(5). 91–117. Retrieved from [http://www.sociologiaeantropologia.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/v3n05\\_04.pdf](http://www.sociologiaeantropologia.com.br/wp-content/uploads/2015/05/v3n05_04.pdf)
- Gern, A. & De Lima, M. D. V. (2018) Aprender e ensinar o jornalismo ambiental. In Girardi, I. M. T., De Moraes, C. H., Loose, E. B. & Bellmonte, R. V. (2018). *Jornalismo ambiental: teoria e prática*. Porto Alegre: Metamorfose.
- Girardi, I. M. T., De Moraes, C. H., Loose, E. B. & Bellmonte, R. V. (2018). *Jornalismo ambiental: teoria e prática*. Porto Alegre: Metamorfose.
- Globo. (2015). *About Globo*. Retrieved from <http://shorturl.at/hkxU>
- Gonçalves, A. (2016). Análise de Conteúdo, Análise do Discurso e Análise de Conversação: estudo preliminar sobre diferenças conceituais e teórico-metodológicas. *Administração: ensino e pesquisa*, 17(2), 275–300 <https://doi.org/10.13058/raep.2016.v17n2.323>
- Grupo Técnico de Trabalho para Regularização dos Empreendimentos Salineiros. (2017). *Relatório conjunto de avaliação técnica ambiental dos empreendimentos salineiros no estado do Rio Grande do Norte*.
- Hansen, A. (2019) *Environment, Media and Communication*. 2 ed. Routledge.

- Harjuniemi, T. (2021). The power of primary definers: How journalists assess the pluralism of economic journalism. *Journalism*. <https://doi.org/10.1177/14648849211035299>
- Holton, R. J. (2013). *Economy and society*. Routledge.
- Loureiro, M. R. & Pacheco, R. S. (1995). Formação e consolidação do campo ambiental no Brasil: consensos e disputas (1972-92). *RAP*, 29(4), 135–153. Retrieved from <https://bibliotecadigital.fgv.br/ojs/index.php/rap/article/view/8267>
- Maar, W. L. (2017). *O que é política*. Brasiliense.
- Maciel, A. Z. (2006). *Jornalismo Ctrl c/ Ctrl v: uso do release na comunicação da informação online* [Masters Dissertation, Universidade de Brasília]. Retrieved from <https://repositorio.unb.br/handle/10482/5530>
- Mancuso, W. (2007). *O lobby da indústria no Congresso Nacional: empresariado e política no Brasil contemporâneo*. Edusp.
- Media Ownership Monitor Brasil (2019) *Rede Globo*. Retrieved from <https://shorturl.at/inJRY>
- Melo, A. W. (2022) *Comunicação pública e meio ambiente: a cobertura da atuação do MPF no RN contra a ocupação de áreas de preservação por empresas salineiras* [Masters Dissertation, Universidade Federal do Rio Grande do Norte]. RI UFRN. Retrieved from <https://repositorio.ufrn.br/handle/123456789/47140>
- Miguel, K. G. & Machado, M. F. (2019) Jornalismo e afetos na experiência transmídia do movimento ambiental. *Revista Observatório*, 5(4), 280 – 308. Retrieved from <https://sistemas.uft.edu.br/periodicos/index.php/observatorio/article/view/5778/15501>
- Miller Jr, G. T. (2012) *Ciência ambiental*. Cengage Learning.
- Ministério Público Federal (2019a) *MPF quer retirada de salinas de áreas de preservação e realocação da produção do sal. Natal-RN*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3hK9D1S>
- Ministério Público Federal (2019b) *MPF obtém liminar para mais uma empresa desativar pilhas de sal em área de preservação*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/35OMadz>
- Ministério Público Federal (2019c) *MPF quer anular decreto que permite funcionamento de salinas em áreas de preservação*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/33BU9b6>
- Ministério Público Federal (2019d) *MPF quer impedir licenciamento ambiental para salinas em áreas de preservação*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/2RxWiPh>
- Miranda, L. (2005). *Pierre Bourdieu e o campo da comunicação: por uma teoria da comunicação praxiológica*. EDIPU-CRS.
- Mourão, R. R. & Sturm, H. A. (2018) Environmental journalism in Brazil: history, characteristics, and framing of disasters. In Takahashi, B., Pinto, J., Chavez, M. & Vigón, M. (eds.) *News media coverage of environmental challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean – mediating demand, degradation and development*. Palgrave MacMillan, 67-90.
- MPF entra com ação para anular decreto sobre interesse social do sal no RN. (2019, August 7). *Mossoró Hoje*. Retrieved from <https://mossorohoje.com.br/noticias/28538-mpf-entra-com-acao-para-anular-decreto-sobre-interesse-social-do-sal-no-rn>
- MPF entra com ações para retirada de salinas de áreas de preservação no RN. (2019, January 29). *Agora RN*. Retrieved from <https://agorarn.com.br/geral/mpf-entra-com-acoes-para-retirada-de-salinas-de-areas-de-preservacao-no-rn/>
- MPF quer retirada de salinas de áreas de preservação ambiental no RN. *G1 RN*. (2019a, January 29) Retrieved from <https://g1.globo.com/rn/rio-grande-do-norte/noticia/2019/01/29/mpf-quer-retirada-de-salinas-de-areas-de-preservacao-ambiental-no-rn.ghtml>
- MPF quer retirada de salinas de áreas de preservação ambiental. (2019b, January 29). *Mossoró Hoje*. Retrieved from <https://mossorohoje.com.br/noticias/26099-mpf-quer-retirada-de-salinas-de-areas-de-preservacao-ambiental>
- MPF quer suspender emissão de licenças para empresas salineiras. (2019, August 10). *De Fato*. Recuperado de <https://defato.com/mossoro/83571/mpf-quer-suspender-emisso-de-licenas-para-empresas-salineiras>
- Postone, M., Lipuma, E. & Calhoun, C. (2002). Introduction: Bourdieu and Social Theory. In Calhoun, C., Lipuma, E. & Postone, M. *Bourdieu: critical perspectives*. The University of Chicago Press. doi/10.1086/204311
- Pott, C. M. & Estrela, C. C. (2017). Histórico ambiental: desastres ambientais e o despertar de um novo pensamento. *Estudos Avançados*, 31(89) <https://doi.org/10.1590/s0103-40142017.31890021>
- Raud, C. (2007) Bourdieu e a nova sociologia econômica. *Tempo Social*, 19(2), 203-232. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0103-20702007000200008>
- Rios-Rodríguez, R., & Arrese, Ángel. (2021). Economic Journalism and the Elitist Approach: A Persistent Pattern in the Use of Sources? The Spanish Press Coverage of The Economic Crisis (2008–2015). *Brazilian Journalism Research*, 17(3), 764–791. <https://doi.org/10.25200/BJR.v17n3.2021.1445>
- Rocha, D. & Deusdará, B. (2005). Análise de Conteúdo e Análise do Discurso: aproximações e afastamentos na (re) construção de uma trajetória. *Alea*, 7(2), 305–322. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1517-106X2005000200010>
- Rosa, C. A. P. (2012). *História da ciência*. Fundação Alexandre de Gusmão.
- Salgado, J. (2006). *A ideia de justiça no mundo contemporâneo*. Del Rey.
- Sampaio, C. O. C. (2014) *A construção do discurso informativo na relação entre assessoria de imprensa e jornalismo: apontamentos metodológicos para análise* [Doctoral Dissertation, Universidade Federal da Bahia]. Retrieved from <https://repositorio.ufba.br/handle/ri/25185>
- Santos, M. A. (2011). Uma leitura do campo jurídico em Bourdieu. *Revista Águia: Revista Científica da FENORD*, 1(1), 86-101. Retrieved from [http://site.fenord.edu.br/revistafenord/revista\\_topicos/Umaleiturocampojuridicopag86.pdf](http://site.fenord.edu.br/revistafenord/revista_topicos/Umaleiturocampojuridicopag86.pdf)
- Schwaab, R. (2018) Jornalismo, ambiente e reportagem ampliada. In Girardi, I. M. T., De Moraes, Loose, E. B. & Belmonte, R. V. (orgs). *Jornalismo Ambiental: teoria e prática*. Metamorfose, 69 – 85.
- Setton, M. G. J. (2002) A teoria do habitus em Pierre Bourdieu: uma leitura contemporânea. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, 20, 60–70. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S1413-24782002000200005>

- Sindicato das Indústrias de Extração do Sal do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte & Sindicato da Indústria de Moagem e Refino do Sal do Estado do Rio Grande do Norte (2019). *Nota à imprensa*. Retrieved from <https://bit.ly/3jnslxE>
- Takahashi, B., Pinto, J., Chavez, M. & Vigón, M. (eds.) (2018). *News media coverage of environmental challenges in Latin America and the Caribbean – mediating demand, degradation and development*. Palgrave MacMillan.
- Thiry-Cherques, H. R. (2006). Pierre Bourdieu: a teoria na prática. *RAP*, 40(1), 27–55. <https://doi.org/10.1590/S0034-76122006000100003>
- Traquina, N. (2005). *Teorias do jornalismo*. Insular.
- Trigueiro, A. (2005) *Mundo sustentável: abrindo espaço na mídia para um planeta em transformação*. Globo.
- Upton, R. (2020). The decade of environmental panic. *Planning: Theory & Practice*, 21(1), 3–6. <https://doi.org/10.1080/14649357.2020.1708018>
- Vanderberghe, F. (1999). The real is relational: an epistemological analysis of Pierre Bourdieu's generative structuralism. *Sociological Theory*, 17(1), 32–67. <https://doi.org/10.1111/0735-2751.00064>
- Vaz, C. R., Fagundes, A. B. and Pinheiro, N. A. M. (2009). O surgimento da ciência, tecnologia e sociedade (CTS) na educação: uma revisão. *Proceedings of the Simpósio Nacional de Ensino de Ciência e Tecnologia*, Curitiba, 1, 98-116.
- Vizeu, A. (2005). *Decidindo o que é notícia: os bastidores do telejornalismo*. Universidade Federal de Pernambuco.
- Zupelari, M. F. Z. & Wick, M. A. L. (2014). A incerteza do futuro e a questão ambiental na contemporaneidade. *Revista Eletrônica do Mestrado em Educação Ambiental*, 31(2), 230–246. Retrieved from [http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci\\_arttext&pid=S2359-07692015000300013](http://pepsic.bvsalud.org/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2359-07692015000300013)





---

## ABSTRACT | RÉSUMÉ | RESUMO

---

**The concept of social field in media discourse: the impact of salt production on the environment in Brazil**

**Le concept de champ social dans le discours médiatique : l'impact de la production de sel sur l'environnement au Brésil**

**Os campos sociais no discurso da mídia: questões ambientais da produção de sal no Brasil**

**En** Pierre Bourdieu's socio-philosophical works have demonstrated the complexity of social space, which is divided into many interacting fields, where agents and institutions position themselves simultaneously. Consequently, each piece of information is embedded in a complex context where multiple social, economic and political interests clash. The ways in which journalists present this context in their articles reveal the different forces that shape the news discourse. This article is the result of the master's research entitled "Public communication and the environment: the coverage of the Federal Public Ministry's actions against the occupation of environmental preservation areas by salt producers". It aims to examine the role of the social fields involved in the coverage of the environmental impacts of salt production in the state of Rio Grande do Norte, responsible for 95% of the Brazilian salt production. For this, we analyzed 54 online media, both local and national, that produced 90 stories on the topic in 2019. Bourdieu's concept of social field, his indications on social structures and the identification of the different fields involved allowed us to identify the social space related to this coverage. This theoretical perspective applied to the methodology of Content Analysis reveals the frequency and influence of the agents and institutions of the different fields as the mouthpiece of the media discourse. Findings show that the Federal Public Ministry (MPF) and its agents were the main source for the newsrooms. These institutional arguments were reproduced by the websites, which shows a successful strategy of the public media service. For the media, on the other hand, the absence of interpretation and transformation of the content implies a weakening relationship with the readership and raises questions about ethics and credibility. In these reports, analysis of the impact of sources from the economic and political fields allows us to conclude the social dimension was superseded by the environmental, legal and scientific fields. The results show that, although the main environmental events were documented throughout 2019, some reports only presented the MPF's point of view, while others - fewer in number - only relayed the arguments of the salt producers. In general, the media failed to portray the different voices involved, providing only a partial view of the complex social context at play.

**Keywords:** Communication and the environment; public communication; Brazilian salt industry; Federal Public Ministry; Pierre Bourdieu

**Fr** Les études socio-philosophiques de Pierre Bourdieu montrent que l'espace social est complexe, étant divisé en de nombreux champs en interaction, où agents et institutions se positionnent simultanément. Par conséquent, chaque information est encadrée par un contexte complexe où s'affrontent de multiples intérêts sociaux, économiques et politiques. La façon dont les journalistes rapportent ce contexte dans leurs articles révèle les différentes influences qui façonnent le discours sur l'actualité. Cet article est le résultat de la recherche de master intitulée « Communication publique et environnement : la couverture des actions du Ministère Public Fédéral contre l'occupation des zones de préservation de l'environnement par les producteurs de sel ». L'objectif est d'analyser le rôle des champs sociaux impliqués dans la couverture des impacts sur l'environnement de la production de sel dans l'état de Rio Grande do Norte, responsable pour 95% de la production brésilienne en la matière. Pour ce, nous avons analysé 54 médias en ligne, locaux et nationaux, ayant produit 90 reportages sur le sujet en 2019. Le concept de champ social de Bourdieu, ses indications sur les structures sociales et l'identification des différents champs impliqués ont permis de cerner l'espace social autour de cette couverture.

Cette conception théorique appliquée à la méthodologie de l'Analyse de Contenu révèle la fréquence et le poids des agents et des institutions des différents champs en tant que voix du discours d'actualité. Les résultats montrent que le Ministère Public Fédéral (MPF) et ses agents ont constitué la principale source pour les rédactions. Ces arguments institutionnels ont été reproduits par les portails, ce qui témoigne d'une stratégie réussie du service de presse. Pour les rédactions, en revanche, l'absence de processus d'interprétation et de transformation du contenu implique l'affaiblissement de la relation avec les lecteurs et pose des questions d'éthique et de crédibilité. L'analyse de l'incidence des sources issues des champs économique et politique permet d'affirmer que dans ces couvertures les dimensions sociales furent supplantées par les champs environnemental, juridique et scientifique. Les résultats montrent que, même si les principaux faits en matière d'environnement ont été couverts au long de 2019, certains reportages se sont contentés de présenter le seul point de vue du MPF, tandis que d'autres – moins nombreux – ne rapportaient que les arguments des producteurs de sel. D'une manière générale, les médias ne sont pas parvenus à représenter les différentes voix en présence, ne reportant qu'une vision partielle du complexe contexte social en question.

**Mots clés :** Communication et environnement ; communication publique ; industrie brésilienne du sel ; Ministère Public Fédéral ; Pierre Bourdieu

**Pt.** Os estudos sociofilosóficos de Pierre Bourdieu mostram que o espaço social é complexo e dividido em numerosos campos em interação, onde agentes e instituições se posicionam simultaneamente. Portanto, cada notícia é rodeada por um contexto complexo no qual múltiplos interesses sociais, econômicos e políticos competem. A forma como os jornalistas refletem este contexto em suas histórias demonstra as diferentes influências na configuração do discurso informativo. Este artigo é um desdobramento da pesquisa de mestrado “Comunicação Pública e Meio Ambiente: a cobertura das ações do Ministério Público Federal contra a ocupação de áreas de preservação ambiental por empresas de sal”. O objetivo é analisar o papel dos campos sociais envolvidos na cobertura dos impactos ambientais da produção de sal no Rio Grande do Norte, que detém 95% da produção nacional. Para isso, analisamos a cobertura de 54 veículos de mídia digital locais e nacionais que produziram 90 reportagens sobre o assunto em 2019. O conceito de campos sociais de Bourdieu, suas indicações sobre estruturas sociais e a identificação dos diferentes campos envolvidos foram fundamentais para entender o espaço social em torno desta cobertura. Essa concepção teórica foi aplicada à metodologia da Análise de Conteúdo para identificar a frequência e a relevância dos agentes e instituições dos diferentes campos como vozes para o discurso informativo. Os resultados demonstram que o MPF e seus agentes foram a principal fonte para as redações. O fato de que os argumentos institucionais foram reproduzidos pelos portais indica uma estratégia bem sucedida da assessoria de imprensa. Para as redações, por outro lado, desistir dos processos de interpretação e transformação do conteúdo gera o enfraquecimento da relação com os leitores e levanta questões de ética e credibilidade. Analisando a incidência de fontes dos campos econômico e político, pode-se afirmar que estas dimensões sociais foram sobrepostas pelos campos ambiental, jurídico e científico na cobertura. Como resultado, os relatos cobriram os principais fatos do assunto ao longo de 2019. No entanto, algumas notícias traziam apenas os pontos de vista do MPF, enquanto outras – em menos ocasiões – apresentavam apenas os argumentos dos produtores de sal. Em geral, os veículos foram falhos na representação das diversas vozes relevantes para o assunto e apresentaram uma visão parcial do complexo contexto social.

**Palavras-chave:** Comunicação e Meio Ambiente; Comunicação Pública; Indústria Salineira Brasileira; Ministério Público Federal; Pierre Bourdieu