



The Brazilian Press and the environmental issues at the beginning of the XXI century: the amazon deforestation in journalistic discourse

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Abstract. This article presents the main conclusions of a research that analyzed the intensification of environmental subjects in the news of the Brazilian Press during 2000-2006. The purpose was to examine how the journalistic discourse was structured at the beginning of the decade through its sources of information. The emphasis was on deforestation and forest fires in the Brazilian Amazon and subthemes related to them. In addition, the article aimed to identify the different *discursive formations* that based the media discourse. The main database was obtained through selection and analysis of 1096 articles published in major magazines and newspapers in Brazil. Most of the journalistic texts can be characterized as superficial, marked by a tone of "environmental alert" without explaining the causes, consequences and repercussions of the climatic and politic events mentioned. They proved to be insufficient to inform and contribute to the formation of local citizens concerned with environmental issues or to help on the creation of regional public policies related to the topic. The reports and press articles concerning the deforestation and forest fires in the Amazon were analyzed through their *discourses*, taking them as producers of the reality, i.e., the reason for the political struggle for hegemony. The theoretical analysis was based mainly on authors and concepts of Semiology of Social Discourse.

Keywords: Communication; Brazilian Amazon; Environment; Journalistic Sources; Journalistic Discourse; Discursive Formations.

La prensa brasileña y las cuestiones medioambientales en el inicio del siglo XXI: la deforestación de la Amazonia en el discurso periodístico

Resumen. En este artículo se presentan las conclusiones de una investigación sobre la intensificación de los problemas ambientales y su tratamiento como noticia por la prensa brasileña en los primeros años del siglo XXI (2000-2006). El objetivo de la investigación fue analizar la estructuración del discurso de los medios impresos sobre la deforestación y los incendios forestales en la Amazonia brasileña al principio de la década. También se intentó comprobar las principales fuentes de información de la prensa y las "formaciones discursivas" que dieron sentido al discurso periodístico. La selección, organización, comparación y análisis de alrededor de un millar de artículos publicados (1096) en las principales revistas y periódicos brasileños fue la base principal de obtención de los datos. La mayoría de los textos periodísticos pueden definirse como superficiales y alarmistas al no considerar las causas, las consecuencias y repercusiones de los fenómenos climáticos y políticos mencionados. Por lo tanto, ellos resultarían insuficientes para contribuir a la formación de una opinión pública bien informada sobre el tema o a la formulación de las políticas públicas. Los

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informes y artículos periodísticos sobre la deforestación y los incendios forestales en la Amazonia brasileña fueron analizados a través de sus discursos considerados en su función de productores de la realidad, o sea, en los aspectos de la lucha por la hegemonía política. Las herramientas teóricas de análisis se basaron principalmente en autores de la Semiología de los Discursos Sociales.

Palabras clave: Comunicación; Amazonia brasileña; Medio ambiente; Fuentes periodísticas; Discurso periodístico; Formaciones discursivas.

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1. Introduction

This article deals with the intensification of environmental subjects in the news from the Brazilian Press in the period 2000-2006. It is based on a research supported by CNPq (Brazilian National Council for Scientific and Technological Development). Its objective was to analyze how the Press discourse on environmental issues was structured during the early years of this century, during which they became constant. Which were the main subthemes chosen? Which were the journalistic sources that had “voice” to talk about environment problems in the Brazilian Amazon? Why? The main emphasis was on deforestation and forest fires. In addition, it aimed to identify the different *discursive formations*² (Foucault, 1970) that based the media discourse.

The main database was obtained by searching on the web and by collecting the press editions of major Brazilian magazines (*Veja, Isto É, Época*) and newspapers (*Folha de São Paulo - FSP, O Estado de São Paulo - OESP, Correio Braziliense, Jornal do Brasil - JB, O Globo, Diário do Pará* and *O Liberal*). As a result, 1096 articles and reports were selected, organized, compared and analyzed³.

We started this research from the following hypothesis: the coverage made by the print media on deforestation and forest fires in the Brazilian Amazon over the past 30 years approximately (Costa, 2006b) and, especially in recent years, still has been based on information primarily provided by environmental agencies (governmental or nongovernmental), favoring a partial view of the problem and contributing to reaffirm the imbalance in power relations between the rural and

² The concept of *discursive formations* developed by Foucault (1970) is understood as a set of discursive rules that determine the existence of objects, concepts, strategies and enunciative modalities. These rules are assimilated through the linguistic learning and they make it possible for the individual to elaborate his discourses and to react linguistically in different situations (Foucault, 1970).

³ It is emphasized, however, that only the following publications were available online: *Veja* (2002-2006), *Isto É* (2002-2006), *Época* (2002-2006), *Folha de São Paulo* (2002-2006) *Jornal do Brasil* (2004-2005), *O Estado de São Paulo* (2006), *O Globo* (2006), *Correio Braziliense* (2006), *O Liberal* (2002-2006) and *Diário do Pará* (2003-2006).

environmental *fields*⁴ (Bourdieu, 1998), including the *subfields* of family farming and monoculture / livestock on a large scale.

Environmental issues started appearing on Brazilian Press in the 70's. At this time, the journalistic articles on deforestation and burning in the Amazon were predominantly descriptive (Costa, 2006a) and favored the governmental agencies as their sources of information. Brazil was under a military dictatorship (1964-1985). From the late 80s, research institutions and NGOs (non-governmental organizations) also began to be listed as sources of information, because issues like the deforestation in the Amazon, that started to have consequences at the economic and social level, as the murder of rural and rubber workers ("seringalistas") leaders. However, small farmers and indigenous people and their representative institutions appeared in "a secondary place" in the articles until the 80's. Sometimes they appeared as "villains", sometimes as "victims" of the severe process of deforestation and burning in the region.

From the 90's, the sources of science and environment (particularly the NGOs), were also legitimized as authoritative voices by the media discourse to "talk" about the Amazon (Costa, 2008). In the period 2000-2006, as will be seen below, the main difference is that the loggers and their representative agencies, seeking to reverse their worldwide spread image of responsible for the deforestation in the Amazon, also appear as recurring sources of the journalists. It means that the power relations among the rural (agribusiness), governmental and environmental *fields* (Bourdieu, 1998) has been changed as well.

2. Theoretical and Methodological References

The theoretical and methodological referential which guided the research is based on concepts taken from the theories of authors who understand the social relations as being structured by and structuring the social world and consider that the dispute for the *symbolic*⁵ power organizes the interests and strategies of the social agents.

⁴ Bourdieu's field concept refers to the idea of a system in which institutions and actors, as well as their acts and speeches, have meaning only relationally, through a game of oppositions and distinctions. The materialization of the history of a social *field* is present in institutions and attitudes of the agents who run these institutions or struggle against them. Thus, a field is a specific system of objective relations that may be of alliance and / or conflict, competition and / or cooperation among different positions, socially defined and established, independent of the agents' physical existences (Bourdieu, 1998:133). The field's boundary is the limit of its effects.

⁵ The symbolic power, Bourdieu's concept, has its roots in Durkheim's theory and can be defined as the power of constructing reality, i.e. the immediate sense of the social world. The symbols make possible the consensus about the social world and contribute thus to the reproduction of the social order (Bourdieu, 1998:09). It is a transformed form of many other forms of power (such as economic), so unrecognizable, ignored as arbitrary. The Symbolic Power is "the power to preserve or to transform objective principles of union and separation, of marriage and divorce, of association and dissociation, which are at work in the social world; the power to conserve or to transform current classifications in matters of gender, nation, region, age, and social status, and this through the words used to designate or to describe individuals, groups or institutions" (Bourdieu, 1989:22). Also available in: <http://www.soc.ucsb.edu/ct/pages/JWM/Syllabi/Bourdieu/SocSpaceSPowr.pdf>

The reports and press articles concerning the deforestation and forest fires in the Amazon were analyzed through their *discourses*, taking them as producers of the reality, i.e., the reason for the political struggle for hegemony (Bourdieu, 1998). The theory of social discourses deals with the processes of the formation of the discourse, which can be defined as the locus for the production of meaning, so, it is a discursive practice.

Communication relations are thus power relations that depend on the symbolic capital⁶ of the agents and the institutions involved, related to the material and institutional structures of society (Bourdieu, 1998). The discursive legitimacy, based on the recognition that the social agents give to it, establishes its inherent power relationships. It is determined by factors that go beyond the social and institutional position or the social and economic power of the agents. These include individual, group and class interests, the history of previous institutional relations, the discursive mediation type and the competition from other discourses (Araújo, 2000:145) The language presents itself therefore as an arena of social confrontations in which the meaning relations are an essential part in the constitution of power relations.

The discourse is the primary arena in which the different capitals of the agents, transfigured into symbolic capital, struggle for the symbolic power and for the hegemony of their way of perceiving and defining the world, i.e., of representing it. The discourse allows the apprehension of the existing consensus and conflict in social relations through the "marks" it carries.

The symbolic systems will fulfill their political roles as instruments of imposition or legitimacy of the dominant world view, as far as they are structured and structuring communication tools as well as knowledge instruments.

By using the concept of *discursive formations* developed by Foucault (1970), Orlandi observes that words receive their meaning from the *discursive formation* in which they are produced. The author notes that "the fact that a text is associated to a meaning is an illusion of the individual" (Orlandi, 1978:35), because he ignores the necessary inclusion of the entire sequence in a *discursive formation* (and not another), so that it makes sense and therefore he has the impression that he is the source of that meaning.

Pêcheux refers to this "illusion of the individual", who believes he is the absolute master of his acts and thoughts, as *Effect Munchausen* – in memory of the immortal baron who lifted himself in the air by climbing his own hair (Pêcheux, 1988:157).

The marks of history present in a discourse bring a dual observation: that the individual does not fully control his speech, as it is the place of the symbolic

⁶ "Capital is accumulated labor (in its materialized form or its 'incorporated' embodied form) which, when appropriated on a private, i.e., exclusive, basis by agents or groups of agents, enables them to appropriate social energy in the form of reified or living labor. It is a *vis insita*, a force inscribed in objective or subjective structures, but it is also a *lex insita*, the principle underlying the immanent regularities of the social world (Bourdieu, 1986:01) The symbolic capital, i.e., is a credit; it is the power granted to those who have obtained sufficient recognition to be in a position to impose recognition.

disputes which exceed his consciousness; and that all discourse is built from other discourses and is linked to them (Fausto Neto, 1991 apud Araújo, 2000:166).

Below, we will find an analysis of the main environmental subthemes reported by the Brazilian press discourse during 2002-2006.

3. The beginning of the century: Illegal logging in indigenous lands and the discourse on the internationalization of the amazon

During the first three years of the XXI century there was an increase in journalistic articles published by the Brazilian Press that contained "deforestation" or "burn" as keywords (the vast majority of them, reports) (Costa, 2008). The loggers and NGOs gained more space in the pages of the publications, increasing the balance of forces in the discursive and symbolic fields. Economic factors were also essential for the prominence of the theme deforestation, particularly, issues involving logging and soybean production.

The media discourse of the period studied (2000-2006) was constructed from four major *discursive formations* (Foucault, 1970): the political discourse of sustainable development; the scientific discourse (that was generally accepted by the publications without questioning on the methods of researches); the NGOs' preservationist environmental discourse; and the economic agribusiness discourse (with a focus on the timber industry discourse).

In 2002, for instance, 171 news were published about the theme. In the case of the local newspaper analyzed (*O Liberal*, from the State of Pará), the authors of most of the journalistic articles were not identified. Out of 78 news, 15 reports came from news agencies (such as Agência Estado linked to *O Estado de São Paulo* journal), 15 were signed by journalists of the newspaper itself and 48 did not have any authorship identification in their online version.

The year 2002 was marked by a sharp focus on illegal logging in indigenous lands. In addition, subthemes as global warming, greenhouse effect, the results of Rio +10 (that happened in August, in Johannesburg, South Africa) filled the pages of major newspapers and magazines in the country. In terms of regional journalism, the extraction of mahogany, the main subject of the year, was the dominant subtheme during all months of the 2002.

The officials of IBAMA [Brazilian Institute of Environment and Renewable Natural Resources] and the police helicopter found tracks, secondary roads and clandestine airstrips for landing small airplanes, tearing off the jungle like crazy snakes moving through the colossal forest. But instead of venom, the fangs of these snakes, in human shape, carry the riches of the forest, especially mahogany, wood of high international market value (*O Liberal Online*, August 01, 2002).

As it can be seen above, *O Liberal* newspaper adopts a dramatic tone, full of analogies ("tearing off the jungle like crazy snakes"), comparing the loggers to

looters of the Amazon treasures ("carry the riches of the forest"). *O Liberal* stood out for a coverage *in loco*, not only interviewing representatives from IBAMA and loggers, but also the indigenous people themselves. However, *O Liberal* highlighted an "unethical" and commercially naive behavior by the indigenous leaders, dismissing the arguments of those social agents.

According to the (...) Kayapo leaders, an indigenous person receives R\$ 50 to allow the cutting of a mahogany tree more than 40 feet tall. After cutting, the same tree is divided in logs that may be worth more than R\$ 2.100 in the international market. Each log has 3.2 cubic meters. The cubic meter of mahogany is priced at US\$ 1,600 (*O Liberal Online*, January 18, 2002).

The loggers owe more than R\$ 30,000 to the indigenous inhabitants. The chief Kaikware admits that it is not correct to allow the removal of timber from their land, but argues that, unfortunately, this is a means of economic survival for the tribe. "We are facing rough times and have no money for anything. The FUNAI [National Indigenous Foundation] does nothing for us and the FUNASA [National Health Foundation], which should take care of our health, only appears in indigenous villages when the people are dying," says the chief (*O Liberal Online*, January 31, 2002).

It is possible to note below that the discourse of the indigenous chief in relation to the Brazilian government is reproduced by the newspaper, but then it is mocked ("have nothing to complain") and disqualified by the journal. *O Liberal* also highlights the fact that the indigenous inhabitants were acting as workers hired by the loggers.

"They had been paying, but then, they didn't pay us nor gave any kind of satisfaction." If the Kayapo claim payment, the Paracana people, from the Apitereua Reserve, seem to have nothing to complain about. Not only they are being paid correctly as they are being hired for an extra task yet: to escort (for the loggers) mahogany extracted from their lands in Sao Felix do Xingu (*O Liberal Online*, January 31, 2002).

O Liberal, in the quotation below, also utilized the input of NGOs to strengthen its speech about the "inappropriate" behavior of indigenous people ("30 natives armed with shotguns and rifles supplied by the loggers").

Seduction - According to a coordinator of the Greenpeace environmental movement (...), at least 30 indigenous men armed with shotguns and rifles supplied by the loggers would be ensuring the transport of illegal timber to the town of Sao Felix do Xingu. There, the mahogany will be sawn and sent to Belem, where it will be shipped to Europe and the USA (*O Liberal Online*, January 31, 2002).

The nationwide newspapers and magazines, such as *Folha de São Paulo* and *Veja*, also mentioned the problem in several reports, but without a constant coverage of its consequences. In the excerpt below, from *Veja* magazine, the "enrichment" of the indigenous inhabitants through the acquisition of luxury consumer goods is mentioned ("buy a fleet of imported trucks"). The magazine, indirectly, suggests that the natives are partners of the environmental illegality, in favor of economic interests.

One of the biggest loggers of Mato Grosso (...) was caught extracting mahogany illegally from the Cintas-Largas indigenous lands, northern of the state. He paid 50 dollars a log - which allowed the tribe to buy a fleet of imported trucks (*Veja Online*, September 25, 2002).

The loggers were the main agents quoted in reports from journals of the region. This did not occur with the same intensity in newspapers or magazines from other states. The *Liberal's* position was ambiguous, sometimes placing the loggers as the true villains of deforestation and of forest destruction, sometimes making room for quotes on which they stand as a bastion of the regional economic development and victims of "mistaken" policies and government actions.

"Negotiation" – The President of AIMEX [Wood Export Companies Association of Pará], (...) said the government and IBAMA contradict themselves in their actions. To him, there can be no illegal trade in mahogany without the connivance of government agencies. "How can so many trucks be loaded with timber without being seen by the FUNAI, FUNASA and IBAMA? The logger is only taking advantage of the bargaining", he said (*O Liberal Online*, February 01, 2002).

Accused of being the main responsible for the deforestation in the Amazon in 2002, both by NGOs and by the federal government itself, the timber companies began to invest in a counter-discourse, produced by their communication departments, which puts them as one of the main levers of the regional economic development.

In a document delivered to the governor by the leaders of FIEPA [Federation of Industries of Pará], the AIMEX (Association of Timber Industry for Exportation of Pará) and the Union of the Forest Entities of the State of Pará (UNIFLOR), the business owners and employees say the timber-forest sector constitutes the second economic activity in the state, behind only the mineral one, with 1,592 companies located in 33 timber poles, generating about 300 000 direct and indirect jobs, exporting the equivalent of US\$ 543 million last year. With technology investments made between 1998 and 2004, the sector grew 420% in the share of processed products in total exports, from US\$ 73 million in 1998 to US\$ 308 million last year. According to authorities,

currently more than 56% of exports add value to forest products from Para. The industry moved in total something around US\$ 1.5 billion in 2004 (*Diário do Pará Online*, July 20, 2005).

Large farmers also appear as protagonists in some journalistic reports, along with the loggers. *O Liberal* mentioned the economic interests of these agents. Note the following passage, in which the hiring of workers in semi-slavery is emphasized.

Ranchers and loggers in the cities of Sao Felix do Xingu, Tucuman, Ourilândia do Norte and Água Azul do Norte, in southern Para, are promising to burn 100 acres of native forests in the region, including clear cutting, to turn them into pasture. During this work, for which hundreds of workers have already been hired, many of them in semi-slavery, all the hardwood will also be removed to be sold to buyers in other regions of the country and even abroad (*O Liberal Online*, May 24, 2002).

Other main subject of this period was the "threat of internationalization of the Amazon" In the quote below, it is possible to see the reproduction of information disseminated over the Internet ("... the geography of the Amazon is no longer Brazilian...") and later revealed by several newspapers, including the newspaper of the SPBC (Brazilian Society for the Advancement of Science). As happened in previous decades (Costa, 2006b), the "threat of internationalization of the Amazon" is invoked by businessmen and military personnel as a reason to stop the action of NGOs and the creation of environmental conservation areas, such as Resexs (Extractive Reserves). The title in its Portuguese version is also very suggestive, since they use the word farmers generically, giving a wider scope to the complaint, which is only made by the businessmen of agriculture and not by the rural workers or small farmers, as the title might lead one to believe.

[Title] Farmers are against the creation of more extractive reserves in Para. According to the president of FAEAPA [Federation of Agriculture and Livestock of Para], the movement toward the internationalization of the Amazon has escaped from the control of the federal government and the consequences for the northern region will be incalculable. "Europeans and Americans are occupying the forest and creating indigenous nations with the intention of making them independent. The problem is that so far nothing has been done at the state and federal levels. In the United States, the geography of the Amazon is no longer Brazilian, because even the map of our country has changed there," criticized (*O Liberal Online*, February 01, 2002).

The creation of seven extractive reserves in Para proposed by the Minister of the Environment (...) does not appeal to farmers and ranchers in the state. The president of FAEAPA (...) said yesterday that such measures only serve to "freeze" the process of developing the agro-industry of the state, which in its

evaluation has suffered great blows on account of the interests of European countries and the United States (*O Liberal Online*, February 01, 2002).

The NGOs, confirming a trend observed since the early 90s, became recurring sources of journalists. The reasons are the growing public interest, especially international, about the Brazilian Amazon and its environmental problems, and the news communication departments of NGOs in Brazil, that fed media with new environmental information.

In the case of the newspapers of the state of Para, Greenpeace is highlighted. The other newspapers and magazines also use Greenpeace as a source, but mention researchers from national and international NGOs as well, as IPAM (Institute for Environmental Research in the Amazon) and IMAZON (Institute of Man and Environment in Amazon), both based in Belem, capital of Para.

"Ten years after the beautiful promises of the Rio-92, the powerful people of the world continue to act like Pontius Pilate washing his hands before the criminal destruction promoted by timber companies. Greenpeace hopes that the governments of all countries adopt concrete measures for the protection of forests and their inhabitants during the next meeting of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) and also at Rio +10," he added [the international coordinator of the Greenpeace's Amazon campaign] (*O Liberal*, July 03, 2002).

A survey of the NGO International Conservation showed that half of the Brazilian natural areas are well preserved and that the Amazon is the largest conserved area of the world (*Época Online*, February 16, 2002).

4. Environmental preservation versus economic development: The old debate continues

In 2003, 30 years after the creation of the first Special Department of Environment in Brazil, there was a slight decrease in the number of journalistic articles published in print containing "deforestation" or "burn" as keywords (the vast majority of them, as occurred in 2002, were journalistic reports). There were 151 news in 2003, 20 less than the 171 published in 2002. Again, most of the ones published in local newspapers (*Diário do Pará* and *O Liberal*, responsible for 90 subjects) did not identify the authors.

The year of 2003 saw a continuation of themes already present in the three previous years, such as illegal logging in indigenous lands, especially the mahogany; global warming; the greenhouse effect; the advance of soy plantations and the disclosure of the increasing rates of deforestation and burning in the Brazilian Amazon. In terms of local journalism, the loggers were the main protagonists of the journalistic material throughout the year. This issue, coupled with rampant deforestation numbers, can also be seen in the reports of 2003 from

the other media analyzed (*Folha de São Paulo* and the weekly magazines *Veja*, *Isto É* and *Época*).

The Brazilian government has exposed the wound of the wood sector in the Amazon: the illegal occupation. From now on, companies in the sector must prove that they own the land in order to obtain the permission to cut trees. This measure, adopted two months ago by IBAMA, put in check the entire industry (*Época Online*, November 09, 2003).

The numbers of the Amazon deforestation increased in 2003 (27,200 km² between August 2003 and July 2004), causing a series of criticism from the NGOs condemning the fact ("The general tone was the recovery...") and a series of criticism from Brazilian agro-industries condemning the criticism of the NGOs. The quotes below are illustrative of the two cases and point to the historical debate "environmental preservation" versus "economic development".

The general tone was the recovery of a more forceful position of the MMA [Ministry of Environment, Water Resources and the Brazilian Amazon] and IBAMA. "Good intentions captained by a low budget ministry, as the MMA, are not enough," argues (...), coordinator of Greenpeace's Amazon campaign (*Diário do Pará Online*, June 27, 2003).

"There is no interest from the ranchers and farmers in degrading our region, quite the contrary. Now, what we cannot do is to freeze our economy just to justify ourselves to international environmental organizations," he says [president of the Federation of Agriculture in Para] (*Diário do Pará Online*, July 02, 2003).

Although the loggers appear as the main responsible for the increasing deforestation, other social agents were also mentioned in journalistic reports of greater scope, seeking to point at the economic, social and cultural causes of the problem. These reports were produced mainly by weekly magazines (like *Época*) and national newspapers (such as *Folha de São Paulo - FSP*).

Questions remain, however, as to the true engine of deforestation, whether it is the large monoculture farms, small-scale farmers or logging. It is probably a combination of all three, in an *amazonic* dynamic which generally begins with the predatory exploration of wood (*FSP Online*, July 06, 2003).

During the year of 2004 there was an increase of journalistic material published by the print media that contained "deforestation" or "burn" as keywords. This fact indicates the trend of an increasing interest from those publications in the disclosure of environmental matters and the tightening of the disputes in the discursive and political *fields*. The loggers and NGOs continued to occupy more

space in the pages of the publications, increasing the debate about environmental preservation versus economic development.

There were 224 news in 2004, 73 more than the 151 published in 2003. As happened in the previous year, most of them, when it comes to local newspapers (responsible for 143 subjects), did not have any identification of origin or authorship. The loggers remained as the major protagonists in the texts conveyed, especially by local newspapers, appearing either as environmental villains or as leadership for sustainable economic development, depending on the journalistic source.

(...) president of the National Confederation of Forest Industries, ratifies what the timber industry has been saying for years, that these activities addressed in a responsible manner do not promote deforestation, but constitute a "great partner for the sustainable development" (*Diário do Pará Online*, April 18, 2004).

According to the Ministry of Environment, more than 90% of timber production in the Amazon comes from predatory activity (*Diário do Pará Online*, December 12, 2004).

The citation above shows the federal government's clear position against the supposed impetus for economic development promoted by loggers in Para, at the cost of illegal logging. The Ministry of Environment (MMA) had repeatedly criticized the way the logging was being done in the Brazilian Amazon.

The main highlights in the pages and sites of newspapers and magazines in 2004 focused the sub-themes that marked the previous years: annual rates of deforestation and forest fires, global warming, logging and expansion of soybean plantations. The cattle, after the disclosure of a World Bank study on the 90s, is elected, along with loggers and soy growers, as responsible for the deforestation in the Amazon.

The speech of the loggers, as victims of "mistaken" Brazilian environmental policies, continues to be reflected nationally. However, the operations of the Federal Police, with the arrest of several loggers in 2004, also served to reinforce the image of the loggers as promoters of illegal logging.

No matter how serious was the cheating on Transport Authorization for Forest Products (ATPFs) discovered by IBAMA and repressed by the Federal Police last week, with the arrest of eleven loggers at once, much more dirt will show up under the carpet of the timber industries in Para in the coming weeks (...) (*O Liberal Online*, January 25, 2004).

The deforestation grew in 2003 and the numbers released in 2004 became the second highest mark ever recorded by the INPE (Brazilian National Institute for Space Research): 23,750 km². Apart from the reaction of the NGOs, presented by

the publications as a reliable counter position to the government's speech, the fact generated fiery speeches of the publications themselves, criticizing the government policies for the area, including in editorials. Note in the quotation below, the tone of "command" adopted by the newspaper *Folha de São Paulo* ("It is imperative ..."):

It is imperative, therefore, to adopt measures to restrain deforestation by stimulating non-predatory economic activities. No one contests, for example, the need to expand the agricultural frontier. Doing so does not necessarily destroy virgin forests. There are already degraded areas that would lend themselves to planting soybeans or the formation of grasslands. It is urgent to establish some form of ecological-economic zoning of the region in order to reconcile environment and development. Do not just observe, we must act (*FSP Online*, Editorial, April 13, 2004).

5. The Brazilian Amazon under the spotlight of international media

During the year of 2005, confirming an upward trend, there was a significant increase of journalistic material published by the print media that contained "deforestation" or "burn" as keywords. Besides the recurrent environmental issues (illegal logging, expansion of cultivation of soybean and global warming), two important facts marked the year: the murder of U.S. missionary Dorothy Stang, in Anapu, State of Para, and the release of the Kyoto Protocol⁷.

The agreement signed (...) did not have the U.S. support. The Protocol was released at 7am today in a ceremony in the Japanese city of that name. In a recorded message, the General-Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, urged the international community to accede to the treaty and act quickly. "We have no time to waste" (*FSP*, February 17, 2005, A16).

There were 304 news in 2005, 80 more than the 224 published in 2004 and 153 more than in 2003. Like the previous year, most of them, when it comes to local newspapers (responsible for 202 subjects), did not bring any identification of authorship, although *O Liberal* newspaper had published a large number of articles produced by the Agência Estado. It may be noted that the analyzed magazines and the *Folha de Sao Paulo* newspaper quite frequently used international sources, mostly scientists and researchers from universities and international NGOs, to bolster their speech. However, in most cases there was no questioning by journalists on the results or scientific methods of their researches. This shows that the publications are not interested in going deeper into the subjects or that the

⁷ The signing of the Kyoto Protocol took place in 1997 with membership of 180 countries. The developed countries pledged to cut between the years 2008 and 2012, 5.2% (average) of their carbon emissions over the level recorded in 1990 (Homma, 2003:218). On the subject, see: Philippe Fearnside, *The Amazon in Global Change*. Manaus: INPA, 2003.

journalists are not professionally prepared to elaborate articles more consistent with science and environment.

The murder of U.S. missionary Dorothy Stang by gunmen on February, 12th in Anapu, southwest of Para, mobilized the federal government that needed to respond to international pressure for a rapid and deep investigation of the case. The government incorporated the suspicion that the masterminds of the crime would be the timber owners, which had been repeatedly denounced by the missionary because of the environmental degradation they were causing. About 400 men from the National Police Forces were sent to the region of conflict in Para. However, in a clear confidence in the impunity, small farmers continued to be killed in the state soon after the murder of the missionary.

Organizations linked to the logging industry reacted to the statements of the President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, who blamed "some businessmen of the timber industry" for the killing of Dorothy Stang and trade unionists in Para (...). "The president tarred loggers, gunmen, squatters and ranchers with the same brush. We are an industry that exported US\$ 3.84 billion in 2004 and produces, throughout the production chain, about 2 million jobs" [the superintendent of the Brazilian Association for Mechanically Processed Timber] (*FPS Online*, February 23, 2005, A7).

In the above quote, besides the declaration of President Lula against the loggers, there is once again the counter-discourse of the loggers as propellers of the economic development, frequently present in the pages of newspapers, whenever reports of illegal logging are disclosed.

In 2006 there was a decrease, compared to 2005, in the number of journalistic articles published in print that contained "deforestation" or "burn" as keywords. The main sub-themes that appeared on the pages of newspapers and magazines were the end of the Forest Product Transport Authorization (ATPF); the federal act creating the first Sustainable Forest District of the country; and the sanction of federal law to grant public forests. There were 246 news in 2006, 58 less than the 304 published in 2005. As it occurred in the previous years, most of them did not bring any identification of authorship, especially when it comes to local newspapers (responsible for 111 subjects). In the other publications analyzed, most of the texts were signed or carried the identification of a news agency like Agência Estado (belonging to O Estado de São Paulo Journal Corporation).

In the national Press, the soybean growers in the state of Mato Grosso started to occupy a prominent position as the major responsible for deforestation, since this region took the lead in the deforestation ranking in 2006. As it had already occurred in the previous years, the logging continued in evidence, with a more favorable speech in local newspapers. Timber companies, through their reporting staffs, managed to include in the journalistic agenda the disclosure of their environmentally sustainable actions. The intention was to reverse the international image of villains of the Amazon deforestation.

Brazil has risen to fifth place in the world ranking of certified forests, standing behind Sweden, Poland, The United States and Canada (*O Liberal Online*, March 27, 2006).

Other highlights in the pages of newspapers and magazines in 2006 were the mobilization promoted by Greenpeace activists in 11 countries to carry out simultaneous acts in defense of the Amazon, the creation of the Jurueña National Park (the fourth largest national park in Brazil between the states of Mato Grosso and Amazonas) and the sanction of federal law granting public forests, very well received by the loggers, press and several NGOs.

The law granting public forests for logging may cause, in industry, a breakthrough comparable to the one caused by the telephone companies privatization in 1998. This is the first attempt to find middle ground between the conservative discourse of environmentalists and the utilitarian view of the agribusiness sector. Celebrated by the loggers themselves and the most militant NGOs, such as Greenpeace, the law tries to turn Amazon into an economically productive environment without the need to destroy the forest (*Época Online*, March 26, 2006).

The family farmers, indigenous people and other groups with less political, economic and institutional power hardly appeared explicitly in the reports (quoted string), contrary to what happened with representatives of NGOs, research institutes, government and agribusinesses. In general, the references to these groups appeared through the dissemination of scientific studies or researches. Note in the excerpt below, from a local report, that the main alternative to the predatory cutting of trees by family farmers - the community forest management - according to the NGOs, would, in fact, be damaging to them in many ways. The information was not reverberated by the nationwide publications (“The result is the demobilization of the traditional people of the Amazon”).

The experiences of community forest management in the Amazon are inefficient, do not serve the interests of traditional communities in the region, who make only minimal benefits in an indirect way, and are doomed to failure. On the other hand, the communities depend on the paternalistic relationship with the loggers and the non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The result is the demobilization of the traditional people of the Amazon. In great part, the closeness of the logging sector and NGOs makes the local mobilization impossible and undermines the organizational capacity of its own models for sustainable development, at the expense of official models imposed by the state. More and more these people depend on more rules imposed, alien to their traditions (Aline Brelaz, *O Liberal Online*, July 02, 2006).

6. Conclusions

The main conclusions of this research on the intensification of environmental subjects in the news from the Brazilian Press in the period 2000-2006, with the purpose of examining how the journalistic discourse was structured at the beginning of the decade through its sources of information, can be summarized as follows:

Most of the articles can be characterized as descriptive and factual, marked by a tone of "environmental alert". Therefore, they do not go deeper into the causes, consequences and repercussions of the events mentioned, becoming insufficient to inform and contribute to the formation of local citizens concerned with environmental issues, or to help the development regional public policies related to the topic.

The loggers, especially, and the soybean growers were considered in most journalistic texts as the major responsible for deforestation in the Amazon. Family farmers, medium farmers, indigenous people and their representative institutions appear in a "secondary position" in the articles during the whole period. The indigenous inhabitants, particularly in local reports, were considered either as "villains" of illegal logging on public lands (logger partners) or as "stupid victims" of loggers.

The nationwide publications quite frequently resorted to international sources, mostly composed by scientists and researchers from international universities and NGOs, to bolster their speech. However, there was no questioning by journalists, in most of the cases, on the validity, veracity or legitimacy of the methodology and results of these studies.

NGOs, with their aim of maximum nature preservation, and the press departments of the timber industry have been successful in disseminating information of interest to themselves, gaining space in the Brazilian media and favoring the symbolic power of these groups compared to other social groups, such as the soybean growers and family farmers. So, at that time, the symbolic power struggle (Bourdieu, 1998) by the social agents related to the topic was reinforced by the Brazilian press media.

The media discourse of the period studied (2000-2006), through its sources of information, was constructed from four major *discursive formations* (Foucault, 1970): the political discourse of sustainable development; the scientific discourse (that was generally accepted by the publications without questioning on the methodology of the researches); the NGOs' preservationist environmental discourse and the economic agribusiness discourse (with a focus on the timber industry discourse). This is still a tendency nowadays because the same agents hold specific knowledge about environmental issues (NGOs and scientists) or the largest economic power in Brazilian rural areas (loggers and agribusinessmen).

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