

When Journalism and its sources struggle for controlling public visibility: how *O Povo* covered Cid Gomes' Fanpage on Facebook

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Francisco Paulo Jamil Marques¹

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-5256-1964>

Hébely Rebouças²

<http://orcid.org/0000-0002-4299-0175>

¹(Universidade Federal do Paraná, Setor de Ciências Humanas, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Curitiba – PR, Brasil).

²(Universidade Federal do Ceará, Instituto de Cultura e Arte, Programa de Pós-Graduação em Comunicação, Fortaleza – CE, Brasil).

Abstract

The article aims to investigate the disputes involving agents from the journalistic and the political fields regarding the dispute over the control of public visibility. We consider as a case study the coverage provided by the *O Povo* newspaper about the Facebook page of Cid Gomes, the former governor of Ceará (2007-2014). By using Content Analysis, the empirical section investigates 67 journalistic texts covering Gomes' posts in order to verify (i) the degree of relevance and (ii) the type of content published on the Fanpage that achieved the newspaper's attention. The results show that *O Povo* ignored most of the publications in which Gomes seeks to build a positive image of himself. At the same time, the publication tries to maintain its agenda-building power by associating the Fanpage to informality and controversy.

Keywords: Political Journalism. Social Network Sites. *O Povo*. Cid Gomes. Content Analysis.

Introduction

Several national and international studies in the field of Communication have focused on the marketing, professional and political challenges that digital *media* poses to journalism (GANT, 2007; MORAES, 2011; WOLTON, 2006; PALACIOS; DÍAZ NOCI, 2009; NEVEU, 2010; HAUSER; BERGER, 2015; BRUNS, 2011). One of the more contentious issues these references deal with is the ability of agents from a wide range of social fields to use media devices to reach their intended audience (COLEMAN, 2005). Even though this is not necessarily a new development, it is becoming more common to witness actors from

the political field use their own mechanisms to produce and disseminate content – what Sant’Anna (2009) describes as “sources’ media”.

This professionalization of sources and a greater variety of platforms on which to release content has led Bardoel and Deuze (2001) to identify new media practices. Bruns agrees with this argument when he states that “news users need them [referring to journalists] less and less, as they get their information first-hand from a number of other organizations and sources” (2011, p.137 – Our translation).

It is relevant then to pose the following question in the light of international cases reviewed by authors such as Friend and Singer (2007) and Kovach and Rosenstiel (2001): how does journalism react or adapt to this challenge facing its role as mediator? What are the strategies that news organizations are employing to maintain their role of representing public interest? Apart from these general questions, this article explores the following specific research inquiry: how has the use of social networks by agents in the field of politics been addressed in journalistic coverage?

In order to answer this question, we investigated the news coverage by *O Povo* (a newspaper from the state of Ceará, in the northeast of Brazil) on the Facebook page of Cid Gomes, a member of the Democratic Labor Party (DLP) who was governor of Ceará between 2007 and 2014. The reasoning behind this was to understand the level of coverage the fanpage received between August 2013 (when the fanpage as stake was created) and December 2015, and to investigate how the newspaper considers Gomes’ Facebook as a source for information. Even though Cid Gomes no longer worked for the government in 2015, the newspaper continued to report on his Facebook page activity (mainly because he became Minister of Education during the Dilma Rousseff administration), which is why that year is included in the corpus.

In order to show the importance of this matter, we take into account the opinions of two journalists who worked for *O Povo* about Cid’s *online* communication strategies. The newspaper’s *ombudsman* in 2013, Erivaldo Carvalho, wrote a column in which he discussed the role of the press in the digital age. The piece focused on Cid’s announcement (via Facebook) that he was going to promote a reform of the state administration office. The column was called “Facebook, the agenda-setter”¹ and questions the importance of journalism at a time when sources are speaking more directly to the public. Carvalho’s point of view contrasts that of another professional from *O Povo*, columnist Érico Firmo, who in 2014² argued that journalism is still one of the most relevant arenas for social mediation. Notwithstanding, what remains to be examined is not the personal views of journalists, but the newspaper’s coverage of the Facebook pages managed by political representatives. Considering this issue allow us to unveil the tensions between Cid Gomes and the newspaper in respect to the control of public visibility and the power to mediate the information.

1 Available at: <https://is.gd/P3Yr2m>. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

2 Available at: <https://is.gd/gDnDqU>. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

The empirical *corpus* of the study is comprised of 67 texts published in the printed version of *O Povo* between 2013 and 2015. All texts concern Gomes' posts. We employ Content Analysis (CA) to examine two aspects: 1) how important Cid's posts are to the newspaper building its reports (i.e., verify to what extent the fanpage was brought as the main topic of news and comments, as well as what kind of visibility this material received); and 2) the type of fanpage content that was echoed in the newspaper.

To support this methodology, we decided to conduct interviews with two former editors who worked to *O Povo* (FIRMO, 2016; CORIOLANO, 2016). We also interviewed two of Cid's former press secretaries (CABRAL, 2016; SALES, 2016). The decision to propose these interviews was to clear up additional issues regarding the dynamics of the newspaper coverage and the manager's rationale for using Facebook. Having access to inside information provides for a more complete analysis and a more complete discussion of the data discovered from CA.

The first part of this article reflects on the journalistic credibility in the age of digital communication. Moreover, it acknowledges some of the changes which have occurred to production routines and the relationship media companies and professionals have with sources. The second contextualizes the research by providing information on Cid's fanpage and the history of *O Povo* newspaper. The third section presents the methodological strategies and the data on the coverage at stake. Lastly, the article ponders on the study findings considering the literature.

Journalism, Politics and the dispute for controlling visibility on social networks

Investigating the discourse of self-legitimization in journalism (SCHUDSON, 2008; SOARES, 2009) means observing how this field aspires to evince its importance to the public (ROTHBERG, 2011; MARQUES; MIOLA; SIEBRA, 2014). In this respect, "trust" is one of the foundations that newspapers can use for assuring the importance of journalism before their audience (ALSINA, 1996; CORNU, 1999; KARAM; CHIRSTOFOLETTI, 2011; SODRÉ, 2009; BENETTI, 2008; SODRÉ; PAIVA, 2011; MEYER, 2007).

However, while strengthening its image of credibility, journalism – especially printed media – also faces the challenge of the increasing speed at which facts are distributed and updated in digital communication (PALÁCIOS, 2010). For example, the decentralization of content production and the ability of non-journalism counterparts to disseminate information to large audiences affects the capacity of the printed press to offer exclusive news. The rise of online journalism has resulted in changes to news "scoops" (BRUNS, 2011; ADGHIRNI, 2004). This is why researchers need to pay attention to the challenges that decentralization of content production imposes (NEVEU, 2010).

Agents from the political field are using social network pages and profiles as alternative methods to reach citizens and trying to reduce their dependence on traditional forms of

journalistic coverage so as to gain more visibility (THOMPSON, 2005; VAN AELST; SHEAFER.; STANYER, 2012). Digital media is one of the channels which can interact more directly with audiences, acting as an alternative form for divulging information on campaigns, programs and achievements.

This has resulted in disputes between journalistic institutions and agents from the political field over the control of the sphere of public visibility (GOMES, 2004).

Acting as gatekeepers, journalists are in control of visibility, the extent to which the sources should get the attention that they are seeking, and the tone of the news stories. Conversely, the news sources are in control of information, but also, if they are powerful, have the power to grant legitimacy to the news stories (STRÖMBÄCK; NORD, 2006, p.148 – Our translation).

Despite the quarrels between journalists and sources, one can affirm that newspapers still assume a gatewatching role as they monitor the profiles and pages of political representatives (CANAVILHAS, 2010). This opens up a space for a kind of narrative some authors refer to as “adversarial” (FALLOWS, 1997; MOTTA, 2005; CLAYMAN, 2002; ERIKSSON; ÖSTMAN, 2013).

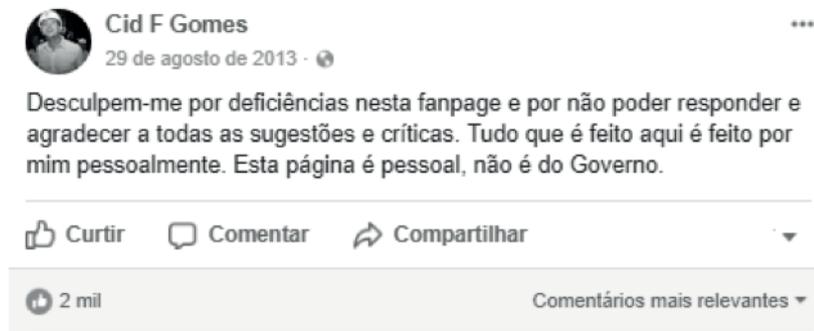
But not everything is a competition or a dispute: digital communication networks have also favored the access of journalism professionals to agents from the political field. In this respect, the relationship between journalistic coverage and the forms for using social networks becomes an interesting object of study as it not only provides an understanding of how representative agents express themselves in order to reach the public directly, but also an opportunity to investigate to what extent journalistic activity tries to maintain its discourse of legitimate mediator of the public opinion.

Understanding the object of study

Cid Gomes, former governor of Ceará and a member of the DLP, created a Facebook page on August 26, 2013: “I am creating a *fanpage* today. Welcome!!! This is one more space for active citizenship”³. Since then, he has used his page to offer his own opinions on polemic events, criticize opponents or respond to criticisms⁴. As of January 9, 2019, his fanpage has a total of 127 thousand followers. According to himself and two of his advisors interviewed for this study, Gomes personally managed his page (CABRAL, 2016; SALES, 2016).

3 Available at: <http://fb.me/3f2M81i7p>. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

4 Available at: www.facebook.com/Cid-F-Gomes-658216240856974/?fref=ts. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

Figure 1 – Cid Gomes’ Facebook post⁵

Source: Cid Gomes’s Fanpage. Available at: fb.me/2zugk3kT8. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

Marco Cabral, advisor to the former governor of Ceará at the time the sample examined in this study was published online, hold that the relationship with the press was one of the elements establishing how Cid Gomes used his Facebook.

Cid believed that his posts had an impact across all media vehicles. We thought that was great. Instead of us having to produce content and write a whole lot of meanderings, he would write on his Facebook and was able to reach the media. [...] We started to get in contact with the press all over Brazil. Gomes became more autonomous. And he got that because he started to enjoy doing it (CABRAL, 2016 – Our translation).

Since the objective of this article is to investigate how journalistic coverage addresses political leaders and their use of Facebook, we would like to present a brief trajectory of the newspaper *O Povo*. This is the oldest printed newspaper in Ceará. January 2019 marks its ninety-first year of publishing.

According to the “Direction of Reader Market”, of the *O Povo* Communication Group, the newspaper sold an average of about 13,957 copies in October 2017 (retail sales and subscriptions combined)⁶. The newspaper has a Charter of Principles⁷ (established in 1989) and a Code of Journalistic Ethics⁸ which outline its editorial policy.

5 “Sorry for the shortcomings in this fanpage and for not being able to respond and thank all the suggestions and criticisms. Everything that is done here is done by me personally. This page is personal, not of the Government” (Our translation).

6 Data sent via email by the Director of Reader Market at *O Povo*, Victor Chidid. According to “News Atlas”, Fortaleza registered 0.87 news vehicle consumption (newspapers and sites) per 100 thousand inhabitants. Available at: www.atlas.jor.br. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

7 Available at: <http://bit.ly/2imnNKe>. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

8 Available at: <http://bit.ly/2jTJoKd>. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

O Povo is one of the two major newspapers in Ceará, alongside *Diário do Nordeste*. Contrary to its main competitor (which belongs to a corporate group that does business with many economic sectors), all the companies belonging to the *O Povo* Group operate in the field of communication – a condition that sometimes bestows it with the *status* of having greater journalistic autonomy. Political news is one of the newspaper's strong points and is also the focus of many Cid Gomes' Facebook post. On various occasions, the former governor used links from *O Povo* texts to comment on or criticize his opponents. In terms of the *Diário do Nordeste*, no nominal mention of Cid was found during the period of investigation for this paper. In an interview for this study, two former editors from *O Povo* stated that the newspaper's relationship with Cid Gomes during his term was both a confrontational and harmonious one (FIRMO, 2016; CORIOLANO, 2016).

A study conducted between August 2013 and December 2015 on the newspaper's virtual archives and physical datasets identified a total of 67 texts addressing Cid's posts. These texts are either news-related or opinionated; they report on, reproduce or analyze statements made by the former governor on his fanpage. The pieces encompassing the sample were collected from virtual and physical archives using the search terms “Cid Gomes”, “Facebook” and “fanpage”.

Empirical Analysis

Methodological Strategies

67 texts published in the newspaper were examined to investigate how Cid's Facebook page was covered in *O Povo*. Content Analysis was an important contribution to this process (CAREGNATO; MUTTI, 2006). Bardin (1977, p.38 – Our translation) defines this approach as “a set of techniques for analyzing communications which is systematic and objective in its description of messages”.

In the light of CA suppositions, category analyses are performed “by dissecting the text into pieces and categories according to analogical regroupings” (CAREGNATO; MUTTI, 2006, p. 683 – Our translation). In this way, the analytical elements are built as the topics emerge in the texts (SILVA; FOSSÁ, 2015). Two aspects stood out from the Content Analysis: (i) how important the posts were to the coverage, whether in building agendas (for example, if they were the main object considered in the piece) or in the structural hierarchy of the pages (if they appeared as headlines or secondary materials); and (ii) the type of content Cid published which the newspaper then reproduced.

In the first dimension, all the 67 texts from *O Povo* were examined based on the following questions: (i) what is the central issue of the news or comment? (ii) is the narrative or central analysis directly related to a statement made by Cid on Facebook? (iii) does the

governor's post induce the main story agenda or is it used only as a background for describing other facts?

These questions helped us to identify similarities and differences among the texts, which in turn helped to build categories to demonstrate the level of importance each post had regarding the pieces.

As for the second dimension of the analysis (fanpage content echoed by the newspaper), a typology of Cid Gomes' Facebook posts was drawn up – defined as a “pre-analysis” by Bardin (1977). This procedure allows us to organize the data and propose the indicators for identifying standards of the content published on the fanpage. The categorizations are detailed below.

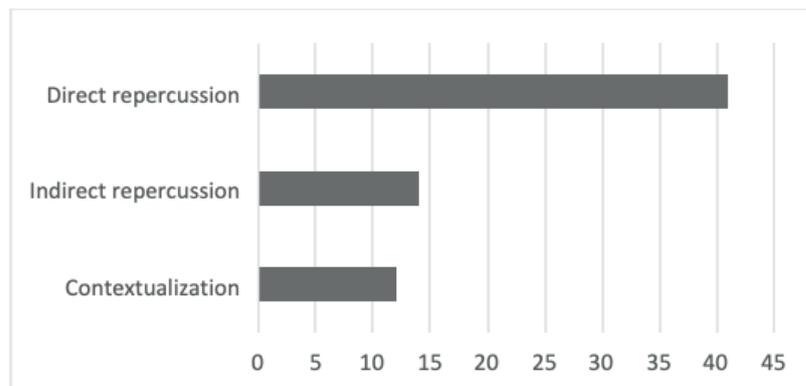
The following topics present data from the newspaper's coverage of Cid Gomes' fanpage. Moreover, they also offer a detailed explanation of the categories we use. Last, the study of the newspaper production routines also includes a reflection on its editorial options.

Dimension 1: How central are Gomes' posts to the coverage?

The corpus is comprised of 67 texts (all of them referencing Cid Gomes' fanpage), 47 of which are news reports and 20 opinion-based (these came explicitly from columns, as there were no other types of opinionated texts – reader letters, editorials, articles – as result of our search). The first point to highlight is the differences in the way Cid's messages are used in the pieces. We observed at least three ways how *O Povo* addressed Cid Gomes' posts: (i) direct repercussion (the post is the main focus of the text); (ii) indirect repercussion (the piece is based around the post, but it is not the central issue under discussion); and (iii) the post has only a contextual role (it is secondary to the central issue).

One of the steps taken to ensure a more objective classification was to identify the part of the text in which Facebook is mentioned: for news items, we check to see whether it is mentioned in the title, lead and sublead, or in the final paragraphs; for opinionated texts, the main theme of the analysis is examined to indicate if the text writes its comment based on the Facebook post or if it uses that post as a secondary reference. Graph 1 shows the distribution of the texts by category.

Graph 1 – Distribution of *O Povo* texts according to how they approached Cid Gomes' posts



Source: The authors.

41 of the 67 texts in the corpus fall in the *direct repercussion* category, dealing directly with the content published by Cid:

Table 1 – *O Povo* texts that directly reverberate Cid Gomes' posts

Date	Title of <i>O Povo</i> Text	Genre
12/30/2013	Water returns to Itaipoca today, promises Cagece	News
08/29/2013	Cars, Facebook and Chico Buarque	Column
08/30/2013	Assembly denies request from Heitor, and Cid cheapens helicopters' scandal	News
08/30/2013	Cid releases tickets for Beyoncé concert on Facebook	News
08/31/2013	The journeys of Cid and the PSB	Column
09/06/2013	Cid announces he will make changes to departments	News
09/07/2013	What the reform tells us about Cid's government	Column
09/07/2013	Cid changes Security, Health, Treasury and 5 other departments	News
09/08/2013	The smoke screen	Column
09/09/2013	Cid announces new secretaries amid speculations	News
09/10/2013	Mambembe method of changing secretaries	Column
09/14/2013	Ciro and Cid Gomes provoke Public Ministry	News
10/08/2013	Cid announces delimitation of vegetation along the banks of the Cocó River	News
10/08/2013	Cable Bridge envisions roundabouts	News
10/29/2013	Cid attacks Eudes for criticizing Cable Bridge: "He doesn't do it, he doesn't let me do it"	News
11/07/2013	Cid claims he has already done more than double what Tasso has	News

Date	Title of <i>O Povo</i> Text	Genre
11/08/2013	After claim, Cid responds to Tasso defenders	News
11/08/2013	Different results from the same logic of rule	Column
11/09/2013	Who has changed Ceará the most?	Column
11/10/2013	Politics is for professionals	Column
11/15/2013	Governor announces criteria for exam	News
12/24/2013	A child on his lap and the most decent thing to do	Column
04/05/2014	A 360° turn. Almost.	Column
04/05/2014	Cid stays and gets involved in pre-election	News
04/08/2014	Prelude to war	Column
04/17/2014	Cid Gomes claims health reasons for leave of absence from government	News
04/17/2014	Vacations, privacy and transparency	Column
06/05/2014	Cinturão Digital guarantees free Wi-Fi in Castelão Arena	News
07/18/2014	Cid responds to election criticisms from Eunício and Luizianne	News
08/08/2014	They are all correct and the community is poor	Column
08/08/2014	Cid Gomes and Tasso go toe-to-toe and aggravate campaign in Ceará	News
08/08/2014	VLT projects to resume in September	News
09/27/2014	The great debate over police cars	Column
01/12/2015	Cid Gomes has third child	News
03/01/2015	Cid Gomes says construction is legal	News
03/03/2015	Kind of a whistle-blower	Column
04/06/2015	Cid Gomes breaks the silence after dismissal	News
07/12/2015	Attack on Eunício. Cid: bribery isn't only in the Chamber	News
07/13/2015	Friends yesterday, enemies today. But and tomorrow?	Opinion
07/14/2015	Cid returns to political arena	Column
08/09/2015	So cute	Column

Source: The authors and *O Povo* newspaper.

We can see that more than half of the texts in the *corpus* (61.2%) use the posts as the main topic in the news or opinion pieces; i.e., the data suggest the importance of the content published by Cid which, in turn, proves that the fanpage is an important source of journalistic material. On other words, the direct repercussion category makes up a good part of the journalistic pieces in the sample.

For example, in the report “Cid releases tickets for Beyoncé concert on Facebook”, his fanpage is mentioned both in the title and in the first paragraph: “In an attempt to get more comments onto his personal Facebook fanpage, governor Cid Gomes announces prize draw for 10 tickets to the Beyoncé concert (...)” (GOMES, 2013 – Our translation).

Another example is the article titled “Cid Gomes says construction is legal”. Once again, his post is the focus of the piece at stake, as indicated by the lead: “Former governor Cid Gomes stands by the Acuario Ceará, a construction project initiated by his administration. He stated on his Facebook page (...) ‘all the acts for contracting the development complied with all legal procedures (...)’” (O POVO, 2015 – Our translation).

A notice published in the newspaper’s “Politics” column under the title “The great debate over police cars” starts with the following excerpt:

The Hilux cars purchased by the Military Police created controversy for Cid Gomes’ government. This week, when speaking about auctioning off the previous vehicles and buying new ones, the governor mentioned [on Facebook] Eunício Oliveira’s report (PMDB) containing the term “Hilux cemetery”. “Modesty and patience... In fact, cars don’t last forever and must be replaced” (FIRMO, 2014 – Our translation).

In short, we can see that what the direct repercussion texts have in common is the fact that they deal directly with Cid’s post. I.e., the political leader’s approach on Facebook is the thread that leads to the narrative or the analysis.

The second category consists of journalistic material that indirectly reverberates the posts (texts that do not emphasize “what Cid said” but instead “the unfolding of what Cid said on Facebook”). In these cases, the post takes a backstage to the report. Moreover, the texts in this classification are almost always published as the so-called “suites”: material that explores the ramifications of a fact which had been previously reported on.

14 out of the 67 reports in the corpus matched these characteristics – all of them were news reports, as presented in Table 2.

Table 2 – *O Povo* texts that indirectly reverberate Cid Gomes’ posts

Date	Title of the Text	Genre
09/06/2013	Nelson Martins says he has no plans to run in 2014	News
09/07/2013	Cid uses reform to change department	News
09/07/2013	Deputies surprised by changes to departments	News
09/07/2013	Bezerra becomes Cid’s right-hand man	News
09/07/2013	Francisco Pinheiro leaves department of Culture and goes back to Legislative Assembly	News
10/09/2013	Mirante becomes target of criticism from Legislative Assembly	News
10/30/2013	Worker’s Party members defend Cid and isolate Eudes over Cable Bridge debate	News
11/08/2013	Comparison between Cid and Tasso leaves Assembly divided	News
11/09/2013	Cid’s challenge “it’s not important at all”, says Tasso	News

Date	Title of the Text	Genre
02/15/2014	Cid labels denouncement of Military Police clumsy	News
04/05/2014	Risk of machine use is high, confirms specialist	News
04/07/2014	Vice president did not influence the decision, says Cid	News
03/03/2015	Opposition reacts to criticisms of Cid Gomes on Facebook	News
07/13/2015	Allies of Eunício say attack on Cid Gomes is nitpicking	News

Source: The authors and *O Povo* newspaper.

One example is the news report “Cid uses reform to change department” which refers to the post announcing the put in action by the then governor:

Supported by unsuspecting electoral claims by those who have no affiliation to the political party, the replacement of Colonel Francisco Bezerra as head of Public Security represents a change in the department’s direction which wears out the government (...). Due to the numbers of violence, the colonel’s replacement has been approved by representative entities of civil and military police, the Public Prosecution, civil society... (FREIRE; LAZARI, 2013 – Our translation).

Note that the content from Cid’s post mentioned in the piece above (aired on August 6th, 2013⁹) is a fundamental element to start the story, but it is not the main topic. In other words, the text does not exactly address “what Cid said” online but does concentrate on “the assessment of what Cid said”; this is representative of the indirect repercussion.

Lastly, there were some instances where the post worked as an element of *contextualization* used in the text. The difference between this category and the previous two relies in the level of importance the post has in the piece. In this case, a publication on Cid’s fanpage is cited in order to strengthen, complement or contextualize on the topic being discussed, and does not directly contribute to the report, nor to its background. Table 3 lists the 12 texts classified in this category.

Table 3 – *O Povo* texts that contextualize content from Cid Gomes’ posts

Date	Title of the Text	Genre
09/04/2013	Cid takes charge of Solidarity in Ceará, even without filiation	News
09/17/2013	Ciro dodges questions and avoids controversy with MPF	News
10/30/2013	Private sector to pay for R\$42 thousand remodeling of Convention Center	News
10/31/2013	Cable Bridge exceeds World Cup costs by more than R\$100 million	Column

9 Available at: fb.me/IdhjWfv7. Accessed on: 9 jan. 2019.

Date	Title of the Text	Genre
11/04/2013	Two hours of rainfall causes flooding and damages	News
04/28/2014	Cid states he is under no obligation to divulge vacation destination while on leave	News
06/19/2014	Why didn't Cinturão Digital work to everyone?	News
09/24/2014	Used police car auction raises R\$2.8 million	News
11/13/2014	São Luiz Cinema to reopen on December 22nd	News
12/16/2014	Cid opens space on agenda for Dilma	News
07/09/2015	Tucans attack	Opinion
10/02/2015	Cunha investigated for Swiss bank accounts	News

Source: The authors and *O Povo* newspaper.

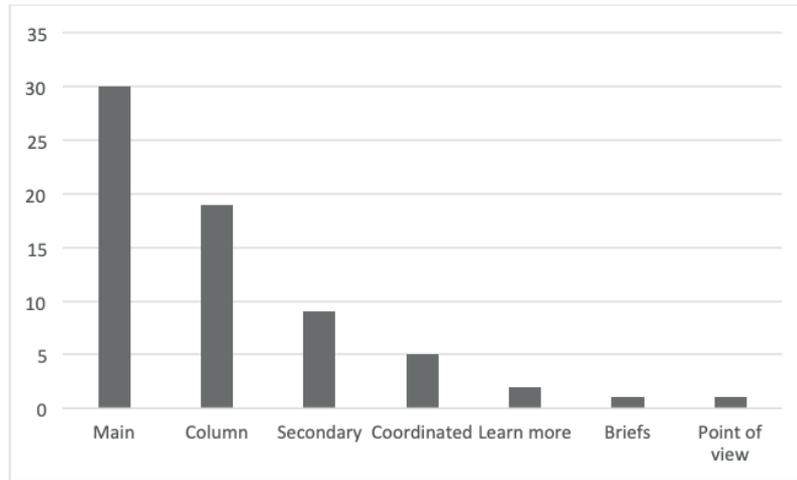
The first paragraph of the report “Cunha investigated for Swiss bank accounts” writes:

On the heels of a criminal investigation opened in Switzerland, and five accusations of involvement in Operation Car Wash, Eduardo Cunha (PMDB-RJ), President of the Chamber of Deputies, is feeling the heat of the allegations made against him. Swiss attorneys have divulged information that he has four secret overseas accounts – what forced Cunha to cancel his trip to Italy (FILGUEIRAS, 2015 – Our translation).

This article reports that US\$5 million had been blocked from the accounts of former federal deputy Eduardo Cunha by federal prosecutors in Switzerland. It is only in the fourth paragraph where the reporter cites Cid's post: ““The mask is coming off the one who represents the unease in our country’ writes former governor Cid Gomes on his Facebook page”.

In short, we can see that most Cid's posts in our sample show that Facebook is very important to writing the reports, either directly relating it in the texts or using it as a backdrop for other developments.

Another fundamental piece of evidence for demonstrating if, and to what extent, *O Povo* privileges Gomes' fanpage as a source in its coverage is that most of the 67 texts published appear in relevant sections of the newspaper's visual programming. Graph 2 illustrates this.

Graph 2 – Distribution of *O Povo* texts addressing Cid Gomes’s posts¹⁰

Source: The authors.

Main reports and columns mentioning Cid’s Facebook are prominent in the coverage. This strengthens the argument that the newspaper used content from the former governor’s posts in its more important reports.

Dimension 2: Analysis of the type of fanpage content echoed by the newspaper

This part of the analysis is about the type of content posted by Cid which gained visibility in *O Povo*. Studying this helps to understand the kind of impact the fanpage had on the newspaper. A comparison is made between the topics that Cid posted the most, and the ones published by the newspaper. This comparison was made to verify if *O Povo* adopted the politician’s agenda or if it was indifferent to the agenda proposed on the fanpage.

In order to discover if these associations make sense, we present more details about the fanpage at stake. Cid Gomes published 217 posts on Facebook between August 2013 and December 2015. Analyzing the posts based on CA guidelines (mentioned earlier) showed there are “standards” or “categories” useful for examining the content. These were taken as the basis to write a codebook to assess the journalistic material afterwards. There are 7 types of content described in the codebook: 1) promoting management plans; 2) political party manifestations; 3) responses to public criticisms; 4) personal matters; 5) phatic messages (for sharing meaning or establishing a social atmosphere with the public, as in “good night” or

¹⁰ The terms presented in Graph 2 are typical of journalism jargon in Brazil. The “Main” (Principal), as the name says, are the most important news in the page, which may or may not be followed by the so-called “Coordinated” (Coordenadas), which are texts whose theme is related to that of the main text. The “Secondary” (Secundárias) are pieces of less weight on the page, while “Briefs” (Breves), “Learn more” (Saiba mais) are hierarchically less prominent in *O Povo* newspaper pages. Last, “Column” (Coluna) and “Point of view” (Ponto de vista) are opinionated texts.

“Merry Christmas”); 6) fanpage promotion; 7) content with no specific classification. This typology allowed for a systematic reading of the posts, identifying keywords, expressions and patterns on the fanpage so as to increase the objectivity of the classification process. This categorization was elaborated to make it possible to compare what Cid published with what *O Povo* echoed.

Each publication was classified into a single category according to the prevailing content of the message. In addition, the type of content published by the former governor on Facebook was presented in a clear way, which made it easier to place the posts into categories. In order to illustrate the categorization process, we may highlight a few examples: terms like “visit”, “construction”, and “I will do it” are associated with “promoting management plans”; in the category “Political party manifestations”, we stress the very presence of words like “vote”, “election”, “electoral study”, among others.

Table 4 presents the total posts per category:

Table 4 – Categorization of Cid Gomes’ posts on Facebook

Type of post on Cid Gomes’s Facebook	2013	2014	2015	Total
Promoting management plans	73	68	3	144
Political party manifestations	1	12	9	22
Responses to public criticisms	7	7	1	15
Phatic Messages	7	4	4	15
Personal Matters	1	1	6	8
Fanpage Promotion	8	0	1	9
No classification	1	3	0	4

Source: The authors.

Analyzing the content of the journalistic coverage allows us to verify whether there is any relation between the content topic published by Cid and the content topic on the pages of *O Povo*.

Out of the 67 texts in the corpus, 28 (41.8%) relate to the posts “responses to public criticisms”; another 26 (38.8%) pieces make reference to the posts “promoting management plans”. Seven texts (10.4%) address posts on “political party manifestations”, while three texts (4.5%) are tied to publications on “personal matters”. Lastly, there are two journalistic texts on “phatic messages” and one on “fanpage promotion”. Table 5 shows the distribution of texts according to the categories.

Table 5 – Distribution of *O Povo* texts per category on Cid’s Facebook

Type of post on Cid’s Facebook	Number of <i>O Povo</i> journalistic texts published according to the content covered
Responses to public criticisms	28
Promoting management plans	26
Political party manifestations	7
Personal Matters	3
Phatic Messages	2
Fanpage Promotion	1
No classification	0

Source: The authors and *O Povo* newspaper.

When looked at individually, the data reveals something interesting about the coverage in *O Povo*: in absolute numbers, the newspaper prefers to echo those posts where Cid responded to, refuted or elaborated on criticisms from opponents and other Facebook users (the “responses to public criticisms” category), and where Cid divulged construction works (the “promoting management plans” category).

However, it is necessary to point out that although the “promoting management plans” is the most recurrent category, the newspaper did not cover this content with the same type of enthusiasm. The category was important in terms of building journalistic reports, but it did not follow the rhythm and intensity of Cid’s posts on this particular topic: Cid published 144 posts promoting his government plans (66% of all posts), while *O Povo* only published 26 pieces on the same topic (38.8% of all journalistic texts).

Conversely, we can see what happens with the category “responses to public criticisms” – posts where Cid reacts to the public by refuting, elaborating on, or responding to criticisms on Facebook: he published 15 messages with this type of content (6.9% of all posts). However, this topic was much more recurrent in *O Povo* as it published 28 texts on that topic (41.9% of all journalistic texts). The posts which were polemic, conflictual or controversial tended to attract more coverage from the newspaper examined in this study.

Looking at the proportion of what was published by Cid on Facebook and what was echoed in *O Povo* becomes fundamental towards assessing how the newspaper used Gomes’ fanpage as a source of information or even a source for agendas. The data show that, even though “promoting management plans” is the most prevalent category regarding Gomes’ Facebook posts, the journalistic impact of this category did not reflect (proportionately speaking) the politician’s investment in this type of content – what implies a struggle for the control of public visibility.

Table 6 compares the posts and their impact in the newspaper.

Table 6 – Relationship between the number of Cid posts and the number of texts in *O Povo*

Type of Content	Cid's Posts	<i>O Povo</i> texts
Responses to public criticisms	15	28
Promoting management plans	144	26
Political party manifestations	22	7
Personal Matters	8	3
Phatic Messages	15	2
Fanpage Promotion	6	1
No classification	4	0

Source: The authors and *O Povo* newspaper.

According to the table above, the categories with less journalistic reverberation are “personal matters” (where Cid writes about his family or his daily routine); “phatic messages” such as “have a nice holiday”; and “fanpage promotion”.

Concluding remarks

The objective of this article was to examine how journalistic coverage addresses Facebook use by political agents, focusing on the newspaper *O Povo* and the fanpage of Cid Gomes. Our investigation helped to understand certain aspects of the dispute between the field of journalism and the field of politics over the control of visibility.

The empirical analysis evinced that Cid is often presented as a polemic figure: the newspaper places an emphasis on controversial content posted on his fanpage; or on the struggles and divergences he has with other political agents. This sheds light on the presence of conflicts (MOTTA, 2005) in journalistic narratives.

The newspaper's position harkens back to the debate on journalism's role of “watch dog”, something partially illustrated by the fact that *O Povo* practically ignores the large number of Cid Gomes's posts simply favoring his own activities. In other words, his attempt to guide the press through the fanpage – something one of Cid's former advisors admitted to in an interview (CABRAL, 2016) – was only partly successful since the journalistic coverage was more interested in the controversial posts.

This leads us to hold that the newspaper did not necessarily see agents from the political field who publish on Facebook as competitors for the public's attention or for mediating information. Instead, *o Povo* saw Cid Gomes as a reference to help write their stories – which also allows the newspaper to strengthen its credibility before the audience by questioning and contextualizing statements made by political agents.

In this respect, we believe the following declaration made by a former editor from *O Povo*, Érico Firmo, to be important: “His communication on social networks was unfiltered. This is good for whoever [reporters] is covering politics. (...). There was no protocol involved. In this way, his communication was more direct, more genuine, yet still strategically planned out”. (FIRMO, 2016).

In short, the data help confirm that this particular newspaper tried to maintain its agenda-setting power by not conforming to the approach Cid employed on Facebook. It did so because if it tried to simply reproduce the content on Cid’s fanpage, *O Povo* could end up weakening its own position as a newspaper – after all, the public might see more upside to reading Cid’s actual posts, and not reproductions of them. Therefore, we can say that there is evidence that a negotiating process exists in terms of agendas and content production – what strengthens the idea that *O Povo* exercises its role of gatewatcher (BARDOEL; DEUZE, 2001; BRUNS, 2011) when it covers content which the newspaper itself did not publish.

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Francisco Paulo Jamil Marques

Ph.D. in Communication Studies, Federal University of Bahia (2008). Associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the Federal University of Paraná, Brazil. He works as a CNPq (Brazilian National Scientific Council) research fellow and coordinates the Research Group on Media, Politics, and Technology (PONTE/UFPR). His interests focus on Political Communication, Journalism, Public Opinion, and Digital Democracy. E-mail: marquesjamil@gmail.com.

Hébely Rebouças

M.Sc. in Communication Studies (Federal University of Ceará, 2016). Currently, she works as a journalist at the Coordination of Social Communication and Institutional Marketing of the Federal University of Ceará. Among her main research topics are: Political Journalism, Social Networks and Political Communication. E-mail: hebely@gmail.com.

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