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The person and the exercise of full citizenship: journalistic narratives and the representation of disability in Folha de S. Paulo

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Abstract

This paper is the result of an analysis of narrative constructs about disability in the digital version of the Folha de S. Paulo newspaper, specifically in the sections Science, Financial Markets, and Health, based on 2021 and 2023 editions, from synchronic and diachronic perspectives. Based on a theoretical-methodological framework anchored in Narratology, the Social Model of Disability, and Biopsychosocial Assessment, we argue that by emphasizing notions such as disability associated with welfare, the newspaper reinforces a historical update of the neoliberal model, thereby marginalizing social groups. Finally, it is highlighted how narratives produced by a mass media outlet seek to create a consensus that impacts social inclusion and the guarantee of the full exercise of citizenship.

Keywords

Communication; Health; Narratology; Disability; Biopsychosocial.

Introduction

The late 1970s, and especially the 1980s,¹ the time of Brazil's re-democratization process, was a period profoundly shaped by the actions of social movements, whose developments led to various identity-based activisms aimed at the emancipation of historically marginalized and oppressed groups. Debates on disability gained strength and saw the adoption of the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health (ICF),² created in 2001 by the World Health Organization (WHO). The ICF introduced the biopsychosocial assessment model of disability. This was a supposed improvement on the social model of the 1970s, which came to understand disability as a characteristic of people with long-term impairments that, in interaction with barriers and contextual factors, may limit their social participation (Brazil, 2023a).

In addition to the ICF, the importance of this approach can be seen in the 2006 UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which was amended in 2009 in the Brazilian Federal Constitution of 1988, and the Brazilian Inclusion Law (LBI) or Statute of Persons with Disabilities (Law n. 13.146/2015). The former, in article 1, explicitly addresses long-term impairments, whether physical, mental, intellectual, or sensory, which, in interaction with barriers, are capable of obstructing full social participation, under equal conditions (Brasil, 2009). The latter, in its article 2, paragraph 1, mentions that the assessment of disability "will be biopsychosocial, carried out by a multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary team" (Brasil, 2015, n/p), considering impairments in bodily functions and structures; the socio-environmental, psychological, and personal factors; the limitation in the performance of activities and the restriction in social participation.

However, from a diachronic perspective, historically, the concept of disability emerged around the 1960s. This development came after World War II and was based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948). The concept is rooted in the notion of a body with some form of impairment, highlighting its biomedical nature (Bernardes; Araújo, 2012). Although this social construction has undergone revisions, such as those in studies that began circulating in the late 1970s, which consider disability as more than just an abnormal or non-standard body, it has not been able to break away from a segregating environment, hostile to diversity and closely linked to capitalist ideals.

We understand disability as being in permanent construction and start from the assumption that different conceptual perspectives coexist in an intense struggle for designation (Sasaki, 2021), without any one of them prevailing over the others. Thus, we hypothesize that the presence of the modern capitalist paradigm, operating with other rationalities and supported by profit-driven means of production, which includes the mass media, promotes the strengthening of ableism, the invisibility and exclusion of those who do not conform to the productivity-oriented profile, centered on normative embodiment. Therefore, the importance of analyzing the proposed journalistic articles to see if and how the press privileges any of the conceptual models of disability, which, at first glance, seems to us to be materialized in a reinforcement of the biomedical model, which presents its content with an eminently market-oriented bias.

Even though journalistic credibility is currently undergoing a moment of inflection (Oliveira, 2020; Albuquerque, 2020), due to the central role that mass media outlets occupy in our society, coupled with a narrative structure that hides nothing, observing the information that is circulated by one of Brazil's main newspapers, e.g. *Folha de S. Paulo* (FSP), contributes to an understanding of how perceptions about

1 The UN declared 1981 as the International Year of People with Disabilities (IYDP), at which time a plan of action was put in place at international, regional and national levels, with an emphasis on equalizing opportunities, rehabilitation and disability prevention (Crespo, 2009).

2 The ICF is a set of classifications of health and health-related aspects, which aims to determine degrees of functionality and disability associated with people, in order to monitor the health of the population, alongside the International Classification of Diseases (ICD). Referring to the models of disability (medical and social), it states: "The ICF is based on an integration of these two opposing models. A 'biopsychosocial' approach is used to achieve integration of the various perspectives of functionality. Thus, the ICF attempts to arrive at a synthesis that offers a coherent view of the different dimensions of health from a biological, individual and social perspective" (WHO, 2008, p. 13-15 and 32).

disability are crystallized and converse with the historical past, prompting readers to attribute meanings concerning certain paradigms, for example the biomedical one, which still has a strong relationship with ableism and dependence on welfare and produces deleterious consequences for the exercise of citizenship.

The narrative construction of disability in *Folha de S. Paulo*

The analysis described in these pages is the result of an investigation into disability narratives, based on a set of journalistic information³ published in the *FSP* newspaper,⁴ in its online version,⁵ in September 2023. The texts that were analysed present a degree of repetition in terms of narrative, as we will see below. Methodologically, we chose to use Narratology, starting by identifying what the *FSP* published and circulated in its pages (observing the phenomenon from a synchronic perspective), but relating this journalistic information to some intertexts, without losing its diachronic dimension. Based on Motta (2005), our perspective is to take these textures with a theoretical-methodological approach that identifies narrative not only as what is written, but as a construct that allows us to identify the production of meaning from a critical perspective, seeking to highlight how movements that invite readers are made, interpellating them to adhere to the published information (Borges, 2014, 2022, 2024).

When we investigate through the lens of Narratology, we are seeking to observe, in parallel, how such narrative constructions, biomedical, social, or biopsychosocial, are reiterated in the pages of newspapers, crystallizing concepts, which, although dislocated from the historical moment in which they are proposed, are presented quite naturally. In this sense, within the rigor that the method demands, we aim to present a critical interpretation that goes beyond identifying recurring patterns, valuing the contexts, spaces, and roles that individuals occupy and/or play in our society. In other words, this could lead us to the understanding that the perpetuation of these social hierarchies (either embodied by ideal models or by people who are unable to achieve these models) is part of a process in which these constructs are central elements of the antagonism that drives our society.

Retaining the notion that a narrative cannot be understood merely as a discourse, written or spoken (Motta, 2005), we move towards identifying an action that emerges from the way journalistic texts materialize on the pages of the press (Ricoeur, 1994). In other words, from the way in which an author constructs their statements, consciously or unconsciously (Jameson, 1992), we identify an equivalence between a theory of narrative and a theory of action, in which, during the process of configuration and refiguration, narrator and receiver are responsible for “constructing the narrative, producing linguistic performances driven by reciprocal motivations and intentions, filled with values, ideologies, memories, which drives in both of them a desire to construct meaning” (Borges & Franklin, 2022, p. 10). Thus, more than what is spoken, we focus on the intentionality present in speech and its potential effects.

Objectively, we intend to analyze how the narrative construction of disability, as a communicational structure that shapes behavior, either reinforces or distances itself from the social model, contributing to (or hindering) inclusion, a requirement for the exercise of full citizenship, and the basis for the construction of public policies aimed at people with disabilities. In this sense, Filho & Ferreira (2013) highlight the necessary intertwining of social participation with the State, in the formulation and implementation of

3 From now on, we will refer to texts produced in the form of news or reports as journalistic information or stories, indistinctly, but with the understanding that there are differences between them, with the first one having a more current and factual dimension and the second a more in-depth construction of the themes, in the terms proposed by Lage (1985).

4 According to My Best (2023) and iServiços (2023), *FSP* is one of the five most accessed news websites in Brazil.

5 Although the analysis was carried out on the online version of the *FSP* newspaper, even though it is a restricted source since a subscription is required for full access to the content, we believe it is relevant to evaluate what circulates in a major Brazilian media outlet. According to the newspaper itself: “Grupo Folha is one of the main media conglomerates in the country” (*Folha de S. Paulo*, 2023).

public policies. Menicucci (2011), in turn, reinforces the correlation with health, stating that the adoption of public policies in this area is fundamental in guaranteeing the right to health.

The timing of the analysis is 2023, in September, which is historically a very important month for people with disabilities, marked by several representative dates (September 19 - National Day of Accessible Theater; September 21 - National Day of Struggle for People with Disabilities; September 22 - National Day of Paralympic Athletes; September 23 - International Sign Language Day; September 26 - National Day of the Deaf). This can contribute to enhancing the narratives, giving greater visibility to these people.

The choice of 2023 was not random which means some clarification is needed:⁶ 1) This is the time of the declaration of the end of the Covid-19 international public health emergency (PAHO, 2023), understanding that the media analyzed, and how it was analyzed, would no longer be heavily influenced by concerns over the hardships of the pandemic – which characterized this historical moment; 2) we chose diachronic analysis, going back to the year of 2021, precisely because we were experiencing the health emergency, with an average of close to 5,000 deaths per week,⁷ in September. This could suggest a bias in the reports found, given the concern with prioritizing vaccination for high-risk groups, including people with disabilities; 3) we did not analyze the years 2020 and 2022. The former because it was the year of global understanding and organization in the fight against the disease, and the month of September did not show a curve of deaths significantly different from that of 2021. The latter, because it showed significantly lower rates, with deaths not reaching 1,000 cases per week. So, on the *FSP* website, we searched for the word “disability” between September 1 and 30, 2023, and then between September 1 and 30, 2021. Of the information contained in these periods, it was in the Market, Health, and Science sections that we found the journalistic texts. Once our corpus had been mapped, in an analytical dimension, we applied Narratology to investigate the articles, making them converse synchronically and diachronically with the socially circulating constructs about people with disabilities.

Understanding that mass media play a central role in the present time (Borges, 2014, 2024) and that the scope adopted does not compromise the plausibility of the analysis, it should be noted that we looked at the online version of this periodical, which, despite its national reach, provides a geographically distinct approach to the print version, which predominantly circulates in the state of São Paulo. There may also be some limitations on the impact generated on readers, given the possible barriers imposed on certain population groups due to their inability to access the internet, for various reasons, or even because they do not have a subscription to the media outlet. However, no less relevant is the fact that the information contained in the digital environment promotes what Carlón (2022) calls the expansion of circulation via digitization. In other words, for the author, the possibility of sharing what is published by traditional media has been amplified by the phenomenon of selecting information and sharing it on social media.

Following the search order, pre-established in 2023, we found 28 journalistic texts, 24 in the Financial Market section, three in Health, and one in Science. The concentration in the Financial Market section itself emerges as an important clue to be explored and deserves a closer look in the following section. Out of this total, five were excluded from the analysis because they dealt with conditions not associated with disability, such as the absence of substances in the body (insulin and hormones, for example) or simply because they represented a number that was lower than expected (fewer houses delivered under the *Minha Casa, Minha Vida* program). Exploring the trail left by *FSP*, it is possible to point

⁶ It is important to point out that the journalistic information in the *FSP* in 2023 is not exclusive to this year, nor does it stop there, as the incorporation of 2021 shows. In a more longitudinal approach, it can be seen that the news and reports, taken here in a specific dimension, accompany the way in which this newspaper covers health. The framework explored here has been present at least since 2014, when we began to monitor the way in which the “Health in Brazil” Forums were advertised by this newspaper.

⁷ Data on deaths related to Covid-19 in Brazil were obtained from the Coronavirus Brazil Panel (Brazil, 2023b).

out how much these journalistic constructs restrict the dimension of disability, linking it to normative-welfare issues and emphasizing the dimension of lack, in line with the biomedical paradigm: 14 dealt with topics such as the minimum wage, income tax, payroll loans, social security and the granting of the Continuous Cash Benefit (BPC in portuguese). Furthermore, another three made direct reference to job or traineeship opportunities for people with disabilities; one focused on tax reform; another provided information on the launch of an accessible autonomous vehicle; and the third dealt with the financial market.

In the other three articles, there is no relationship between disability and social inclusion and participation as a guarantee of citizenship. In this sense, it is worth noting that, even though they appear in different editorials, the dimension of citizenship and participation is subsumed, sometimes in welfare, sometimes in the need for fiscal adjustments to balance state accounts. It should be noted that little or nothing emerges from these texts in terms of valuing the dimension of citizenship, which would converse directly with the biopsychosocial paradigm. Rather, they are closely related to a set of transformations, whose economic order operates as a guiding principle, to cut public spending (income tax table, pension reform, review of benefits such as the BPC) at the detriment of building more inclusive public policies. Given this scenario, it is possible to understand how economic rationality opposes, on the one hand, the inclusion of the most diverse social movements in the political agenda and in the construction of more equitable public policies, and, on the other, the valorization of the shrinking of the state and of a (pseudo) meritocracy, which insists on keeping historically excluded social groups on the margins.

Therefore, we perceive a view of disability that is closely linked to welfare, with the central focus being the implementation of public policies almost exclusively linked to issues that concern the labor market. What does this position indicate? Why are Health and Science practically left aside? Questions that suggest answers centered on a productivist ideal, where, in the face of a population that is also aging at a rapid pace, a hitherto relegated and forgotten workforce is sought out, while still being able to make use of social (pseudo)actions, as in the article of September 17, 2023, which may in fact suggest obedience to quota legislation or the granting of tax benefits.⁸

Returning to 2021, using the same search criteria, 15 journalistic texts were found, four in the Market section and 11 in the Health section. None were found in Science, which arouses our interest, given the possibilities that are escaping analysis, such as the technological advances being made by 3D printers, in orthoses and prostheses, for example. Out of the total obtained, two articles did not refer to people with disabilities, but rather to inadequate services; three dealt with conditions not associated with disability, such as the absence of hormones in the body. Another seven referred to Covid-19, addressing disability in relation to vaccination. Once again, some of the most explicit links to the dimension of disability were in the Financial Market section: one dealt with disability restricted to normative and welfare pragmatism, once again mirroring obedience to quota and tax benefit policies; and the other two, which we selected, discussed the paradigm of inclusion through qualification for the job market, as a form of social participation and as an indispensable condition for effective citizenship.

Based on the two units selected, our analysis shows that they do not aim to deepen the historical discussion of disability, much less its conceptual evolution, which is the result of much struggle by social movements (Crespo, 2009). It is in the context of “dispute, where discursive representations and social interests act partly, prioritizing the standardized body, considered normal and productive” (Xavier, 2022, p. 24) that the social model of disability emerges. Our approach, together with the biopsychosocial assessment, is grounded in this. An understanding that favors inclusion, a requirement for exercising full

⁸ Although the issue of aging is not the central subject of our analysis, it is interesting to see how the advances of certain social agendas have been opposed by more conservative positions. Whether through affirmative action policies, granting tax benefits for first jobs or extending people's time in the workplace, these are narratively presented as obstacles and hindrances, for groups that are already socially privileged to achieve what should be theirs by merit.

citizenship, far beyond simply guaranteeing rights, identifying, in the selected articles, narratives about disability based on a representation that thinks about the person and not the body.

Analysis of selected articles

To analyze narratives about disability, we need to take into account aspects related to the fields of Health and Communication, without losing sight of the fact that the representations attributed to it produce meanings and are riddled with power relations capable of determining discourses and shaping identities, contributing to greater or lesser inclusion (Sacramento & Borges, 2021). From this perspective, “we cannot lose sight of the extent to which journalistic constructions provide elements that interfere in the construction of history and memory” (Borges, 2014, p. 89).

In this sense, it is worth emphasizing that mass media are prominent in contemporary times, largely due to the popularization of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and that “the narratives produced by the media, in addition to enjoying a marked capillarity, interfere decisively in the lives of thousands of people” (ibid., p. 85). There is a textual organization that follows certain patterns and interests, a strategy embedded in a symbolism that takes into account ideologies, political and economic contexts (ibidem). As Ramos and Borges (2022, p. 60) point out, “communicative processes and the representations they reinforce call on readers, listeners, viewers, and internet users to assume for themselves this social construct that is put into circulation”, with media having a central voice as it constructs, reaffirms, and re-signifies what should be considered disability. Of course, this does not mean regarding the people with whom these narratives converse as a passive audience. However, part of the strength of these news constructs lies in the way the media express their ideologies in the way the newspaper is structured.

Given the panorama described above, we objectively selected five articles to deepen our analysis: three from September 2023 and two from September 2021, in which we will try to present the links with paradigms that have long been celebrated in our society. It is no coincidence that they were all in the Financial Market section. We believe this suggests a tendency towards interest in the capitalist economy. This position is supported by Stevanim and Murtinho (2021), who discuss the evolutionary process in search of the democratization of communication in our country. To understand how communication is done in Brazil, it is necessary to have

taking into account the hegemony of a private-commercial media model, strongly intertwined with the dominant political interests in the state; media and politics are organically related, often with the addition of other components, such as religion, authoritarianism and clientelism, which results in the deficit of democratic policies aimed at building a more balanced, plural and diverse scenario (Stevanim & Murtinho, 2021, p. 58).

For September 2023, we focused on three articles, published on the 17th, 18th, and 30th, respectively. The first, from September 17, is entitled *The reasons why companies have been forcing a return to face-to-face work* and has the subtitle *Control, greater team productivity, and maintaining the company's identity are among the reasons* (As Razões, 2023), and identifies an approach centered on market-driven concerns. The article discusses some points concerning the trend towards hybrid or remote working in companies, due to adaptations to the Covid-19 pandemic, and the attempt to return to fully face-to-face work, as a priority, stressing the benefits of physical interaction, but which, in fact, speaks volumes about the capital's need to exert control over its subordinates.⁹

⁹ Although the process of the platformization of work is not the central object of our reflections, we cannot ignore the international movement to increase the precariousness of work and its consequences for the working class, guided by the (new) neoliberal rationality. In these terms, we follow the description and criticism contained in what Grohmann (2020) has described as entrepreneurial rationality.

We are particularly interested in the discussion surrounding the issue of inclusion, mentioning flexibility in performing work routines, without examining the consequences of this conditioned inclusion when adopting remote or hybrid forms. In this excerpt, there is a particularly relevant quote from a UK workplace consultant: “Flexibility may not seem like a matter of diversity and inclusion, but it is”. A statement that is supported by data from a survey that evaluated the benefits of hybrid or remote working routines, indicating, for example, an improvement in the quality of life of workers and a significant change for the reality of people with disabilities, since remote working could eliminate certain accessibility barriers, as well as removing the stigma associated with this human condition. This is the key point for us, as it is observed that remote working, as well as being effective, can promote diversity, inclusion, and greater satisfaction for a range of workers, including those with disabilities. However, there is no denying the relative nature of this inclusion, especially if we consider that not all people have access, for example, to the technologies that allow such flexibility. In this sense, in addition to updating the biomedical paradigm, the euphemism contained in research in the United Kingdom, based on survey data, seems not to take into account aspects of living conditions in Brazil, compared to that region.

These benefits are recognized by the narrative presented in the article, which questions the very concept of work and the need for compulsory and physical attendance in corporate spaces. An argumentative construction that, despite being centered on the debate about labor productivity and not featuring any images of people with disabilities among the 30 pictures accompanying the article, reveals a concern for this part of the population, by thinking about reducing barriers and about inclusion, approaching the social model of disability and the exercise of citizenship, striving to guarantee social rights, such as the right to work, but without giving up quality of life to the detriment of productivity. A narrative that is reinforced in the seven comments left by readers,¹⁰ where the issue of disability is not addressed, but some benefits brought by hybrid or remote work are highlighted, and the perception of power centered on capital is reinforced.

The second text selected was published on September 18, 2023, and was entitled *How companies adapt to families with fewer children, IT training startup raises R\$1.5 million and what matters in the market* (Búrigo, 2023). There are no accompanying images, but instead a demographic curve graph. It is a piece of journalistic information included in the FolhaMercado newsletter, basically segmented into three short articles, the second of which refers to people with disabilities. It highlights the work of a Brazilian startup,¹¹ founded in 2019, which managed to raise an investment of R\$1.5 million and whose activity is related to offering training courses in technology, for new professionals or those who are already employed. It should be noted that, in this passage, there is little or no concern for understanding disability in a biopsychosocial context. The very notion of training for the job market hinders a broader understanding of disability, ignoring a series of social determinants that interfere in the whole process.

The point we want to highlight is that the company was trying to train people from minority social groups, such as women, for careers in IT. The article then mentions two other companies, one that promoted a training program aimed at Black people and people with disabilities or neurodivergent people, and the second, in programming language, for Black or Brown women. In this context, although not deliberately, the *FSP* assumes exclusion to be structural, reinforcing a stigmatizing social categorization that associates people with certain characteristics of color, gender and disability while ignoring the fact

10 An important point of reflection can be found in the *FSP* readers' comments. We believe that by highlighting the participation of its readers, the newspaper is employing strategies to allow for dialogue with its audience, while at the same time valuing its place as an authoritative voice. In the past, the selection of Readers' Letters was the medium used by media outlets to reinforce the notion that public opinion was on their side. However, with the transformations permitted by the internet, they reinforce their place as neutral mediators of reality through the comments they select.

11 Generally speaking, startups are young, innovative companies that seek solutions to specific challenges, mostly in the area of technology.

that many of these actions are in dialogue with organized movements aimed at the emancipation and re-signification of historically oppressed social groups. When analyzing the journalistic texts, we draw attention to how these narratives are part of a social antagonism which, although subsumed in the article, reveals how much the advance of identity categories, such as those associated with gender, race and class, make themselves felt, especially through the way in which the information in the *FSP* is hidden.

Analyzing the article, we see a narrative that focuses on the inclusion of minority groups in the job market, which represents a way of promoting social inclusion and a guarantee of the rights that make it possible to exercise citizenship. In isolation, this appears to be a positive point with which we would tend to agree. However, although focused on the social inclusion of minorities and, as such, on bringing the realization of citizenship to population groups that have historically been deprived of their rights, it is located in a newsletter in the Financial Market section. Furthermore, it is preceded by a piece of news about a decrease in birth rate and the consequent aging of the population, thus generating meanings about how the information should be read.

A closer look might allow us to believe that this narrative arrangement does not seem to have been random, after all, with an older population (the first piece of information), there would be a need to look for a workforce for the market, justifying the search in hitherto marginalized population groups (the second piece of information). Why not resort to *noble* actions, qualifying sections of the population that have historically been forgotten by the labor market, such as women, Black people, and people with disabilities? It seems reasonable to think that these actions, in addition to the concern for the inclusion of minorities, which is legitimate and urgent, are motivated by the maintenance of the capitalist logic that recruits population contingents hitherto considered unproductive or even unnecessary, in search of maximizing production, within a framework of transforming capitalism.

The last story selected was from September 30, 2023, with the headline *Beneficiary of Bolsa Família creates support network and serves more than 100 children* and the subtitle *Dyane Ayala, 41, has been receiving benefits for five years; during the pandemic, she set up a project to ward off impending hunger: "One person strengthens another"* (Gercina, 2023). The title refers to the policy of transferring income through social programs and tells the story of a woman living in a community in São Paulo who was a beneficiary of one of these programs. During the pandemic, she started a social project to help local families, especially children with disabilities, and went on to set up an NGO. It should be noted that this construct is presented on the backdrop of a scenario in which fiscal adjustments and financialization have become the state's primary objective. The story, with accompanying images that do not allude to disability, but instead to moments in the central character's daily life, is built on a series of interviews over the course of a year, and reflects on some difficulties faced by the woman, her family, and her neighbors, including solo mothers and people with disabilities. It also contains a commentary that does not deal directly with disability, but highlights the inequality experienced in our country, including by many people with disabilities,¹² where the economy, according to the author of the commentary, is sustained at the expense of the poorest.

In addition to discussing the social action carried out by the interviewee, who has a brother with disability, and how this has impacted on the lives of local residents, we are interested in looking at the narrative produced. There is no specific construct focused on people with disabilities, whether in terms of social policies or the disabled body. However, it is possible to perceive the production of meanings associated with incapacity and vulnerability, reinforcing a model that, despite advances in our legislation, dialogues with a memory built many years ago, under the aegis of the biomedical view. The focus is on a life story that praises the solidarity of a community resident, who decided to guarantee the basic rights of

12 The Continuous National Household Sample Survey (PNADc in Portuguese), released in 2023, presented relevant data that attests to a lower real average income from the main job received, in general, by people with disabilities (IBGE, 2022)

a section of the local population, playing a role that should be that of the public authorities.

At this point, it is important to highlight the concern shown with social inclusion, a fact that comes close to an ideal of guaranteeing rights and minimum citizenship, especially when the report attests to the presence of a higher than expected number of children with disabilities at the events held by the NGO. A finding that reveals the invisibility to which these people are exposed in our society, especially those who already live with difficulties inherent to most communities in Brazil: how do people with physical disabilities get around in a community located in areas that are difficult to access, for example? How can a deaf child protect themselves from possible armed confrontations as they move through the streets of their community? Does the government really know how many people with disabilities live in communities? What are their disabilities? These problematic questions are a reminder that we need to defend inclusion and, above all, equity, because people with disabilities are everywhere, from the city to the countryside, from well-to-do neighborhoods to communities.

In 2021, also in September, we selected two articles for analysis, on the 10th and 28th, also in the Financial Market section, remembering that we were living through the Covid-19 emergency at that time and that there were different people with different ideologies at the head of the federal government. The scenario was, therefore, unlike today's. The first article, from September 10, has the headline "*São Paulo government will pay R\$1,000 to entrepreneurs who formalize*", accompanied by the subtitle "*Welfare Program will prioritize vulnerable groups*" (Oliveira, 2021a), a direct reference to a cash transfer program by the São Paulo state government, aimed at entrepreneurs who would formalize, prioritizing the most vulnerable groups. Taking into account the contradictions that occurred between the former governor of São Paulo, João Doria, and the former president of the Republic, Jair Bolsonaro, and noting the lack of comments, we could ask ourselves: did this text not merit some reaction from readers, or did these go unregistered by the *FSP*? Were its readers against the social programs or the way they were being directed?

Diving deeper, but without losing sight of the force of these narrative constructs, we can see that the government's objective, in the newspaper clipping, was to formalize previously informal entrepreneurs by granting financial aid and a place on a qualification course, as incentives for those who joined the program. The target audience included people with disabilities, women, Black people, and Indigenous people, social strata that were greatly affected by the pandemic. When we look at our not-so-distant past, we can see that the main framing given by the newspaper, deals with two structural axes of the debate on disability: the first, based on welfare and ableism, reinforces the notion that people with disabilities need charity, which is present in some of these programs; the second, which meets and dialogues with the first, largely rooted in neoliberal ideology, reinforces that only people who have some kind of disability need support through social programs. In other words, there is a view of disability that is closely linked to the capitalist system.

Recognizing the difficulties imposed by the pandemic on people with disabilities, the textual narrative reinforces that we were living through a time of crisis, with negative effects on the economy, and that entrepreneurship was seen as a way out, especially in the face of the federal government's inertia. In other words, if a person finds it difficult to become an entrepreneur, even with the offers mentioned in the newspaper, this accentuates the multiple exclusions to which part of the Brazilian population is exposed. At the same time, it also mentions other initiatives and other income transfer programs implemented by the São Paulo government, but it does not fail to reinforce the political nature of these actions, by comparing the local actions of the São Paulo city council, seen as aggregating, with those of the then president of Brazil, which were seen as disaggregating.

The article only mentions people with disabilities when it is talking about the beneficiaries of the financial aid program. However, it should be noted that, although there is a double production of meanings, economic (formalization of work) and political (comparison with the actions of the federal

government), by considering excluded social groups, the spotlight is directed at them, which, at the very least, tends to raise the debate around social inclusion and the guarantee of citizenship. As for the accompanying images, they bear no relation to people with disabilities, which suggests a reinforcement of the exclusion of this public. These elements seem to reinforce the political bias of the article, in which a carousel of 24 images shows the figure of the then-governor, in different places, at the main moments of the pandemic, suggesting, we believe, the reinforcement of a savior figure.

Finally, the last article analyzed, from September 28, 2021, focuses its narrative on the qualification of the workforce, which is seen as scarce in the labor market, specifically in the technology sector. Its headline is *Startups offer courses to address a labor shortage*, and its subtitle is *Initiatives also aim to expand diversity* (Oliveira, 2021b), following the amalgam between datification and financialization, which underpins neoliberal rationality (Grohmann, 2020). Faced with the difficulty of finding qualified labor, some startups have started to offer courses or establish partnerships to train future employees, looking for people in groups with little representation in the area of technology, such as women, Black people, and people with disabilities. It is a narrative that, although separated in time by two years in relation to the second text from 2023 (September 18), is similar to it and is also presented within the framework of the market, with a focus on workforce training. This is a narrative anchored in rules, signs, and cultural and historical baggage, highlighting what it wants to show and erasing what it wants to forget (Borges, 2014). As Ricoeur (1994) teaches us, narration manipulates memory and leads to the crystallization of specific imagery, revealing nuances of human experience on purpose.

The central narrative revolves around market logic when analyzing the scarcity of qualified workforce and the search for training to meet business needs, but it is worth highlighting that while a notion is reinforced that disabled and excluded people are only able to overcome the barriers of inability imposed by the economic order, when they receive assistance, the article also recognizes that initiatives such as the one described can lead to greater diversity. By recounting some experiences related to women and transgender people, it recognizes that diversity has the power to enable companies to understand different realities, a construct that, even though it may be linked to a productivist logic, allows us to think about social and labor inclusion, and how much this is associated with guaranteeing rights and citizenship. There is only one image accompanying the information. The young woman in the foreground appears to be either Brown or Black, but has no visible disabilities. The only comment attached refers to a supposed media action, about trying to crystallize a difficult situation by repeating a certain theme, and then publishing articles about possible solutions. There is no direct dialogue with the disability, but the strategy is similar to reinforcing the production and circulation of certain meanings.

The exercise of citizenship, communication, and disability

To be able to think about the exercise of full citizenship, we first need to emphasize that we understand communication (journalistic narratives), health (disability), and citizenship as interconnected concepts, acting directly on each other. The latter, the basis of the Democratic State of Law, according to Article 1, II, of the 1988 Brazilian Federal Constitution, is one of the conditions for the existence of democracy as a synonym of popular sovereignty. In other words, the realization of full citizenship depends, roughly speaking, on the guarantee of rights, including the right to communication and the right to health.

Communication in our society must be recognized as a human right. It is expressed in our Federal Constitution, in Article 5, and “requires a set of other civil, political and social rights to be guaranteed” (Stevanim & Murtinho, 2021, p. 45). Health, which is included in the chapter on social rights, starting with Article 6 of the Federal Constitution, is also a point of interest for us, as it permeates the lives of all Brazilian citizens, especially those who make up historically excluded social groups, such as people with disabilities, implying immediate acceptance by society of some elements that are part of the Brazilian

social imagination, such as disability linked to possibly fragile health. This is an image that interferes with people's appropriation of journalistic narratives (Borges, 2014, 2022, 2024).

Health, according to the concept established by the WHO in 1946, and problematized at the 8th National Health Conference (*CNS* in Portuguese) by Arouca (1986), should be understood as the composition of physical, social and affective well-being, based on the guarantee of basic rights, such as education, sanitation, housing, the environment and access to information that enables an understanding of the world in which we live and the ability to participate in decision-making processes. All this in a free environment that is not subject to the fear of violence from other people or even the government, because to live without fear is to live with freedom in its broadest sense.

As Stevanim and Murtinho (2021, p. 71-72) say, recalling the period of Brazil's re-democratization and the 8th *CNS* itself, at that time there were already discussions among various social movements to seek a connection between communication and health, understanding that the latter "requires effective actions that link it to the various social determinants, such as living, working and cultural conditions, as well as communication". Araújo and Cardoso (2007) point out that communication is particularly close to health, especially in the field of collective health, and is directly related to the principles of the Unified Health System (doctrinal and organizational). It cannot be disassociated from the notion of rights. It must seek to improve the public health system by guaranteeing public debate and access to information that allows effective social participation in health and social assistance policies.

Communication and Health, therefore, as rights, need to be recognized and guaranteed for all people, including those with disabilities, so that citizenship can be effectively and fully exercised and democracy ensured. This is why it is important to analyze media narratives and the production of meanings about disability. There is a need to explore what is being constructed and put into circulation about disability and about people who live with this reality; otherwise, we will reinforce exclusion, stereotypes, and stigmas, consolidating old paradigms that sometimes return spectrally (Borges, 2022, 2024), in mass communication outlets.

We need to build a democratic country, where there is equity and its citizens, whether disabled or not, are equal in rights. This requires appropriate public policies, capable of resolving differences, bringing unequal people closer together and dialoguing with the National Plan for the Rights of People with Disabilities - New Living without Limits (Decree n. 11.793/2023), which expressly provides for the development of actions and policies to combat ableism, guarantee accessibility and promote rights (Brazil, 2023a).

However, the articles analyzed in this paper represent a narrative construction that is more focused on market interests and welfare and less on the construction of public policies or the exercise of full citizenship, although they have tried to demonstrate, to some extent, a concern with inclusion. In these terms, and even if they do not mention it explicitly, these narratives present a biomedical framework for people with disabilities, obliterating the advances of more comprehensive perspectives. Inclusion is a decisive factor when it comes to thinking about citizenship, but we think it is important to reinforce the welfare narrative in the image presented by the media, which crystallizes a permanently unfavorable position for those who do not fit into a supposedly productive norm. As Moreira (2021) warns, a narrative contaminated by primordial racism, which encompasses aversion to disability, naturalizes practices in the social environment, fabricates consensus, promotes erasure, reduces otherness, and further marginalizes those considered different, as if they needed to be tamed.

Closing remarks

This paper, limited to articles published in the *FSP* in 2021 and 2023, and the production and circulation of the meanings that emerge from them, reminds us of a reinforcement of the economic logic

of the market, from which we talk about people with disabilities linked to notions of inclusion and diversity as guarantors of fundamental and social rights, being associated with the needs of capitalist society and its productivist logic. Therefore, we believe that although it is necessary to debate the social inclusion of people with disabilities and the extent to which this guarantees them the exercise of full citizenship, we cannot disregard the standard adopted by the media narratives that are circulated, which, mostly prioritize a market framework with a welfare bias, regardless of the time of publication, politics or the ideological orientation of governments or businesspeople.

Thus, we understand that disability should not be used as an inferior social distinction, reinforced in journalistic narratives that value the needs of the market to the detriment of the recognition of rights and that contribute to “a process of surveillance and punishment, in which deviations imply failure and judgment” (Ramos & Borges, 2022, p. 65). Following this path, we will not deviate from the understanding brought by the model of disability centered on biopsychosocial assessment, which seeks to identify not only the structures and functions of the body, but also the context of people's lives and the extent to which interaction with one or more barriers can prevent full participation in society.

Finally, we discuss the place that journalistic narratives occupy in the contemporary landscape. The fact that they produce and circulate meanings on a large scale – particularly in the case of *FSP* – by drawing on and updating the Brazilian social imagination, shows us that we are not dealing with just any kind of narrative. By proposing such constructs, in an open dialogue with the worldview of large economic corporations, the adoption of a specific paradigm regarding people with disabilities becomes either a catapult or an obstacle to radical, emancipatory citizenship, to achieve the commitments announced by Sérgio Arouca.

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