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What do text-based newsgames have to do with journalism? An account from Gem Model perspective

O que os newsgames têm a ver com o jornalismo? Uma contribuição sob a perspectiva do Modelo GeM

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Abstract: The article aims to discuss text-based newsgames as a multimodal artifact, having in mind the goal to systematize their expressive processing and rhetorical strategies as possible tropes for journalistic processes and practices. For that, we have adapted some of the main layers/elements of the GeM Model (Genre and Multimodality), proposed by Bateman (2008, 2014), to analyze a Brazilian text-based newsgame called “A Teia”, having in mind its material regularities and semiotic modes. The game portrays the reality of a woman who has to decide what to do upon situations of continuous domestic violence and abuse carried out by her partner. In the design of trajectory of “A Teia”, the player follows a rhetorical cluster made of a non-linear sequence, according to an event/circumstance upon which the player has to decide, and so on. Another goal of the paper is to contribute for the assessment on how procedural rhetoric of digital text-based newsgames touches crucial aspect of journalistic practices, functions and values.

Resumo: O artigo tem como objetivo discutir os newsgames baseados em texto como um artefato multimodal, tendo em vista o objetivo de sistematizar suas estratégias expressivas de processamento e retórica como possíveis tropos para processos e práticas jornalísticas. Para isso, adaptamos algumas das principais camadas/elementos do Modelo GeM (Gênero e Multimodalidade), proposto por Bateman (2008, 2014), para analisar um newsgame baseado em texto brasileiro intitulado “A Teia”, tendo em vista suas regularidades materiais e modos semióticos. O jogo retrata a realidade de uma mulher que precisa decidir o que fazer diante de situações de violência e abuso domésticos contínuos praticados por seu parceiro. No desenho da trajetória de “A Teia”, o jogador segue clusters retóricos construídos a partir de uma sequência não linear, de acordo com um evento ou circunstância sobre a qual o jogador deve decidir, e assim por diante. Outro objetivo do artigo é contribuir para a avaliação de como a retórica procedimental dos newsgames digitais baseados em texto toca o aspecto crucial das práticas, funções e valores jornalísticos.



INTRODUCTION

If, on one side, “the existence of a genre in a culture is considered a relatively stable communicative strategy (as well as psychological and strategic function) both for achieving some relevant social purpose” (BATEMAN, 2014, p. 239), on the other, the programmable properties of digital media, and its modular nature (MANOVICH, 2001), have expanded the possibilities for genres to disappear, hybridize or colonize one another.

In this sense, we discuss text-based newsgames as a potential genre for journalism, having in mind the goal to systematize expressive processing and rhetorical strategies of multimodal artifacts as tropes for journalistic processes and practices. For that, we seek at adapting some of the main layers of the GeM Model (Genre and Multimodality), proposed by Bateman (2008, 2014), in order to systematize rhetorical strategies of a Brazilian text-based newsgame called “A Teia”¹, compared to the material regularities of other prototypes of the same kind, in order to “extend out multistratal view of genre as patterns of patterns in a way that moves more readily across multimodal artifacts” (BATEMAN, 2014, p. 249).

The basic goal of the GeM project is “to investigate the appropriateness of a multimodal view of ‘genre’”, in the sense of extending its traditional as developed in literary studies and linguistics (BATEMAN, DELIN and HENSCHHEL, 2001-2, p. 17), to analyze “relevant dimensions for describing the genre space of multimodal documents” (BATEMAN, DELIN e HENSCHHEL, 2001-2, p. 18). For that, the proposition of the project comprises the following level of analysis:

Content structure[:] the ‘raw’ data out of which documents are constructed; Rhetorical structure[:] the rhetorical relationships between content elements; how the content is ‘argued’; Layout structure [:] the nature, appearance and position of communicative elements on the page; Navigation structure [:] the ways in which the intended mode(s) of consumption of the document is/are supported; and Linguistic structure [:] the structure of the language used to realise the layout elements (BATEMAN, DELIN and HENSCHHEL, 2001-2, p. 19-20).

Following Bateman’s suggestions, it is useful to ask “what semiotic modes² are being mobilized in the service of what kinds of rhetorical strategies” in order to find

¹ <<https://daniela-felix.itch.io/ateia>>. Accessed October, 23rd, 2020.

² On this respect, see the topic “Ontological foundations of semiotic modes” in Bateman 2016, 39-41.

“reoccurrences of configurations of rhetorical strategies” to understand how a “common genre might be involved” (BATEMAN, 2014, p. 252).

“A Teia”³ portrays the reality of a woman who has to decide what to do upon facing situations of continuous domestic violence and abuse carried out by her partner. When deciding on a path, the player is faced with consequences derived from such decisions, and must move forward until reaching one of its three endings, anchored on real-life situations among Brazilian women: either she (the character) is killed, her partner is arrested, or she runs away to live in an asylum.

This text-based newsgame was created with Twine⁴, an open source tool released in 2009 by the developer, game designer and North-american writer Chris Klimas. It allows the creation of different types of interactive and non-linear digital plots, without the need of programming knowledge. Nevertheless, according to the platform tool, it is also possible to construct plots using conditional logics, variables, and languages such as CSS and JavaScript. The use of the tool is free, as is the license of what is produced with it, including for commercial use.

Their structure is based on the use of hypertexts, that is, audio-verbo-visual blocks of text, connected to other blocks of information through nodes or links. In Twine, the creator has the option of using some of the pre-settled but customizable templates which control the appearance and behaviour of stories, either by making them playable, or by adding a new format. Once the plot is ready, the tool generates a file in HTML format that can be hosted on any server.

It has been chosen as a prototype to be analyzed because it had been carefully planned, during one year, as a prototype, mandatory for graduation completion at Universidade Federal de Ouro Preto, in 2017. The choice is also justified in the sense that it was possible to follow and supervise its process of production carried out by the Journalist Daniela Félix in all stages. Besides, this text-based newsgame has been documented in detail by the creator, which makes more adequate to identify “well-defined ways of focusing in on just those aspects of form and structure” (Ibid. 249) that could be definitive of genres.

³ Available at: <<https://daniela-felix.itch.io/ateia>>. Accessed October, 23rd, 2020.

⁴ Available at: <<http://twinery.org/>>. Accessed October, 5th, 2020.

To do this, we need first to discuss more of the functions and contributions of the elements that intersect journalism, narrativity, and mechanics⁵, since they may provide a way to decompose the elements of text-based newsgames, or the grouping of potential elements into a “generically recognisable configurations distinctive for particular genres” (BATEMAN, 2008, p. 108).

It is possible to define, as the first of these elements, the set of technologies based on cognitive operators, capable of ensuring the understanding of narratives produced from complex contents and substance. An example was *Bingo - Bolsonaro at the UN*⁶, a newsgame structured by The Intercept Brazil, in September 2019, to provide the public with a critical look at President Jair Bolsonaro 's speech to the United Nations Assembly in that month.

A second element is in the field of narrative strategies based on interaction, in order to reach audiences made up of increasingly active consumers, always in search of information exchange and content sharing, but also in search of sharing experiences (BOURSCHEID, 2017). This aspect leads us to the third element, which is the development of specific tools, capable of allowing certain communicative compositions coming from multiple forms of language - written, oral and (audio)visual.

Thus, we have elements that broaden the possibilities of narrating the issues, from a perspective that is playful and educational at the same time. It allows, as a result, the simulation of certain experiences - which gives the interlocutor a better understanding of the issues presented there. This is a process therefore not limited to description. Rather, it ensures the reconstruction of emotional experiences (BOGOST, FERRARI and SCHWEIZER, 2010). The individual feels like someone who actually participates in the reported scene, someone who is actually inside the event - not just one who witnesses a fact (WOLF and GODULLA, 2018). This is precisely why social actors in the journalistic universe have been increasingly called upon to reflect on new ways of offering each

⁵ Sicart (2008b) defines mechanics as methods invoked by agents, designed for interaction with the state of the game.

⁶ Available at: <<https://twitter.com/theinterceptbr/status/1176452733668405248>>. Accessed November, 24th, 2019.

person the opportunity to undergo through experiences and to assimilate new ways of perceiving the world and its dilemmas.

Having in mind that “computational processes are an increasingly rules for system behavior” (WARDRIP-FRUIIN, 2009, p. 3), it is useful to understand the “author-crafted processes”, that is, how does the creator of “A Teia” has used processes to represent other processes, when enforcing the rules of the game tree, that is, how the player/user can interact with actors/situations/circumstances set in the plot. We seek also to provide an “account of the rhetorical relationships between the content expressed by elements (...) and their communicative purpose” (BATEMAN 2008, p. 108).

Newsgames as colonized by other genre(s)

According to Bateman, a genre is “a temporarily stabilized, conventionalized and structured bundle of planning results for communication among a community of users” (2014, p. 258). The bundle, or schematic structures, is embedded with “a collection of rhetorical strategies deploying the semiotic modes provided by the medium within which the communication is being enacted”. The author explains that whenever there are reoccurring social purposes, there may be genres identifiable for them. Also, whenever there are artifacts or events that appear to show formal similarities, there may be social purposes held in common. In this sense, the task must be to identify particular kinds of similarities when addressing multimodal artifacts or events.

Genre definitions are also colonized by changes in the medium, providing “stronger support for tracking genuine trajectories of change and a more powerful framework for bringing together generically-related artifacts” (Ibid., 259)

According to Bateman, rhetorical strategies can range “over any of the semiotic modes that can be mobilised in an artefact” (Ibid., 250), and its communicative goals. The strategies are enacted “in order to achieve the genre’s goals while also supporting the genre’s recognition” (Ibid. 258).

Once a genre displays similarities and regularities related to form, style, content, structure and intended audience (BATEMAN, 2014), the rhetorical strategies, from where these

“pattern of patterns” derive and emerge, would be useful to analyze new genres for Journalism.

Although the GeM model has been systematized as a multilayered of descriptive resources to analyze a static document page, we consider that some of the layers are valid for describing text-based newsgames, in the sense that they are colonized by other genres and by journalistic functions and practices, namely: the rhetorical strategies (semiotic modes), the material (canvas) and the game mechanics. We intersect them with some properties of digital media and with what Bogost (2010) calls procedural rhetoric.

As computer softwares, games display distinct media formats, but they also simulate how things work, when constructing models with what people can interact, a capacity Bogost (2010) has given the name procedural rhetoric.

Procedurality refers to a way of creating, explaining, for understanding processes. And processes define the way things work: the methods, techniques, and logics that drive the operation of systems, from mechanical systems like engines to organizational systems like high schools to conceptual systems like religious faith. (...) Procedural Rhetoric, then, is a practice of using processes persuasively. More specifically, procedural rhetoric is the practice of persuading through processes in general and in computational process in particular (Bogost, 2010, p. 2).

In *Persuasive Games* (2007), Bogost had posited operational logics as ‘tropes’ of procedural rhetoric, which, according to Wardrip-Fruin, “seems appropriate, at least for those logics that clearly structure audience experience” (2009, 17). For our analysis, it is also useful the distinction that Juul (2005) establishes between “game tree” and “game play”. Whereas the first refers to the possibilities of actions and its ramifications offered to the player, the second is related to each game session, that is, to the ways in which the player has decided to behave to overcome the challenges.

Text-based newsgames focus on schematic representations of possible worlds, reconstructed as a plot. The situations (re)created in the plot assumes a narrative form based on real-world events and references, as we are going to discuss further. Its mechanics is based on point-and-click actions, through hypertext. When facing particular situation(s) upon which the player (in the position of the character who performs the actions within the game) has to decide what to do, and face the consequences of his/her

choices, which leads to another decision and so on. Although we are not part of the depicted world, we can be in the character's place and predicament.

As a digital prototype, navigation is non-linear, and may require the reader/player to hop backwards and/or forwards, since two distinct situations placed by the plot may lead the player to the same situation from which is consequence. Rather than following a definite linear sequence, the reader can point and click, to reach rhetorical clusters on distinct navigational pages, instead of in a fixed and linear sequence. In this sense, text-based newsgames' semiotic modes share similarities with multilinear narratives of fictional books, also called book-games, in which the reader can make choices by jumping to the corresponding page set by the plot, depending on a "challenge" or situation.

Examples of this genre can be seen in Jean Meschinot's *Litanies de la Vierge*, from 15th century. More recently, in the twentieth century, Raymond Queneau was noted for intensely experimenting with the possibilities of offering his readers multiple paths, through bifurcations of the story plot. Julio Cortázar, in "Rayuela", and Ítalo Calvino, in "Se una notte d'inverno un viaggiatore", also gave form to intertextual paths within a printed device/medium. In the 20th century, publishers have released book-games widespreadly in west cultures and target-publics.

Given that "within the least abstract 'semiotic strata', each semiotic mode is defined by particular combinations of *material properties* which act as traces of the semiotic decisions made at the other levels" (BATEMAN, 2014, p. 251), in the Brazilian text-based newsgame "A Teia", the plot is articulated to its procedurality and vice-versa, once the journalist Daniela Félix has established and enforced rules to generate a representation and behaviour.

The creator of A Teia has, thus, incorporated processes (such as gathering information based on real-world indicators, constructing a plot and procedures) to represent other processes and to construct authoring arguments. The player assumes the role of a woman, who has to decide what to do, upon situations of violence and abuse carried out by her partner. The whole plot was set based on real-life situations and indicators which surround Brazilian women's daily lives. When deciding on a path, the player is faced with consequences derived from such decisions, and must move forward until reaching one of its three endings, as we have previously said.

The term newsgame can name a wide range of products that intersect the field of games and journalism (BOGOST, FERRARI and SCHWEIZER, 2010). Because other attempts to define newsgames have not been successful, perhaps because they have not been systematically anchored on genre literature, a secondary, but not irrelevant, goal of this article, is to contribute for the assessment on how procedural rhetoric of digital text-based newsgames touches crucial aspects of journalistic functions and concerns, in order to find material regularities for journalistic practices and processes.

WHAT DO TEXT-BASED NEWSGAMES HAVE TO DO WITH JOURNALISM?

As the horizon of expectations of text-based newsgames, as a potential genre for journalism, remain open and imprecise, as it is not a wide-spread format for journalistic practices and organizations, yet, it is useful to ask how much of journalism is contained in them. It is also useful to assess not only formal similarities with other genres, but also to understand its potential recognition in society at large (or at least in journalistic purposes) that they may do “some specifically recognizable social ‘work’” (BATEMAN 2014, p. 239).

We begin with information gathering, as one of the core of journalistic practices, from where rhetorical strategies may be conceived. The plot, in turn, is multilinear (assuming distinct formats such as data, verbal, visual, audio or audiovisual), and the player assumes the role of a character who is experiencing situations or events connected to real-world references.

Since journalism practices have also news values at its core, that is, characteristics and attributes pertaining to real-world events that deserve to be known by the public, Silva (2005) proceeds to an extensive literature review, in order to systematize and analyze newsworthy events. Some of them encounters echo also with the functions that journalism can take on democratic societies, combined in different ways.

Journalism can tell people about others in their society and their world so that they can come to appreciate the viewpoints and lives of the other people, especially those less advantaged; (...) the news media can serve as advocates for particular political programs and perspectives and mobilize people to act in support of these programs (SCHUDSON 2008, p. 12).

In this sense, public interest, among other newsworthy criteria, belonging to real-world references, is the “substance” of journalism. In “A Teia”, spatial references (where supposed “facts” happen) and temporal ones (when) are fictitious, that is, they totally differ from traditional journalistic enunciation, where these referents have been precisely demarcated in general. However, its narrative hold strong connections to a kind of polyphony, a synonym for “multiple voices”, in Bakhtin's sense:

Bakhtin reads Dostoevsky’s work as containing many different voices, unmerged into a single perspective, and not subordinated to the voice of the author. Each of these voices has its own perspective, its own validity, and its own narrative weight within the novel. The author does not place his own narrative voice between the character and the reader, but rather, allows characters to shock and subvert. It is thus as if the books were written by multiple characters, not a single author’s standpoint. Instead of a single objective world, held together by the author’s voice, there is a plurality of consciousnesses, each with its own world (ROBINSON, 2011 on-line).

Thus, the meanings emerge out of the mediations among the plot, the sources of information, the game-play, and the audience are, in turn, influenced by the context in which they are placed. That is, the experiences of several women with whom Daniela Félix had contacted previously, served as a “raw material” to construct “A Teia”. Similarly to procedures carried out in the creation of long narratives published in book reports, this text-based newsgame is a result of the mediation among sources of information (victims, police, laws, documents etc.), the plot, procedurality and the audience.

Similarly to other text-based newsgames aforementioned, “A Teia” has involved a fictionalization of narrative, here “taken as synonymous with narrative strategy, indicating forms for composition of possible worlds” (LEAL and JACOME 2011, p. 863)⁷. Possible worlds, in turn, for theory of narrativity, are cultural constructions, structures of data that narrative language allows the reader to reconstruct, based on evidence that the text itself predicts. “A Teia”, in this sense, is capable of projecting elements to the mental construction through a representation of real-life experiences.

⁷ The authors review the contribution of referential theory in Farré (2004), and fictionalization in Pavel (1986), to understand the boundaries that cross reality and fiction, in the context of analyzing the fictional status of TV programs.

As we seek to find material regularities of text-based newsgames, we also adopt a “pragmatic and non-semantic conception of the status of fiction” in Searle, according to whom, being fictional or not would not depend exactly on textual properties, but on the author's intention and his/her position on what he/she reports” (LEAL and JACOME, 2011, p. 864). In this sense, the rhetorical strategies used to create “A Teia” seem to fit the referential theory, according to which

(...) it has the merit of recognizing the representational force of fiction and [is] able to recognize the existence of frontier zones. It shifts the problem around the fictional status of the work pieces, but does not erase it, because it takes the narrative or textual strategies as something that articulates and underlies texts of different natures (LEAL and JACOME, 2011, p. 862).

Even though we recognise that the rhetorical strategies are fundamental to understand the discourse level of narrative organisation, the paper is not focused in depth on these last aspects. However, for journalistic purposes, we consider that it is important to discuss some of the conditionings from which the player has to choose, set by the plot, in order to posit a verisimil depiction of the world portrayed from real-word reference.

What informations would be necessary for an effective design of “A Teia” and text-based newsgames in general, in terms of rhetorical organization and purpose, according to journalistic function? As a fictional product, and at the same time, holding strong connection with journalistic gathering, “A Teia” has been conceived from events and realities that exist in the world of reference, that is, real-life experiences from women who have faced domestic violence.

The world of “A Teia” is based on several testimonies collected from the Web, from conversations with Daniela Félix’s friends, on her personal experience and more specifically, on Pâmela's story, “a young, black (...) woman who dropped out of school and went to live with the man she claimed to be in love with” (FÉLIX, 2018, p. 28). According to Félix, Pamela states to have been violated in several ways over five years. She managed to break free from the relationship after losing a baby during pregnancy due to physical aggression: “Pamela has undergone psychological treatments, and up to present, she holds visible and invisible marks of that relationship” (Ibid., 28).

The depicted world of “A Teia” has been set within a frame which helps the player to understand that the situations and consequences of domestic violence overall, similarly

to the reality of many Brazilian women. “The reader is therefore invited to adopt a particular metadiscursive stance on the depicted world, as implied by the framing relationship” (BALDRY and THIBAUT, 2006, p. 17).

However, and contrary to the way much of the Brazilian yellow press, TV and radio reports, “A Teia” has been built under the frame of neither victimizing the aggressors, nor blaming the victims. The conditions by which the character is set in the plot is feasible in the sense that it reconstructs part of the reality of many Brazilian women. E.g. there are several situations set by the plot in which the player has to decide whether or not to run away from home or to report the aggressions to the police. However, she finds several obstacles as consequences, such as being financially dependent on her partner, not having enough support from her family and friends, having fear to be caught, not having an adequate and safe feedback from Brazilian police, beat again or killed, among others. Félix has encountered situations like those along one year of gathering and researching.

It seems also important that the plot does not posit excessive conditioning in one rhetorical cluster at once, as it can be seen in a North-American newsgame of similar type called “Depression Quest”⁸. From the three options that the player has to choose in one given situation, the newsgame posits three conditionings altogether, which may turn difficult for him/her to find verisimilitude, such as the example as follows: You are “depressed”, “not seeing a therapist” and “not taking medication”. What if one of these two last conditionings set by the plot at the same time were not the case?

Non-fictional references used to build “A Teia”, in turn, include also document and literature review on academic works on history, naturalization and reality of violence against women. Paratextual journalistic cues, such as additional and service informations are also provided, whenever the player reaches any of its three possible endings. They include curation on official data on violence against women who live in Brazil; information on the Law Maria da Penha, enacted in 2006, which provides mechanisms to restrain domestic violence; prevention and protection services; security plan for women living with aggressors; and guidelines of Woman Police Stations. The materials were

⁸ Depression Quest, as the website describes itself, is “an interactive fiction game where you play as someone living with depression”. <<http://www.depressionquest.com/dqfinal.html#>>. Accessed October 10th, 2020.

taken and credited from booklets, such as “FAQ on Domestic Violence”⁹, and “Dossier of Women Police Station”¹⁰, among others.

Whenever the player reaches one of the three endings, he/she encounters a “shocking” audio content, leading the player to a real situation of domestic violence. The hyperlink is a recording provided by the Military Police of Santa Catarina city, which shows a real telephone-dialogue between the police and a desperate woman in search of help, because she had been caught and is being threatened by her husband.

The text-based newsgame “Rainy Day”¹¹ is another prototype of the kind, whose material regularities resembles the ones of “A Teia”, such as information of service. Overall, “Rainy Day” posits an unspecified gender character, who has to decide what to do when facing daily situations of anxiety¹².

Being anxious is a serious matter. This game aims to illustrate how anxiety and other psychological conditions can get into the way of a happy life. If you or someone you know deal with similar issues as the protagonist don't take it lightly and please talk with someone about it. If you need someone to listen to you right now, give 7 cups of tea¹³ a try but please don't hesitate to seek professional help if you think you need it (RAINY DAY, online).

Similar to that, Journalists and programmers from Brazilian magazine Superinteressante have created “Sua vida em tempos de ditadura” (“Your life in times of dictatorship”), to illustrate the dramas a person (no gender specified) was facing during political events that surrounded Brazilian dictatorship (1965-1986)¹⁴. Similarly to the mode of the other aforementioned prototypes, the player reads a situation in which he is involved in the narrative pertaining to the political conflicts at the beginning of Brazilian dictatorship. The difference from other previous prototypes is that, after deciding for a path by clicking

⁹ <<https://www.tjsc.jus.br>>. Accessed September, 8th, 2020.

¹⁰ <<http://azmina.com.br>>. Accessed September, 8th, 2020.

¹¹ <<https://thaisa.itch.io/rainy-day>>. Accessed September, 8th, 2020.

¹² In “Rainy Day” the character can't handle ordinary situations of his/her daily life, such as getting up from the bed, having a shower, going to work, or socializing with other people.

¹³ Hyperlink that triggers a website (“7 cups”), which claims to be “The World's Largest Emotional Support System”, as it provides connection for free “for text chat, online therapy & counseling (...) with trained listeners, online therapists & counselors”. Available at: <https://www.7cups.com/>. Accessed October, 21st, 2020.

¹⁴ Although the website shows a description of the newsgame <<https://super.abril.com.br/blog/superblog/de-volta-a-1964-sua-vida-em-tempos-de-ditadura-por-dentro-do-jogo/>>, unfortunately it is no longer available.

on a hyperlink, the player achieves more information of context on Brazilian political situation, which derived from the decision he/she made.

While playing, the interpersonal meaning metafunction may be accomplished since the reader/player, takes up a particular evaluative, and experiential stance with respect to the depicted world/frame. We believe also that these prototypes may accomplish experiential meaning, whose recipient interprets the phenomena of the world as categories of experience.

EXPRESSIVE PROCESSING

When adapting the GeM model to digital text-based newsgames, we propose to place the layer of rhetorical strategies in relation to what Wardrip-Fruin calls expressive processing, as an interplay (operational logics) among the elements of the model discussed so far: “data, process, surface, interaction” (2009, 13). Writing a procedurality is to use processes to represent other processes, that is, create codes that establish rules, in order to generate some kind of representation. The rules set in “A Teia” are intertwined with its narrative, and with the ways through which it is represented

Operational logics of text-based newsgames have not been incorporated to journalistic practices and constraints, as journalistic genres have historically been circumscribed to material regularities, contexts of production, demanding some implementation of their logics, accordingly to experiences well established through a set of processes. In other words, journalistic gathering has been highly influenced by the horizon of expectations that genre and format assumed by the news reporting.

The operational logics for creating text-based newsgames requires a distinct mindset similar to public interest newsworthy criteria, considering the affordances of different media, software, semiotic modes, and mechanics of the game.

Wardrip-Fruin uses the term “expressive processing” to address “processes express in their design” and histories, that is, “‘operationalized’ models of (...) subjects, expressing a position through their shapes and workings”(Ibid.; 4-5). Further, “processes, when examined, may also express a very different set of priorities or capabilities than one might assume from authorial or scholarly descriptions of the system” (Ibid.; 4-5).

Several processes are employed to generate the plot. The design of trajectories is anchored on situation/circumstances posited, leading to decisions the player has to make. It invites the player to an extension of experimentation, instead of an instructional process. It is an experience with context and meaning.

By making use of their rhetorical ability, games can reconfigure attitudes and thoughts about situations in the world, when simulating processes, rules of behavior, and representing either real or imaginary systems. According to Bogost (2010), persuasive games make use of this potential to argue about the way systems work in the material world, so as to produce agency on the player's cognition beyond the game itself. By being part of the materiality of a multimodal artifact, the software means, thus, something beyond a tool. It conveys "styles of interaction", according to their affordances (GIBSON, 1979), and operates within rhetorical situations (HOLMES, 2016).

In this sense, software studies seeks to give visibility to the relationship between computer programs, their systems and cultural effects (FULLER, 2017). In the case of multimodality studies, this field of research helps us to uncover the materiality, and to dissect the conditions of production for journalism, and the rhetorical strategies/procedures that circumscribe the digital artifacts, as a way to avoid reasoning disconnected to the capabilities of software possibilities and functioning.

Through the expressive processing of "A Teia", the journalist has enacted some navigational procedures in order not to allow the player to return to previous phases. "However, after reaching one of the three endings, the player is offered the option to restart the game. To facilitate a new route, the hyperlinks of the already chosen phases are highlighted in another color and in italic format actions within the software. Overall, there are 52 possibilities of actions and consequences in "A Teia". Some situations in the plot have only one alternative to click, "since women often have no other choice" (FÉLIX 2017, p. 32).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The path which have guided the reasoning carried out here proposes a systematization of aspects anchored in some of the layers of Genre and Multimodality (GeM Model), to analyze text-based newsgames, and more specifically, "A Teia", by contrasting and

comparing some of its semiotic modes and material regularities with other prototypes and products of the kind.

We have come to the conclusion that text-based newsgames are able to attend the horizon of expectations of journalistic standard practices, even though not being widely recognized as a genre for journalism among traditional media organization. However, and following Bateman's (2008, 2014) suggestion on the attempt to decompose some of its semiotic modes or material regularities as tropes, we can expand this reasoning in order to find out some regularities of other prototypes, once journalistic practices and processes have been challenged in many levels, especially considering a historical perspective of news conception and news reporting.

Having "A Teia" as an object of scrutiny, we have attempted to describe and analyze it as a hybrid colonized by other genres and semiotic modes, and as a *modi operandi* for expanding practice among journalists. In addition, it is useful to reflect on what theoretical-methodological gains for research in journalism in the approximation between genres, rhetorical strategies and software studies. Text-based newsgames seem to carry material regularities from long reports, as published in books or magazines. On the top of it, we have seen new proceduralities for playing it, reinforcing some rules whose values posit distinct experiences and representations. Besides, one of the essences of journalistic processes and practices has traditionally been anchored to real-world events and references. Thus, we consider that they have potential to accomplish important journalistic (meta)functions, as we have seen it before.

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