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Framing by proximity as criteria for newsworthiness: the *curve of absences*

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Abstracts: This article starts with the redefinition of the current concept of journalism in the communicative context due to the changes in audiences' attitudes, the roles of the media, and the productive routines of journalists; it reviews the production of information as a process that reveals how events are transformed into news when they constitute a rupture of the social consensus; it also investigates the impact on newspapers from Mexico, Spain, Portugal and Galicia of two events occurred outside the habitual points of informative interest: the signing of peace in Angola and the elections in Mozambique to propose a) that the media prioritize as news-value those events led by "relevant sources" or those occurred within their own geographic area of diffusion, and b) that the prolonged absences in the agenda are determined by what we call the *curve of absences*: mimetic schemes that reflect an oscillating interest at a cyclical rate in which the secondary elements are used to serve as updating referents to initiate a narration that mixes the background with the expectations about evolution (projection).

Keywords: newsmaking; agenda-setting; news-value; framing; routines.

Summary: 1. News value and newsmaking. 2. Case study: implementation of the news-value in the peace processes in Angola and Mozambique. 2.1. Geographic and historical proximity in the agenda setting. 2.2. Context. 2.3. Research Hypothesis. 2.4. Methodology. 3. Results. 3.1. Angola: different levels of peace. 3.2. Mozambique: maintaining the informative tension. 3.3. The curve of absences. 4. Conclusions. 5. Bibliography. 6. Notes.

Translated by Cruz Alberto Martinez Arcos

1. News value and news-making

In order to identify and analyze the influence of the criteria of newsworthiness in the three phases of the process of informative production, we chose to develop a first section that serves as conceptual reference of the thematization process, and to study more concretely what is being the use of newsworthiness in a global context of the transformation of journalism as a consequence of the redefinition of genres, the change of audiences' attitudes, the tendency to promote a communicative flow from the media to its public based on linear or discursive models and more inclined to dialogic formulas.

Journalists transform into news the events that constitute a rupture of the established social consensus and those that mark the reestablishment of the disrupted social order. The evolution of the professional routines requires the incorporation of a remark within this classic definition of news: newsworthy events are also those framed within the predicted social order (even programmed) but that are led by an actor of excellent projection, mainly in the area of political management.

Geographic proximity, the social relevance of the source and the rupture of the social consensus have been configured as the three most common elements of news value/newsworthiness in the acts that belong to the informative affairs diffused by the media. However, the recovery of the broken consensus (which closes the cycle of reconstruction of the altered social order) is news in relation to the geographic proximity to the area of diffusion of the medium or the participation of a significant part of the audience as promoters or protagonists or as affected public, as a matter of fact or potentially. The events become news due to their value as important affairs in relation to the notoriety of their protagonists, because they occur within the range of diffusion of the medium, because they fit within the economic and ideological strategy of the medium's editorial company, and because are framed within the usual thematic of the global informative discourse.

Journalism is undertaking a process of reconfiguration. The tendency to the hybridization of genres, the convergence of media in Internet, the new production routines, the new roles of the audience... The journalist no longer seeks out news but instead the news pursues the media because a new dynamic of informative work planning has been generated. In this new way of newsmaking, centrality has been gained by the proposals of the sources, which have reorganized their strategies to develop actions of relations with the media based on journalistic conventions.

This reconfiguration of journalism is observed in the sources, the channels, the media, the journalists and the audiences. This change is visible in the transformation of the lineal scheme of mass communication (subject – channel - receptor) into a circular system in which the receptor can be emissor of arguments that are personal or re-elaborated based on what was received from the media.

Media companies have oriented their activity towards multimedia products, attracted by the possibility of new business models in new platforms (Internet) or adaptation of traditional media to new receptors (television on mobile phones, for example).

Audiences also move. Internet has democratized the possibility of becoming a transmitter for a transnational audience that has fed the role of receptors as providers of their own products (personal recordings) and products elaborated over what was transmitted by other media. The web, cable TV, digitalization of broadcasting in substitution of analogical signal... are translated into an increasingly major fragmentation of the audience, which is accentuated before the possibility of products and devices that facilitate new forms of consumption (for instance, the *pod-cast*) or participation on what was broadcast (for instance, *twitter*). Audiences' bid is directed towards informative relations that allow them being active players in the process: they request less discourse and more dialogue.

Journalists' routines also vary. Convergence within companies is transferred towards editorial departments, which tend to be restructured openly to make possible the elaboration of products for different platforms. Simultaneously, the tendency towards integrated editing provokes an increase in the demand of professionals capable of fulfilling that production need: multimedia journalists.

The increase in offer from media and organizations, and the constant activity of citizens as providers/producers of information, provoke a state near to informative saturation. Now it is no longer possible to attend all the informative proposals launched everyday in channels and platforms each one of us individuals have access, which reevaluates the need of a mediator figure between informative discourse and its audience. This function, together with the honest attitude of telling and interpreting what happens, are basic premises of the journalistic activity. And the sources have accepted that managing communication must be managing credibility (Tuñez, 2007: 53).

Audience fragmentation in the printed press is identified with actions beyond the influence of Internet and is contained within strategies of proximity that favoured the diversification of headlines in order to offer products in which the target audiences sees reflected the events they live, the events they lead, and the events that affect them directly. In other words, interest lays on the proximity because the agenda setting:

1. is based on a reevaluation of the geographic proximity;
2. new social actors are subjected to a hierarchy of relevance within that territorial field;
3. scenarios of informative events are valued if
 - a) they are within that field and
 - b) they are led by relevant actors within that territory

Thematization is considered a specific modality of the production of information, which is characterised by the in-depth treatment of the subjects and by being exercised from the company through its informative and marketing strategies and from the edition room through journalists' professional routines. Thematization is considered as the fourth function of journalism, after the other three classic functions of inform, form and entertain [1],

and constitutes the process through which the selection of the inclusion in the agenda is made, and through which that selection is transmitted to the audience (Fontcuberta, 1993: 35). Analysed from the communicative system's intern perspective, thematization is an instrument of journalistic information that acts, at intervals, as interpreter, adviser, or register of reality, and constitutes a process helped by the editorial strategies, in the politic line and qualitative content of the media (Breument and Agostini in Baida, 1992: 218).

In a broad sense, to speak of the journalistic agenda is to talk about what is disseminated in the informative times and spaces of the mass media. As Héctor Borrat explains, the agenda is a polyphonic communication from the medium to its audience which has to be understood as the result of "the last, supreme, and unquestionable instance of this production process: one where all the selected newsworthy facts become the subjects of actuality narrated and commented over and grouped in areas and sections; where each subject unfolds in own thematic in a narrative or argumentative text" (in Fontcuberta and Borrat, 2006:56-57).

Thematize is to make events visible to the individuals through the media, and it is simultaneously to emphasize the importance of those events a) through their mere transmission on the media as referents of actuality; and b) through the hierarchy established between the different narrations that comprise the informative discourse. Thematization is made by incorporating the subject to the media's agenda, but the cycle is closed when that subject becomes part of the agenda of the individual citizen and social community of citizens.

This is how it happens when, using Enric Saperas's proposal (1987: 68-73), the theme passes from the media's agenda to the public agenda and the individual agenda. Following Lippmann (1922), the media places images of the reality in our mind and induce stereotypes since the newspaper "is perhaps not very effective in telling people *what to think*, but is amazingly successful in telling its readers *what to think about*" (Cohen, 1963:13). This media influence in the formation of public opinion and in individuals' public preoccupations is referred through the agenda setting, i.e. the result of the process of media selection.

"The global ideas about the media's channelling effect-function of the public perceptions starts to be crowned with superior theoretical solidity by different schools of sociological thought. Recent reviews demonstrate that Niklas Luhmann's structural-functionalism (which some isolate as "thematization theory"), Berger's and Luckmann's theory of "social construction of reality, and other socio-phenomenological variants like Goffmann's ethno-methodology and sociology are in splendid conditions to theoretically corroborating the positive impressions of the '*agenda-setting research*'" (Dader, 1990: 315).

The agenda-setting theory [2] has evolved in five stages: 1) confirmation of the theory; the transference of images from the media to the audience; 2) studies on the conditions that extend or limit the development of the media's agenda; 3) studies that go beyond the transference of images, arriving at the transference of attributes (second level) and extending to other subjects, not limiting themselves the politics; 4) it asks: how the media's agenda is configured (or constructed); and, 5) the consequences of the setting of the agenda (McCombs and Shaw, 1993: 58-67; McCombs, 2006: 228 and Weaver, 1997: 229) [3].

In the agenda setting it is possible to differentiate two levels [4]:

the first refers to the transference of the media's agenda to the citizens' agenda (transference of the object); the second corresponds to the transference of the attributes of the objects (McCombs, 2006:138-140; Lopez-Escobar, Llamas and Rey, 1996: 67-89).

The process is better understood employing the idea of *framing* because, along the lines signaled, among others, by Goffman (1974), Entman (2004) or Tuchman (1983), news are seen and constructed according to the framing of whom constructs it as much as according to the framing of the audience [5].

The theory of framing takes off from the field of communication, from a specifically journalistic perspective (Tuchmann), which has been joined by several variants, like Sampedro's (1997), which put it close the field of the social movements. For Tuchman (1983: 36-37) the elements that determine the

media's framings are their organization and the professional attitudes of the journalists. He points out five elements: 1) the place from where the news is covered; 2) the organization of the sections; 3) who decides what is covered; 4) the moment at which the events happen; and, 5) the standardisations or classifications. Sampedro, on the other hand, studies how social movements create conditions so that their events are embedded in the media's agenda and, from there, to try to influence their vindications in the governmental agenda.

For Tankard (1991: 5) framing is the "central organizing idea for news content"; Gamson (1989: 157) considers it like the central organizing idea that gives sense to the events, and Sádaba explains that frames structure both "the world of the journalist who offers his own discourse, as much as the audience's world, which is exposed to the journalistic message with a previous cultural and cognitive system". As Rodriguez and Mena (2009) rightly synthesize, the process of framing takes place within the sender, the text, the receiver and the culture, just like Entman (1993) has postulated. The theory of Framing has been corroborated by recent analyses such as those of Lyengar (1991), Price, Tewksbury and Powers (1997) and De Vreese (2004), among others.

In the informative production, framing contributes elements to understand and explain the media agenda setting because the various media use the same raw material, or at least very similar for all of them, but they produce very different products. Product variations result from process, strategies and objectives of each newspaper and from its available resources to execute them, including its financial state, market size and distribution, economic strategy and the level of ideological commitment.

All these factors will determine the way to interpret and apply the journalistic conventions on the criteria to be used by the medium to select among all the events known, those that they will transmit to its audience and those that will leave out of publishing. All these factors will also determine the criteria to be used to decide the high, medium, or low importance of the issues selected for publishing.

To affirm that the process is similar but the results are different is an implicit way of recognizing that there is an intervention from the media that can transform the reference from reality, which is transmitted to the audience according to the scales used to select and rank.

Thus it is admitted that the selection needs the previous consensus between the journalists and also, as Gans (1979) points out, of a hierarchic organization able to impose the most important criteria because this is a process that goes beyond the simple independent application of objective criteria to the events that can potentially become news and a negotiated phenomenon. [6]

The informative web is woven with the scenarios that the media select as preferential to locate its reporters and with the production dynamics that stimulates the journalist's own contributions. Logically, the informative web is also woven with the relations established with the providers of news (mainly agencies, and Internet like documentary source and scene of action of the other media) and the activity of the sources organized like agents which promote and disseminate events they consider of informative interest for the media to present. In short, there are three dynamizing information producers (the communication company, the journalists, and the sources), with a strong interrelation of the sources organized around power spheres related to medium through what Fishman (1980) defined as the principle of bureaucratic affinity.

The first stage to establish the media agenda is the collection of information in multidirectional flows: the newspaper takes the initiative in the search of material, receives proposals of issues to incorporate into the agenda and is alert of the contributions of other media. The sum of these actions when, in Borrat's terms (1989), the newspaper seeks and is sought after, determines the reality the media knows and over which it undertakes a process of selection and hierarchical structuring.

In the second phase of production, both the medium and the journalist play the role of gatekeepers [7] because they define the informative flow that will reach the audience and will determine three new types of reality (Tuñez: 1999): the published reality (which is transmitted), the excluded reality (the proposals known by the media but not by the audience because they have lower informative value than those that were actually transmitted) and the silenced reality (the contents that have informative value but are deliberately hidden to favour the media's economic or ideological interests).

To a certain extent, when admitting the veracity of the formulation according to which what it is not told on the media does not exist, gatekeepers are who decide what knowledge of the social reality the social segments they reach will have. Gatekeeping is also, therefore, in the words of Del Moral and Esteve, "a process which exposes the control imposed by journalistic means over definitions of reality when supporting the diffusion of some definitions and when truncating the publishing possibilities of

others” (1993: 165).

That process of control is undertaken putting in practice a set of news values, which include professional and organizational criteria. The term news value refers to the “set of elements through which the informative apparatus controls and manages the amount and type of events from which to select the news” (Wolf, 1985: 222). In the practice, news value act jointly through “relations and combinations that determine, between the different news values, those that ‘recommend’ the selection of an event” (Wolf, 1985: 222).

In each one of the steps to set the agenda journalists work applying the criteria previously assimilated, internalized and assumed through the repetitiveness of certain procedures. In other words, journalists do so through productive routines [8]

norms of behaviour which are assimilated and transmitted by tradition, evolve along changes in professional conventions and are executed without a previous conscious intellectual reasoning (Tuñez, 1999:148).

Each agenda is constructed against the clock, which (except in the constant updates of online media and coverage of special events) clearly marks the closing hour and the space/time assigned. That chronomentality (Schlesinger, 1978) means that journalists cannot stop to review the list of news value and question their application for each event that is known in an editing room. News selection is a decision process quickly undertaken, and that is why the news criteria must be fast and easy to apply, flexible, relatable, comparable, and easily rationalized (Gans, 1979). In short, news values should be able to guarantee the necessary provision of appropriate news with the minimum investment of effort, time and money.

The definition of the journalistic values should not be done by isolating each one of the proposals, but by defining them in an interdisciplinary form because “they suppose criteria of informative validity, economical, macrosociological and psychological” (Van Dijk, 1980:1 80). The number, the weight of each journalistic value and their pertinent combination for each news item can change from one subject to another. Newsworthiness is, then, the result of a negotiated process in which the important criteria vary according to certain factors [9].

Based on Galtung and Ruge, and incorporating diverse contributions of journalism, we enumerate the news vales granted more weight in the selection process: Hierarchic level of the subjects involved; Proximity (geographic, social, psychological, etc.) / impact over the nation; Amount of people involved in the event; Projection and consequences; Novelty; Actuality; Relevance; Frequency; and Conflict.

NEWS VALUE	CONTENT
Hierarchic Level	Social relevance of the source. The presence of the actors with remarkable social projection is greater if they are also the ones that use the most the routine channels to transmit their proposals or inform their activity to the media.
Amount of people involved	In actuality or potentially. They are, in other words, those who are protagonist (e.g. in a manifestation) or those who can be affected (e.g. by a governmental decision).
Projection and consequences	The event’s significant importance in relation to the future evolution of a certain situation. More than the mere event, the interest for the journalist lays in the interpretation that may be given as advance of something that may happen in the future. It can also be understood as the consequences of an event. The more consequences can be predicted about the event, the more possibilities it will have to be included in the journalistic agenda.
Novelty	Novelty is inevitably linked to actuality, i.e. to the frequency of the informative appointments between its medium and its audience. Novelty is considered a news value because the model developed by a discourse must contain information that is not yet present in audiences’ current models, i.e. unknown issues by the audience.
Actuality	In its simplest definition, actuality is the expiration date of news. The frequency of informative appointments between a medium and its audience determines the period of relevance of the concept of actuality

	and, very related to this, novelty.
Relevance	In general, the media prefer to select the information about events it considers relevant to the reader. This information provides models that can be used for the interpretation of another discourse or for the planning and execution of social action and interaction.
Frequency	This is the time needed by the event to acquire form and make sense. The more coincident the frequency of an event with an informative medium, the greater its possibility to be integrated in the agenda (Galtung-Ruge, 1965, 116).
Conflict	This is understood as the difference in points of view, approaches, and criteria about an issue, and not only like an express confrontation. For Borrat (1989: 29), the medium reflects, is intermediary, and participates in the conflicts. In the extra level, is an external observer of conflict among other actors; in the inter level it takes the role of intermediary; in the intra level is a collective actor involved in conflicts formulated by and between some of its components – between all and its parts.
Geographic proximity	Proximity or impact over the nation and the national interest. Proximity can be geographic, social, psychological, and ideological. Geographic distance varies according to the range of diffusion of each medium. The McLurg law (Schlesinger, 1978) establishes a gradual scale of newsworthiness of disasters: In Europe, one European equals 28 Chinese or 2 miners from Wales equal 100 miners from India. And there is Kaiser's (1963) "kilometric dead" rule which gives more possibilities of news appearance to dead people which are closer to the medium's location.

TABLE 1. News value

The ruptures and reconstructions of the social consensus can be analyzed through the weight of news values, which would allow us to see to what degree is identified each of them in the event that is chosen to be broadcast and moved into the reality conveyed by the media. But they can also be studied from journalistic conventions that determine the factors behind the decisions taken in the agenda-setting process based on factors alien to the reported event.

It is the case, for example, of the ideology of bad news, which closely corresponds to the conception of news as a result of an ideology of information. Van Dijk coined the terms deviation and negative to refer to this situation. He notices that even in such cases the need to be in tune with the social norms leads to the need to publish bad news with a happy ending. Much of the journalistic discourse, Van Dijk explains, is about negative events, such as problems, scandals, conflicts, crime, wars or disasters. [10]

This condition is not absolute. While the novelty requires prior knowledge, diversion and negativity require conformity and positivity. The narration of problems, conflicts or disasters also needs happy endings. In other words, in the simulation of potential problems, and the reestablishment of the purposes, norms and values shared by the group or culture. Disruption and reposition of the social consensus are the general referent of the news.

2. Case study: Implementation of news values in the peace processes in Angola and Mozambique

The news-making process appears to work by adjusting the news values to the medium's territorial coverage, as an interaction between the values of proximity and relevance to the audience. Proximity is key in building up daily agendas in competition with the social relevance of the subjects involved. To verify this, we opted for an case study of events responding clearly to all news value referred to in the newsworthiness criteria and analysed the weight of proximity as the determining factor in the inclusion and ranking of the news event or as the determining value of its exclusion from the agenda. We wanted to go beyond a mere study of geographical proximity so we resorted to combined that with historical proximity, in other words: the identification of where the event occurred with a significant part of the audience independently of the distance separating the receiver and the event's scenario.

We chose two themes with a frequency spread in time to try to see if the informative interest was maintained throughout the development of the event or if there were alternations of exclusion and inclusion of informative references over time (which we later termed as the *curve of absences*). One

might think that this is a case of dependent-variable sampling but is clear that to condition the research to the weight of the historic variable against the geographic variable implies that there is no sampling presenting a priori the phenomenon of interest but that the study aims to verify the weight of historical proximity as a reference value in the framing of news interest.

2.1. Geographic and historical proximity in the agenda setting

With the brief description, in the first section, about the web of information production and the vectors that condition it, it is easy to understand how non-traditional sources in the agenda and what we might define as the peripheral information (events that occur outside the diffusion coverage) have more difficulty to get their proposals incorporated into the media's list of known issues and to ensure that the events they schedule and/or lead are known to the audience.

To take for granted the functioning of this production model as clockwork is tantamount to assuming that if the media feeds from similar raw materials the media would publish almost identical content. Not only the cognitive evaluation process (therefore, subjective) serves to explain the differences, but we must look at the adjustments made by the media in the application of news values, and at the establishment of new production routines and at the definition of information strategies conditioned both by the quest for informative rigor and quality of information and by the achievement of favorable economic performance.

These three vectors are mixed together to define what might be considered as a new variety of proximity: the historical proximity, which is understood as the historical relations or links between the inhabitants of medium's diffusion area and the place where the event occurs, regardless of the distance between them.

As previously noted, the news tends to highlight the breakdown of the established social consensus, and the measures needed to strengthen it and reestablish it. Partly because of the asymmetry referenced to address the *ideology of bad news*, the balance between the two favours the rupture of the consensus (newsworthy when it breaks down and while it is broken, especially if it intensifies) and not its reconstruction (meaning that the return to normality is no longer newsworthy). From this consideration, it is clear that the onset of war is news, but its end or the beginning of peace need reinforcements to become news. The economic impact of the conflict zone, the historical links of the war scenario with the audience, the geographical proximity, the participation in the conflict of institutions or organizations that are par of the medium's area of diffusion, the intensity of the problem according to the number of victims or the prolongation in time, the spectacular nature of the actions taken, the participation of referential actors in the informative star system, etc. In these cases the consideration of the reconstruction of the social consensus is not enough and almost all of the ingredients to ensure that peace becomes news are related to the war.

2.2. Context

In a very summarized way and as an essential context:

Angola was ruled by a colonial system until 1961. The nationalists were divided in three rival groups: FNLA (National Front for the Liberation of Angola), MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola, which was supported by the USSR and helped by Cuban troops) and UNITA (National Union for the Total Independence of Angola -allied with South Africa, USA, and other Western potencies). The colonial power did not yield to the proposals of the nationalist forces, and began a long series of guerrilla warfare between Angolan and Portuguese people.

In 1974, Portugal lived the peaceful *Revolución de los claveles* (Carnation Revolution) that marked the end of the military dictatorship and accelerated the process of decolonization. On January 14, 1975 Portugal and the liberation fronts signed an agreement for the independence, proclaimed on November 11 of that year, but Angola embarked on a long internal war. In May 1991 a ceasefire was signed, supervised by the UN. In the elections of September 1992, the MPLA wins an absolute majority with 129 of the 220 seats in the new parliament, while UNITA gets 70. The following year the fight between government troops and UNITA forces intensified, and more than a million refugees left their homes. In 1994 a new UN-backed peace plan [11] fails in the attempt to resolve the conflict.

In April 1997 the Angolan parliament adopted a special statute to impose a unified government and a single army, which produced an apparent end to 19 years of war. However, in October 1997 UN launches an embargo on areas dominated by conservatives of UNITA. In December 1998, UNITA intensified its attacks and soon after the UN observers are forced to leave the country without achieving peace, which translates into a renewed fighting causing displacement of hundreds of thousands of

Angolans and one real humanitarian disaster. On 4 April 2002, the government and UNITA signed, in Luanda, a historic peace agreement that, retaking the Lusaka Protocol, put an end to hostilities and contemplated the convening of elections within a maximum of two years, as well as the integration of members of the guerrilla to the army.

Mozambique went to the election polls on 1 and 2 December 2004, ten years after the first multiparty elections in the country, which had been declared independent in 1975 as a result of changing Portugal's colonial policy after the *Carnation Revolution*. Preliminary results take three weeks to be revealed. Mozambique's National Elections Commission made them public on December 21. Armando Guebuza, the candidate of the ruling party *The Liberation Front of Mozambique*, better known by the acronym FRELIMO, won a majority and replaced the then president Joaquim Chissano of the same party.

Afonso Dhlakama, the candidate of *The Mozambican National Resistance* (RENAMO), the main opposition force, had heated up the days of waiting for the results by claiming on behalf of the united opposition of Mozambique - a total of 20 parties - that there had been a "plot against democracy" and a "massive fraud" in the elections. The EU, through the Bulletin 12-2004 of Common Foreign Affairs and Security Policy stated "the elections were conducted largely in accordance with established international standards, as formulated, particularly in the UN Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the principles and guidelines governing democratic elections in the Southern African Development Community (SADC)".

The research was conducted by reviewing newspapers from the 3 to 9 April 2002 [12], thus covering days before and after the signing of the armistice in Angola (day 4), and from 1 to 22 December 2004 to cover all the process from the vote until the preliminary announcement of results in Mozambique. Data collection was performed through the measuring of variables such as impact on cover, section location, editorial size of the news, presence of graphic and infographic support elements, and hierarchy given to the holder of the information. The analysis card dismissed the measuring in square centimetres or centimetres/column and instead used the standard regimen based on the module as a measurement unit with a model of 50 modules per page (5cm wide by 10 cm high). [13]

2.3. Research Hypothesis

Although it might seem that this is a case of sampling on the dependent variable, this is not about a sampling presenting a priori the phenomenon of interest, but about proving if the dynamics of information production use the historical proximity as framing value of newsworthiness. In the case of Mozambique, the hypothesis is that the historical relations act as news value of proximity and thus the elections are considered an event of informative interest proportional to the links between audience and stage of the event.

For peace in Angola, the starting hypothesis is that despite the intensity and duration of the conflict, the reconstruction of the consensus will become news of different intensity on the basis of past links. The period of analysis is regarded as one of the most deadly civil wars in the world but that does not prioritize the event as a crucial element of inclusion in the agenda but it is instead the historical proximity news value what will determine presences and hierarchies on the agenda.

2.4. Methodology

Newsmaking studies have proved the interaction of the news value with other factors involved in the mechanism of information production of each medium. Perhaps the least discussed factor is the historical proximity as a way of referring to the parameters that force a reinterpretation of the news value not only in terms of past links of the area of diffusion but also of the whole audience or a large group of the audience. The news from Mexico are interesting in Los Angeles, USA, more due to the origin of much of the potential audience, than due to historical ties of both countries.

To try to measure the influence of all these parameters we chose to do research on the impact on the media of these two situations of conflict and political tension in two remote countries and which can be considered as the priority focus of attention in the international pages of newspapers around the world: the signing of peace agreements in Angola and the electoral process of December 2004 in Mozambique with 20 day wait between the elections and the preliminary results.

We selected 4 referents of measurement:

- Portugal, because of the historical ties with both countries.
- Galicia, because of the linguistic links produced by being in the lusophone area

- Spain, because of its medium geographical distance and null historical connection.
- Mexico, because of its wide geographical separation and the lack of historical ties to the scene of the event.

Considering diffusion variables, we selected the following newspapers:

- Portugal: *Público* and *Jornal de Noticias*
- Galicia: *La Voz de Galicia* and *Faro de Vigo*
- Spain: *El País* and *El Mundo*
- Mexico: *La Jornada*

3. Results

The comparative analysis of both cases in the papers referred reflects similarities in the presence of both events, with regular inclusions and exclusions from the agenda and a balance of similar impact on the agenda based more on criteria of proximity between the place of the event and audiences than on criteria of linguistic or geographical proximity between the medium and the place where the event occurs.

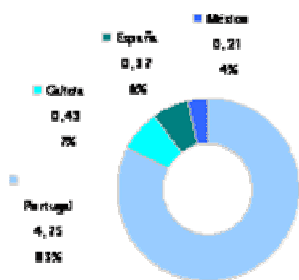
3.1. Angola: different levels of peace

It is difficult to talk about proximity (geographical, social, ideological, historical, ...) between Angola and other countries like Spain or Mexico. The presence in the agenda of the signing of the peace agreement should probably be sought, in any case, in other news value. But no such linkage exists with Middle Eastern countries either and, however, is the news related to the conflict in Israel or with the situation in Ukraine the issues occupying the front of International pages during the period studied. We assume that this is more than just a predilection for giving support to the ideology of *bad news* but it is true that ruptures of consensus (is evident the conflict between players and that is an event with consequences, lingering in several agendas) deserve much more media attention than his reconstruction (which is the closing of the cycle and exit from the agenda).

Between Galicia and Angola, there is the linguistic proximity between Galician and Portuguese, although for our case of interest it is a circumstantial affinity that has no impact on the process of selection of news and, although they are indeed devoting more space to and coverage of the event than the Spanish newspapers the difference is minimal. The evident historical proximity is between Angola and Portugal. Angola was a Portuguese colony. There are links between the target audience of the newspapers of Portugal and the geographic area or setting where events take place.

These historical ties between the target audience and the scene of the events are the explanation of the levels of presence in the Portuguese, Mexican, Spanish and Galician agendas: There is no interest in the return to normality after the bloodiest war in history, there is interest only if the scene or the event are in the usual circuits of informative coverage, if is a scenario often selected by those in charge of the thematization process or if the event incorporates actors or narrative elements that develop previous situations already incorporated in the audience's referent of reality because they are issues/scenarios of recurring presence in the agenda.

The results figures make it clear. In the six days analyzed, Mexican newspapers devoted 0.21 pages to the subject. It is an almost residual figure equivalent, in total, to a small advertising insert of five columns with two modules high. The Galician and Spanish press published a little more: 0.86 of headlines in Galicia and 0.74 in Spain. In Portugal, 9.5 pages per newspaper, which five times more than all the information from other newspapers.



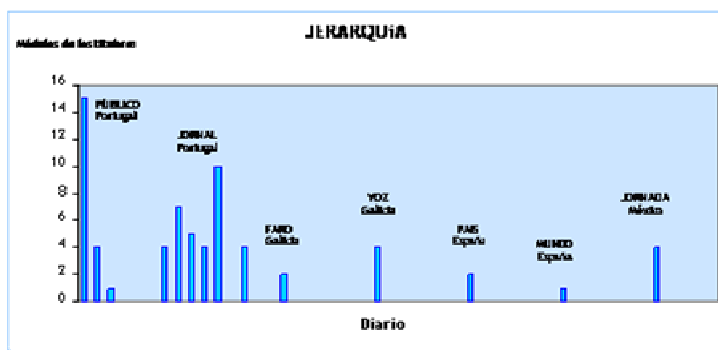
Graph 1. Pages per newspaper dedicated to peace in Angola: Mexico 0.21 (4%); Spain, 0.37 (6%); Galicia, 0.43 (7%); Portugal, 4.75 (83%);

The subject is published the day of signing in every newspaper, with medium intensities in the headlines produced in Galicia and Mexico, low in Spanish newspapers, and very high in the Portuguese press. It is only the latter press in which the issue becomes a recurrent theme of consecutive agendas, with curves of intensity of interest that reach their highest peaks on the date of the signature (as a type of news that anticipates in the press the event held that day) or the following day (based on a reconstruction of the ratification of the peace agreement).

The impacts are not directly comparable but in the attitude of the media we can observe the two blocks according to the historical link not only in the space destined for the event but also in the ranking of the event on the agenda, which amounts to consider that it is the level of importance that the media gives to the event and call of attention about the importance of incorporating it to the collective referents of reality that is presented to the audience. The media reconstruct the reality by configuring an agenda that, being fragmented and developed through recontextualisations of events, is presented as the global reference for people to be aware of what has happened. It is not reality, but the media representation of reality. But this is not a flat discourse that just chains events together but a representation in which we are told what are the most and least important events, a hierarchy which is transmitted through the section on which they are located, their position within the page's layout, the surface given, the number of columns for the headline, the use of supporting graphic resources and enhancement typographic resources, the incorporation of evaluative texts along with the interpretative or informative ones, etc.

Angola was not thought of as deserving a place within the cover, any day, of the Mexican, Galician and Spanish newspapers, but that was not the case in the Portuguese newspapers: *Público* published it on the front page on the days 4 and 5 and so did *Jornal* on day 4. A further indication that the reconstruction of the consensus is news value for the continuance on the agenda for those newspapers that target some audiences who feel close to those affected by the restored consensus but not so much by the fact itself as by the connection that makes us assume the recipients' interest on the published event.

The news was analyzed in all covers the day after the signing of peace, but it failed to be featured on the front page or the opening page of the international section of any Mexican, Galician and Spanish newspapers – it was always situated in the back pages. In Portugal, Angola was the opening news of *Público's World* section twice and the news of maximum relevance of *Jornal de Notícias' external affairs* section for three days. The dynamics of production determine journalistic conventions and information flows that are represented in the convergence of selection and hierarchy of all the newspapers studied, which highlight the information in the Middle East as the most important issues.



Graph 2. Ranking according to headline columns by newspaper: *Público* (Portugal); *Jornal* (Portugal); *Faro* (Galicia); *La Voz* (Galicia); *El País* (Spain); *El Mundo* (Spain); *La Jornada* (Mexico).

The graphic resources are currently used to illustrate the information and to provide additional information. Their use also implies that some importance is given to a particular topic. The graphic treatment of the end of the Angolan conflict is in line with the space, hierarchy and continuity given to the news on the agenda. Along these lines, only the Portuguese headings make use of photographs, maps and infographics to illustrate the signing of peace and geographically locate the African country.

The results largely confirm the hypothesis. The signing of peace is referential argument in all the headings studied, although with very different hierarchies and presences in the agenda. Except in Portugal, it is an informative argument with a single presence in the agenda, day 5. In Portugal, the two newspapers coincided in approaching the topic with fluctuating interest: preliminary information announcing the signature (medium or low intensity), coverage of the signing act (high or very high intensity) and monitoring of the process in the early days (medium or low intensity or in discontinuous form).

3.2. Mozambique: maintaining the informative tension

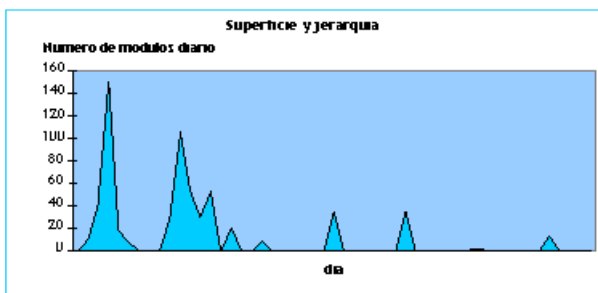
The elections in Mozambique were selected as a case study because they represent an extraordinary event in which it is easy to identify a good number of news values: actuality, novelty, conflict, relevance of the actors involved... except from geographic proximity. The delay between the vote and the results give the event more importance that reinforces the need to maintaining the event on the agenda, to keep the informative tension about the event, to remind the audience that is a current issue, and even to feed the feeling that the newspaper does tries to satisfy our need to stay informed of the topics that interest us or that we know from previous agendas. And the country's political instability added to the presence of international observers from the EC could make us assume that there is an increased informative interest on what happens at the polls, in particular and generally in the election process, including possible outbreaks of social violence.

The same trends presented in Angola are repeated in the case of Mozambique: the election or the results are only a brief notice in the newspapers in Spanish. For the Portuguese press, however, is an argument of the highest-ranking (5 columns headline on the cover in *Jornal de Noticias* and double page in *Público* the day before the election (December 1).

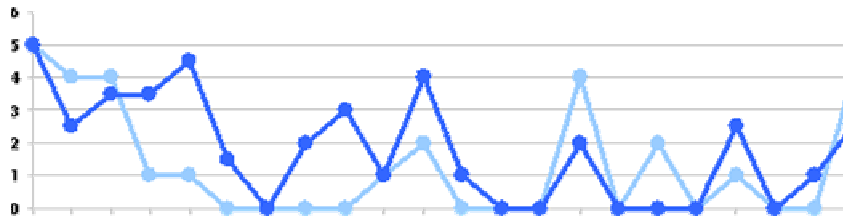
3.3. The curve of absences

The interest is in demonstrating the ways discontinuous presences / absences are produced on the agenda as a form of reminder of an unfinished event but of which there are no new contributions, apart from the valuations made by the actors involved. Is occurring what we have come to term as curve of absences because it shows similar cadences in the case of Angola and Mozambique: alternations of absence and presence on the agenda defined by a cyclical rhythm, with news in which secondary elements are used to serve as an updater referent to start a narrative that blends the background with the expectations of evolution (projection) and whose function is to show that the absence of the previous agenda was not a mistake in the agenda-setting because the argument remains in the medium's informative attention points.

It also shows that this new reference keeps the informative tension and the interest of the audience:



Graph 3. Daily evolution of the presence of the agenda and hierarchy. Angola's peace signing



Graph 4. Elections in Mozambique. Evolution according to number of headlines columns.

In the print press, audience fragmentation is identified with actions outside the influence of the Internet and contained within proximity strategies that encourage the development of information products that offer content on which the target audiences can see reflected the events they experience, the events they lead, and the events that affect them directly. In other words, there is mainly a journalistic strategy of proximity: there is a reappraisal of geographic proximity as a determinant value in the agenda setting, and within or linked to that territory new relevant actors are ranked. So we can affirm that the scenarios of news events are valued on the basis that

- a) they are within that area
- and
- b) they involve the relevant actors within that territory.

The informative *periphery*, i.e. events occurring outside the medium's diffusion area and the unusual sources on the agenda, find it more difficult to incorporate proposals to the list of issues known by the medium, which partly excludes them from the possibility of opting to be part of the agenda. But this periphery should not be considered only in quantitative terms of geographical distance. The diffusion area is supplemented with other informative scenarios that are situated outside of it but that result attractive to the audience because there were ties in the past.

Moreover, as a cognitive valuation process (thus, subjective), the phase of thematization helps to explain how the media adapts the need to achieve favourable economic results with an application of news values that fits into the professional conventions and allows to publicly defend an information strategy based on accuracy and plurality. But the agendas also need renovation to daily provide actuality and novelty, two interrelated concepts that also serve to understand the curve of absences: exits from the agenda are marked by a significant lack of novelty and reentries are defined by the need to maintain the informative argument in the parameters of actuality since it is an unfinished event that is supposed to be of interest to the audience. The discontinuous presences permit the newspaper to balance the need to report the event with the need to transmit novel information.

4. Conclusions

As a general summary, we offer, synthetically, four conclusions.

- a) Proximity as a news value has to be seen also as what we might call a new variety: the historical proximity, understood as the historical relations or links between the inhabitants of the medium's area of diffusion and the place where the event occurs regardless of the distance between them.

b) The media reconstruct reality when configuring an agenda that, being fragmented and developed through recontextualisations of events, is presented as the global referent for people to be aware of what has happened. It is not reality, but the media representation of reality. The attitude of the media in terms of historical proximity is reflected in the access to the agenda, in the space assigned to the event, and in the ranking of the event. The decision goes beyond thematization itself because the way the medium projects it to society equals to the impact with which the event is incorporated within the collective referents of reality of each individual that is part of the audience of that medium.

c) The behaviours of the media in relation to events of interest that last over time respond to what we have termed the *curve of absences*: mimetic patterns that reflect an oscillating interest at a cyclical rhythm, with intermediate hierarchies, in which secondary elements tend to serve as an updaters model to start a narrative that blends the background with the expectations of evolution (projection).

d) The number of people involved in the events, the projections or consequences, the level of novelty and actuality, the frequency or the threshold of conflict cannot be considered as vectors that are evaluated differently depending on the country where each medium operates. The only news values with varying intensities depending on the geographic area of emission and therefore the framing definers of the event are the social relevance of the source and proximity (geographical, historical, etc).

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6. Notes

[1] The fifth that is necessary to add is the commercial function to make company profitable (De Fontcuberta, 1992, p. 36).

[2] The theory was initiated by Maxwell McCombs and Donald L. Shaw in 1972 with the essay "The Agenda Setting Function of the Mass Media". The founding fathers are: McCombs, Donald Shaw and David Weaver (McCombs, 2006: 19). Recognizing Walter Lippmann (1922) as an intellectual father, Dader (1990: 296-297) presents a list of 14 authors whose works are antecedents to the agenda setting. Casermeiro (2004: 30) only recognizes those who are explicitly recognized as intellectual precursors by the creators of the theory.

[3] As Valdez and Fernandez (2009) have pointed out, this theory also explains the issues that the media excludes from the agenda, as well as the ranking of the importance of the information disseminated; in Valdez Zepeda, Andres and Rivera Fernández Rogelio (2009): Obama, en la Prensa Latinoamericana (Obama at the Latin American Press). *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 64, pp. 120-126. La Laguna (Tenerife): Universidad de La Laguna, retrieved on 27 November 2009 in: http://www.revistalatinacs.org/09/art/10_809_21_Guadalajara/Valdez_Zepeda_y_Rivera.html

[4] McCombs uses the metaphor of the onion to explain the establishment of the agenda: "The concentric layers of the onion represent the many influences at play in shaping the media agenda, which is the heart of the onion. This metaphor also illustrates the sequential nature of a process in which the influence of an outer layer is, in turn, affected by layers closer to the heart of the onion" (McCombs, 2006: 190). Casermeiro (2004: 152-153) made a brief explanation: 1) the first layer is the means used by the journalist to get the news, speeches by politicians, public relations offices, lobbying departments, and so on; 2) the second is the influence or impact of the rival agenda, including news agencies; and, 3) are the internal factors, characteristics and attributes of the reporter, the media company, journalistic genres, among others.

[5] Classic texts are Goffman's 1974 "Frame Analysis" and Entman's 2004 "Projections of Power" and Gaye Tuchman's 1983 "Making News".

[6] As Tuchman (1983) predicted, the valuation of the newsworthiness is a negotiated phenomenon, consisting of activities of a complex bureaucracy designed to monitor the information network.

[7] By the end of the 1940's, psychologist Kurt Lewin noted in the experiences of group dynamics that there were some points where the chain of transmission of information was either interrupted or flowed without problems after overcoming them. Lewin conceptualized those points as barriers with which one can prevent or guarantee the information flow when allowing further transmission of information, and coined the term gatekeeper to refer to them. The same idea was transferred to the news selection process, which eventually becomes part of the agenda.

[8] The academy defines the routine as "inveterate custom, acquired habit of doing things by mere practice and without reason." Routine is also the habit of doing a certain thing or to make it in a certain way, that is still maintained although there is no longer a reason for that or there is a reason against it" (María Moliner)

[9] Túñez & Guevara (2006), "El temario monofónico", en *Información Pública* Vol. IV nº1, Escuela de Periodismo Universidad Santo Tomás, Chile.

[10] The explanations can be formulated in sociological, psychoanalytical or cognitive terms. Psychoanalytically, these different forms of negativity in the news can be seen as expressions of our fears, and the fact that others suffer them provides both stress and relief as a consequence of that kind of delegate participation in others. (...) In more cognitive terms, we might say that this processing of information about these events is like a general simulation of any incidents that can disrupt our lives (...) Especially when is involved in the deviation of different types, provides information to the members of groups about pariahs or marginalized people, and applies a consensus of social norms and values that help define and confirm the group itself. This is a combination of cognitive and sociological approach to the explanation of the role of negativity in the news. (Howard & Rothbart, 1980. In Van Dijk, 1980).

[11] "On 15 November 1993 peace negotiations began between the two warring parties in Lusaka, Zambia, under United Nations mediation through the representative of the Secretary General, Mr. Alioune Blondin Beye. These negotiations succeeded in concluding a ceasefire agreement on 3 December 1993", as recorded verbatim in the report of the Human Rights Commission United Nations, which is available at <http://www.unhchr.ch/Huridocda/Huridoca.nsf/0/7a5cc06685a132808025673200624642?Opendocument>.

[12] The measurements were carried out consulting the funds of the *Central* Newspaper Archive, the Newspaper Archive of the Faculty of Communication Sciences at the University of Santiago de Compostela, the Newspaper Archive of the City Council of Porto (Portugal) and in the Newspaper Archive *La Jornada* (Mexico City, Mexico)

[13] In the results with different measures to the standard pattern, their measures were projected to the parameters of reference to make it comparable with other publications.

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