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ARTICLE
Modes of professional subjection: an analysis of labor relations in the field of innovation

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Abstract

This study analyzes how modes of subjection are revealed in discursive practices about the working relationships of innovation professionals. The research starts from the understanding that these modes of subjection are evident in labor relations in the professional field of innovation, based on Foucauldian theory. We analyze the speeches made by these professionals. The empirical scope was innovation professionals from the creative economy and information and communication technology fields. Fourteen narrative interviews were conducted with specialists from different locations in Brazil, adopting criteria of representativeness and saturation. The findings show 2 modes of subjection: austerity, which shows the subjection that the professional exerts on themselves as a relational process of the subject with themselves, according to their life experiences, going through family power structures, moral attachments, and emotional and material difficulties; and conformity, which reveals the subjection arising specifically from the professional dimension, showing how the subject binds themselves to the rules of their field, marked by constant and compulsory connectivity, as well as excessive stress. Both modes of subjection highlight aspects of neoliberal logic and the field of innovation. The research contributes to the field of innovation both theoretically, through an approach uncommon in works in the area, and in terms of applicability, by highlighting important aspects that can influence the work of professionals, which can be taken into account in the management policies of organizations.

Keywords: Innovation professionals. Labor relations. Subjectivation. Modes of subjection. Foucauldian discourse analysis.

Modos de sujeição profissional: uma análise sobre as relações de trabalho no campo da inovação

Resumo

O presente estudo analisa como modos de sujeição se revelam em práticas discursivas sobre as relações de trabalho dos profissionais da inovação. A pesquisa parte da compreensão de que esses modos de sujeição se evidenciam nas relações de trabalho no campo profissional da inovação baseadas na teoria foucaultiana. Com isso, elas são realizadas por meio da análise dos discursos proferidos por esses profissionais. O escopo empírico foram profissionais da inovação dos campos da economia criativa e de tecnologia de informação e comunicação. Foram realizadas 14 entrevistas narrativas com especialistas de diferentes localidades do Brasil, adotando-se critérios de representatividade e saturação. Os achados evidenciam 2 modos de sujeição: austeridade, que evidencia as sujeições que o profissional exerce sobre si como processo relacional do sujeito com si mesmo, segundo suas experiências de vida, perpassando estrutura de poder familiar, vinculações morais e dificuldades emocionais e materiais; e conformidade, que revela as sujeições advindas especificamente da dimensão profissional, evidenciando a maneira como o sujeito se vincula às regras de seu campo de atuação, marcadas pela conectividade constante e compulsória, bem como pelo estresse excessivo. Ambos os modos de sujeição evidenciam aspectos da lógica neoliberal e do campo da inovação. A pesquisa contribui para o campo da inovação tanto teoricamente, por meio de uma abordagem pouco comum nos trabalhos da área, quanto em termos de aplicabilidade, ao evidenciar importantes aspectos que podem influenciar a atuação de profissionais, o que pode ser considerado em políticas de gestão das organizações.

Palavras-chave: Profissionais da inovação. Relações de trabalho. Subjetivação. Modos de sujeição. Análise de discurso foucaultiana.

Modos de sujeción profesional: un análisis de las relaciones laborales en el ámbito de la innovación

Resumen

LEste estudio analiza cómo se revelan los modos de sujeción en las prácticas discursivas sobre las relaciones laborales de los profesionales de la innovación. La investigación parte de entender que estos modos de sujeción se ponen de manifiesto en las relaciones laborales en el ámbito profesional de la innovación, basándose en la teoría foucaultiana. Para ello, se analizan los discursos de estos profesionales. El ámbito empírico fueron profesionales de la innovación de los campos de la economía creativa y de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación. Se realizaron 14 entrevistas narrativas a especialistas de diferentes localidades de Brasil, adoptando criterios de representatividad y saturación. Los hallazgos muestran dos modos de sujeción: la austeridad, que muestra la sujeción que el profesional ejerce sobre sí mismo como un proceso relacional del sujeto consigo mismo, de acuerdo con sus experiencias de vida, pasando por estructuras de poder familiar, apegos morales y dificultades emocionales y materiales; y la conformidad, que revela la sujeción surgida específicamente de la dimensión profesional, mostrando el modo en que el sujeto se vincula a las reglas de su campo, marcada por la conectividad constante y obligatoria, así como por el estrés excesivo. Ambos modos de sujeción revelan aspectos de la lógica neoliberal y del campo de la innovación. La investigación contribuye al campo de la innovación tanto teóricamente, a través de un enfoque poco común en los trabajos del área, como en términos de aplicabilidad, al destacar aspectos importantes que pueden influir en el trabajo de los profesionales, que pueden ser tenidos en cuenta en las políticas de gestión de las organizaciones.

Palabras clave: Profesionales de la innovación. Relaciones laborales. Subjetivación. Modos de sujeción. Análisis foucaultiano del discurso.

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INTRODUCTION

Contemporary society is witnessing the reconfiguration of labor's productive structure, which is evidenced by the transformation of productive and organizational processes associated with the technological context. This scenario changes labor's nature and relationships, such as psychological contracts, instability in employment relationships and constant surveillance, besides devaluing workers who have been losing access to rights. More specifically, the innovation workers' class represents these productive changes quite well, mainly those linked to information technology, as well as to creative and cultural production (Freitas, Assis, & Efing, 2018; Tse & Shum, 2022; Abílio, 2020; Antunes, 2018; Lima & Bridi, 2019; Silva, Vieira, & Franco, 2019; Peukert, 2018).

On the one hand, this class is going through a job insecurity process; on the other hand, the technological transformation guided by the capital perspective enables the emergence of "digital labor" (Lima & Bridi, 2019). This emergence process is featured by a technological time that, in its turn, experiences changes in production and labor relations.

This productive and technological context interferes with the subjectivity of workers themselves, since labor relations can be understood as subjective process linked to a socio-historical bias. In other words, labor and labor discourse produce subjectivities (Dubar, 2012; Thiry-Cherques, 2023; Vallas & Hill, 2018). Foucault's theoretical perspective helps better understanding this subjectivity (1998, 2005, 2004). The Foucauldian subject is formed based on 'subjectivation' practices, such as subjection modes, which refer to subjects' relationship with their moral obligations.

Since 'subjectivation' processes can be accessed through discursive practices (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012; Fage-Butler, 2020), the aim of the current study is to investigate how subjection modes take place in discursive practices about the labor relations of innovation professionals. Its empirical focus lies on the fact that this class properly represents the labor reconfiguration process, besides highlighting the main features of this transformation, since it creates a productive context for the aforementioned reconfiguration (Antunes, 2018). Furthermore, the 'precarization' issue involving the labor world, in the current structural configuration, takes place in an increasingly digital labor context (Freitas et al., 2018).

It is worth emphasizing that subjection modes are currently either directly or indirectly used to understand subjection to capitalism (Carelli & Andrade, 2023) and to the rules of the professional field (Diniz & Campos, 2018; Maia, 2020). However, studies in the literature do not focus on the specific context of the herein investigated professionals. Thus, the current study stands out for applying discursive analysis to personal and labor experiences. Experience and the context of living are elements that help better understanding career path (Kjærgård, 2020).

Thus, the current analysis explores the dimension of labor relations in the innovation field. This is where the theoretical contribution lies, since the current study presents innovative labor activity as having a 'subjectivizing' character, mostly with regards to subjection. Similarly, the herein presented discussion enables developing programs and public policies focused on the difficulties, precariousness and constraints faced by innovation professionals. Moreover, the very profile of professionals belonging to the information and communication technology (ICT) and creative economy (CE) fields enables making an analysis linked to the technology-media field, and it allows thinking about new analytical proposals and study subdivisions in the innovation field.

The current theoretical framework was split into 3 different sections in order to cover all the herein explored points, with emphasis on the key points. The first section covers the reconfiguration of labor activities, mainly of those centered on ICTs, by linking these aspects to new 'precarization' and control forms. The second section – "Subject and Subjection Modes" – explores Foucault's theory about the subject, more specifically, 'subjectivation' practices focused on the subjection aspect. Finally, the last section addresses the creative class and ICT professionals, as well as features of these activity fields and their overlaps.

LABOR AND THE SUBJECT

Labor Relations and the Subject

The labor world is undergoing a series of transformations capable of changing the relationship between subject and professional activity, mainly the work dynamics (Greenhaus, Callanan, & Godshalk, 2018, Antunes, 2018). This factor can be seen in the remodeling of organizational, productive and worker control processes (Abílio, 2020; Antunes, 2018; Lima & Bridi, 2019; Greenhaus et al., 2018).

According to Antunes (2018), this productive reconfiguration derives from capitalism-related changes in the current technological scenario. This process leads to the formation of a new class of precarious workers who are inserted in a production system regime that exploits their capacities to the maximum and seeks to aggregate the least amount of labor charges (Lima & Bridi, 2019; Freitas et al., 2018).

The possibility of constant surveillance, which is typical to current capitalism (Zuboff, 2021) enables the omnipresent work control (Abílio, 2020) in a technological context that carries within itself the paradigm of versatility and mobility, which are integrated and featured by ICTs' ubiquity (Freitas et al., 2018).

These socio-historical-cultural conditions enable creating the "subject who produces", which is a new construction about the meaning of professional performance. The discourse on labor addresses productive subjects' emergence conditions (Thiry-Cherques, 2023). Accordingly, professionals undergo 'subjectivation' and take part in a historical-cultural construction process in labor practice (Vallas & Hill, 2018; Kjærgård, 2020).

Labor models impose a series of disciplinary techniques that, in their turn, enable control over workers' subjectivity (Thomas & Davies, 2005; Sewell & Wilkinson, 1992; Mielly et al., 2023) and undermine the likelihood of resistance (Fleming & Sewell, 2002; Gómez, 2023).

Subject and subjection modes

According to Foucault (1998; 2005; 2004), there is no such thing as a subject being, but a continuous process of becoming a subject. The subject is not fixed and isolated; it is relational, historical and facing a construction process (Schutijser, 2019). The subject and its 'subjectivation' processes are linked to matters of power, according to which, the subject represents a social ideology elaborated by specific disciplinary techniques (Foucault, 1999b). Thus, the subject acts in compliance with the regime imposed on him/her, in a culture with specific self-construction mechanisms.

The subject's constitution process goes through 'subjectivation', with emphasis on the connection between subject-truth/knowledge-power, besides presupposing subjection modes. 'Subjectivation' is a process, whereas subjection modes are linked to the subject's choices, to how he/she deals with the rules imposed on him/her, i.e., to social conduct. Although the rules of conduct are set out, it does not necessarily mean that the subject will follow them; this choice depends on his/her will and subjectivity, so that he/she chooses the rules he/she will submit to. Subjection modes express the subject's practice, how he/she acknowledges his/her moral obligations, his/her relationship with the rules and with the knowledge-power games (Foucault, 1998; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1995).

Understanding subjection modes based on choices and practices associated with moral obligations in a given socio-historical-cultural context enables linking these subjections to work relations. The activity itself can be understood as a self-constitution process (Dubar, 2012; Vallas & Hill, 2018; Kjærgård, 2020). Thus, the association between subjection modes and work relations is possible because personal and work experiences can be understood as part of the 'subjectivation' and subjectivity-construction process (Ramos, 2020).

The creative class and ICT professionals

The current study focuses on investigating innovation professionals working in CE segments affected by changes in ICTs, which require reconfiguring professionals' practices and skills (Van et al., 2020; Peukert, 2018). It comprises those who participate in ICTs – who produce digital artifacts – and who are immersed in a constant transformation field.

According to Florida (2012), the creative class is not defined by workers who use creativity in their jobs, but rather by those who are paid for their intellectual production, who solve complex problems with high human capital levels and who use cognitive and social aspects to do so. This group comprises entrepreneurs, engineers and computer scientists, individuals who work in technical fields, such as economists and managers, as well as in artistic fields, such as musicians and writers. ICT professionals, on the other hand, are linked to the design, management and user experience fields (Moura Jr. & Helal, 2014; 2019; Suhaimi et al., 2012).

These professionals fit into a class featured by contradiction (Roy, 2021; Dorschel, 2022) since, although they have certain privileges – higher salaries and better qualifications, for example –, they experience a digital 'work-precarization' process due to capital reconfiguration, with emphasis on lack of labor rights and job insecurity. Moreover, there is overlap between the two aforementioned segments. ICT professionals' functions are compatible to those observed in professionals belonging to the creative class. Similarly, the technological aspect is incorporated in the discussion about CE, mainly when it comes to audiovisual and new media, such as software, games and digital content (Flew, 2018; Peukert, 2018).

These two professional fields are addressed together at the time to discuss about innovation (Saura, Palacios-Marqués, & Ribeiro-Soriano, 2023) and creativity management or creative careers (Maciel, Lins, & Fernandes, 2020; Calasans & Davel, 2020), since innovation is associated with creativity and can be enhanced by creative capital management (Muzzio & Paiva Jr., 2018; Acar, Tarakci, & Van Knippenberg, 2019).

The current study aims at investigating the point of intersection between these two professional fields. Therefore, it focuses on using digital technologies and on the way this process highlights practices capable of adding valuable knowledge to the CE and ICT labor market.

METHODOLOGICAL PROCEDURES

The present research was based on the Foucauldian discourse analysis (FDA), which enables identifying a set of knowledge and insights about the investigated phenomenon (Foucault, 2008; Souza-Leão & Moura, 2018). In order to do so, it was made the option to use narrative interviews (Kutsyuruba & Mendes, 2023) to get textual reports from professionals. This action is based on the understanding that interviews have a discursive nature (Santos & Davel, 2021) and that, just like narratives, they are capable of capturing the discursive practices of subjectivity (Gubrium & Holstein, 2012; Fage-Butler, 2020). Therefore, narrative was herein approached as discursive practice capable of reflecting its socio-historical-cultural context (Brockmeier & Harré, 2003; De Fina, 2021) in order to explain the set of rules making these discursive formations possible (Brockmeier & Harré, 2003).

Professions associated with the ICT and EC fields were herein identified, based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations, version 2008 (ISCO-08), in order to define the profile to be investigated. The following segments were observed: graphic and multimedia designers (code 2166), web and multimedia developers (code 2513) and broadcasting and audio-visual technicians (code 3521). Professionals who, at the time the interviews were carried out, worked in one of these segments and had digital experience since childhood were selected.

Table 1
Code, interviewees' job position, activity segment and region

Code	Job position	Segment			Region				
		2166	2513	3521	N	NE	S	SE	CO
Int1	Graphic Designer	X				X			
Int2	Software developer (CEO)		X			X	X	X	
Int3	Web developer		X			X			
Int4	Sound capture			X	X				
Int5	Production assistant			X		X			
Int6	Innovation manager and artist (*podcast*)			X				X	

(Continue)

Code	Job position	Segment			Region				
		2166	2513	3521	N	NE	S	SE	CO
Int7	Consultant (Data Science, AI)	X	X				X		
Int8	Graphic designer	X						X	
Int9	Product designer	X					X		
Int10	Designer (motion design and animation)	X						X	X
Int11	Software engineer		X			X			
Int12	Audiovisual producer (CEO)			X					X
Int13	Graphic designer	X							X
Int14	Game programmer and digital artist	X	X					X	

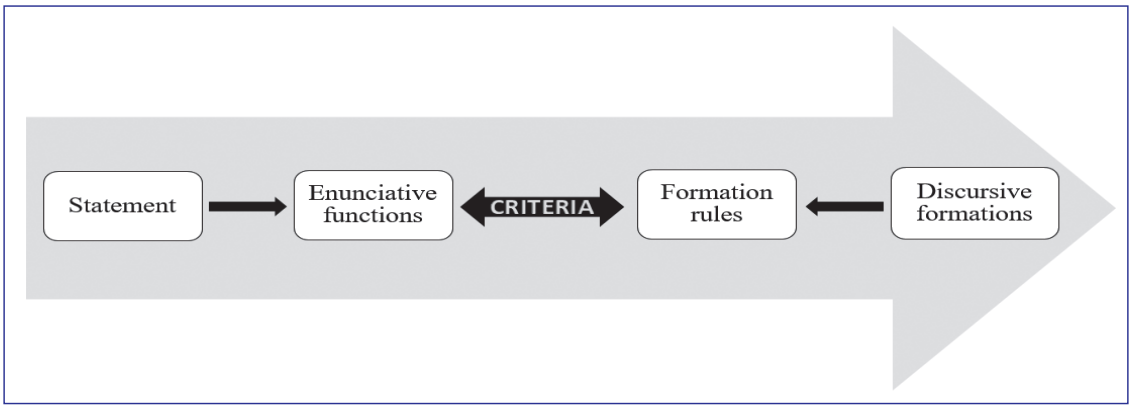
Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Table 1 shows interviewees' job positions, segments and the region they live in. Sources were selected by contacting (by email) the companies indicated on the websites of technology parks that met the interviewees' scope. The snowball strategy was adopted after contacting the first professionals (Parker, Scott, & Geddes, 2019). The narrative interview script has followed a semi-structured model (Wengraf, 2001; Kutsyuruba & Mendes, 2023) designed to be adaptable (Kim, 2016).

Interviews were performed until representativeness (geographic and segmentation) and sufficient data for analysis (Tight, 2023) were achieved – 14 interviews, in total. They took place through video calls carried out on the Meet or Teams platforms, between September 8 and November 15, 2022 (1 hour-duration, on average).

Data were subjected to Foucauldian discourse analysis identified in Foucault's (2008; 1999a; 2005) works and systematized by Souza-Leão and Moura (2018), as well as by Camargo, De Souza-Leão and Moura (2020); De Souza-Leão, Ferreira and Moura (2022); De Souza-Leão, Moura and Nunes (2022); and Moura and De Souza-Leão (2022). The systematics of the Foucauldian discourse analysis is depicted in the chart in Figure 1.

Figure 1
Foucauldian discourse analysis process



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on Camargo et al. (2020).

Figure 1 depicts sequential procedures. The analysis starts with the formation of statements (Ss) that synthesize the narratives in sentences, which, in their turn, present an isolated element of the discourse, i.e., a minimal unit. These statements present features that will be classified based on functions and rules. Enunciative functions (Fs) refer to actions, whereas formation rules (Rs) are linked to statements' discursive regularities. The association between criteria and rules points out discursive formations (DFs) that, in their turn, express the practices accounting for ruling discourses underpinning what is stated.

Figure 2
Description of FDA categories

Statement			
Refers to the minimum unit of discourse, "isolated acts" of formations. It highlights the set of signs that explore the same statement.			
Enunciative functions			
Refer to the "action" of statements. It highlights the relationship between statements based on the analysis of how they operate, based on criteria:			
Referential	Associated field	Subject	Materiality
What the statement refers to, i.e., what is addressed in the statement.	Place of knowledge through which the statement emerges. "Field" as space that allows the emergence of such statements.	The condition (individual or group) capable of declaring such statement.	The material form in which the statement is conveyed, the "tone" it is revealed in.
Formation rules			
Highlight the regularities establishing the formation of discourses. Rule criteria are analogous to function criteria and they are analyzed based on:			
Object	Concept	Modality	Strategy
Specific meaning given to what the statement deals with.	Topic specific of the associated field. It highlights dependencies, coexistences and successions of what is addressed.	The way the subject manifests itself, in view of the conditions the statement emerges in.	The purpose seen in view of the materiality expressed in the statement.
Discursive formations			
Result of the grouping of discursive regularities, the formation expresses discourses that were formed by the existence of statements in the conditions they were enunciated in.			

Source: Elaborated based on Souza-Leão and Moura (2018).

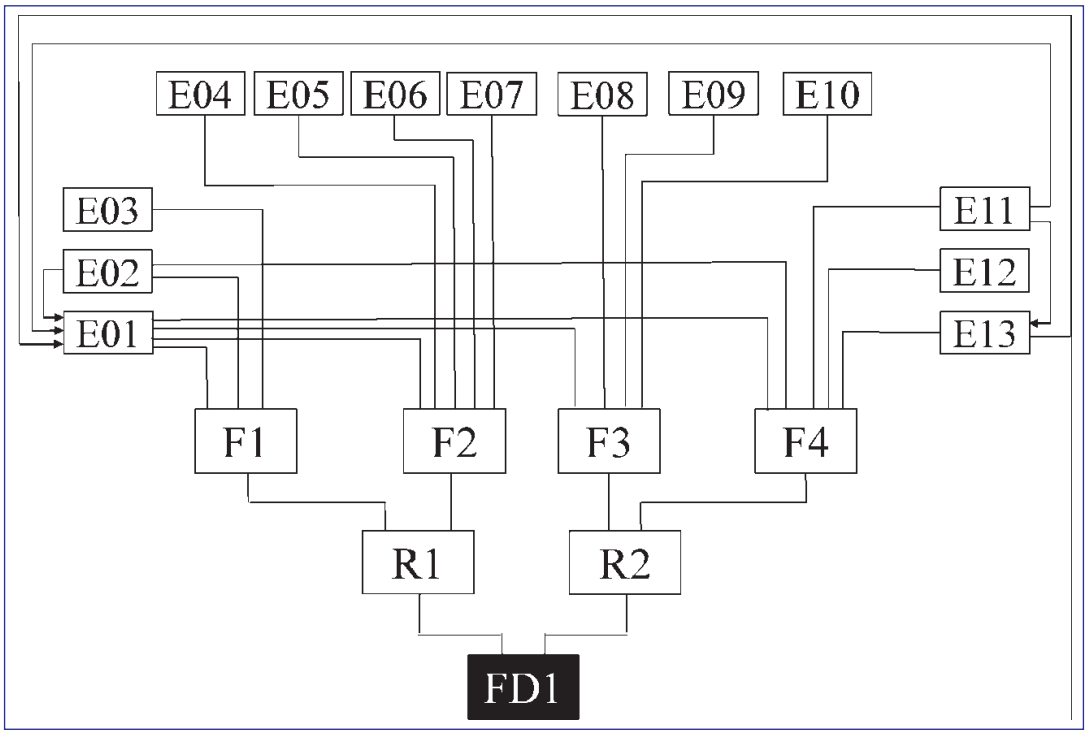
There is a process structured by determining the analytical criteria between the minimum/initial structure and the result. The systematics delivers the DFs in order to detect the rules for discourse formation and statements' functions shown in Figure 2.

Fs and Rs are inferred based on the Ss taken from interviewees' statements. As summarized in Figure 2, the Fs deal with the statement's performance, whereas the analysis applied to Rs aims at finding regularities and at identifying the rules outlining the DFs.

RESULTS

Subjection modes are expressed in a discursive formation of regularities related to conformity and austerity in work relations. They deal with submission to the rules of the field, which reveals 'subjectivation' processes related to ethical behavior. In other words, this formation concerns the reconfiguration of practices understood as painful and necessary for individuals to remain or advance in their respective careers. Thus, they are directly linked to the choices made by professionals and to the way they behave once the established power game is set out. The analytical map represented in Figure 3 (and captioned by Table 2) highlights the relationship between professional subjection and other analysis levels, such as rules, functions and statements.

Figure 3
Analytical map of professional subjection



Source: Elaborated by the authors (2023).

Table 2
Analytical Map Caption

Code	Title
E01	Adaptation is part of my professional journey
E02	My expertise has changed me
E03	My convictions shape my professional trajectory
E04	My family encouraged me to follow this career
E05	This job provides me with stability
E06	My professional choice represents me
E07	Guidance plays important role in one's professional choice
E08	Sociability is useful in my career
E09	The digital environment is necessary for me to be who I am
E10	The digital environment provides opportunities for my performance
E11	My profession requires specific knowledge
E12	I must manage my own career in this job
E13	The profession affects my mental health
F1	Giving up principles
F2	Pointing out difficulties
F3	Complaining about essential connectivity
F4	Reporting professional exhaustion
R1	Austerity of professional practice
R2	Compliance with professional practice

Source: Elaborated by the authors.

Based on Figure 3, professionals' subjection is based on two professional practice-related rules that refer to austerity (R1) and conformity (R2). Both rules express professionals' acceptance of the power pressures established in the professional field (strategy).

Austerity

The austerity of the professional field (R1) refers to its rigidity and derives from statements whose function lies on renouncing beliefs (F1) and on presenting difficulties faced by subjects (F2). This rule involves power relations in the private sphere and encompasses impositions linked to values built by subjects, to family – helplessness and pressure in choosing the activity field – and to career direction.

The first function concerns renouncing principles (F1) and refers to statements that deal with how convictions shape one's professional trajectory (E03), with how they were changed by this trajectory (E02) and with how they adapted to it (E01). Changes resulting from expertise (E02) explain the adaptations (E01). The statements of this function address difficulties and elements that form part of the identity of a given subject who positions itself politically (modalities) based on its knowledge about its political current (concept), as summarized in the excerpt shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4

Example of function 1 taken from interview 5

> [...] sometimes, you have to be the person who doesn't question an attitude of male chauvinism or racism on the set [...] there are many reports [...] of men who harass women on the set because they are in a position of power and nobody does anything. Do you understand? In a case of racism, nobody does anything! And the guy continues to get to work. So, sometimes you have to give up your activism, what you believe in. I try to do this as little as possible, so as not to cover it up, you know? (Int5)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on research.

This excerpt exposes austerity towards the rigidity of the conservative thought[1], as well as highlights values that are questioned, and even reconfigured, in order to expose the power structure and how subjects react in a submissive way.

The function of pointing out difficulties (F2) is related to statements about adaptation (E01), family encouragement (E04), to how the choice represents them (E06) and the importance of career guidance (E07). The family environment-related issue is seen within 2 statements, one referring to adaptation (E01) and the other one, to family encouragement (E04). Encouragement (E04) herein reflects family pressure, since its influences the interviewee to choose a given professional or academic path. Lack of support reflects on adaptation (E01) and family pressure (E04) to choose a career. The statements show a subject who adjusts to its reality (modality) by addressing its difficulties (object) based on the search for security (concept), as represented in Figure 5.

Figure 5

Example of function 2 taken from interview 5

> [...] studying film was quite complicated because I never had any kind of family support, you know? Neither financial nor emotional support, you see? [...] there was a certain amount of family pressure for me to also graduate in something that "makes money" [...] at the time my mother got sick and was hospitalized for four months; and when she passed away, [...] my family didn't give me much emotional support [...] (Int5)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research *corpus*.

[1] 'Conservative' herein refers to the political thought that advocates for the maintenance of social structures. Thus, progressive speeches were understood as those aimed at changing the social context and they are evidenced in narratives addressing the defense of minorities.

This excerpt portrays both lack of support and family's pressure for the subject to choose paths that could generate good financial income. The family issue arises from the understanding that the technological field can provide better remuneration than other fields.

Difficulties (object) are also evidenced in the lack of guidance (E07) addressed by interactive and adjusted subjects (modality) regarding the impossibility of interacting with the innovative context (concept). This perspective is shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6
Example of function 2 taken from interview 8

> [...] I think it's an opportunity to see what other people are doing, to live together, to see there. I needed a 'push' like that too, I think I needed maybe someone there to guide me like that, you know? [...] I think I needed a 'push' like that, to have courage and so on. (Int8)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research *corpus*.

The interviewee in the excerpt above explains the importance of guidance in pursuing a career. This guidance deals with access to innovation spaces and to people in the field, as well as with the possibility of seeing a career in innovation as possible and achievable. The lack of guidance in the profession (E07), presented in the excerpts above, explains how necessary subjects' adaptation was (E01).

Pointing out difficulties (F2) also evidences adaptation (E01) and career transition in pursuit of stability (E05) due to personal experiences that lead to a given path (E06). These statements highlight adjusted subjects (modality) who refer to the professional trajectory and to elements they identify with (objects) regarding career management (concept). This function is depicted in Figure 7.

Figure 7
Example of function 2 taken from interview 6

> So I ended 2020 emotionally broken, tired as f****** hell, exhausted from my relationship with my partners [...] then I entered 2021 saying, at least for now, I don't want to go back to undertaking, I want a steady job, a concrete place, something that breathes mental sanity! (Int6)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research *corpus*.

The excerpt above presents the path built in pursuit of stability. It is possible noticing a career transition and a professional trajectory reconfiguration, so that personal features and experiences affect the way one's career will be conducted.

Compliance

There is an uncomfortable perception regarding connectivity in compliance with professional practice (R02). This rule reveals certain irritation due to one's dependence on digital media, although one likes the digital space. This perception is expressed as interviewees complain about compulsion (F3) and report exhaustion (F4). However, F3 speaks exclusively about connectivity, the imposing establishment of digital and physical relationships, whereas F4 reflects on the stress caused by profession, which mainly results from informational burden.

Compulsive connectivity (F3) includes complaints about social interactions required by the profession and it refers both to the need for building a professional network of relationships and to the obligation to constantly connect. This function highlights sociability in the career (E08), the adaptation (E01) of those who are more reserved, and the contribution of the virtual environment (E09 and E10), albeit in an imposing way, to promote the produced material.

Statements related to valuing sociability in the career (E08) and adaptation (E01) involve the interactive subject (modality) and deal with professional networking (concept), as well as with relationship building and difficulties (objects), which are elements explored in Figure 8.

Figure 8
Example of function 3 taken from interview 7

[...] pretending to enjoy it when you're not, demanding much more of yourself in terms of productivity and a question of adapting to the rules of coexistence and environments [...] I think that working from home was a defining point for me as I kind of took off all these masks and even started to demand less of myself in terms of production (Int7)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research *corpus*.

This report addresses the difficulty in building relationships with coworkers and the subject's adaptation to the social reality of its profession. The interviewee says he "pretends to like" to adapt to the "rules of coexistence". However, as soon as he realizes he is outside the workplace, he takes off his "masks".

The socio-labor imposition associated with the virtual environment is evidenced by statements that deal with aspects related to promoting the work done, with emphasis on the contribution of the virtual environment (E10) and on how it interferes with who they are nowadays (E09). The statements of those who point out that the digital environment is part of who they are (E09) reflect the choice of a profession in the digital universe. This statement refers to professionals who express fascination (modality) towards the connection to the digital universe (object); however, they show that using these devices is not necessarily an isolated decision, but rather the consequence of working in media networks (concept).

The same thing is observed in the statements by professionals who point out how the digital environment enables high performance (E10), more specifically with regards to promoting the work done. The same interviewee addresses the maintenance of social relationships (object) from the perspective of building a network (concept) among specialists (modality). Both statements make it clear that it is necessary to be visible in the digital environment to get new work assignments, as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9
Example of function 3 taken from interview 4

[...] technology is essential, the digital world is essential, whether it's the device that will transmit this information, these data, or the internet, right? - the internet environment. And the internet - which I'll cut out from social networks - which is a channel to promote creations [...] So it is essential for those who work with video, with images, with sound, right? [...] but there's also this dependence issue [...] if you are not present there, you don't exist, right?, no one knows what you're doing, no one knows your work, no one knows you and, consequently, no one will call you to do things because, deep down, that's how it works, right? it's always the contact we have in this environment that makes it possible to carry out projects. (Int4)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research *corpus*.

This excerpt exposes the evolution of media for society and the dependence on the career one chooses. It makes it clear that it is impossible to distance themselves from the network, since production and promotion are exclusively and intimately linked to digital media.

Criticism of excessive stress in the profession (F4) always comes from those who hold a position of knowledge in the field (modality). This function refers to statements that address both the mental and emotional health affected by the profession (E13) and those who have changed (E02) and adapted themselves (E01) due to exhaustion. It involves the knowledge required in this field (E11) and career management as professionals' responsibility (E12).

Changes (E02) and adaptations (E01) start from an expert subject (modality) who refers to impositions related to mediatization and competence (concept) faced by it during its professional trajectory (object). The professional trajectory associated with these concepts refers to changes in innovation and, consequently, in one's work, which reflects the knowledge intensity that is beyond one's capabilities.

This information intensity results from the mediatization of life, which is more intense for these professionals, since they are inserted (producing) in the digital universe. Once they are inserted in this universe, the mandatory update reflects the development of their skills and makes it impossible for these professionals to disassociate themselves from the environment used to promote the produced material and to attract customers. This perspective is expressed in Figure 10.

Figure 10
Example of function 4 taken from interview 8

I knew everything about Facebook, I knew everything about Instagram, when I used it a lot, after a while I said "I can't take it anymore, I don't want it anymore", I posted every day and I was quite dependent on it; nowadays [...] I think that the less you use it... the platforms keep changing, and if you're not paying attention, you'll fall behind, you know? (Int 8)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research *corpus*.

The excerpt above reflects the mandatory nature of connectivity for professional practice. They need to be constantly online to keep up with trends and they consider those who can, and are able to, disconnect to be the privileged ones. In this excerpt, the professional claims to be "falling behind" when she does not access social networks on a regular basis. Since social networks are a work tool (publicity, contacts and production space), there is gain in skills when professionals experience these spaces. However, the need to pay close attention to new developments (technologies, applications, software and functionalities) means that they need to be constantly connected, even if they do not want to.

This factor brings us to the statements referring to issues like sanity (E13) and knowledge related to this profession (E11). Keeping up to date with new developments is a practice that must be constantly carried out, since professionals must know and master how media and software work. Thus, in order to manage their careers well (concept), they must always access these devices due to mediatization (concept). This constant access and the excessive informational burden cause professional burnout (concept).

Figure 11 explores fragments that represent the aforementioned statements (E11 and E13) and start from the condition of specialists (modality) who address the professional trajectory (object).

Figure 11
Example of function 4 taken from interviews 6 and 7

I became more anxious, I started to suffer from FOMO. FOMO is the acronym for fear of missing out, basically the fear of missing out on the next new thing that's coming out. So, everyone who deals with innovation and technologies and with these changes suffers from FOMO at some point (Int6) It seems like they want to mold you as quickly as possible to produce at very high speed, right? [...] there's this pressure and sometimes this pressure is explicit, right? It's done through 'terrorism'. I think it changes the way you understand your own productivity, so that you start to demand more of yourself at a level that, for me, has gone beyond the limits of what's acceptable in terms of mental health [...] (Int7)

Source: Organized by the authors based on the research corpus.

These excerpts reflect the "informational agility" observed in the productive practice of innovation, which affects subjects' mental and emotional health. The first paragraph explores the anxiety issue caused by the need for being in constant contact with updates on the innovation market, whereas the second one highlights the excessive-production issue.

Finally, E12 is composed of expert subjects (modality) who understand trajectory (object) management (concept) as individual responsibility. It does not focus on the mental exhaustion issue, it rather deals with the understanding that what they currently are is the very result of a series of choices, either conscious or not, as expressed in Figure 12.

Figure 12
Example of function 4 taken from interview 2

I think that from the moment you need to go to college, for example, it is already a choice that you make socially. Then, choosing a course is a decision that you make based on your features, right? You kind of have to adapt to a course that you identify with. You also have to adapt to the market associated with this course because a career is a profession, it is work. So you already have to adapt to the market you are going to participate in. So there are a series of decisions that end up being mandatory, in a way. What is our free will? Choosing between options. But there is no doubt that determinisms exist. (Int2)

Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research corpus.

This interviewee questions free will by analyzing the adaptation to the choices he had made throughout his life, which were sometimes "imposing" and "deterministic" - he evokes the social aspect of it. Adaptation is understood as part of the job. Moreover, subjection is something natural in several professions — if one does not adapt to the modes (knowledge and power constructions) and constraints, one is not qualified.

Results discussion

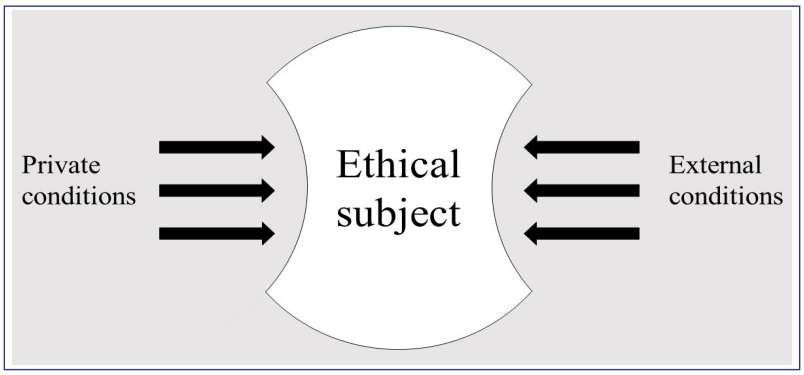
The professional field reveals a game of truths that establishes limits and rules on subjects' behavior by imposing discipline on their bodies. Professionals undergo a 'subjectivation' process at the time to choose a given work activity, since they insert themselves into this field of work relations. By subjecting themselves to the structure (games of truth, labor discourses), professionals remodel their practices towards austerity (R1) and conform (R2). These findings highlight subjection modes featured by private and external conditions, as represented in Figure 13.

Professionals subjected to constraints imposed on themselves and on the environment are inserted in a structure that constrains them – whether in family or social power, or in the activity field – and that shapes their subjectivity. They adapt to the technologies of their field, even if it leads to renouncing their own practices. In other words, work activity involves a set of practices adopted by professionals. Thus, they remodel their conduct by renouncing certain practices and by adopting others. This finding highlights the way subjects behave towards obligations (Foucault, 1998; 2005; Dreyfus & Rabinow, 1995).

With respect to self-submission, interviewees chose to go against moral values, daily practices and desires in favor of having a stable career. The change in practices shows the construction of new professionals who adapt to the values and knowledge of their field, even if reluctantly (F1). Subjects faced with difficulties (F2) and arising from a private context that clashes with work needs adjust their trajectory.

Subjection to the professional environment emphasizes the reconfiguration of practices focused on the technical sphere and linked to a more specific technological context. This context of agility and constant connection, which is typical of the technological reality and associated with the exploitation and precariousness of the workforce, is expressed by the impossibility of disconnection (F3) and by the condition of exploitation in current capitalism (F4).

Figure 13
Subjection modes in labor relations



Source: Elaborated by the authors based on the research corpus.

Professionals inserted in a neoliberal rationality (Antunes, 2018) adapt to professional practices by understanding that they are responsible for their careers, based on an increasingly individual logic (Calasans & Davel, 2020) in the information context. It echoes on how they establish their social relationships, expose their content and develop their skills.

This career individualization process associated with the mediatization of life in the context of the innovative professional field reveals certain dependence on ICTs, which is seen as harmful and painful (Carelli & Andrade, 2023). The need of using digital media, whether to produce and promote one's work or to follow trends and news, affects one's mental balance (Gollnhofer & Manke, 2023) and exceeds the limits of what is healthy.

Accordingly, the informational burden related to professionals' stress is linked to the (unsustainable) capitalist production system and to the technological context itself. Subjects subject themselves to system pressures (Carelli & Andrade, 2023), even if it affects their quality of life, in order to meet the needs of the capitalist system as entrepreneurs of themselves.

Individualization and excessive workload are closely linked to the current phase of capitalism. In other words, the capitalist reconfiguration based on a neoliberal logic linked to new ICTs generates specific subjections linked to these professional segments. It means that the herein presented professional subjections are affected by the neoliberal rationality engendered in the professional discourse of innovation.

Thus, although the investigated professionals are specialized and well paid, they are also marked by sociocultural constraints specific to their activity field, which are associated with both the productive reconfiguration of capital and with peculiarities of the innovation field. These segments are a contradictory field, since they are featured by both privileges and 'precarization' (Roy, 2021; Dorschel, 2022).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

The discursive formation accounting for evidencing innovation professionals' subjection modes arises from regularities concerning austerity and compliance with professional practices. These practices relate to a socio-historical-cultural moment (Foucault, 1998; 2005; 2004). Austerity (R1) highlights the subjections professionals exert over themselves, and it permeates the family power structure, subjects' moral bonds (F1) and their emotional and material difficulties (F2). Compliance (R2), on the other hand, reveals subjections arising, more specifically, from the innovation and technology field, wherein constant and compulsory connectivity (F3), as well as professionals' excessive stress (F4), are often observed. Both rules are inserted in a productive and economic scenario of reconfiguration of cultural, social and technological practices (Greenhaus et al., 2018, Antunes, 2018).

Thus, there are standards to be followed and knowledge about the innovation field that reflects the productive practice. This knowledge is reflected on the findings of the search for social change, individualization of careers, excessive production logic, digital dependence, constancy in building networks and promoting materials, and monitoring trends and news in digital media. Professionals faced with this new professional and technological reality subject themselves (Foucault, 1998; 2005; 2004) to the truth of their field, adapt themselves to capitalist models (Carelli & Andrade, 2023) and to regulations in technologically measured interactions.

Subjection in the literature is related to the work context (Diniz & Campos, 2018) and to specific fields, such as the academic (Furlin, 2021; Fleming, 2022), military (Assis Jr. & Silva, 2021; Corrêa & Nummer, 2017), bureaucratic (Maia, 2020) and criminal ones (Almeida, 2020). However, there is no specific concept for the investigated professional careers. Thus, the current study helps better understanding subjection not only to professions featured by high oppression levels, but also to popular jobs, such as ICTs.

In practical terms, the current study outlined a field of intersection between ICT and EC professionals, and helped improving the perspective on these segments. Moreover, it defined professionals in terms of discursive practices of subjectivities related to subjection. Accordingly, programs aimed at this audience (selection, training, among others) are likely more connected to the reality of these professionals. Thus, public and private organizations will benefit from learning how to deal with such workers.

It is worth highlighting that the present study has limitations. The herein intentionally selected scope limits ICT and EC professionals' data collection and analysis. Another important point lies on lack of coverage of all activities related to these segments. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that the herein observed concentration resulted from the representativeness and saturation criteria described in the methodology.

Regarding the research agenda, the current study involved new possibilities of investigation. Subjection is a 'subjectivation' process that involves the truth about the subject. The discovery of a discursive practice of subjection can lead to other discoveries from the Foucauldian perspective, such as the association between true love (Foucault, 1998) and profession. This possibility is perceived due to the association between work and what gives one pleasure (i.e., erotic), between bond institutionalization (i.e., economic) and a regime of practices (i.e., dietary).

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DATA AVAILABILITY

The entire dataset supporting the current findings was published in the article itself.

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