

The environment in *Petrobrás* magazine (1961-1979): Meaning mobilized by corporate discourse

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Abstract

Purpose – This study analyzes the ideological constructions of Petrobras' corporate environmental discourse during the period from 1961 to 1979.

Theoretical framework – The paper uses Thompson's (2011) critical conception of ideology, specifically its modes of operation and strategies of symbolic construction.

Design/methodology/approach – The study develops a critical analysis through qualitative and documental research based on Petrobras, making use of Thompson's (2011) depth hermeneutics approach.

Findings – *Petrobrás* magazine was used as a communication and accountability tool through which symbolic forms were disseminated, in response to environmental pressures from society. Using a nationalist, developmentalist, and anthropocentric approach, these symbolic forms helped to hegemonize the understanding of reality, promoting the company and the regime.

Practical & social implications of research – Through corporate and press discourse and strategies of symbolic construction, the research contributes to understanding the growing social awareness of the environment arising from organizational behavior.

Originality/value – The study illustrates how corporate environmental discourse, far from being neutral, contributes to establishing and sustaining relations of domination. It also provides insights to understand how Petrobras kept reporting reality and the basis of today's narrative.

Keywords: Corporate discourse, ideology, Petrobras, environmental reporting.

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1 Introduction

Language and its use in discourse are not neutral. Discourse, as a particular form of talking about and understanding the world, or part(s) of it, creates the social reality through the production of concepts, objects, and subject positions, shaping the way we understand and react to the world (Hardy et al., 2000). Thus, language and its use in the discourse of organizations communicated in corporate reports are strategic and ideological, “creating particular ways of seeing things” (Mäkelä, 2013, p. 366).

In the area of the accounting literature, the concept of ideology has been explored with special emphasis on studying the environmental/sustainability report (see Chelli et al., 2019; Journeault et al., 2021; Mäkelä, 2013; Milne et al., 2009; Situ et al., 2021). This literature has shown that corporate reports (Letter from the CEO, annual reports, sustainability reports) can be used to reinforce specific views of the world, participating in the processes by which societies come to frame and understand certain phenomena, communicating an instrumentalized discourse to serve a specific ideological influence (Mäkelä & Laine, 2011; Spence, 2007). Even accounting books and manuals, texts which are often considered apolitical or merely technical, can present ideological characteristics, often subtly, with implications for the educational process (Ferguson et al., 2009). Ideology acts in hegemonizing certain understandings of reality, silencing others (Eagleton, 1997).

Based on Thompson’s (2011) conception of ideology, this study explores, in specific socio-historical circumstances, how the meaning mobilized by symbolic forms serves to establish and sustain relations of domination. Specifically, the research aims to analyze the use of the general modes (and related strategies) proposed by Thompson (2011) through which ideology can operate in the organizational discourse (linguistic and quasi-linguistic) resulting from the environmental effects caused by Petrobrás’ operational activity. Based on the methodological reference of depth hermeneutics (Thompson, 2011), a qualitative and documental study is developed, and a critical analysis is conducted of the narratives and visual images of the material published in *Petrobrás* magazine about the environment (or that allude to the theme), during the period in which it was in circulation (1961-1979). This magazine not only reflected the organizational culture and values, but it also had a broader cultural and political meaning. Similarly

to Chelli et al. (2019), the research focuses on the link between the ideological constructions explored in this discourse and the media context in which it occurs, specifically the written press.

The study contributes to the literature that explores corporate discourse within the ideological perspective (see Chelli et al., 2019; Journeault et al., 2021; Mäkelä, 2013; Situ et al., 2021), embedded in a particular socio-historical context (Brazil in the 1960s and 1970s), in which the relations of domination are evident. The research also responds to the appeal for studies about the use of symbolic forms by organizations to represent themselves, as well as their activities in the “discursive and ideological dispute underway regarding the environment and development” (Milne et al., 2009, p. 1220). The research extends the analysis to underexplored symbolic forms in the literature, in this case *Petrobrás* magazine, assumed by the company as an instrument of accountability, and it addresses the scarcity of studies that analyze, beyond texts, visual images (see Milne et al., 2009). The investigation also contributes to understanding the evolution of the *meaning* of the effects of the organizational activities on the environment, through the corporate and press discourse and the symbolic construction strategies used by a company to establish and sustain its power.

The article is organized as follows. The second section presents the theoretical framework, highlighting the conceptualization of ideology, modes, and strategies with which it operates proposed by Thompson (2011). The third section describes the method. This is followed by an analysis of the socio-historical context. The fifth section analyzes the meaning mobilized by Petrobrás’ discourse in *Petrobrás* magazine (1961-1979) within the context of accusations by the written press regarding the environmental damage caused by the oil industry and/or the company. The article finishes with the discussion and conclusions.

2 Theoretical framework

According to Thompson (2011), the concept of ideology can be used to allude to the ways meaning is built and conveyed by symbolic forms and serves, in certain circumstances, to establish and sustain structured social relations from which some individuals or groups benefit and have interest in preserving, while others seek to contest them. That is, ideology is related to the mode in which meaning serves to, on one hand, actively create

and institute and, on the other, maintain and reproduce relations of domination through a continuous process of production and reception of symbolic forms, in the social contexts in which they are produced, conveyed, and received. Thus, ideology “*is meaning at the service of power*” (Thompson, 2011, p. 16).

Symbolic forms refer to a “broad spectrum of actions and speech, images and texts, which are reproduced by subjects and recognized by them and others as significant constructs” (Thompson, 2011, p. 16), being partially constitutive of the reality of society. It is through them that individuals or groups express themselves and understand each other. The author highlights linguistic

speech and spoken or written expressions, but also non-linguistic or quasi-linguistic ones, for example an image or construct that combines images and words. Thompson (2011, p. 19) thus presents ideology as “a creative and constitutive characteristic of social life that is sustained and reproduced, contested and transformed, through actions and interactions, which include the continuous exchange of symbolic forms.”

The author proposes five general modes through which ideology can operate: legitimization, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation, and reification, which relate to a set of typical strategies of symbolic construction (see Table 1).

Table 1
Modes through which ideology operates and symbolic construction strategies

Modes	Strategies
Legitimization	Rationalization
(the relations of domination can be established and sustained by the fact they are represented as fair and worthy of support)	(development of a rationale that seeks to defend/justify a set of social relations or institutions as worthy of support)
	Universalization
	(interests of certain individuals/groups are presented as serving the interests of all)
Dissimulation	Narrativization
	(stories tell the past and treat the present as part of an acceptable eternal tradition)
	Displacement
(concealment, denial or obscuration, or deviation of attention or overriding existing relationships/processes)	(a particular object or person is used to refer to another, transferring the positive or negative connotations to another object or person)
	Euphemization
	Trope
Unification	(figurative use of language, particularly the synecdoche, metonymy, or metaphor)
	Standardization
	(creation of a collective identity through the association of a shared and acceptable standard reference)
(symbolic construction of unity of individuals in a collective identity)	Symbolization of unity
	(construction of symbols of unity, identity, and collective identification, which can be linked to the narrativization process)
	Differentiation
Fragmentation	(segmentation of individuals/groups that can build a real effective challenge to dominant groups)
	(differences and divisions between people and groups are emphasized)
	Expurgation of the other
Reification	(building of an enemy, internal or external, portrayed as evil, dangerous, and threatening and against which individuals are called on to expunge)
	Naturalization
	(socio-historical phenomena treated as natural events or as an inevitable result of natural characteristics)
(portrayal of a transitory, historical situation as permanent, natural, atemporal)	Eternalization
	(socio-historical phenomena considered as permanent, immutable, and recurrent)
	Nominalization/passivization
	(representation of processes as things/events that occur in the absence of a subject that produces things through, respectively, the transformation of a phrase or part of a nominal syntagma, or when the verbs are placed in the passive voice)

Source: Thompson (2011, pp. 85-88).

3 Method

The research develops a critical analysis through a qualitative study based on Petrobras, making use of the methodological framework of depth hermeneutics developed by Thompson (2011). This covers three phases: a socio-historical analysis, a formal or discursive analysis, and interpretation/reinterpretation, to “explain the connection between the meaning mobilized by the symbolic forms and relations of domination that meaning maintains” (Thompson, 2011, p. 35).

In 1953, after the triumph of the “The oil is ours” campaign, Getúlio Vargas, the President of Brazil at the time, sanctioned Law n. 2,004 (Brasil, 1953), which discusses the National Oil Policy and the creation of *Petróleo Brasileiro S.A. – Petrobras*. For roughly forty years, the company has acted exclusively, in the Brazilian territory, in the activities of oil and natural gas exploration and production and of oil refining. The choice of Petrobras was due to the fact that the company is a symbolic cornerstone in the idealization of Brazilianness (Maia, 2005); it focuses on an activity with a direct impact on the environment, exposing it to public scrutiny; and it finds itself in a position of domination, given that it is a state company, operating as a monopoly and having been “always intimately related to the Brazilian political, economic, and social context” (Petrobras, 2013, p. 6).

This is a qualitative and documental study, whose source and symbolic form is *Petrobrás* magazine during the period in which it was in circulation (1961-1979). The temporal space considered is pertinent. From 1961 to March 31st of 1964, Brazil lived through a politically polarized, economically deteriorated, and socially agitated period. More than two decades of military dictatorship followed, which lasted until March 15th of 1985, leaving deep scars on Brazilian society (see section 4). This magazine resulted from the transformation of the *Petrobras* bulletin in 1961 and defined, in its first edition, the aim of focusing on

the oil question from all of its angles so as to situate oil in the plenitude of its meaning within the national context (...) Having made the pacific point that there is no longer room for controversy regarding the correctness of the state policy adopted by Brazil, all that remains is for us to provide accountability to the Brazilian people for the mission it has entrusted PETROBRÁS with,

the essence and symbol of the dearest concerns of the nationality. Oil is sovereign and the sovereign does not alienate himself. (Petrobras, 1961, p. 3)

Petrobras assumes the use of this means of communication as an instrument of accountability. In that period, this magazine, published monthly, reached more than 100 thousand copies. In the middle of the military dictatorship, with a circulation equal to the biggest ones of the period, the magazine was distributed to the employees, to thousands of subscribers from a wide variety of activities, in Brazil and abroad, and used as a means of promotion in schools, in which Petrobras’ Public Relations Service (Serpub) held workshops to promote the oil activity (Petrobras, 2013). In 1968, at the beginning of the most repressive phase of the military regime, its content was reformulated, extending to topics such as “theater, music, biology, everyday life, and the horoscope, which made it more popular and interesting for families, teachers, and the public in general” (Petrobras, 2013, p. 26). As a result, Petrobras “constituting an efficient example of the interference of the State’s institutional communication in the theory and practice of corporate communication” (Petrobras, 2013, p. 11) and Serpub being marked by the “search for creative solutions” (Petrobras, 2013, p. 21) open up space to explore the use of the magazine to hegemonize certain understandings of reality. The magazine was in circulation up to December of 1979, giving way in 1980 to three publications: the *Notícias da Petrobrás* bulletin, the *Petrobrás News* bulletin, and *Jornal Petrobrás*. Hence the importance assumed by the magazine in the period from 1961 to 1979, based on the socio-political context experienced in Brazil, which also exerted an influence on its purpose, on the diversity of its target audience, and on the comprehensive range of subjects covered.

The research was developed covering the phases of depth hermeneutics identified. The first phase, the socio-historical analysis, intends to contextualize the symbolic forms in the specific space-time conditions of their production, circulation, and reception, since these “do not subsist in a vacuum” (Thompson, 2011, p. 366). According to the author, these conditions can be reconstructed using documental methods.

The research resorted to bibliographic sources and legislation to understand the socio-political environment and the legislative production on the environment in Brazil. In order to understand the media context of the oil activity,

particularly that of Petrobras, and its repercussions for the environment, news items were extracted from *Jornal do Brasil* and from *Correio da Manhã* about environmental damage involving Petrobras in the period analyzed (Appendix A). These two newspapers were among the main ones in the country in the mid-1960s. Both formed part of the mainstream media that supported the campaign against the Goulart government. While *Jornal do Brasil* guaranteed its support during the start of the military regime, *Correio da Manhã* quickly turned on the regime, ultimately becoming a reference in the opposition against the military and the target of persecution at the end of 1968, culminating in its closure in 1974 (Guarnieri, 2021). In the selection of the materials, the following contents were sought: Petrobras accident, gas pipeline, Petrobras pollution, refinery pollution, atmospheric pollution, and oil pipeline breach. The selection of keywords took into account the specificity of the oil activity (e.g. gas pipeline, refinery, oil pipeline) and the published environmental

legislation, which emphasized the term “pollution” (See Table 2, section 4). The newspaper search was carried out on the website of the National Digital Library of Brazil.

Seventy-five editions of *Petrobrás* magazine were also analyzed (digitally supplied by the company or obtained from the National Library) and the materials related with the environment resulting from Petrobras’ activity were identified. Subsequently, the illustrative examples were chosen (Appendix B).

The formal or discursive analysis requires the study of symbolic forms as complex symbolic constructions that present an articulated structure. That is, it requires a phase of analyzing the internal organization, structural characteristics, patterns, and relationships of the symbolic forms, which consist of images or words. The term discourse is used to refer “to the instances of communication currently present” (Thompson, 2011, p. 371). The analysis was operated taking the narrative and visual images as an object. As discursive analysis methods, argumentative

Table 2
Main legislative milestones regarding the environment – 1960s and 1970s

1960s
Law n. 4,771/1965, of 09/15 – Forest Code: Important instrument in the protection of hydric resources, indirectly having the role of protecting the quality and quantity of waters, determining minimal levels of protection for forests and other forms of vegetation situated along rivers, water courses, streams, reservoirs, lakes, and lagoons. (Brasil, 1965)
Law n. 5,197/1967, of 01/03 – Fauna Protection Law: Wild fauna came to be considered a common use good, under the immediate ownership of the Union. (Brasil, 1967b)
Decree-law n. 303/1967, 02/28 – Creation of the National Council for the Control of Environmental Pollution: Revoked after Law n. 5,318/1967 (Brasil, 1967a). It covered standards and limits for pollution (e.g. art 2 “liquid or solid waste or any state of material derived from industrial activities... can only be released into receiving waters if these do not become polluted...”; art. 3 “the substances emitted by any type of industrial source..., can only be released into the atmosphere if it does not become polluted.” According to Arantes (2018), the norm reveals a lack of technical preparation in its elaboration, which is of a strictly legislative nature, since the insufficiency of existing instruments defines the invalidity of its applicability.
Law n. 5,318/1967, September 26th - Establishes the National Sanitation Policy and creates the National Sanitation Council: Highlights that the National Sanitation Policy will cover the control of environmental pollution (Brasil, 1967c).
1970s
Decree n. 73,030/1973, of 10/30 (Brasil, 1973) – Creation of the Special Secretariat for the Environment: Linked to the Interior Ministry and responsible for the execution of environmental promotion actions.
Decree-law n. 1,413/1975, of 07/31 (Brasil, 1975b) – Control of Environmental Pollution Caused by Industrial Activities: Its art. 1 determines that the industries installed or that will be installed in the national territory are obliged to provide the necessary measures to prevent or correct inconveniences and damage caused by pollution and contamination of the environment, using adequate control equipment, including with special funding to acquire it and support from the government. In the case of non-observance of the arrangements of art. 1, it is the exclusive responsibility of the Federal Executive Power to “determine the suspension or cancellation of the functioning of an industrial establishment whose activity is considered of high interest to national development and security” (art. 2).
Decree n. 76,389/1975, of 10/03 (Brasil, 1975a) – Measures for the Prevention and Control of Industrial Pollution: Discusses measures for the prevention and control of industrial pollution, addressed by Decree-law n. 1,413/75, and sets out other arrangements. Its art. 1 defines industrial pollution, highlighting the direct or indirect effects that are harmful to the health, safety, and wellbeing of the population, the creation of conditions that are adverse to social and economic activities, and the production of relevant damage to flora, fauna, and other national resources. Art. 5 establishes that “Besides the penalties defined by the state and municipal legislation, non-compliance with the necessary measures... will subject the transgressors to: a) the restriction of tax incentives and benefits granted by the public authorities; b) the restriction of lines of financing in the establishment of official credit; c) the suspension of their activities.

analysis was used for the narratives and the analytical approach to visual rhetoric proposed by Greenwood et al. (2019) was used for the visual images, including categorical and content analyses. Thus, argumentative analysis was used to “break down the discursive body into sets of affirmations or assertions, organized around certain topics and themes, and then map the relationships between those affirmations and topics” (Thompson, 2011, p. 374). Categorical analysis involves categories known a priori by social actors from everyday life and/or induced based on a genre of corporate communication; the research adopted categorization by semiotic elements (see Greenwood et al., 2019), correlated with air pollution (gases, smoke, sky), water pollution (spills, water), and others (providing the image accompanied texts related to the environment), so as to select the visual images related to the oil activity that alluded to the environment. Subsequently, the context analysis covered abstract explanations of the social reality through a description of the visual phenomena present in the visual images by means of: a perceived artifact (denotative level) and cultural artifact (connotative level).

Taking as an object of analysis the selected materials from *Petrobrás* magazine, the text (and/or image) coded in each ideological category was analyzed separately to unveil its specific meanings, so as to identify the structural characteristics that enable the mobilization of the meaning. In the specific formal analysis process, first the structural characteristics of the materials from *Petrobrás* magazine were analyzed, seeking to establish those characteristics as instances of symbolic construction strategies. That is, the pattern of inference followed, as proposed by Thompson (2011), in the opposite direction to the presentation of Table 1, first identifying the symbolic construction strategies that, in specific circumstances, can be linked to certain modes of operation of the ideology, leading us to the next phase. As Thompson (2011, pp. 379-380) mentions, the formal analysis “can provide only initial access to the modes of operation of the ideology.”

The interpretation/reinterpretation phase analyzes the creative construction of a potential meaning based on the results of the socio-historical analysis and of the formal or discursive analysis, going beyond a synthetic construction process. In this phase, the symbolic form is interpreted under that light, seeking “to explain and elaborate on what it says, what it represents, what it involves” (Thompson, 2011, p. 34). The development of the interpretation implies interpreting a pre-interpreted field, that is, the projection of “a possible meaning that

may diverge from the meaning built by the subjects that constitute the socio-historical world” (Thompson, 2011, p. 378). Within the author’s line, the whole interpretation is open to suspicion, which requires the presentation of reasons and foundations, evidence and arguments, which make it plausible.

Thus, the adaptation of depth hermeneutics for interpreting ideology makes use of socio-historical analysis and formal analysis “with the aim of unmasking the meaning that is at the service of the power” (Thompson, 2011, p. 35). The interpretation of the ideology thus takes on “a dual task, the creative explanation of the meaning, and the synthetic demonstration of how that meaning serves to establish and sustain relations of domination” (Thompson, 2011, p. 380).

These steps should be seen as analytically distinct dimensions of a complex interpretative process, and not so much as separate stages of a sequential method (Thompson, 2011). However, so as to facilitate the understanding of the author’s hermeneutic procedure and clearly reflect his proposed methodology, the next section examines the socio-historical context, covering the operationalization of the first phase of depth hermeneutics. However, section 5 presents the formal analysis and interpretation/reinterpretation in an integrated way, developing the argument about the inter-linking between meaning and power.

4 The socio-historical context

In political terms, Jânio Quadros, elected President of Brazil in 1960, renounced his post seven months after assuming it. His vice, João Goulart, assumed the presidency in September of 1961. The inheritance of a deteriorated macroeconomic picture worsened after the renouncement (Villela, 2005). Goulart had a lively and politically unstable presidential mandate, marked by national and international political polarization, and by two phases: the parliamentarist phase (from September of 1961 to January of 1963) and the presidentialist phase. The discomfort generated by his government led to various sectors of society uniting, including the armed forces, the Catholic Church, rural landowners, national business owners, and international investors (Delgado, 2010). The result materialized in Goulart’s removal in April of 1964, as a result of the civil-military coup, launched with the appearance of freeing the country from corruption, from communism, and re-establishing democracy (Fausto, 1999), and which promoted the establishment of the

Military Dictatorship in Brazil. This regime lasted until March 15th of 1985, with the re-democratization process being concluded in 1989 with direct elections for President of the Republic (Hermann, 2005). The dictatorial period led to deep changes in Brazilian politics, society, and the economy, and was characterized by authoritarianism, repression, and limited freedom of expression, silencing and repressing those who opposed the government (Comissão Nacional da Verdade, 2014). Not characterized by transparency of information or by dialogue, the military dictatorship showed efficiency “in the composition of its image and in the revitalization of the nationalist sentiments” (Petrobras, 2013, p. 21), particularly in the period called the “economic miracle” (1969-1973), also the most repressive of the dictatorial regime.

It also has to be considered that the State’s interests were present in Petrobras’ interests. Public companies were an instrument of development policy widely used during the military dictatorship. The military authoritatively continued to strengthen the developmentalist State, which for a long time showed the potential, through a policy of growth, to appease the internal contradictions (Novy, 2009). The actions of the state companies and of the developmentalist State in this period culminated in the 2nd National Development Plan (NDP) (1975-1979), with deliberate State participation in public companies (for example, the role of Petrobras is explicitly referred to in the development of shale) (Brasil, 1974). The 2nd NDP was launched as a result of a serious disequilibrium in the balance of payments of Brazil due to the 1973 oil shock, as oil was the engine of the country’s energy matrix.

Petrobras thus engaged in an important expansion of its activities during the military regime, as a member of the sector capable of contributing to the country’s economic emancipation (Praun & Costa, 2016). With the mission of resolving the old Brazilian dependency on fuel imports, in the first decade of its existence, the exploratory activities did not alleviate the weight of the national dependence on imports of large volumes of oil. In 1960, the conclusions of the Link report highlighted the inexistence of large accumulations of oil in the terrestrial sections of the sedimentary basins of Brazil. In the second half of the 1960s, the company reorientated its explorations to the maritime platform, which resulted in the discovery of important oil fields at sea (Morais, 2013). In this period and through a vision of the time, Smith (1978) contextualizes Petrobras:

Petrobras cannot be examined solely or even primarily from the financial viewpoint, as political, and even emotional, factors should be considered, which may well be crucial – at least with regard to the Brazilian people. These political and emotional factors can be summed up in one word: nationalism. The development of the oil industry was very important for the national pride of Brazil, and Petrobras, which was an instrument for achieving that goal, emerged as a virtual state monopoly due to the strong sentiment of the masses in favor of that form. Its achievements – real or imaginary – since its creation have encouraged Brazilian nationalism. And that feeling can be seen as positive because it has promoted national development, and this, in turn, is a strategic advantage for Brazil as it provides a better life for future generations, as well as conserving national independence. (Smith, 1978, p. 193)

In environmental terms, until the 1970s the legislations on the topic were disperse and specific, and sought “the recognition of the national territory and use of natural resources, especially water and mining resources, as a strategy for guaranteeing national sovereignty” (Arantes, 2018, p. 326), seeking the best economic use. Table 2 presents the main federal legislative milestones related to the environment in the 1960s and 1970s.

It was in 1975 that companies were obliged by law to prevent and correct contamination damage to the environment. However, it was the end of the 1960s that essentially saw official participation in international conventions/meetings. In 1968, Brazil participated in the Biosphere Conference held at the UNESCO headquarters, aiming to address conservation and the sustainable use of the biosphere. In 1971 in Brasília, there was the 1st Symposium on Environmental Pollution with the aim of attracting subsidies for the study of environmental pollution in Brazil. At the start of 1972, the *Limits of Growth* (Meadows et al., 1972) report was published, warning of the limits to the exploration of natural resources, whose conclusions had major repercussions in the first United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, known as the Stockholm Conference, held that same year (Jornal do Brasil, 1972b). This conference was a driver of the implementation of environmental conservation and control measures in Brazil and its more

aligned position with the international conventions. Brazil was also a signatory of conventions that affected the oil industry, namely the International Convention on Civil Liability for Oil Pollution Damage, of 1969, and the International Convention for the Prevention of Pollution from Ships, signed in London in 1973 and altered by the 1978 Protocol. The 2nd NDP also included environmental guidelines (Brasil, 1974, ch. IX), highlighting that “primarily in major metropolitan areas... anti-pollution standards will be established, as part of a general concern about preserving the environment and avoiding the devastation of the country’s natural resources” (p. 17), whose preservation forms part of development, highlighting that “fighting pollution is already important in Brazil” (p. 92).

5 The meaning mobilized in the corporate discourse through *Petrobrás* magazine

The commitment of Brazil to conserve and preserve the environment began to be felt in the 1960s, particularly with the publication of the Forest Code and the Fauna Protection Law, and official participation in international conventions/meetings (e.g. the Biosphere Conference). The press reported on accidents that caused damage to the environment, involving the oil industry and Petrobras. Table 3 chronologically summarizes the related news items in *Jornal do Brasil* and *Correio da Manhã*, which configured accusations toward Petrobras.

Table 3
Main news items and consequent accusations

Date	Publication	Title	Accusations
02/21/1961	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“Breathing is forbidden”	The refineries are mentioned as polluters.
03/03/1961	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“A little more salary is worth the risk of losing one’s life”	Oil refinery workers are subject to serious diseases that can cost them their lives.
03/09/1967	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“SURSAN installs in Castelo a device to verify the air pollution in the river”	Rio de Janeiro is one of the cities with the most atmospheric pollution in the world.
05/12/1967	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“First air pollution test shows that smoke from buses affects health”	Companies whose activities were causing odors in the Avenida Brasil region, including refineries, are subject to inspection.
04/18/1969	<i>Correio da Manhã</i>	“Air pollution worsens and Government fails to punish culprits”	The particulate matter emitted by refineries is among the reasons for the worsening air pollution in cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro.
07/03/1969	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“IES thinks it’s combatting polluted air well”	On the list of big companies that hinder the work of air pollution inspectors are government refineries.
05/14/1970	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“The dangerous air of progress”	Two oil refineries, one belonging to Petrobras, are major sources of air pollution.
12/18/1970	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“Dehydration in December killed 62 children in São Paulo and 27 in the state of Rio”	Petrobras refinery indicated as a causer of worsening air pollution, one of the causes of dehydration, which killed children in Brazilian cities.
06/30/1972	<i>Correio da Manhã</i>	“Intoxication, a new threat to Ilha”	A breach on an auxiliary line of the Petrobrás pipeline; the low humidity caused intoxication.
07/01/1972	<i>Correio da Manhã</i>	“Pollution: two meter stains”	Breach on the Petrobras pipeline: waters of the bay, on Ilha do Governador, covered in oil, with consequences for fishermen.
07/02/1972	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“Petrobrás is already clearing oil from the bay”	Oil breach on Petrobras pipeline polluted Guanabara Bay, with consequences for bathers and fishermen.
04/01/1975	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“Petrobrás sprays dispersant over oil polluting the bay”	Serious accident in Guanabara Bay involved Iraqi oil tanker carrying oil for Petrobras.
08/07/1976	<i>Jornal do Brasil</i>	“Ships that spill oil in the Bay were fined Cr\$980 thousand in seven months”	Spending on cleaning up oil came to almost Cr\$1.6 million, in 1975.

In one item of 1961 in *Jornal do Brasil* under the title “Breathing is forbidden,” the refineries are mentioned as polluters: “both the refinery in Manguinhos... and the one in Duque de Caxias... are wrongly located and are major contributors to air pollution, due to the numerous gases produced in their industrial process” (Donato, 1961a, p. b3). In another edition, Donato (1961b) says:

Oil refinery workers are subject to serious diseases, which can cost them their lives, or disable them for work. The toxic substances that are most present in the refinery environment, or close by, are sulfuric gas, ethyl mercaptan, and methyl mercaptan. All three are gases that cause intense irritation of the tissues they come into contact with. The effects of sulfuric gas will depend on the concentration. A small quantity produces an odor characteristic of rotten eggs. At a 50 times higher concentration, the odor is unbearable, but, after a few minutes, the person loses their sense of smell. Above that the symptoms will progress with irritation of the eyes and respiratory tract. Daily contact causes sub-acute poisoning, with headache, nausea, sore throat, cough, and dizziness. At a very high dose cardiac failure and death occur. (Donato, 1961b, p.10)

In the October/1962 edition of *Petrobrás* magazine, an item about the nine years since Petrobras’ creation opened with an image of a tower of the company emitting gases into the atmosphere, showing a red flame and a black

cloud of smoke (Figure 1). The accompanying linguistic message states “NINE YEARS and the flame is still lit” (Petrobras, 1962, p. 11). The next page presents a formally dressed man smiling, showing his right hand covered in a dripping black liquid. Pages 11 to 23 are dedicated to the material. Figure 1 illustrates the first three pages.

Despite the narrative not discussing the effects of Petrobras’ activity on the environment, these are implied in the images. The first image connotes Petrobras’ activities, which are in full swing, and the second connotes the satisfaction and joy with Petrobras’ oil of the then president of Brazil, Getúlio Vargas, who

on October 3rd of 1953... sanctioned law 2004, which gave new directions to the national oil policy, through the creation of Petrobrás and the restructuring of the CNP. On that memorable day, the flame was lit of the fight for Brazil’s economic emancipation. Nine years have passed since then. Those years have been neither easy nor peaceful. But despite all of the difficulties, it continues to shine, and with greater intensity than the flame lit on October 3rd of 1953. (Petrobras, 1962, p. 13)

Together the images evoke the idea of the economic independence derived from the Brazilian oil policy and the rightness of the decision to create the company, corroborated by the narrative presented. Despite the emission of toxic gases, with directly harmful effects for the workers that inhale them and for the environment, this being a visible side of Petrobras’ activity, the way the contribution of

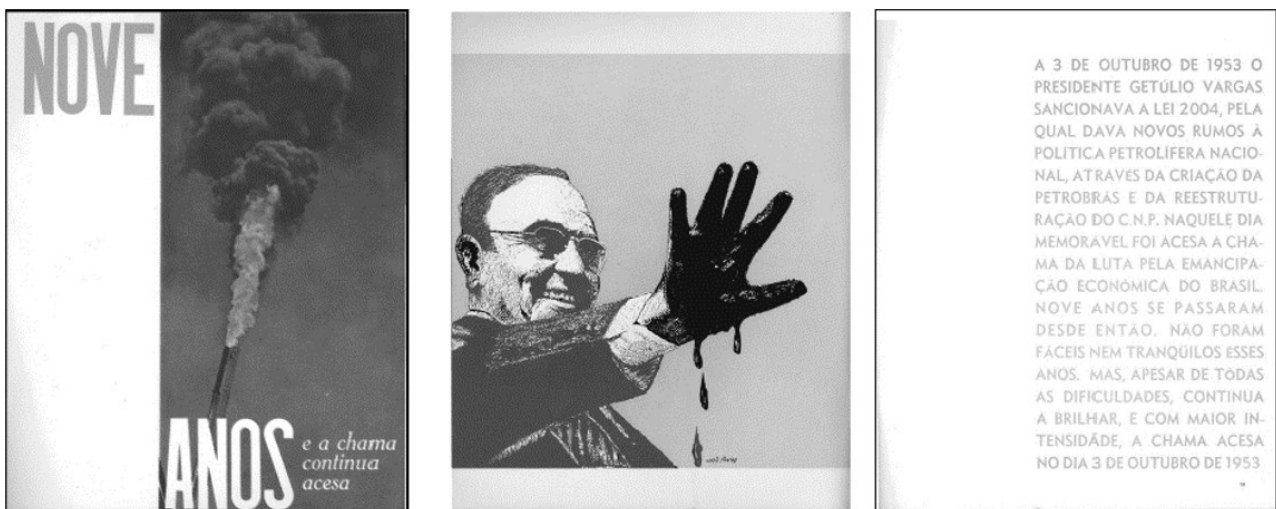


Figure 1. Nine years and the flame is still lit

Source: Petrobras (1962, pp. 11-13)

that activity to the Brazilian people and to the country's economic emancipation are reported means that reality seems to be less important than the successes obtained with Petrobras' creation. There is a rationalization in the justification: "You only have to verify the results obtained by the state company in its performance in the mission it was given, to ascertain that its creditors were right and justify the ardor in the sustained fight for the good Brazilian people" (Petrobras, 1962, p. 15). The narrative makes use of universalization by highlighting that Petrobras leads to "progress in the poorest regions of Brazil, creating jobs for thousands of workers and bringing wellbeing to their families" (Petrobras, 1962, p. 17), serving the interests of all. The company repays the people and the support given: "Petrobrás owes the people not only for the campaign for its creation, but also the resources it needed to begin its activities... Early on, however, the company began to pay them back in multiples; what it had received" (Petrobras, 1962, p. 16). The narrative also reveals the use of narrativization, showing that the social relations at the time are contextualized in stories of the past that narrate the present as part of an acceptable tradition. The relations of domination are established and sustained this way by Petrobras by being represented as legitimate.

The ideological perspective of Petrobras' discourse also operates in this material through dissimulation. Despite the implicit recognition emerging from the visual rhetoric, the narrative makes use of silencing, redirecting the attention to a particularly dear topic for Brazilians, revealing Petrobras' achievements in its nine years of existence. The narrative also makes use of a trope, concretely of a metaphor: "the flame was lit of the fight for Brazil's economic emancipation" (Petrobras, 1962, p. 13), the flame visible in Figure 1. Through the *modus operandi* of unification, oil and Petrobras are conveyed as national symbols of unity:

For decades the Brazilian people were in search of a national solution for the national oil problem (...) Petrobras was charged with the achievement of its vast and complex work program, which are closely linked to the greatest interests of national sovereignty. (Petrobras, 1962, p. 15)

This symbolization is interlinked with the narrativization process, as these national symbols form part of the narrative "of the origins that tell a shared story and project a collective destiny" (Thompson, 2011, p. 86). They are also projected as permanent, as their end

becomes unimaginable, with there being reification through eternalization.

The ideology thus operates through legitimization, dissimulation, and unification to revitalize one of the greatest nationalist myths, the abundance of oil in Brazil, firmly reached through the conclusions of the Link report in 1960, which led to increasing questions about the handling of Petrobras' exploratory policy (Dias & Quagliano, 1993; Morais, 2013). The concern was not the environment itself, but the scarcity of the oil resource, which had given *meaning* (and the intention was for this to continue) to the social imagination.

In the March-April/1968 edition, *Petrobrás* magazine, in different clothing, showed on its cover the image of the face of a black man smiling and wearing a helmet; his face and helmet are dirty with black stains. Connotatively, the image refers to a Petrobras worker, whose expression conveys joy, optimism, and sincerity. The linguistic message that accompanies it are titles of two items: "We're breathing in death" (Petrobras, 1968, pp. 18-23) and "Why are we one of the biggest in the world" (Petrobras, 1968, pp. 24-29). The highlighting and the sequence of the two titles, linked by the causal subordinating conjunction "Why," which refers to the introduction of a sentence that refers to the cause of the event expressed by the first sentence, suggests the recognition of an evident reality and consequent rational justification of Petrobras.

The image and text (see Figure 2) reinforce a pillar of Petrobras' legitimacy, the company's contribution to the Brazilian people and to the country, as well as emphasizing the feeling of belonging to the company and of pride held by the employees, generating the impression that these override the fear of breathing in death.

The item entitled "We're breathing in death" covers atmospheric pollution in Brazil and in other countries, as presented in its opening: "Rio de Janeiro, like Los Angeles or London, is becoming an unbreathable city. The danger is becoming increasingly greater and lies in the air we breathe" (Petrobras, 1968, pp. 18-19). The item highlights that "in the great cities of the United States the warning has already been sounded against air pollution" (p. 18) and "the air is a threat" (p. 20).

Rio de Janeiro is indicated by *Jornal do Brasil* (1967a) as one of the cities with the most air pollution in the world. Air pollution was becoming so serious that it was necessary to take measures to try to minimize the problem (e.g. Decree-law n. 303/1967, 02/28 Brasil,

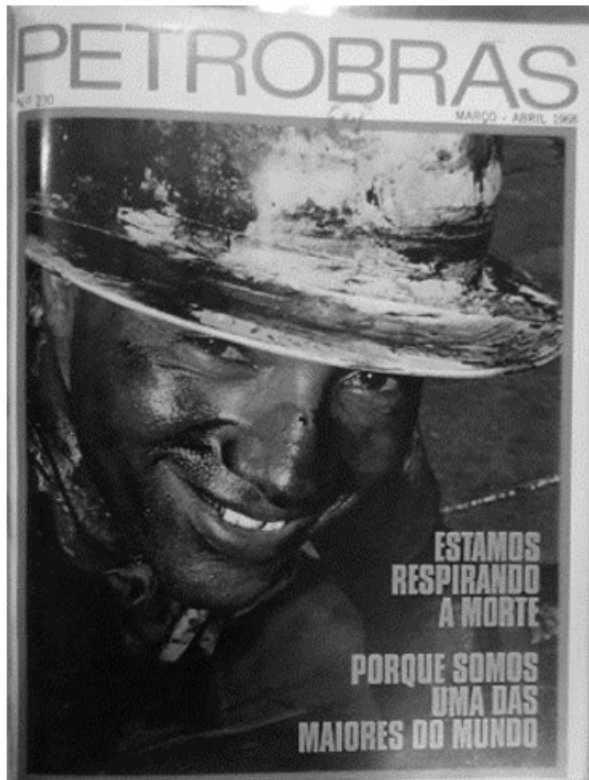


Figure 2. Cover of *Petrobrás* magazine March-April/1968

Source: Petrobras (1968, cover)

1967a). An example is Decree n. 779, of 01/30/1967, which approved the Regulation for the Control of Atmospheric Pollution in the State of Guanabara. One of the activities of the Atmospheric Pollution Control Service, created by the aforementioned decree, was to monitor companies whose activities caused odors in the Avenida Brasil region, and among the companies were the refineries (Jornal do Brasil, 1967b). Another measure was the installation of devices to analyze air pollution in the city of Rio de Janeiro (Jornal do Brasil, 1967b). The item in *Petrobrás* under analysis creates the impression of constituting an answer of the company to the indications of the press.

The air is presented as a “threat” (Petrobras, 1968, p. 20); “Automobiles, buses, and trucks spread death and disease” (p. 21). There is no explicit recognition of Petrobras’ contribution to that situation. On the contrary, it is the air that is a threat and not the company’s activity, creating a distortion about the origin of the pollution. The narrative suggests the existence of fragmentation, through the strategy of expunging the other, with the construction of a threatening enemy against which society should unite.

Petrobras is referred to in the item at two points. First, under the subtitle “Water pollution is another problem that requires a solution,” it is stated that Petrobras “filters its waste, removing the oil before launching it into the sea” (Petrobras, 1968, p. 22) and as having participated in a round table about water pollution in Guanabara Bay that took place in a seminary on safety engineering held in June of 1961. At a second point, the company is referred to in the part of the item with the subtitle “How Petrobras addresses air and water pollution” (Petrobras, 1968, p. 22). In this part, it is presented that “it has been possible... to keep its industrial units within the standards that guarantee the health of the population” (Petrobras, 1968, p. 22), through various measures. These are only some reports of actions carried out with relation to water. The company mentioned the undesirable subject, recognizing it implicitly, not explaining anything about it. The ideological perspective of Petrobras’ narrative operates through dissimulation, with the strategy of displacement, attributing to automobiles, buses, and trucks the negative connotation and contextualizing Petrobras within the field of the solution, and of legitimization, through rationalization.

The Brazilian press continued pointing to the worsening of air pollution in cities such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro (Correio da Manhã, 1969). Various reasons collaborated in increasing this problem, including the particulate matter emitted by refineries (Correio da Manhã, 1969). In 1962, *Jornal do Brasil* made a relevant point concerning air pollution:

IES technicians report that the fight against air pollution was started by the agency in March of 1967, when Governor Negrão de Lima sanctioned Decree n. 779, even giving the Institute powers to fine and close offending firms, that is, those that did not seek to adapt their ovens and equipment with anti-pollution devices. The greatest difficulty found by the inspectors is that on the list of major polluters were federal and state bodies, such as refineries, Sursan’s own Asphalt Plant, and concessionary companies such as the gas one. (*Jornal do Brasil*, 1969, p. 14)

Government refineries are indicated on the list of these major companies. From the content of the material it is perceived that the refineries did not fully comply with the impositions of the decree that had been established two years earlier.

In 1970, Brazil was experiencing the period of greatest popularity of the regime, with the beginning of the “economic miracle.” The regime reinvented the optimism and social imagination, propagating a “Great Brazil” (Fico, 1997). Simultaneously, the most repressive period of the dictatorship was about to begin after Institutional Act 5. In the March-April/1970 edition, the front cover (Figure 3) of *Petrobrás* magazine again refers to the topic of air pollution, appearing to respond to the criticisms faced.

Denotatively, the image shows an installation/tower of Petrobras functioning, launching an enormous flame into the air. The first linguistic message that accompanies the image is “fire!...”, written in red. Next, in white, the following can be read: “But, its presence is progress. They are refineries supplying Brazil. Moving vehicles and industries. Creating wealth. It’s the Petrobras that doesn’t stop. It’s the Petrobras serving Brazil” (Petrobras, 1970, p. 44). The company’s brand is equally visible, the lozenge with the name Petrobrás in the center.



Figure 3. Front cover of *Petrobrás* magazine March-April/1970

Source: Petrobras (1970, p. 44)

Connotatively, the photograph refers to the company in operation, despite the collateral effects of this activity, namely the pollution resulting from the combustion portrayed in the flame. Pollution is explicitly recognized in the message “fire!...”, through the use of the exclamation mark and dots, followed by the use of the adversative coordinating conjunction “But,” which indicates opposing ideas: if on one hand there is fire (implicitly pollution), on the other there is progress, a greater good that overrides it. The rhetorical use of these visual design elements creates organizational legitimacy by reinforcing Petrobras’ contribution to Brazil’s development. The use of the logo that alludes to the colors of Brazil conveys unification, through the strategy of symbolization of unity. Through a developmentalist strategy, Petrobras is shown as an instrument of the policy of development and the propagation of the regime’s ideas, which articulated the repression, persecution, and social control with optimistic narratives, silencing the reality and promoting the idea of a “Great Brazil.”

Another item in *Jornal do Brasil* from 1970 stands out, pointing to two refineries as being responsible for a large part of the industrial pollution in the State of São Paulo, one of them Presidente Bernardes, the property of Petrobras:

One recently conducted study defined the biggest sources of contaminated air and the proportions with which they contribute to the worsening of the situation: - two oil refineries, which every day emit 12 tons of sulfur dioxide, corresponding to an approximate total of 80 per cent of the pollutants of the other industries of Greater São Paulo... (Jornal do Brasil, 1970, p. 1b)

The pollution in Rio de Janeiro continued to create problems for people’s health, being indicated as an aggravating factor for the dehydration of children. One of the items in *Jornal do Brasil* from December of 1970 was entitled “Dehydration in December killed 62 children in São Paulo and 27 in the state of Rio.” A doctor from Rio de Janeiro reported to the newspaper that “the population of the Imbarié District (...) is the most affected by dehydration, as a result of the heat, a lack of water, and a deficient diet, worsened by the air pollution conditions caused by the Petrobrás refinery” (Soares, 1970, p. 6).

In 1972, the press narrated the breach of a pipeline of the company that polluted Guanabara Bay. The oil

spread with consequences for bathers and fishermen (Jornal do Brasil, 1972a), the low humidity created intoxication (Correio da Manhã, 1972a, July 30th), and the “fishermen cry over their losses” (Correio da Manhã, 1972b, p. 16). Petrobrás magazine failed to mention the incident. In the September-October of 1972 edition, it reported on the development of new methods for combatting water pollution (Petrobras, 1972).

In March of 1975, a serious accident occurred in Guanabara Bay involving an Iraqi oil tanker carrying oil for Petrobras (Jornal do Brasil, 1975). It is considered the biggest oil spill in the bay: six million liters of oil contaminated the waters (Alencar, 2016). According to Jornal do Brasil (1976, p. 16) “the cost of cleaning up the areas affected by the oil totaled almost Cr\$1 million and 600 thousand last year” (value updated in December of 2022 according to the IGP DI would be R\$4,058.522.68). “The accident mobilized six entities due to its consequences and motivated the creation of a special group assigned to act in cases of similar emergencies.”

Even in the middle of the dictatorship, Petrobras “could not fail to correct its image, even though without directly mentioning the event” (Petrobras, 2013, p. 34). The January-February-March edition of *Petrobrás* magazine, published immediately after the accident, highlights the company in times of ecology. Figure 4 presents the cover (Petrobras, 1975).

Denotatively, the cover is composed of an illustration of a lighthouse, illuminated in the upper part of its structure, surrounded by a tumultuous sea, with many waves all around, and the color blue prevailing. A square photograph is also presented over this illustration, showing a man looking up, in an enclosed environment, highlighting two big light bulbs, one of them illuminated. Accompanying the verticality of the lighthouse tower is the yellow of the linguistic message “A light over the sea.” Horizontally, in the lower part of the cover, “Petrobras in times of ecology” is written in white (Petrobras, 1975, cover). The first linguistic message refers to an item published under the title “Lighthouse and lighthouse keepers” (p. 12). The latter is also the title of one of the items in the magazine, to which five pages are dedicated.

The lighthouse connotes a guiding light in the middle of the darkness or direction in adverse situations, reinforced by the turbulence connoted by the tumultuous sea. The photograph presented in the middle of this context refers to man’s search for solutions. The messages direct the reader through the meanings of



Figure 4. Cover of *Petrobrás* magazine January-February-March/1975

Source: Petrobras (1975, cover)

the image. The visual elements and texts that accompany them create the impression that there is a light for the environmental problems caused by the company. Without directly referring to the accident that occurred, there is implicit recognition of the existence of problems in the sea connected with Petrobras.

The narrative “Petrobras and the environment” (Petrobras, 1975, pp. 19-23) recognizes that pollution is a current problem derived from industrial development, and that it is necessary to combat it. But for this “it is fundamental that we have ecology-based training. This is the only way we will actually contribute to the country’s progress” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 19). Pollution is defined in a didactic way: “it is the physical-chemical or biological alteration of the environment, in an accelerated way, in a rather unnatural manner” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 19) and it is clarified that the rational use of natural resources is necessary, with “the employment of ecology-based methods or processes” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 21). Decree n. 76,389/1975 (Brasil, 1975a) presented in that same year the definition of pollution in its art. 1. Within the passage “The oil industry and the environment,” there is reiteration

of the idea that “there is no incompatibility between the various activities of the oil industry and the maintenance of ecological equilibrium” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 22) in the different phases: extraction, production, transport, and refining. Through the strategy of rationalization, the company seeks support for its activity, representing it as legitimate, presenting a set of reasons that justify it. With reference to transport, it is mentioned that “although they are rare, there are events of an accidental, unpredictable nature, such as various types of disasters with tankers, pipeline ruptures, etc., that are really damaging, when large quantities of oil are released” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 22). The company explicitly recognizes the existence of accidents such as the one in Guanabara Bay, without directly referring to the event, adjectivizing them as “rare” and “unpredictable” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 22).

Regarding ecology-based development, the passage in the magazine places the company in alignment with the government’s action, legitimizing the support of its activity through the strategies of rationalization, universalization, and narrativization:

In Brazil, Petrobrás, through its unique position, through its meaning to the country’s development, and through its industrial size, has been making efforts in the sense of also maintaining a position of leadership and support for the policy adopted by the Federal Government in the ecological field. (Petrobras, 1975, p. 22)

It should be highlighted that in 1973 the Special Secretariat for the Environment was created by the Brazilian government and the 2nd NDP stressed the need to “address the effect of [industrial] pollution and, in general, aggression against the environment” (Brasil, 1974, p. 47). The previous excerpt also reveals the ideological perspective of the corporate narrative through reification, showing as natural the efforts undertaken by Petrobras, also resorting to the use of the gerund to highlight its eternalization.

The rest of the item details Petrobras’ actions to minimize the environmental damage from its activities, creating the belief that it acts in order to fulfill the expectations of society in accordance with the concerns attributed. The item concludes by highlighting: “These are some examples of the actions taken by the company to preserve the balance of the environment. Ecology-based development is also a viewpoint of Petrobrás” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 23). Once again, Petrobras’ narrative reflects the

discourse of the regime, which stressed it should follow a policy of “equilibrium, to reconcile high-speed development with a minimum of damaging effects on the ecology and guaranteeing the rational use of the country’s resources” (Brasil, 1974, p. 92). Through the strategies of reification, “ecology-based” development is represented as something natural to Petrobras’ action. The examples include Petrobras’ affiliation with the “international organization that acts in the area of pollution, which is of enormous importance, not only for remaining up to date technically, but also to guarantee support in any potential disaster at sea” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 23), once again not referring to the accident that occurred. The narrative distracts and makes use of dissimulation through displacement and a trope (metonymy) by highlighting the activities of cleaning the waters, namely in Guanabara Bay, subtly alluding to the “oil pollution caused by foreign ships” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 23). It is noted that the oil that was the origin of the spill was Iraqi, but in service of Petrobras.

The link to the international organization together with the linguistic message of the cover “Petrobras in times of ecology” reinforce the idea that it was experiencing global pressures in environmental terms and Petrobras could not be left out. In fact, less than two years before, in June of 1972, the Stockholm Conference took place, which was a driver of greater alignment of Brazil with the international conventions, as analyzed in section 4.

Among the actions reported by Petrobras in the report from 1975, there is also mention of “the adoption of the load-on-top system in its tankers, to eliminate the release of cleaning water from the tanks, or of ballast water (water used to fill the tanks that contained oil)” (Petrobras, 1975, p. 23). In 1976, *Jornal do Brasil* (1976, p. 16) showed that the release of ballast water from tankers into Guanabara Bay was a common practice, with the amount of fines for oil spillages in the bay applied by the Ports Authority totaling Cr\$ 980 thousand (Value updated in December of 2022 according to the IGP DI: R\$2,485,845.14) in the first seven months of the year. In 1975, Decree n. 76,389 (Brasil, 1975a), on Measures for Preventing and Controlling Industrial Pollution, and Decree-law n. 1,413 (Brasil, 1975b), on Controlling Environmental Pollution by Industrial Activities had been issued.

Considering that the first major oil spill occurred in 1975, the year in which companies were obliged, by law, to prevent and correct damage from environmental pollution, it is verified that up to 1975 the contexts of

the production of the symbolic forms of Petrobras in the relationship with the environment did not include legal concerns about environmental damage, but rather the risk of mere scarcity through exhaustion of raw material. However, essentially starting in the 1970s, and attending to the company's close relationship with the military regime and to the official position assumed by the military in this domain, concerns other than merely legal ones influenced those contexts: the promotion of the company and of the military regime through developmentalist and anthropocentric narratives.

6 Conclusion

Petrobras emerged imbued in a nationalist sentiment of the Brazilian people, which idealized the country's progress by achieving the development of the monopolistic oil industry. Its power is rooted in emotional (see Smith, 1978; Maia, 2005), legal (see Brasil, 1953), and political factors (see Petrobras, 2013).

However, since the beginning Petrobras carried with it stigmas related to the environment, seeing the need to establish and sustain structured social relations, using corporate discourse for this, which far from being neutral, was shown to be ideological and often strategic. *Petrobrás* magazine was used in the 1960s and 1970s as a communication channel and instrument of accountability through which symbolic forms were disseminated and organizational responses to the pressures from society regarding the environmental theme were constituted. Those pressures resulted from the atmospheric pollution of Petrobras' activities (with direct consequences for workers' health and, in general, for public health), as well as accidents, events of an extraordinary nature, at the company's installations or with ships, but reported with major frequency. Their repercussions were evident: losses of human lives and consequent psychological effects on the families, and loss of biodiversity.

In the 1960s, Petrobras showed little concern about hiding the deprecating attributes of its activity, justified by the context of the time, whose concern focused on the degradation of sources of resources. The company's contribution to Brazilian economic emancipation and to the wellbeing of the people were overriding, echoing the nationalism that was at the base of the company's constitution and that was revitalized by the military regime. In the 1970s, also as a result of the subject of the environment starting to be discussed at a global level, the

company showed alignment with international organizations and with the government, disclosing a range of actions compatible with preserving the environment. However, in its discourse it did not explicitly portray itself as a causer or as being at the heart of the environmental accidents that occurred. That is, it silenced negative questions to build a particular understanding of the reality.

There was therefore an evolution of the corporate discourse over the two decades analyzed. The symbolic forms studied promote a particular view of the world and function as a means of legitimization of those views and of certain courses of action (see Mäkelä & Laine, 2011; Spence, 2007). The analysis of the material of *Petrobrás* magazine, including in ways that integrate text and images, also sustains the need for space-time contextualization of the symbolic forms. The importance, perceived through the corporate discourse, attributed by Petrobrás itself to the environmental damage derived from its activities in the material analyzed underwent an evolution. That is, the *meaning* of the company's concerns about the environment accompanied the international movements on behalf of the environment, but without this affecting its activity or its contribution to the developmentalist policy of the regime. By using the modes of legitimization, dissimulation, unification, fragmentation, and reification (Thompson, 2011), Petrobras presents its activity as beneficial for Brazil and the Brazilian people, despite the news reported by the press.

Considering the target audience of *Petrobrás* magazine, employees, subscribers, in Brazil and abroad, and even students targeted by the promotional activities of Serpub, the research shows that it is naïve to consider the information conveyed as neutral. Thus, what is included and excluded in the material is the result of complex power relations, revealing deep and historical political, economic, and cultural relationships and, consequently, a particular construction of reality.

Contributing to studies about the use of symbolic forms by organizations and in a particular socio-historical context, the study provides insights about the use of corporate discourse relating to the environment within the ideological perspective (see Chelli et al., 2019; Journeault et al., 2021; Mäkelä, 2013; Mäkelä & Laine, 2011; Milne et al., 2009; Situ et al., 2021). Seeking to understand the complex interaction between meaning and power, the research focused its attention on the "nature and consequent ways in which symbolic forms are used and understood in particular circumstances" (Thompson,

2011, p. 93), contributing to revealing how *Petrobrás* magazine was a vehicle of excellence of a nationalist and developmentalist discourse instrumentalized to serve a specific ideological influence. The magazine can also be interpreted as an instrument of indoctrination and of social distraction, reflecting the close relationship of the company with the dictatorial regime. The research also contributes to filling a gap regarding studies that combine texts and visual images (see Milne et al., 2009), innovating by extending the analysis of symbolic forms to material reported in a corporate magazine, assumed as an instrument of accountability at the time. The study developed enables a more in-depth understanding of the historical evolution of the social importance attributed to the environment resulting from organizational activities, through the corporate and press discourse, and of strategies of symbolic construction used by a company to establish and sustain its power. The research may also collaborate in understanding the way Petrobras continued to narrate the reality, serving as a basis for understanding the current narrative structure.

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APPENDIX

As agreed in writing by the authors, by request of the National Library of Rio de Janeiro, the database cannot be shared. However, all of the material is available for analysis if directly requested from the Library. All of the steps for the research and analysis are described in appendices A and B.

A - Identification of controversial materials about the environment and Petrobrás in the newspapers at the time..

Newspapers analyzed: Jornal do Brasil and Correio da Manhã

Period: 1961-1979

Contents searched: Petrobras accident, gas pipeline, Petrobras pollution, refinery pollution, atmospheric pollution, and oil pipeline breach.

Source: Website of the National Digital Library of Brazil, at the Hemeroteca Digital link (Biblioteca Nacional Digital, 2023).

B - Selection and analysis of the symbolic forms in *Petrobrás* magazine

1. Search for text and/or images that allude to the environment/environmental impact of Petrobras' activity, for the period the magazine was in circulation (1961-1979);

2. Space-time contextualization of the symbolic forms, based on the socio-historical context and news reports identified;

3. Identification of the strategies of symbolic construction and modes through which the ideology operates, according to Thompson (2011) (detailed in Table 1), present in the texts and/or images;

4. Analysis and interpretation based on depth hermeneutics;

5. Selection of illustrative examples to present in section 5. "The meaning mobilized in the corporate discourse through Petrobrás magazine."

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