

## Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, a popular president who has all the media coverage: Content analysis of the press (2016-2018)<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In his first speech, in March 2016, as 20<sup>th</sup> Portuguese President, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa guaranteed that every Portuguese person was rooted in his first determining thought. It was in the people that President Marcelo found legitimacy to develop everything he sought. But will this concern in building bridges, in bringing others closer to him, be reflected on the journalistic coverage that his work raises? From the analysis of the first two years of his term, what is striking is the depiction of a President who wants everyone close to him, and yet the whole daily press discourse is centred on him. The President has consistently aligned himself with different social actors and has made a visible effort to expand his political action to different Portuguese regions and also to several other countries. However, the President is the main source and hegemonic voice in journalistic discourse.

This research begins with the following question: How does the journalistic coverage of President Marcelo's activity, during his two-year term of office (2016-2018), concur with and guarantee the principles of autonomy and exemption in the news construction? Taking into account this research question, in methodological terms, this study will analyse the two years of journalistic coverage of the presidential activity, from a set of daily and weekly newspapers. The technique of content analysis will be used, in a categorical approach, following Bardin's (2013) and Lopes & Espírito Santo's (2016) previous framework. The expected results are the identification of the relationship between the political involvement of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa as President and the construction of the press message, combined with the potential introduction of a new role for the President as a political and media actor of the democratic system.

Keywords: Communication studies; journalism; press studies; content analysis

### Introduction

Ideally, political power should seek political and civic inclusion, and foster the democratic space that the political bodies direct. In this sense, allying public visibility to public service as rendered by the twentieth President of the Portuguese Republic, Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, has been one of the most striking images of his mandate. Due to the traits of his mandate, in terms of hegemony and public media visibility, this study seeks to identify the bases and sources of the construction of his political message, which is omnipresent in the public and political space covered by the media, throughout the first two years of his term of office. Identifying the selection of sources, in terms of the message published in the media, is a central element in the identification of the political message's building blocks in terms of transparency, ethics and democratisation of the political system.

Our main argument is that in democratic regimes the press is one of the key elements in assessing the maturity of the democratic system, the independence of the media and political power. In Portugal, as a rule, the press does not assume or identify itself politically or is partisan with any party, candidate or political ideology. As such, this contribution has, as its primary objective, the identification of and the connection between the sources and news production, during two years in the press (between 16 March 2016 and 16

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<sup>1</sup> Este trabalho é financiado por fundos nacionais através da FCT – Fundação para a Ciência e a Tecnologia, I.P., no âmbito do projeto UID/CPO/00713/2019

March 2018), taking as reference the news which includes messages from and action of the President of the Republic of Portugal. This analysis will be carried out in the light of the autonomy principle between the press and political power. The aim is to identify whether the assumption of journalistic neutrality, which the Portuguese newspapers cherish and defend, is reflected in the way the news construction is elaborated. In other words, this contribution seeks to examine in what terms the foundations of news construction reflect and guarantee the requirements of diversity, plurality and journalistic exemption, and which guarantee the neutrality of the press as one of the guiding principles and fundamental values, as well as its credibility and validity in democratic regimes. The specific objectives are to identify the main sources, both official and unofficial, which are presented in the press during the aforementioned two-year period. Another specific objective is to identify the origin and status of these sources of information. By doing so, we aim to furnish a sustained and extensive view (based on content analysis technique outputs) about the influence of the President, as a leading source of the press. This kind of influence is translated into the ability to conduct and lead the press to cover the issues that the President aims to insert in the public agenda, representing himself as the main source of the press news. Throughout this angle, we intended to observe the tendency for the centrality of information in news-making, considering politics and official sources, and in particular the President. To some extent, direct and indirectly, the press may support the powers and political action of the President and the regime headed by him. We argue that credibility and citation of the President as the main source for journalists, creates a kind of subalternation of the press, towards the President's objectives in terms of public agenda news. This tendency has been observed in the current Portuguese political context.

In what concerns the current contribution context and empirical study, this contribution aims to provide evidence, in an extensive two-year daily press basis, about the argument that supports a tendency for the use and predominance of official sources in political media coverage. In theoretical terms, we aim to support this analysis on two core axes: on the one hand, the centrality of information sources in news-making, and on the other hand, we intend to revise how the relationship of information sources with journalists is sustained in terms of developing, permanently, a 'negotiated power'.

In empirical terms, this contribution will focus on the figure and *modus operandi* of President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, considering his singular and paternalistic performance in the media. This President is a popular figure in the Portuguese democratic regime, considering his past, for two decades, as a television commentator in several TV channels, and his prestige as a University Law Professor. During the first two years of his term of office (2016-2018), the Portuguese President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa was a figure present in the media, on a permanent, almost daily basis. He has always demonstrated an ability to be close to the people, even on the same day, in times of disaster or celebration, anywhere in the territory, and sometimes in places far apart. This singularity in the political action of a President of the Republic is only possible because the media accompanied him and actively participated in the construction of the message and image that the President wanted to portray within the political system. The extensive and inclusive expression that characterises the performance and execution of the mandate of President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa (since 2016) has aroused public interest and debate, still sparsely reflected academically. As such, the starting point for this contribution is: How do the sources selected for journalistic coverage of President Marcelo's activity, over a two-year mandate (2016-2018), concur with and guarantee the principles of autonomy and exemption?

## Theoretical framework

### *The centrality of information sources in news-making*

News-making information sources influence journalistic production and consequently on the design of the public sphere. Information sources are a vital concept in news-making and on the professional status of journalists studies. The link between journalism and society was emphasised by Herbert Gans, together with Philip Schlesinger (1990). This connection has been stressed in recent years by the sociology of the media, which has paid more attention to the relationship between journalists and their sources and between journalists and public media.

Journalists have been attracted to follow those who represent the structures of power and the official sources, for the journalistic class. There are several contributions in political science that observed the attraction of journalists to these official sources: Sigal (1973); Brown, Wearden and Straughan (1987); Derville (1997); Schudson (2009), Speer (2017), among others. They create a certain "sphere of consensus" that seems to spare the journalist from the task of listening to other agents. They tend to be open and reliable, have clear and condensed information, be in positive situations, be proactive in communicating their "stories", and they are careful with the transmitted information. Furthermore, their contribution is expected to have a positive effect and, if there is a relationship of trust with the journalist, they may advance with additional off-the-record or background information. This great reliance on official sources gives rise to the belief that the media is an institution serving the establishment. This is Michael Schudson's (2009) point of view, for example, well explained in an article entitled "Pourquoi les démocraties ont-elles besoin d'un journalisme détestable?". Journalists are attracted to these sources because they bring credibility and prestige to the news reports in which they are cited and, by implication, the journalists who obtain these testimonies.

Örebro (2002), Gieber and Johnson quote an article entitled "The City Hall beat: a study of reporter and source roles", published in the *Journalism Quarterly* in 1961. This article analyses the roles of journalists and sources in the mediatisation of local politics in three types of relationships:

- independence relationship: there is a gap between who provides and who builds information;
- cooperative relationship: the source seeks the publication of the information, and the journalist needs this information to do his/her work;
- source domain relationship: the source controls the journalistic work.

These different roles are always present in the types of relationships that journalists and sources establish among themselves. Official sources tend to assume a more dominant position in the journalistic field when defining a specific media schedule. When studying strategies of building the media agenda during the second term of US President Barack Obama, Spiro Kioussis and his colleagues (2016) reveal the strength that a presidential agenda has in the media, although they also admit that what is known cannot always be controlled.

*The relationship of information sources with journalists: a negotiated power*

Information sources and journalists are a binomial that determines part of the news process. The relationship established between these two actors is crossed by moments of tension or withdrawal, negotiation or proximity. There are theorists who place substantial power on the sources that determine the information to be published, others who defend the superiority of diary concretised in the edition of the texts in which they choose a framework; and yet others who put this relationship in a precarious balance: Herbert Gans (1979: 116) speaks of a "dance" in which the sources seek access to journalists and journalists seek access to sources. It is with this positioning of a certain proportionality, which follows a constructionist perspective, with which we identify ourselves the most in this work. At this point, we will highlight the arguments of those who approach more than one of these lines of thought. We speak here of a relationship in which the source tries to be news (by a positive approach) while the journalist seeks relevant and credible information from notorious and knowledgeable sources.

The sources hold extremely important and symbolic information. Several researchers are developing strong arguments that assert the primacy of sources. In the 1970s, Leon Sigal (1973) developed a content analysis of news published in the newspapers that traced a diachronic line of twenty years. He argued that the news content published in the press depended on what the sources transmitted through various channels, thus giving them considerable power over journalists. This thesis has attracted followers over the years (Mencher, 1991; Berkowitz & Beach, 1993; Chaparro, 2001). Another contribution, R. Santos (1997; 2010), argued that the relationship between journalists and sources brings up an original and critical added value to the news, turning this news into a 'negotiated' output. This argument stands for the complexity of the news-making process, considering different types of sources, with different interests, which are balanced by the journalist. In addition, sources, journalists, news media, power elites, organisations and society in general define, in a particular way, the context and culture of the news production process. Another perspective argued that the news construction process corresponds to a "mythological function", meaning that, according to Correia (2011), news can "act as a force of compliance", and "bring together a moral sense of social adequacy" (Correia, 2011, p. 55). Despite not being a creator, the journalist performs a function of dissemination and, to some extent, of critical judgment, which is, according to P. Serra (2003, p. 16-17), an essential training social role. The democratic information society generated free press, together with a new relationship space between journalists, sources, society and political power. This relationship space oriented the construction of new balances and dimensions of criticism and enunciation of the political and public space dynamics.

Journalists are aware that they are engaged in a significant "battle" to find a balance between autonomy and authority, where access to sources is a fundamental mechanism of transparency in the newsroom. In this sense, Carlson (2012, pp. 4-5) argues that "sources normally supply evidence in journalist accounts while the journalist moves to the background as an assembler of quotes". Another line of thought states that journalists have more power to highlight specific sources, giving visibility to some while throwing others into an addictive spiral of silence. This gives the journalist a remarkable power to choose who will be interviewed (although some interlocutors are inescapable), the questions to ask, and what is more meaningful to quote, hierarchizing the people contacted in the text. In this respect, the work of Harvey

Molotch and Marilyn Lester (1993) in the 70s is relevant. However, there will , always be those who point out that sources have the same power.

The concept of negotiation between information sources and journalists requires a relationship of some balance between both parties. One of the first theorists to underline this was Hebert Gans (1979). Adopting a constructionist perspective of the news texts, Gans suggests that news happens in the encounter between sources and journalists and that this encounter often is developed through "focuses of war" in which each one tries to impose power over the other. Richard V. Ericson (1989) and colleagues also argue that the negotiating process characterises the relationship between sources and journalists and that each party uses specific strategies for context, subject matter, type of sources involved or the media body concerned: "news is a process of transaction between journalists and their sources" (1989: 377). However, in this dance, there are always those with more power who lead the way.

## **Empirical study**

### *Methodological note*

The methodology used is the technique of content analysis in a categorical perspective. Firstly, there is a review of the corpus of analysis to be studied that takes into account a selection of news items where the President is quoted both directly and indirectly. After this stage, a categorical framework is constructed, subdivided into indicators. The units of analysis selected are the word and the theme or the topic. The theoretical approach for the implementation of the procedure to be used was based on Bardin (2013) and follows the study developed by Lopes & Espírito Santo (2016).

This contribution analyses the first two years of the first term of President Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. The Portuguese general daily newspapers selected were: *Diário de Notícias (DN)*, *Público*, *Jornal de Notícias (JN)* and *Correio da Manhã*. These newspapers were selected because they have the highest runs. The sample consists only of journalistic articles (see Table 1) that have as a news angle the action of the President of the Republic, excluding all texts in which the President is the target of the action of other social actors. The analysis covers the period from 9 March 2016 to 9 March 2018, totalling 1,537 news stories where 3,035 sources of information are cited. Data collection was done using the digital versions of the newspapers in question, selecting the main books of these titles and excluding the Local (in *Público*) or Oporto (in the *JN*) sections.

**Table 1:** Newspapers

	Title						Total
	Positive		Negative		Neutral/ Ambiguous		
Newspaper <i>Público</i>	245	59.9	53	13.0	111	27.1	409
<i>Correio da Manhã</i>	167	54.6	52	17.0	87	28.4	306
<i>JN</i>	223	60.1	36	9.7	112	30.2	371
<i>DN</i>	302	67.0	45	10.0	104	23.1	451
Total	937	61.0	186	12.1	414	26.9	1537

The collected texts were subject to a quantitative analysis, made through the software Statistics Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). It was focused mainly on the sources of information, analysed in relation to the following variables that, in turn, integrate several categories:

- . presence of sources: yes or no.
- . number of sources: one, two, three, four or more;
- . identification of the source(s): identified, not identified (the name is unknown, but the organisation from which they speak is known), anonymous (nothing is known from the source);
- . type of sources: personal (men, women and group/community/authority), non-personal (non-human trace sources) and unspecified;
- . place of origin of the source(s): national (global national, Lisbon, North, centre, Alentejo, Algarve and the islands) and international (Europe, North and South America, Africa and Asia).
- . status of the source(s): official, professional, non-professional, non-personal, citizens, other.

Even though the sources are the central axis of our analysis, we take a look at the results of the analysis of other variables, namely the extension of the texts (short, medium or long), news genre (news article and interview) and place event classification which follows that of the place of origin of the source.

This contribution looks at the information sources from the point of view of the reader since it is important for us to evaluate if the citation of sources is perceptible in a precise way to the general public. The statute of information sources is found from a typology based on Lopes (2016). It should also be noted that the researchers do not carry prior knowledge about a given individual before the analysis of the data, which could expose existing flaws in the identification of the sources by the journalist.

### *Discussion*

Following this previous research (Lopes & Espírito Santo, 2016), it was argued that official sources tend to be prevalent in the media coverage concerning Government affairs and its main ministries. This was particularly the case Ministry of Finance, which may be considered a hegemonic area in press coverage if the current Government fields are considered. For instance, according to this contribution (Lopes & Espírito

Santo, 2016: p. 16), with respect to the first 100 days of the 21<sup>st</sup> Government (from 27 November 2015 to 4 March 2016), the main sources were the Ministries (16.2%) and the Deputies (21.7%), followed by "Head-Secretaries" (7.5%). The Prime-Minister, on the other hand, figured with only 3.5% as a quoted source in the press. However, these were quite distant from other sources, such as "professionals", meaning several categories, namely "economists/businessmen/managers" (1.8%) and "academics and professors" (0.1%). The perspective of using official sources as the main press resource, in terms of media coverage, does not necessarily conflict with the principles of transparency, autonomy and neutrality of the press. This is a long and far from consensus discussion (example: Sigal, 1973; Derville, 1997; Speer, 2017), which is centred on a democratic regimes' preference for official sources, mainly due to their availability, together with their prestige, credibility and proactivity. However, the news-making process discussion encounters quite different views, when balancing these perspectives with the main argument that media is an institution serving the establishment Schudson (2009). In other words, although the evidence finds a common tendency, in democratic press countries, to follow official sources as a main, immediate and accessible resource, it must be put into question when we aim to find a plural and independent kind of media supports.

Generally considered, the Portuguese daily press that covers the work of the 20<sup>th</sup> Portuguese President uses diversified sources of information. Only 7.4% of the news texts do not have any kind of cited source. Of the universe of cited sources, 92.9% are identified, 5.8% are unidentified, and only 1.3% are anonymous. Here are traits that can lead to a positive appreciation of political journalism promoted by the Presidency of the Republic in the first term of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. However, this quality has to be re-evaluated when faced with the diversity of used sources. Most articles cite one source (46%) or two sources (25.9%), thus creating a dominant view of the President. The reasons for this could be in the predominant journalistic genre, which is the news (86.8%) evidenced in a universe of texts that includes a low percentage of reports. However, these texts had space to integrate more voices, as 38.9% of the articles are medium-sized and 40.5% are long. The explanations must then be pursued in the options of the journalists who mediate the Presidency of the Republic and who consider the declarations of the President as sufficient to cover any situation.

*Who are the sources that talk about issues involving the PR?*

Regarding the texts that cover the Presidency of the Republic, more than 80% of the citations are from people who talk to journalists (see Table 2). In this group, women tend to be silent (only 9.7%). Also, not many documents are used. These make up only 5.8% and are divided into those citing official sources, documents and *communiqués*. The media and digital platforms add up to 6.4%. The central source of information is the President who appears, in many texts, either alone or alongside male rulers or deputies. Hence, men are the predominant information source.

**Table 2:** Type of information sources cited in the President texts

		<b>Responses</b>	
<b>Type of information source</b>	<b>Information source: gender</b>	<b>no.</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Personal	Male	2185	72.2
	Female	293	9.7
	group/community/authority	32	1.1
Not personal	Official sources (documents and <i>communiqués</i> )	176	5.8
	Media and digital platforms	194	6.4
Unspecified	Anonymous and not specified sources	154	5.1
		3034	100.0

News stories across the country reporting on the work of the President of the Republic between March 2016 and March 2018 reveal a tendency to decentralise the action of Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa. Whilst the Greater Lisbon area accounts for almost half of the published articles (45.1%), matters extending across the country as a whole (e.g. a veto or a statement from Belém) account for only 21.5%. This occurs despite the following facts: the President often visited the North of the country (7.5%); his presence was constant in the Centre region of the country after the summer fires of 2017 (6.2%); the President went to the Portuguese Islands several times (3.1%), travelled to the Alentejo (1.3%) and visited the Algarve (0.5%) a few times. He was also a President who travelled abroad several times (14.9%). By making the Centre a nomadic place, this President added some diversity to the news, instead of events. However, this feature is not mirrored in the sources mentioned. There is a somewhat excessive concentration on national sources in the country (77.2%) because the newsworthiness hegemonically anchors the figure of the President. There is also considerable visibility of sources in the Lisbon region (8.1%). This means that only 8.2% of the sources are scattered throughout the rest of the country and 6.5% from abroad. Therefore, there is no geographical pluralism in the voices that speak about the President. This is an important tendency to be observed in this contribution, revealing a Lisbon-centred newsmaking process.

*What do the sources reveal about the issues involving the President?*

Since the President of the Republic is the primary source of information, and often the only one mentioned in the news stories, it is logical to assume the predominance of official sources, especially the ones that focus specifically on the PR. In addition to this, the group emphasises rulers and deputies. In the set of quotes, the parties that speak mainly through their President also gain prominence. This means a clear hegemony of political sources. Outside this field, there are few subjects centred on the Presidency of the Portuguese Republic. This is despite Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa appearing in public with a discourse of proximity to the Portuguese and gestures of affection towards those with whom he interacts in his political action.

The 8.8% of citations collected by members of the Government (see Table 3) is not substantial but given the percentage distribution of the sources present in the articles that speak of the President they are still

relevant. Significant is the presence of the Members of Parliament in this news space that surpasses that which the Government presents: 7.1%. Parliamentarians are approaching the voice of the rulers, and this is also due to the fact that the 21<sup>st</sup> Constitutional Government is a minority and counts on parliamentary support of the three parties to the left, not always aligned with each other, which creates some tension in all parliamentary benches/seats. Since the presidents of the parties are also Members of Parliament, in some cases there may be too fluid a border regarding the position in which they speak. However, it is almost always possible to distinguish between both functions. Looking at Table 3, we find a reasonable percentage of parties speaking about matters involving the Presidency, as well as presidents who have access to the media.

**Table 3:** Status of information sources cited in President texts

Statute of the information source		no.	Percentage
Official sources	President	1098	36.6
	Counselors	30	1
	Prime Minister	138	4.6
	Government Members	127	4.2
	Members of Parliament	213	7.1
	Mayors	47	1.6
	International politicians	58	1.9
	Presidents/administrators	5	0.2
	Advisors	67	2.2
	Other	51	1.7
Professionals	Several professional groups (justice; arts; sports; economists and enterprise administrators; school and university professors; researchers; doctors, nurses and similar; the army; the church; trade unions; associations)	355	11.9
	Other	29	0.9
Non-Professionals	Associations	32	1.1
	Party members	157	5.2
	Students	11	0.4
Non-personal	Presidency web site	46	1.5
	President's declarations	23	0.8
	Documents, websites and media	302	10.0
	Unspecified	131	4.4
Personal	Notable people	41	1.4
Unspecified	Unspecified	38	1.3
		2999	100.0

More than half of the sources cited (61.1%) are in categories that belong to the group of official sources. It is a high percentage and therefore must be considered, particularly when compared to those with low speech rates, particularly professionals (12.8%) and non-professionals (6.7%). In this respect, although the main proportion of official sources cited, the inclusion of several types of sources must be taken into account in their whole dimension. The tendencies observed reveal the insertion of different perspectives to counterbalance the official one, and positive approaches to the issues made to be considered as important by the President.

### **Final remarks**

The relationship between the information sources and the selection that the press makes of them constitutes a fundamental element to characterise and identify the extent to which the supposed demand and neutrality principle of the news are counterbalanced with the strategic decisions that the political power intends to publish. This contribution brought to light the role and importance of identifying and selecting sources in the press, in the democratic regime. The basis of analysis of the empirical study was the news of the general press, centred on the message and activity of the President of the Portuguese Republic, during his first two years of office (March 2016 - March 2018). The motivations of this study lie in the observation of the proximity of the relationship between the President of the Republic and the media, leading us to inquire about the basis of the sources relevant to this relationship. Though we may find some similarities with other political periods, considering previous Portuguese Presidents (such as Mário Soares and others), the current media panorama is not comparable, taking into account the number of media supports (particularly in what concerns television), and the intensity of the media coverage. On the other hand, Portugal has a semi-presidential regime, considering the so-called cohabitation between the Head of State and the Prime Minister. The semi-presidential regime, already identified by Duverger (1978), considering the case of several countries, including France and Portugal, offers a particular set of powers and responsibilities, defined by and according to the Fundamental Law. Though this is not a central discussion in the contribution, we must refer that previous studies about President Marcelo, considering the semi-presidential regime and context, lead to the conclusion that "the exercise of power and counterbalance of the political system was reinforced by the President and generated a position of judge and of a political leadership which are difficult to match" (Espírito Santo, Lopes, 2019: p. 256). This is mainly due to his omnipresence in the media, almost daily, rooted in a personalisation of politics performance and dynamics, within the modern political arena. Personalisation, as a political and behaviour feature and technique, is more relevant than the type of regime itself, when considering the attitudes and behaviour of the President towards the press. In what concerns the personalisation of politics, the technological achievements of the digital era are quite important and profoundly influence the political results to be achieved (Negroponte, 1995, Norris, 2001; Hidman, 2012; Lopes & Espírito Santo, 2016).

In general, according to the study carried out, several lines of observation were identified regarding the sources and their selection context in the press by journalists. A tendency was verified for the centralisation of the news construction to suit the figure, the message, and the activity of the President of the Republic when compared with other actors in the public space media. In specific terms, we could observe and

conclude the following: the predominant journalistic genre is the news (in detriment of the report); the vast majority of sources are cited (around 95%), which demonstrates the intention, importance and zeal in transmitting credibility of the information produced. Other observations are that the majority (about 72%) of the news is based on male sources who spoke directly to reporters. In this regard, the President of the Republic is the main source, as well as the rulers who flank him. There is also decentralisation of the news site in relation to the Lisbon region. This aspect has to do with the President's political strategy, which is to give visibility to the interior and the peripheral areas of the country, in the face of Lisbon's hegemony, regarding the centrality of news and politics. Nonetheless, Lisbon continues to have the majority of articles published (about 45%), which is due to the fact that they refer to the President's political activity.

This study allowed us to conclude that the intention of the President of the Republic is for the press to reinforce the construction of a public image. based on this assumption, we confirm that the main basis of the news building are sources that derive from the President of the Republic or from governmental sources that contribute to reinforce the visibility of the image and the contents that the President wants to project in the public space. We also conclude that the omnipresence of the President of the Republic in the public space has an important and strategic virtue that is to decentralise the political stage from Lisbon to the multiple interior and peripheral areas, chosen by the President. It is our understanding that the lack of party and ideological identification by the Portuguese press reinforces the image of centrality of the President's message and activity, giving it credibility. On the other hand, in the Portuguese political regime, the candidacy for the Presidency of the Republic is uninominal, i.e., candidates do not have to be supported or linked to any political party. Therefore, we observe an orientation of the news building that is motivated by the thematic choices of the President of the Republic. However, we argue that support from the official sources and the President in particular, and the follow-up of the press in relation to the appointment of the news agenda by the President of the Republic, does not compromise the independence of news production. We defend that, despite the existence of a tendency to centralise the news building process on the person of the President as a source, there are two essential features that must be enhanced concerning this tendency. Firstly, there is an express citation of the sources, as a guarantee of fidelity of the evidence brought in the news made. And, another important feature is that we find a relevant tendency for the multiplication of the several other sources, of a 'non-professional' status. These counterbalance with the official ones, and constitute fundamental strategies of diversification not only for the angles of construction of the news but also for journalistic credibility and political support for the contents that the President highlights. We defend that the evidence found does not compromise the principle of neutrality in the news building process. There is, however, as already referred, a strong feature that characterises the news-making process about all the range of events in which the President takes part, which is the centralisation of news sources about his figure. One may say that this is a consequence and derives from a strong personification of the position of the President and, therefore, of the messages built around him. In a democratic country as is Portugal, this singularity brings to the investigation a line of vibrant observation that sets the convergence between policy holders and organs of sovereignty.

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*Submitted: 13<sup>th</sup> March 2019*

*Accepted: 13<sup>th</sup> June 2019*

**How to quote this article:**

Espírito Santo, P., Lopes, F. (2019). Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, a popular president who has all the media coverage: Content analysis of the press (2016-2018). *Observatorio*, 13(4), 1-13.