

What the covers say: a graphic analysis of copies of the alternative newspaper *De Fato* (1976–1978)

O que dizem as capas: análise gráfica de exemplares do jornal alternativo De Fato (1976–1978)

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ABSTRACT

This article aims to elucidate how the graphic-editorial design of the covers of the alternative newspaper *De Fato* (1976–1978) in Minas Gerais communicated socio-politically engaged messages during Brazil's civil-military dictatorship through technical and aesthetic elements. Thus, the study falls within the field of graphic memory, which identifies graphic artefacts as important materials in the construction of a history of design. The methodology adopted follows the assumptions of André Villas-Boas, who advocates the critical practice of graphic analysis of visual programming projects, considering both the organization of elements in the *layout* and the historical context. In the search for more in-depth knowledge, procedures from Gui Bonsiepe's visual-verbal rhetoric were also used, applying concepts drawn from semantics to design. The results show that the design of the covers functioned as a visual translation of discourses permeated by social demands, driven by compositional strategies that demarcate the place of design in narrative disputes.

Keywords: Graphic analysis. Alternative press. Graphic memory. Visual-verbal rhetoric. *De Fato* newspaper.

RESUMO

Este artigo objetiva elucidar como o design gráfico-editorial das capas do jornal alternativo mineiro De Fato (1976–1978) comunicou mensagens de cunho sociopoliticamente engajado durante a ditadura civil-militar no Brasil por meio de elementos técnicos e estéticos. Dessa forma, o estudo se insere no campo da memória gráfica, que identifica os artefatos gráficos como importantes materiais na construção de uma história do design. A metodologia adotada segue os pressupostos de André Villas-Boas, que defende a prática crítica da análise gráfica de projetos de programação visual, considerando tanto a organização dos elementos no layout quanto a sua contextualização histórica. Na busca por conhecimentos mais aprofundados, também foram utilizados procedimentos da retórica visual-verbal de Gui Bonsiepe, aplicando os conceitos extraídos da semântica ao design. Os resultados mostram que o design das capas funcionou como tradução visual de discursos permeados por reivindicações sociais, impulsionados por estratégias compositivas que demarcam o lugar do design em disputas narrativas.

Palavras-chave: Análise gráfica. Imprensa alternativa. Memória gráfica. Retórica visual-verbal. *Jornal De Fato*.

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INTRODUCTION

This work is part of a doctoral research project that examines the visual characteristics of the Brazilian alternative press, considering this movement as a form of cultural resistance to the civil-military dictatorship that governed the country from 1964 to 1985. Within this framework, the study focused on the graphic and editorial design of two newspapers: one from Bahia and *De Fato*, published in Minas Gerais, the latter being the subject of the present analysis. By treating graphic artifacts as documentary sources subject to investigation through specialized methodologies, the research is positioned within the field of design history, specifically in the area of graphic memory studies.

The sociopolitical context in which the artifact was produced is reflected “in Brazilian design, both in a positive sense, linked to the stimulating atmosphere of the time, and in a negative sense, related to the suppression of freedom of expression” (Melo, 2008, p. 36). In this regard, graphic memory serves as a tool for analyzing communicational and pictorial artifacts from the past, with the objective of understanding the particularities of specific socio-historical contexts (Farias, 2017; Verissimo; Campello, 2019). It is noted that “valuing research that focuses on the most varied artifacts that make up material culture, produced at different times and in different places, is essential for the construction of Brazilian identity” (Fonseca, 2021, p. 13). Newspapers are included in this category and are regarded as sites of memory — artifacts of material culture that reflect the social, political, economic, and technological practices of their respective historical periods (Fonseca, 2021).

A graphic analysis of two *De Fato* covers was conducted based on the principles proposed by Villas-Boas (2009), who advocates for a critical examination of visual programming projects by evaluating the solutions adopted for organizing visual elements—namely, layout—alongside relevant historical variables. From a complementary perspective, considering the multiplicity of meanings involved in the production and reception of journalistic content, it becomes clear that the discursive content of newspapers is neither neutral nor impartial (Tavares; Vaz, 2008). To deepen the understanding of the messages conveyed by the covers, concepts from visual-verbal rhetoric were incorporated, defined as “a set of empirical persuasive techniques used to influence the emotions and feelings of the message recipients” (Bonsiepe, 2011, p. 115).

Rhetoric, by operating within the structural logic of the graphic piece itself, engages with its semantic field and fosters a reflective approach guided by the manifestation of language. This perspective creates an opening “for the study of characteristics that allow us to recognize, in a graphic composition, the creative, persuasive, and argumentative potential of Graphic Design: its Rhetoric” (Almeida Junior; Nojima, 2010, p. 16).

Additionally, the decision to investigate the front pages is justified by their capacity to provide immediate identification of the publication. Once analyzed, these elements allow for discussions that extend beyond design, encompassing cultural, economic, and, in particular, social issues.

BRAZILIAN AND MINAS GERAIS ALTERNATIVE PRESS

The alternative press, also referred to as the “political,” “*nanica*” (tiny), “independent,” or “underground” press, is understood as a resistance movement that emerged during the Brazilian civil-military dictatorship (1964–1985). It was primarily driven by professionals “organized in cooperatives, with lean structures and operating outside the industrial model” (Carvalho, 2013, p. 35). Influenced by the American counterculture and new journalism, this segment addressed social and behavioral issues from a fresh perspective, receptive to the transformations occurring globally (Barros, 2005).

Alternative periodicals positioned themselves in opposition to the mainstream press’s alignment with the dictatorship, indicating that the political conditions of the time played a crucial role in fostering their emergence (José, 2015). Notably, the consolidation of this segment occurred during the regime’s most repressive phase, after the failure of armed resistance became apparent. Consequently, these publications served as a legal platform for political resistance, where numerous journalists, intellectuals, and former militants sought not only to express dissent but also to create an alternative professional space outside the commercial press (Abreu, 2002).

During the years of the dictatorship, “around 150 periodicals were born and died, all sharing a common trait: an uncompromising opposition to the military regime,” as noted by Bernardo Kucinski (2018, p. 11) in *Journalists and Revolutionaries: In the Times of the Alternative Press* (*Jornalistas e revolucionários: nos tempos da imprensa alternativa*), one of the most influential works on the press during this period. Regarding the sociopolitical and economic context, it is important to emphasize that, while civil liberties were severely restricted, the “modernizations brought about by economic growth intensified the striking contradictions between the practices of an industrialized and urban society and a politically closed regime” (Vilela et al., 1996, p. 31). The print newspaper, as a media category, was affected by this economic modernization, experiencing significant changes in production processes, including technical innovations in journalism, improvements in printing facilities, and the introduction of offset printing. Within this context, the *nanicos* (underground newspapers), “with access to offset printing, freely created new column and headline formats, which stood out due to their innovative nature and increased their appeal among intellectuals and artists” (Teixeira, 2024, p. 263).

Multifaceted in nature, the alternative press included both national and regional publications, exhibiting considerable diversity by addressing topics ranging from cultural issues to gender, including homosexuality and women’s rights, and, above all, establishing itself as a form of journalism actively resisting the dictatorship (José, 2015). Beyond their oppositional stance, these newspapers shared common structural features, such as the tabloid format and a pronounced emphasis on graphic design in their editions (Magalhães; Musse, 2016). Their print runs were irregular: some were sold at newsstands, while others circulated within party circles, clandestine leftist movements, academic centers, and the student movement.

Regarding the persecution of these small outlets, Magalhães and Musse (2016, p. 4) highlight that the alternative press endured severe military repression, “especially the more popular and irreverent ones, which were even seen as enemies by the censoring (surveillance) bodies, receiving a harsher degree of censorship.” Although tolerated, these newspapers remained under strict surveillance and faced not only rigorous censorship but also attacks from far-right groups (Capelato, 1994). As a result, few critically oriented newspapers maintained long-lasting trajectories.

According to Kucinski (2018), approximately 25 newspapers intrinsically opposed to the political model of the time had lifespans of up to five years. Despite the considerable variety of editorial approaches, aesthetic solutions, and thematic, regional, and ideological diversity, none survived the authoritarian regime with their original characteristics intact. Nevertheless, the alternative press served as a space for political and ideological reorganization “within the specific conditions of authoritarianism. Therefore, [...] it acquires an importance that goes beyond its appearance as a collection of newspapers or as an ideological-cultural creation” (Kucinski, 2018, p. 15).

With a territorial focus on this approach, Kucinski’s work (2018) was again adopted as the primary source to identify titles circulated in the state of Minas Gerais during the dictatorship period. The initial survey was based on a listing presented in the book, where publications are organized chronologically by their year of inception. The list includes seven organizational factors, as outlined at the top of Chart 1: year of emergence; title; city of foundation; paper format; publication frequency; editor; and categories describing the journalistic language and other characteristics. These categories vary according to the following codes: (P) predominantly political newspapers; (R) reportage; (H) humor; (C) cultural; (F) feminist; (A) anarchist; (G) gay; (E) ecological; (n) national; (r) regional; and (e) ephemeral, indicating publications lasting less than one year; otherwise, the total number of years in circulation is provided.

In addition to the publications listed by Kucinski (2018), other periodicals produced in the state were included based on parallel investigations, such as the magazine *Circus* (1973), referenced in a document by the Truth Commission of Minas Gerais (*Comissão da Verdade em Minas Gerais – COVEMG*, 2017), and the newspaper *Sete* (1970) from Juiz de Fora, examined in a study by Magalhães and Musse (2016). Ultimately, the list presented in Chart 1 was compiled, with the acknowledgment that some fields related to the characteristics of the periodicals remain incomplete due to the lack of more precise information.

For this article, the selection of one newspaper was based on the following criteria:

- availability of visual material;
- availability of access to physical or digital archives suitable for review.

Through searches in libraries, public newspaper archives, digital collections, and academic databases, a group of periodicals was identified, including *Binômio*,

Chart 1. Survey of alternative printed materials from Minas Gerais.

Year	Title	City	Format	Freq.	Editor	Classif.
1952	Binômio	Belo Horizonte	Tabloid		Euro Luiz Arantes	P r 12
1958	Binômio	Juiz de Fora	Tabloid		Fernando Zerlottini	P r 6
1968	Piquete	Belo Horizonte				
1970	Sete	Juiz de Fora	Tabloid	Weekly	Ivanir Yazbeck	
1973	Vapor	Belo Horizonte	Tabloid	Monthly	Aloísio Moraes	P r e
1973	Circus	Belo Horizonte	Magazine	Monthly	Aloísio Moraes	R r e
1974	Mantiqueira	Poços de Caldas	Standard	Weekly	Luís Nassif	R r e
1976	De Fato	Belo Horizonte	Tabloid	Biweekly	Aloísio Moraes	P n 3
1976	Expansão	Uberaba		Biweekly	Pedro C. de Oliveira	R r e
1976	Jornal dos Bairros	Belo Horizonte	Tabloid	Biweekly	Edson Fernandes	R r 4
1976	Paca Tatu, Cotia Não	São Gotardo	Magazine	Irregular	Júlio Prado	C r e
1977	Dois Pontos	Poços de Caldas		Weekly	Luís Nassif	R r e
1977	Mutirão	Patos de Minas		Monthly	Roberto Melo Maia	R e
1977	O Vagão	Belo Horizonte	Mini tabloid	Monthly	Coletivo	C r e
1978	Geraes	Vale do Jequitinhonha	Tabloid	Monthly	Aurélio Silby	R r e
1979	Uai	Poços de Caldas	Tabloid	Monthly	Coletivo	P r e
1979	Cometa	Belo Horizonte	Tabloid	Monthly	Aloísio Moraes	P r 30

Source: adapted from Magalhães and Musse (2016) and Kucinski (2018).

Sete, *Circus*, and *De Fato*. Subsequently, in pursuit of additional information — particularly regarding visual characteristics — complete, high-resolution digital editions of *De Fato* were located and made available for consultation on the website of the Central and Historical Archive of Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV). Given the accessible graphic material, which demonstrated significant relevance in terms of design elements, *De Fato* was selected as the object of study.

DE FATO (1976–1978)

The newspaper *De Fato* was founded in January 1976 in the city of Belo Horizonte, conceived by journalist Aloísio Moraes, who also served as the editor of the publication. Over its two years and nine months of existence, a total of 27 issues were published, all in tabloid format. The newspaper was produced by the

editor-in-chief with the support of the editorial staff, fourteen regular contributors, and additional collaborators who worked on specific issues (Leão, 2015). Across its monthly editions, “more than 100 people were involved: [...] some stayed from the beginning to the end, but most had a brief presence” (Carrato, 2022, p. 103).

The publication emerged at a unique moment during the civil-military dictatorship, when “civil society in Minas Gerais and Brazil was already showing the first signs of wanting the return of democracy, civil rights, and amnesty for political prisoners, exiles, and those banned by the regime” (Carrato, 2022, p. 100). In this context, the catalyst for the creation of *De Fato* was the murder of the journalism director at São Paulo’s TV Cultura, Wladimir Herzog, at the DOI-CODI¹ headquarters in October 1975 (Carrato, 2022). According to Kucinski (2018, p. 100), Herzog’s death triggered internal crises in several newsrooms, leading to the emergence of alternative newspapers founded by respected journalists in capitals outside the Rio de Janeiro–São Paulo axis. *De Fato* was born out of a rebellion by journalists at *Jornal de Minas*, which occurred after its editor, Afonso Paulino, publicly supported the repression in various editorials (Kucinski, 2018; Morais, 2018).

It was in this context that Aloísio Morais, then a correspondent for *O Globo*, alongside journalists from *Jornal de Minas* and students of communication and psychology, conceived a new alternative newspaper founded on the principle of “journalistic autonomy.” Launched without formal management or working capital, *De Fato* was initially produced in Morais’s home. Revenue from the sale of each edition, approximately seven thousand copies, financed the production of the next. Distribution was typically carried out by the newspaper’s own team, who sold copies individually at bars, and outside cinemas and theaters (Kucinski, 2018; Carrato, 2022).

The structure of *De Fato* as a communication vehicle included an editorial, a letters section featuring readers’ correspondence (ranging from commentary on topics covered in previous editions to socially engaged denunciations), news articles, reports, opinion pieces, a humor section (titled “*Humordaz*”), small advertisements from local businesses, numerous images, and short stories. Each edition averaged approximately 20 pages, increasing to 24 pages from the 17th edition onward, with even higher page counts in the final issues (Leão; Torre, 2016).

Regarding its journalistic identity, the publication was “committed to protecting the exercise of citizens’ rights against a dictatorship that restricted freedom” (Leão, 2015, p. 65). Although it was part of the cultural and political resistance to the dictatorship, the newspaper was not subject to direct censorship by the Censorship Division of the Ministry of Justice — which did not prevent constant threats made by repression agents against its journalists.

In an effort to raise awareness among its readers, *De Fato* addressed topics largely ignored by conservative society, establishing itself as a prominent platform

1 Information Operations Detachment (*Destacamento de Operações de Informações* – DOI) – Internal Defense Operations Center (*Centro de Operações de Defesa Interna* – CODI), agencies responsible for carrying out repression.

for the communication of ideological proposals through the production and social engagement of the young journalists involved in the project (Lemos; Duarte, 2021). In its early issues, the newspaper covered themes such as feminism, homosexuality, and popular culture, alongside discussions on cinema, theater, and literature (Lemos; Duarte, 2021; Carrato, 2022).

Nonetheless, the newspaper's primary focus was on local issues, particularly the hardships faced by the most vulnerable segments of the population. According to Lemos and Duarte (2021, p. 194), the journalism practiced by this alternative newspaper from Minas Gerais constituted "an intervention, in the sense of telling, showing, analyzing, and denouncing social and political life localized in the urban environment of the 1970s, in the capital of the state of Minas Gerais." As noted by Leão and Torre (2016), the tabloid published articles that addressed internal social tensions, aiming to expose the lack of infrastructure in various neighborhoods, along with issues related to public transportation, housing, and expropriation.

Ultimately, the newspaper's run came to an end in October 1978, not as a direct result of repression, but due to related factors, including the invasion of its newsroom by vandals and a shift in pursuit of more effective means of opposing authoritarianism through journalism (Moraes, 2018; Carrato, 2022). Nevertheless, given *De Fato's* stance as a combative communication outlet against the dictatorship, it may be inferred that the visual and editorial elements of its covers serve as indicators of its "role in resisting censorship and the silencing imposed by the dominant mainstream press" (Leão, 2015, p. 66).

COVER DESIGN IN PRINT NEWSPAPERS AND VISUAL-VERBAL RHETORIC

According to Caldwell and Zappaterra (2014), editorial design fulfills multiple functions, including conveying expression and personality to the content, attracting and retaining readers, and organizing elements in a clear and coherent manner. These functions, as the authors emphasize, must operate simultaneously and continuously to produce outcomes that are enjoyable, useful, or informative — often combining all three. In this context, the importance of "engaging readers through visual presentation in order to foster interest in reading" is underscored (Damasceno, 2013, p. 8).

With regard to editorial design in the context of journalism, Gruszynski and Damasceno (2014) note that graphic forms emerge from the interaction between these fields, serving as the visual expression of journalistic content. Accordingly, various terms are employed to describe the set of elements and processes that create identity and confer visual form to journalistic discourse — newspaper design, press design, visual journalism, journalistic design, and news design are among the most commonly ones in specialized literature are (Gruszynski, 2012; Travassos, 2012; Damasceno, 2013; Caldwell; Zappaterra, 2014; Moraes, 2015).

An examination of the visual characteristics of printed newspapers reveals that design is intrinsically linked to the publication's editorial project and, ultimately,

constitutes a specific form of visual identity design (Moraes, 2015). Editorial design determines how and where each topic will be presented, that is, graphic design, in this context, defines the format, layout area (including margins), column structure and spacing, typography, color palette, and iconographic elements that collectively articulate the publication's conceptual identity (Gruszynski, 2012).

In this context, the front page plays a central role in consolidating a newspaper's identity, serving as a reflection of its journalistic stance. It is the space where visual and editorial elements are synthesized and most readily absorbed by readers. Between 1950 and 1990 — the period during which *De Fato* was published — marketing and advertising concepts promoted heightened graphic-visual awareness. This shift, driven by economic-industrial logic, led newspaper owners to regard the publication as a product and the front page as its packaging (Travassos, 2012). As the primary visual interface with the reader, the front page is designed to attract attention and realize the newspaper's communicative potential (Ferreira Junior, 2003; Damasceno, 2013).

At the intersection of design and journalism, there are distinct approaches to front pages, but generally, they can be classified into three categories: figurative, abstract, and text-focused (Caldwell; Zappaterra, 2014). However, it is important to highlight that among the "range of differentiations that a newspaper layout must promote, there is one that perhaps can be [...] the most evident to the reader: the difference between the appearance of the front pages and the appearance of the inside pages" (Damasceno, 2013, p. 30).

When designing a newspaper cover, professionals must attend not only to its communicative and informative functions but also to the demands of synthesis and persuasion. These characteristics align the cover with the field of rhetoric, as Bonsiepe (2010) asserts that "information without rhetoric is an illusion." According to the author, the act of designing an object for communication inherently involves rhetorical mechanisms. In his view, "'pure' information exists only in sterile abstraction. As soon as one begins to give it a concrete form, rhetoric begins its process of infiltration" (Bonsiepe, 2010, p. 180).

Recognized as the classical art of persuasion, the "objective of rhetoric is, fundamentally, to shape opinions, determine the attitude of other people, or influence their actions" (Bonsiepe, 2010, p. 177). Thus, this work proposes the use of rhetoric as an analytical-descriptive tool, favoring the refinement of analyses regarding the relationships between the verbal and non-verbal content of the studied graphic compositions, and their consequences on the reading public. For this purpose, visual-verbal rhetoric is the most suitable tool for the proposed objectives.

Over time, classical rhetoric, verbal and strictly related to language, gave way to visual rhetoric because it could no longer "describe and analyze phenomena in which verbal and visual signs, that is, word and image, are associated" (Bonsiepe, 2010, p. 178). Posters, advertisements, films, newspapers, magazines, and commercials are just some examples of artifacts that evoke image-word combinations, in which the signs are independent but interact closely. Therefore, it is understood

that, just like such combinations, there are different relationships of signs and figures of visual-verbal rhetoric in these artifacts (Bonsiepe, 2010).

In visual-verbal rhetoric, therefore, rhetorical figures are combinations of two types of signs (linguistic and visual), “whose communicative effectiveness depends on the tension between their semantic characteristics. The signs cease to simply add up and begin to operate, more precisely, in cumulative reciprocal relationships” (Bonsiepe, 2010, p. 181).

GRAPHIC ANALYSIS OF THE COVERS OF *DE FATO* NEWSPAPER

The selection of covers for analysis was based on the availability of digitized editions of *De Fato* within the digital archive of the Central and Historical Archive of UFV, specifically issues 9, 17, 20, 21, and 22 of the newspaper. Figure 1 displays these covers in chronological order. Among the five examples, the covers of issues 20 and 21 stood out due to their graphic and visual characteristics. The primary selection criteria included the prominent use of color as background within the compositions and the unconventional arrangement (both verbal and visual) in the graphic design, features that distinguish these covers and attract attention. Furthermore, the selected covers addressed key themes aligned with *De Fato*’s journalistic stance, particularly concerning the social issues of the period, and were published during the newspaper’s most politically engaged phase (Carrato, 2022).



Source: Central and Historical Archive of Universidade Federal de Viçosa (UFV).

Figure 1. Covers of issues 9, 17, 20, 21, and 22 of the newspaper *De Fato*, respectively.

It is noteworthy that the professionals responsible for the layout and assembly of *De Fato* issue 20 were Edson Ricardo Teixeira de Melo and Dione Maria Dutra, whereas issue 21 was solely laid out by Edson, as indicated in the mastheads (De Fato, 1977). Additionally, the graphic analysis method employed followed the approach proposed by Villas-Boas (2009) in the article “*About critic design strategies and teaching practice.*”

From another perspective, in agreement with Tavares and Vaz (2008), who define the newspaper as a communication medium characterized by communicative strategies manifested through the coexistence of text and image, the discussion proceeds based on the visual-verbal rhetorical patterns proposed by Bonsiepe (2010; 2011). Communicative intentions are primarily revealed “through rhetorical patterns described as ‘the art of saying something in a new way’ and ‘the semantic transformation of words and the effort to give greater persuasive power and vitality to discourse’” (Bonsiepe, 2011, p. 117).

The method proposed by Villas-Boas (2009) considers graphic analysis as a critical-analytical practice involving technical-formal and aesthetic-formal elements, as shown in Chart 2. The technical-formal elements (or technical elements) are those that the average observer does not see (or tends to ignore), whereas the aesthetic-formal elements (or aesthetic elements) refer to what the observer actually sees in the layout (images, lettering, colors, etc.). In other words, the technical elements concern the overall organization of the aesthetic elements on the surface of the design, but not the aesthetic elements themselves (Villas-Boas, 2009).

Chart 2. Summary of aesthetic and technical elements.

Layout	Technical elements	Composition devices	Graphic Mass Structure Centering Axis
		Design Principles	Unity Harmony Synthesis Balance Movement Hierarchy
	Aesthetic elements	Textual components	Kicker Headline Subheadline Subheading Body text Drop cap Caption Pull quote Recurring unit (etc.)
		Non-textual components	Graphic elements Color Photography Illustration Illustrative type
		Mixed components	Graphic Logotype Illustrated table Infographic (etc.)

Source: adapted from Villas-Boas (2009).

The analysis begins with the identification of the design area and its dimensions. *De Fato* adopted the tabloid format, with each front page, inner page, and back cover measuring approximately 27 cm in width by 32 cm in height (Moraes, 2015). Based on this information, the subsequent step involves the identification and description of the technical elements that structure the layout — beginning with issue number 20 (Figure 2).



Figure 2. Cover and layout of issue 20 of *De Fato*, Dec. 1977.

The technical elements are categorized into two groups: compositional devices and design principles. Compositional devices are instrumental design techniques employed to position aesthetic-formal elements on the layout's surface (Villas-Boas, 2009). The most fundamental of these is the graphic frame, which establishes margins and defines notions of bleed. In the cover under analysis, the aesthetic elements that mark the vertices of the graphic frame are the newspaper's logo and the textual component positioned at the bottom of the layout (Figure 3). According to Moraes (2015), the graphic frame of the tabloid format typically measures 24.7 cm in width by 30 cm in height.

The layout structure serves as a device that organizes the positioning and dimensions of aesthetic-formal elements on the design surface by dividing the graphic frame into preferably homogeneous modules (Villas-Boas, 2009). These modules are derived using a structural diagram composed of horizontal and vertical lines. In the composition under analysis, the spacing between the vertical lines was determined by the width of the header — positioned below the logo —, while the horizontal lines were guided by the height of the newspaper's title, which served as the basis for defining the module dimensions.

Centering is a compositional strategy that aligns the layout according to two reference points: the Euclidean geometric center and the optical center. Its application enhances the organization of the layout and increases the visual prominence of specific aesthetic-formal elements. On the cover of issue number 20 of *De Fato*, the tracing of these centers reveals a strong alignment with the photograph, which is positioned for strategic visual impact (Villas-Boas, 2009). Notably, the optical center is located almost precisely at the eye of the photographed subject, Charlie Chaplin (1889–1977).

Design principles, in contrast to compositional devices, do not constitute specific arrangements or prescriptions; rather, they are historically determined references (Villas-Boas, 2009). In the composition under analysis, the most prominent

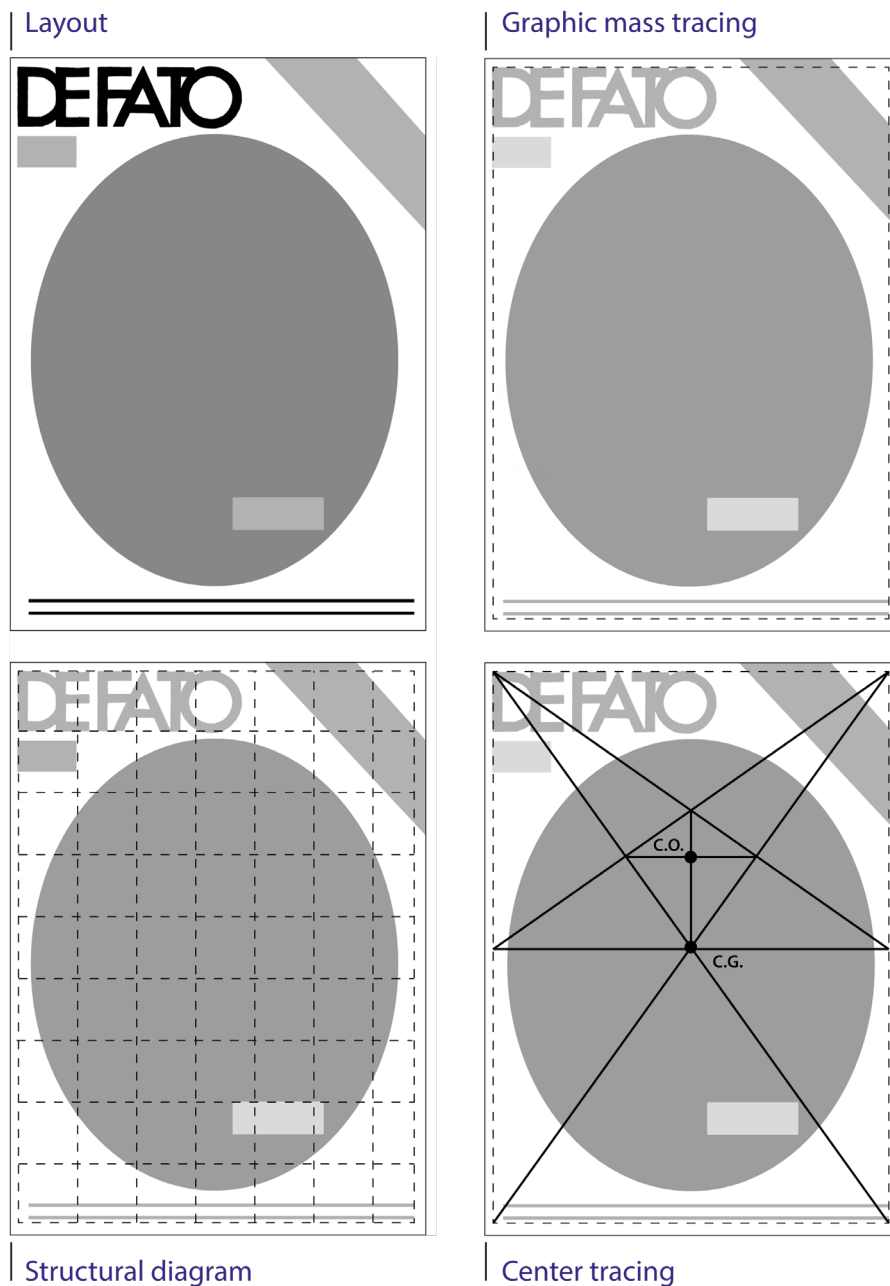


Figure 3. Layout and specifications of the compositional devices.

principles are synthesis and hierarchy. With a limited number of verbal and visual elements, the cover effectively synthesizes key information to facilitate communication. Complexity is achieved through the combination of simple components, with synthesis functioning as a design principle capable of organizing a “richness of meaning and form into a total structure that clearly defines the place and function of each detail within the whole” (Arnheim, 2011, p. 52).

Visual hierarchy is established through the positioning and scale of aesthetic elements on the cover, structured to guide the viewer’s reading in accordance with the relative importance assigned to each element (Villas-Boas, 2009). The photograph receives the greatest prominence, as it occupies a substantial portion of the composition and is centrally positioned. This prominence

enhances the significance of the message associated with the image, creating a visual dividing point that influences the viewer's mode of navigation/reading (Lupton; Phillips, 2008).

Consequently, it is noted that the examination of the design principles brings the analysis closer to the aesthetic elements present in the composition, and thus, the recognition and discussion of these elements, indicated in Figure 4, follows.



Figure 4. Identification of the aesthetic elements.

With regard to the textual components, a prominent diagonal (black graphic) in the upper right corner features the headline: "BRAZILIAN POLITICS IN 1978: WHAT WILL IT BE, WHAT WILL IT BE?" (*A POLÍTICA BRASILEIRA EM 1978: O QUE SERÁ, QUE SERÁ?*), referencing the song *O Que Será* by Chico Buarque, released in 1976. Within the context of authoritarianism, the newspaper evokes uncertainty about the future, a sentiment visually reinforced by the expression of doubt and apprehension in the photograph, particularly through Charlie Chaplin's anxious gesture of "biting his nails." This demonstrates the use of the rhetorical pattern of visual/verbal analogy, in which "a verbal comparison is transferred to the visual field through equivalent semantic signs" (Bonsiepe, 2011, p. 118), or when "a verbally expressed referent is confronted with a similar referent expressed visually" (Bonsiepe, 2010, p. 181).

Another verbal-textual element appears at the bottom of the layout, where the following headline is displayed: "SPECIAL, 20 PAGES: THE WORKERS IN EIGHTY YEARS OF BEAGÁ'S HISTORY" (*ESPECIAL, 20 PÁGINAS: OS TRABALHADORES EM OITENTA ANOS DA HISTÓRIA DE BEAGÁ*). It is noteworthy that, beginning with issue number 20, *De Fato* began to engage more intensively with the labor movement, establishing it as a central theme through the publication of interviews and articles addressing the political struggle of the working class (Leão; Torre, 2016).

On the other hand, the main headline of the issue is not explicitly represented in the graphic composition of the cover. Instead, the design professionals employed semantic strategies such as the rhetorical pattern of visual/verbal associative transfer. This meaning becomes evident upon recognizing that Charles Chaplin was (and remains) widely known for portraying the hardships faced by workers in his films. Chaplin, also known as Carlitos, "made 61 silent films and about ten sound films, most of them critically addressing the social problems of his time" (De Fato, 1977, p. 3).

Thus, by establishing connections between the verbal text and the photograph, it can be inferred that the image of the artist functions as a signifier for labor-related themes, encapsulated in the verbal expression "workers in eighty years of history." Associative transfer occurs when "the meaning of a verbal signifier is visualized, allowing another element to associate with this meaning. Through syntactic juxtaposition, a semantic transfer (a semantic borrowing) is sought" (Bonsiepe, 2011, p. 118). In this context, the workers' struggle against authoritarianism is thematically associated with Charles Chaplin, a figure widely recognized for his connection to labor issues. This results in a transfer (borrowing) of meaning, whereby a potential reader, upon viewing the cover, is likely to associate Chaplin's image with the newspaper's journalistic stance and infer that the issue addresses workers' concerns.

Finally, there is a textual component with compromised legibility due to its juxtaposition with the photograph, which reads: "CARLITOS, OFF THE STAGE OF LIFE" (*CARLITOS, FORA DO PALCO DA VIDA*). Metaphorical in nature, the phrase refers to the death of the renowned British filmmaker, which occurred on December 25, 1977, two days prior to the newspaper's publication. In this context, the photograph "is not just an image of the news. It is also the news" (Tavares; Vaz, 2008, p. 131). Accordingly, in the text/image relationship, the presence of two rhetorical patterns can be observed: visual/verbal parallelism and metaphorical inversion (or re-metaphor).

Visual/verbal parallelism occurs when "the verbal and visual signifiers refer to the same meaning" (Bonsiepe, 2011, p. 118). In the case under analysis, the verbal signifier "Carlitos" directly references the visual referent, the portrait of Charles Chaplin. The remainder of the textual component, "off the stage of life," introduces a metaphorical inversion, as Chaplin's image is used to announce his death, metaphorically conveyed through the phrase. This results in a reversal of meanings between the verbal and visual elements. In the metaphorical inversion pattern, tension is established between primary and secondary (transferred) meanings, whereby the visual signifiers either illustrate or invert the primary meaning (Bonsiepe, 2011).

Complementarily, and with the aim of deepening the analysis, the discussion returns to the use of specific aesthetic elements. Regarding the striking presence of the photograph, Barthes (2012) emphasizes that such an image possesses the power to confront the observer directly, an effect notably achieved in this composition through technical elements such as centering. Despite the image's nostalgic tone, it is observed that the photograph, although not necessarily evoking the past, serves as evidence that what is depicted did, in fact, exist, thereby reinforcing the undeniable significance of Carlitos (Barthes, 2012). Sontag (2004) further supports this perspective, arguing that photography confers upon the event or the photographed subject a form of immortality (and significance) that they might not otherwise attain.

Given the prominent use of color on the cover, it is understood that this element has the capacity to elicit emotional, sentimental, and affective responses, as well as to convey associated meanings. In particular, green evokes restorative thoughts and is commonly linked to notions of growth, hope, health, and safety (Dondis, 1997; Arnheim, 2011; Lupton; Phillips, 2018). By correlating the elements (verbal and non-verbal) with the use of green, it can be inferred that *De Fato*, despite operating under the constraints of censorship and the harsh conditions faced by workers, sought to reinforce a sense of hope among those striving for a better future, much like Charlie Chaplin did through his artistic work.

From this point onward, the analysis turns to the identification and description of the technical elements that structure the layout of the cover of *De Fato* issue 21, as shown in Figure 5.



Figure 5. Cover and layout of issue 21 of the newspaper *De Fato*, Jan. 1978.

On this cover, beginning with the compositional devices, the aesthetic elements that define the vertices of the print area include the newspaper's logo, the illustration on the left, and the verbal component positioned at the bottom of the composition (Figure 6). Regarding the layout structure, as in issue 20, the spacing between the vertical lines was determined by the width of the header — located

beneath the logo — while the horizontal divisions were based on the height of the newspaper's title, which served as the guiding element for defining the modules. This approach “embeds the notion of a grid, present in graphic designs of newspapers, books, magazines, and other paginated prints” (Villas-Boas, 2009, p. 13).

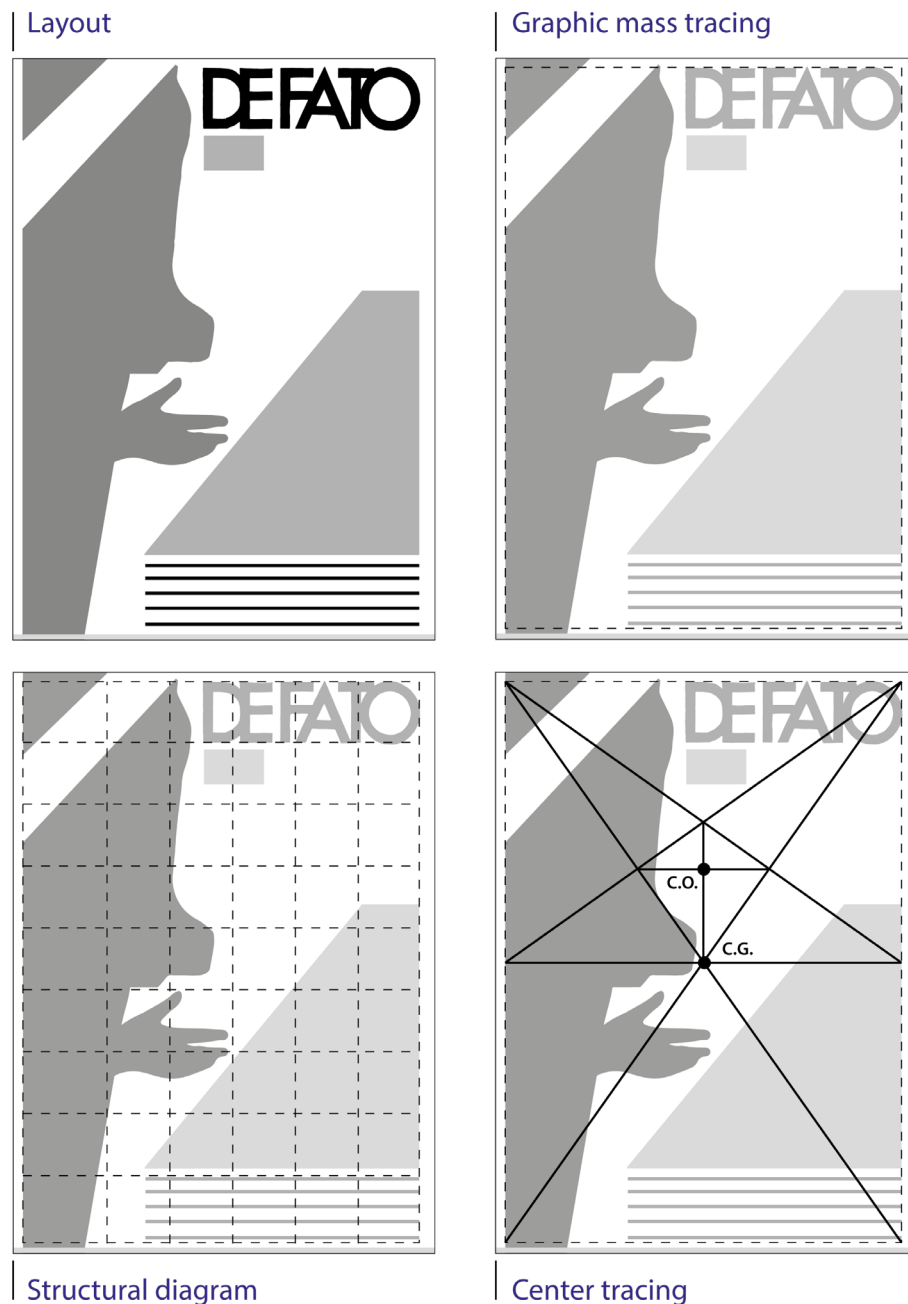


Figure 6. Layout and specifications of the compositional devices.

With respect to centering, the establishment of the referential centers — the Euclidean geometric center and the optical center — reveals a perceptible sense of depth within the composition. On the cover of issue 21 of *De Fato*, the tracing of these centers indicates a clear relationship between the verbal and non-verbal elements, which nearly overlap, suggesting a deliberate complementarity between them.

Regarding the design principles outlined by Villas-Boas (2009), which are regarded as broadly accepted intentions, the most prominent in this composition is movement. Although the image is static, the cover conveys a sense of movement through two factors: the previously noted impression of depth, created by the shape and arrangement of elements, and the allusion to a plea (an action in motion), represented by the hands of the prisoners in the illustration. As Dondis (1997, p. 80) observes, the suggestion of movement in “static visual manifestations is more difficult to achieve without simultaneously distorting reality, but it is implicit in everything we see, and derives from our full experience of movement in life.”

Complementarily, Arnheim (2011, p. 365) notes that “movement is the visual attraction that most intensely captures attention.” According to the author, in a static image, the most effective way to convey movement is through “the selection of a moment that represents a unique structural instance, as if taken from a film representing the sequence in the temporal dimension” (Arnheim, 2011, p. 415). In the composition under analysis, among various possibilities, the designer chose to depict the movement of hands engaged in an act of dissent and supplication, thereby creating a sense of tension that conveys the “agony of the political prisoners.”

Furthermore, the analysis continues with the identification and discussion of the aesthetic elements present on the cover, as indicated in Figure 7.



Regarding the textual components, the most significant for understanding the meanings conveyed on the cover is the prominent headline: "THE AGONY OF THE POLITICAL PRISONERS" (*A AGONIA DOS PRESOS POLÍTICOS*). Once again, *De Fato* reaffirms its firm journalistic stance in opposition to the civil-military dictatorship by publishing 22 testimonies from individuals convicted under the National Security Law, distributed across nine pages.

Regarding the text-image relationship, Tavares and Vaz (2008, p. 134) observe that when engaging in a quick reading of a newspaper, "the reader [...] will certainly have their attention drawn [...] by its headlines and images. Hence the importance of the relationship between them. There is a complementarity of information, a dialogue between both." In the graphic design under analysis, this complementarity is achieved through the use of two rhetorical patterns: synecdoche and visual/verbal parallelism.

Visual/verbal synecdoche occurs when a part stands in for the whole. In the case under analysis, the verbal referent "political prisoners" is not represented through literal depictions of incarcerated individuals, but rather through the image of hands behind bars (Bonsiepe, 2010; 2011). Parallelism is evident when "visual and verbal signs represent the same referent" (Bonsiepe, 2010, p. 183). Accordingly, the illustration (visual signifier) clearly conveys the agony experienced by prisoners (meaning), aligning with the verbal signifiers presented in the headline (Bonsiepe, 2011).

To enhance the analysis, it is essential to revisit the discussion of key aesthetic elements, particularly the illustration and the use of color. Regarding the illustration, its primary function is understood to be referential. Its main objective is "to convey visual information to a specific audience, information that generally means the expansion of a verbal message" (Dondis, 1997, p. 205). As demonstrated throughout the analysis, the cover presents a clear correlation between the illustration and the verbal message. Oliveira (2008) is agreed with in understanding illustration as a communicational phenomenon, endowed with informational and persuasive functions to make objects perceptible, but without giving them finished forms, representing them with a kind of membrane of illusion that evokes reflective thinking in observers.

Finally, the color red stands out as a highly significant element in the analyzed composition. Red is a color loaded with ambivalent connotations — it may be associated with anger, but also with passion; it appears on flags waved to provoke bulls, yet also features prominently in the banners of communist parties (Dondis, 1997). In the case studied, the vibrant and provocative red paves the way for various associations, such as the relation to the bloodshed of tortured individuals, to the banners of leftist parties, to anger, danger, and other heated sensations. In any case, it should be kept in mind that color "is the most emotional of the specific elements of the visual process, it has great strength and can be used very effectively to express and intensify visual information" (Dondis, 1997, p. 69).

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

This article discussed the relationship between graphic memory artifacts — in this case, alternative newspapers — and editorial graphic design. Amid the restrictions imposed during the dictatorship, the new technical resources of the time allowed greater space for creative experimentation, successfully utilized by the alternative press. The graphic analysis of the covers of the newspaper *De Fato* confirmed that the prominent use of photographs and other types of images, as well as colors, made its presentation more dynamic and engaging, inviting the reader to read and reflect. Furthermore, it was evident that the journalistic identity of the outlet — prominent in its verbal content — was intrinsically related to its visual aspects.

In light of the results, the analytical method employed, grounded in the propositions of André Villas-Boas and complemented by Gui Bonsiepe's principles of visual-verbal rhetoric, proved effective in elucidating the meanings generated by the image compositions on the covers. This understanding reinforces the role of design in the construction of narratives, particularly those of a socially engaged nature. It demonstrates that the professionals involved intentionally apply compositional and persuasive strategies to fulfill the communicational/informative functions of the editorial project.

From another perspective, the knowledge acquired opens new avenues for understanding the visual foundations of the Brazilian alternative press and the strategic use of visual language in conveying anti-authoritarian messages. This involves not only analyzing the solutions adopted in the organization of aesthetic elements within the layout but also interpreting their meanings in light of the historical context.

Considering the studies on Brazilian Graphic Memory, their significance is recognized as an integral part of policies aimed at valuing and disseminating the national cultural heritage. By analyzing the covers of an alternative newspaper produced during the civil-military dictatorship, this article highlights that such graphic artifacts formed part of discourses infused with social demands and were linked to segments of the population opposing the regime. Although the analysis focused on only two covers due to the article's textual constraints, it is concluded that comparative studies of similar and contrasting cases offer promising avenues for future research.

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