

## **THE COMMODIFICATION OF JOB VACANCIES: MARKET PRACTICES OF FEE-CHARGING EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES IN RIO DE JANEIRO (1950-1975)**

“Labor is not a commodity”: this principle founded the International Labor Organization (ILO) in its 1919 constitution and has been enshrined in the 1944 Declaration of Philadelphia. The authorship of this maxim is not unanimous in the community of historians (O’Higgins, 1997; Evju, 2013). ILO actors invoked it in support of various policies, backed by the idea that labor is inseparable from the worker whose dignity should be protected: the defense of non-market mechanisms for establishing wages, the prohibition of the transfer of a worker from one employer to another without their consent, or the fight against migrant labor traffic. On a theoretical level, Karl Polanyi (1944) conceptualized the processes of commodification of labor by social forces whose stake is in the availability of labor force for capitalist interests. In this Marxist reading of the “fictitious” commodification of labor, the concept refers to a materialist conception of history, in which the social actors representing class interests, who are embedded in power relations, determine the material conditions for the degree of submission of workers to the institutionalized rules of supply and demand. This is the case of the social laws conquered by the organized workers, allowing the regulation of work according to principles other than that of the free market. In this sense, the history of social conquests, limiting the availability of labor force on the one hand and offering socialized income to replace labor on the other, is that of a progressive decommodification of labor (Offe, 1984; Esping-Andersen, 1988). Therefore, the commodification/decommodification process is understood in a materialist perspective and concerns the worker’s earnings, i.e., the supply side, rather than the demand of labor.

However, one of the earliest practical understandings of the maxim “Labor is not a commodity” concerns the employment intermediation policies aimed at extinguishing the fees charged to workers for their placement. Based on the 1919 constitution, different ILO conventions have reaffirmed that financial cost should not hinder access to employment for workers and that job vacancies cannot be traded. Thus, the idea that workers should not pay to be allowed to work is the second facet of the labor decommodification norm, positioned on the demand side. Most countries, including those in Latin America, have taken steps to regulate this area, and the norm of intermediation at the expense of employers or the State is taken for granted. Brazil is one of the few countries, however, where workers pay for access to online job boards and employment services, despite the existence of a public system for placing the unemployed. Hence, the situation in Brazil raises a two-fold question: How did the job vacancy become a “thing” to be traded? How did workers agree to pay for the matching service?

The article aims to go back to the sources of this norm of vacant jobs as commodities by considering the commercial work done by private employment agencies between 1950 and 1972 to seduce job seekers and convince them to pay for an intermediation service. It sheds light on a part of the activity of these employment agencies that is generally little studied because the literature focuses on the function of matching labor supply and demand (Autor, 2009; Marchal & Bureau, 2009), which leads to direct the selection of the workforce and the circulation of economic information. The best example of sociology of work applied to employment agencies in Brazil is the research led by Nadya Guimarães (Guimarães, 2009) which offers a very thorough analysis of the intermediation system in the Metropolitan Region of São Paulo in the 2000s.

To say that private employment agencies transformed job vacancies into commodities may seem absurd to a somewhat objective labor economist. Indeed, it will not escape any specialist in labor market intermediation that private employment agencies do not sell job offers but rather a service of putting workers in touch with recruiters and preparing them for the labor market, i.e., for the selection tests of employers. In addition, researchers are able to differentiate between a job vacancy and a job advertisement, the second being a material representation of the first.

Hence, from our culturalist and situationist perspective (Appadurai, 1986), the production of commodities is a cultural and cognitive process as “commodities must be not only produced materially as things, but also culturally marked as being a certain kind of things” (Kopytoff, 1986: 64). In western mercantile capitalism, such as one experienced by the Brazilian middle class in the 1950s, an object or service becomes a commodity when it is marked symbolically as a saleable thing.

Many sociologists confer a moral meaning to this symbolic marking, describing the historical processes of normative regulation that tend to

separate the world into two classes of objects: those that can be traded and those that are priceless and untradeable. They focus on collective action contesting the commodityhood of certain class of objects, in particular people, on a moral point of view (Radin, 2001; Satz, 2010). Indeed, I showed elsewhere how, during the first years of dictatorship, Brazilian private employment agencies collectively responded to the timid moral contestation of the monetization of workers by the State (Lima, 2022).

In fact, the moral acceptability of the salability of a thing is one very important condition to commodify an object or a service. However, it is not the only one. The object or service might be also marked as a thing belonging to a shared consumer culture of the middle class, made of promises of abundance, presented as a free choice between an ever-increasing range of goods and experiences and accumulation of material and immaterial services. Consumer studies have taught us to consider the consumer not as a universal anthropological datum, an ideal-typical manifestation of *homo economicus*, but as an individual socialized to certain consumption practices through discourses and market devices (Arnould & Thompson, 2005; Gottschalk & Berger, 2002). Thus, we defend a pragmatic conception of commodity, which is performed by actors who believe in the reality of the market and its laws (Muniesa et al., 2007). This way of thinking commodityhood emphasizes the role of commercial objects, artefacts, and technologies within the market framework (Cochoy, 2007), especially to confirm the saleable nature of the thing made desirable for consumption (Pettinger, 2006). One object or service is thus commodified by marking it materially and discursively as belonging to the class of consumption goods, which provides a desirable social identity to the middle class. Jean Baudrillard identified two characteristics of the social organization of objects in a consumer society: profusion and packages or collections of goods; the drugstore being “the synthesis of profusion and calculation” (Baudrillard, 2012: 27).

The work of market professionals is thus to reproduce for each object to be sold the representation of profusion and collection in order to signify to the community the belonging of the thing to the sphere of commodities. Therefore, we propose to direct the research towards what the organization of the labor market owes to the “work of market professionals” (Cochoy & Dubuisson-Quellier, 2000) and “market practices” (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2016), in particular advertisers and marketers who develop selling techniques, be it discursive or material. We argue that the consumer culture colonized the labor market when private employment agencies imported techniques, codes, and normative expectations specific to the market of consumption goods into the world of labor. We witnessed in Brazil a historical process of commodification of job vacancies, i.e., the institutional and symbolic arrangement of a commodity situation for the vacant job in which the latter appears to be exchangeable for a certain sum of money sacrificed by the job seeker.

This article deals with the different aspects of the commodityhood of job vacancies that characterizes the treatment of job intermediation in the 1950s and 1960s. As job matching appeared to be a free market in the 1950s, real “market practices” were developed, and in particular “exchange practices” as identified by Kjellberg and Helgesson: activities of advertisement and pricing, which “all contribute to temporarily stabilize certain conditions (the parties to the exchange, exchange object, price, terms of exchange) so that an economic exchange becomes possible” (Kjellberg & Helgesson, 2016). The commercial work had to involve employers to convince them to entrust their job offers to agencies. However, this work is less observable by the researcher than the intense activity of seduction deployed by the market professionals to capture job seekers.

The article relies on the exploitation of the classified pages of the archives of the *Jornal do Brasil*. (JB). We justify the choice of this newspaper due to the accessibility of its digital archives, available free of charge on the national library website [bndigital.br](http://bndigital.br), and due to its longevity (the first edition dates back to 1891 with no interruptions since), as well as by its centrality in the life of the Carioca bourgeoisie. We have constituted a sample by selecting all the job offers from each September 5 issue (or nearest when it happened to be on weekends), for each year ending with 5 between 1905 and 1975, totaling 3556 ads. In addition, we collected all the advertisements for employment agencies from 1945 to 1975 by entering the keywords “*agência de emprego*” (“employment agency”) and all the names of agencies identified on September 6, 1955 (which represents a peak in the publication of job offers and advertisements for agencies): ATA, Pitman, TÉD de serviços, Link de serviços, and Utilix.

First, we will analyze the use of classified ads by the new commercial actors of intermediation by resituating it in a general economy of labor market information in the city of Rio de Janeiro. Then we will analyze the discursive and technical means by which these private actors commodified employment and reclassify the worker as a mass consumer of job vacancies and as a customer of the employment service.

## **NEWSPAPERS, EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES, AND LABOUR MARKET INFORMATION IN RIO DE JANEIRO**

Despite the high level of informality on the labor market and the weight of individual relationships in job search (Guimarães, 2009), newspapers have been a common media for labor market information in Rio de Janeiro since the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially in the domestic labor (Souza, 2017). Job ads cannot be used for describing the structure of employment in the city since the media, its cost and its function, selected a certain kind of actors overrepresented in the newspaper pages. However, the comparison of job ads

overtime gives an insight into the evolution of the producers of such information, those who publicized job information together with the newspaper. Private intermediation services appeared in the 1950s in a quite fuzzy form that the job seeker could hardly distinguish from other services, such as short courses.

### Job ads: staging the labor market and the information economy

In the JB, the job advertisement section became autonomous in the 1900s. Between 1915 and 1965, the job ads even served as a loss leader strategy to sell the newspaper, spreading them on the front page. The newspaper invested in a way that it could cover the city of Rio with its registration offices dedicated to classified ads, which constituted an important part of its revenue.

At the end of the 1900s, the JB introduced the purchase of single issues, which allowed a significant democratization of the readership. The workers who could already read it in the spaces traditionally dedicated to the circulation of economic information on jobs, such as cafés, could punctually buy an issue to consult the job advertisements. Thus, it was the *bourgeoisie* that spread its needs in the newspapers by encouraging candidates to present themselves to the newspaper, or on the job place and then, from 1955 onwards and more rarely, by calling the company's headquarters.

Job advertisements slightly increased from 1945 to 1955 and dropped dramatically from 1955 to 1965 (-790 ads, equivalent to a drop of over 53%) and then from 1965 to 1975 (- 460 ads, equivalent to a drop of 93.8%). So much so that in its September 5, 1975 edition, the JB contained only about 40 ads focused exclusively on domestic service jobs (Chart 1).

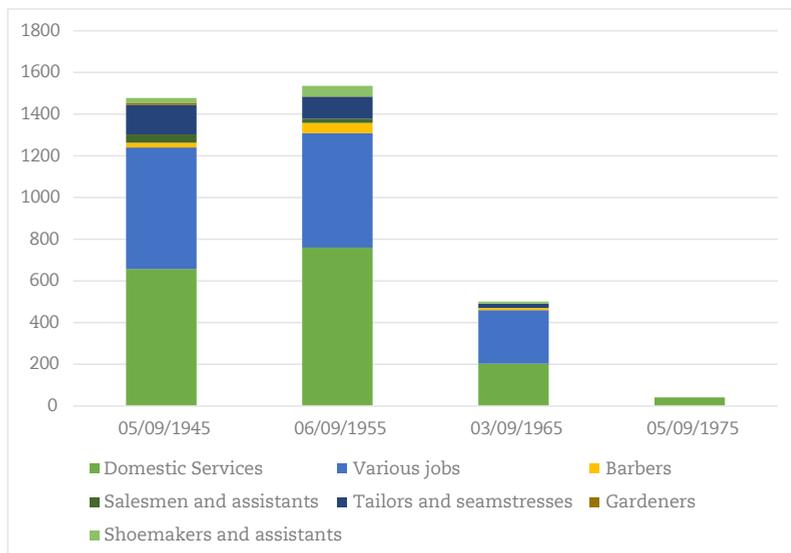


Chart 1 – Diary Number and Type of Job Ads in the Jornal do Brasil (1945-1975)

Source: JB, statistics by the author.

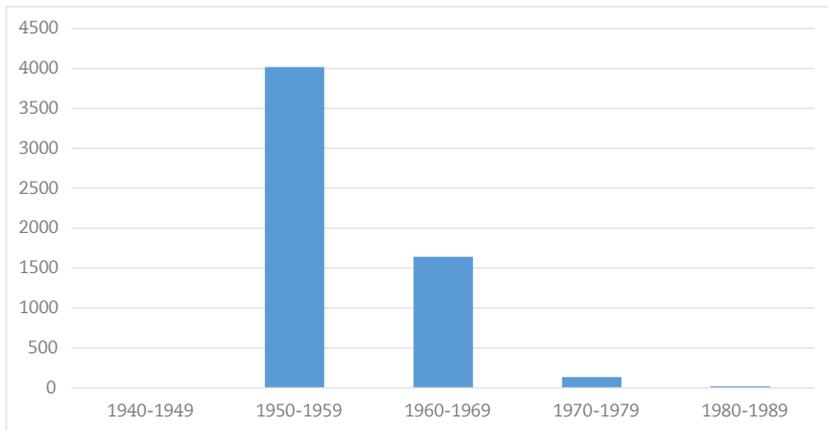
Ads for domestic service jobs still accounted for the majority in 1945 and 1955, but the “various jobs” category, which in fact included many office jobs, represented more than half of the ads in 1965. The number of ads for office jobs declined between 1955 and 1965, but not as rapidly as the number of ads for domestic services.

Furthermore, there was a growing need for small administrative staff in industrial or service companies (secretaries, accountants, reception staff...). The 50s is well known as a decade of modernization in the Brazilian production system due to public and international private investments (Leopoldi, 1994; Draibe, 1985). The bureaucratization of the companies and the economy accompanied this industrialization process. The growing division of administrative labor encountered the social aspirations of a white urban lower middle-class to maintain its status in a highly hierarchized society by acceding to non-manual occupations. Based on the 1950 census, the journal *Desenvolvimento e Conjuntura*, cited by Luiz Carlos Bresser-Pereira, counted 792 000 office workers and shop assistants with low qualification in Brazil, i.e. 4,8% of the labor force (Pereira, 1986: 87). While the population of Rio de Janeiro increased by 50% between the census of 1950 and 1960, the number of small administrative staff<sup>1</sup> jumped by 100%. The number of dactylographer almost tripled in the city of Rio de Janeiro between the census of 1950 and 1960. Then it doubled again until 1970, while the growth rate of the employees was 53%<sup>2</sup>. Given the probable high turnover on those jobs, we assume that the hiring activity on this kind of occupation must have been very intense, offering good market opportunities to intermediaries, although still dealing with a specific segment of the labor market.

Meanwhile, the incomplete democratization of high school education led generations of young people with strong basic skills in literacy and numeracy to seek office jobs. Jayme Abreu showed that enrollment in secondary education increased by 490% from 1933 to 1954; whereas the increase in primary and higher education was of only 90% and 80% (Abreu, 1961). But only 20% of the entrants into the secondary schools (selected by a difficult exam) completed the degree until the final exam (the “vestibular”), which can be interpreted as the result of precarious life conditions of the lower middle class (Nunes, 2000). These vast cohorts of young people excluded from the university, fighting against their proletarianization, represented a reservoir of labor force for large companies and public administration, while appearing as very good clients of fee employment agencies.

Still invisible in 1945, the agencies that appeared in the classified ads for the recruitment of workers, were all dedicated to the administration and business services. Indeed, employment agencies published 22.9% of the job advertisements in the “various job” category in 1955, representing 8% of all job advertisements, and this proportion dropped to 15% in 1965, still accounting for 7.5% of all advertisements.

The indicators of the evolution of the top 5 employment agencies (Agência Link de empregos, ATA, Snelling e Snelling, TÊD de serviços, Utilex) cited in the JB shows that the 1950s represent the golden age of employment agencies in the service sector, or at least of their presence on the advertised labor market (Chart 2).



**Chart 2** – Total of citations of the top 5 employment agencies in the JB  
**Source:** JB, 1940-1989, elaborated by the author.

### Composition and recomposition of paid employment services

In addition to the traditional agencies for the placement of servants, new actors took advantage of the modernization of companies and the division of labor of administrative functions in companies of different sizes, by offering private courses in typing and secretarial skills (Lima, 2022). This service to workers often include a placement service that becomes a selling point for their training. For example, in the January 1<sup>st</sup>, 1950 edition of the JB, Escola Velox, which claims to have been founded in 1911, promises a 30-day typing course and claims that it is “taking care of the placement of its students” (Escola “Velox”, 1950: 27; our translation). Some of these companies use the job posting as a lead-in to their courses, and soon the “various jobs” section brings up advertisements for these courses. Here, the CIT agency, by using the 3 keywords “Aux. escritório” (Office Assistants), “Aprendizes de escritório” (Office Apprentices), and “Auxiliar de contabilidade” (Accounting Assistant) positioned in the first ads, since it is in alphabetical order, ensures maximum visibility to their offer of short courses:

Office Assistants – Young men and women who wish to start a career in the office world will find this opportunity by taking a 20 or 40-day practical course. More details in person at CIT – Av. Pres. Vargas, 435, 10<sup>th</sup> floor.

Office Apprentices – Receiving requests from major firms, CIT is able to prepare young women and men in record time (20 or 40 days) with an absolute guarantee of employment. CIT – Jobs and Courses. Pres. Vargas, 435, 10<sup>th</sup> floor.

Accounting Assistant – In one month CIT prepares and places its students in the most important Companies in Rio. Exclusive preparation system, extra fast and efficient. CIT – Jobs and Courses. Pres. Vargas, 435, 10<sup>th</sup> floor (Empregos diversos, 1955: 1; our translation).

While some agencies have developed their recruitment service from a training activity, others have experienced the opposite trajectory. The “TÉD de serviços” agency (called also TÊD – *Tempo é Dinheiro* ‘time is money’), the most commercially active, began in 1950 with a recruitment service for companies, and a few years later added courses and finally occupied the entire intermediation chain<sup>3</sup>. In 1962, it introduced correspondence courses (Cursos..., 1962: 10, cad. 3). The company then developed a strategy of diversification into business services and integration of the activities that make up the labor intermediation sector. To the point of forming the “TÉD Group” at the turn of the 1980s, made up of seven entities covering recruitment services, training courses, temporary agency, cleaning services, data processing services, and advertising agency (Grupo TÊD de Serviços Ltda., 1980: 6, cad. 1).

Companies that entered the market a little later usually opened courses at the same time as an employment agency. This is the case of the ATA agency, Serpe (Seleção e Ensino Rápido de Pessoal Especializado – first occurrence on February 10, 1955), or the Curso Pitman which announced the opening of its first typing courses in December 1957 and then the Pitman Agency on January 19, 1958. Few organizations positioned themselves solely as recruitment agencies, such as the agency Link de Empregos, which appeared in the pages of the JB for the first time on September 17, 1953, and which did not publish any advertisements for courses until its last appearance on January 1, 1971.

In issue #208 of September 6, 1955, TÊD appears as particularly active in the office job market. It placed 38 job advertisements on the front page of the newspaper in the section “Various jobs,” which gave great visibility to it and two larger inserts for recruitment on the back page. With its 40 ads, which represent a third of the agency’s job offers, they are placed first in the ranking of job advertisers, far ahead of the cluster made up of CIT, Utilex, ATA, and Serpe, each with 15 to 20 published ads and no inserts.

TÊD agency promises students priority in staff placement. Its name appears at least once in 712 pages of the JB through 1959. On August 26, 1953, it shows 628 applicants placed between the months of June, July, and August, many of them before classes had even ended (A TÊD..., 1953a: 11, cad. 2). The managers enhanced the organization of the intermediation: the candidates must present themselves on the spot while the employers in search of workers can order by phone. In May 1953, the TÊD office was so crowded that managers

had to introduce different opening hours for different types of jobs: in the morning for jobs above 2,000 cruzeiros and in the afternoon for jobs below (A TÊD..., 1953b: 15, cad. 5). By the end of the 1950s, the agency had opened three offices in Rio. In a greeting card published in the JB on December 24, 1961, it boasted that it had trained 70,000 students, and that it had 3,000 in stock, and 12,000 client companies (Jornal do Brasil, 1961: 7, cad. 3).

The Snelling e Snelling agency, which set up in Rio in 1968 and boasted of a network of 350 agencies worldwide, positioned itself in a wider variety of professions, investing in commercial professions, aiming for a higher range of qualifications such as engineers or managers.

Of the 5 employment agencies in Rio – TÊD, Utilix, ATA, CIT<sup>4</sup>, and Serpe – that dominated the publication of job offers in the administrative sector in 1955, only two remained in 1965 (ATA and TÊD), while the dispersion of recruitment announcements became greater. In fact, the same number of agencies (9) published a much smaller number of job offers (38 instead of 120, in 1955). These famous agencies visible in the Carioca daily newspaper do not account for the proliferation of these companies, since in 1968 the Ministry of Labor counted between 300<sup>5</sup> and 150<sup>6</sup> agencies in the state of Guanabara alone, most of them focused in domestic services but also in office jobs.

All these agencies are very valuable advertisers for the local press, which lives largely on advertising revenues. This economic and commercial interdependence is particularly evident for the most established agencies, with political and economic connections among the business world, the press and the political world supporting the institutionalization of these intermediation actors (Lima, 2022). Again, the TÊD agency is a good example of this type of link. The founder and leader of TÊD, Francisco Pinheiro Machado, who comes from a prominent family from the region of Piauí, benefits from a good media coverage in the JB. The journal and the recruitment agency carried out jointly some advertising operations. In 1957, the newspaper and TÊD launched a typing contest; the opening of new branches in the city was the subject of a small article; and in the early 1970s, the executive posed in an advertisement for the newspaper's classified advertisements pages. The JB covered the 25<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the TÊD group in a four-page supplement and the municipality sent a representative to the inauguration of its new headquarters (Jornal do Brasil, 1977). Francisco Pinheiro also created his own advertising agency, which became a client of the newspaper by posting other advertisements.

### **THE COMMODIFICATION OF JOB VACANCIES AND THE CLIENTELIZATION OF THE UNEMPLOYED**

The creation of a marketplace for a “job consumer” relies on three types of market practices. First, employment agencies redefined the “thing” to be for sale by attaching value to the acquisition of job vacancies rather than to

training and job search services. Second, they imported into the sphere of wage employment the culture and techniques of choice (Schwarz, 2018) that apply in the sphere of material consumer goods, especially the semiotic fashioning of profusion and collection of job vacancies. Third, they “clientelized” the unemployed person, by requalifying him or her as a privileged customer. These symbolic operations, which aim to change the representations of the job search situation and enhance the value of the placement service, call upon the emerging culture of consumption.

### **From the job search service to the job as a product**

Agencies went to great lengths to convince candidates of the true nature of the service they were about to buy. First, many of them wanted to distinguish themselves from the agencies dedicated to courses. They emphasized the matchmaking service to distinguish themselves from training organizations for which intermediation was an accessory service. They, therefore, isolated access to employment as the real purpose of the service. Gradually these agencies have signified their particularities by displaying the mention “100% employment agency” in their ads. The term “immediate hiring” or “immediate recruitment” suggested the possibility of direct access to an office job without any training obligation. The credibility of private employment agencies also depended on the development of a portfolio of job offers that became the real products to be promoted.

Second, they developed a rhetoric of contractualization of job access using a legal vocabulary. The semantic universe of employment agency advertisements tended to reassure job seekers about the contractual guarantees of the service provided by designating the job as the object of the monetary exchange. The Pitman agency, for example, advertised vacancies as “existing” in order to distinguish themselves from the apparent legions of scams. In 1955, the ATA agency, in the middle of an advertisement for its courses, published a warning against any forgery to its readers:

Special Notice (to applicants and employers):

The ATA is a legal entity, guaranteed under law 3.010 of August 1938, and licensed by the P.D.F. Therefore, it has a definite responsibility towards employers, employees and people in general. Its progress and the great development it has obtained is due to its judicious and honest action. We do not support people or supposed agencies that, in an unfair competition, try to deceive the candidates and employers, pretending to be dependent of the ATA, saying that it is “the same thing” and other information frequently received to our knowledge (Empregos..., 1955a: 11, cad. 5; our translation).

Later, it became more insistent, denouncing the “imitators”:



Third, many employment agencies endorsed a pricing strategy attaching the value of the service to the effectiveness of job access and not only to the job search service. From the 1950s to 1970s, the policy of monetizing applicants was the norm. However, this policy could take several forms that attached value to the fact of getting a job to varying degrees. Agencies that focused on training tend to charge an enrolment fee, as this was an extension of the practice of payment by the course. Nevertheless, the empowerment of the employment intermediation as a service that could be valued in its own right goes together with the evolution of the pricing policy. It became increasingly oriented towards payment by results, namely a percentage of the first salary. This policy, which aimed to attract the unemployed by guaranteeing the candidate an efficient job, anchors in the mind of agency users the representation of job as a product, i.e., the idea they could acquire jobs through these distributors. Thus, from June 1955, ATA mentions a policy of reimbursing registration fees in the event of a failed placement: “a small fee will be refunded if ATA does not place” (our translation). For workers using its placement services, the fee was 15% of the salary.

Some agencies able to connect with large national and foreign-owned companies are in the habit of charging the intermediation service to both sides. The TÉD agency, in a 1959 large insert details its conditions to employers: “10% on the salary of the candidate admitted after a 30-day trial period. This payment is less than the price of a classified ad” (Organização TÉD de Serviços Ltda., 1959: 5, cad. 6; our translation) and in the same advertisement, this time aimed at potential candidates, it promotes negotiated fees for its courses: “Are you a typist? We offer you fast training and you pay us as you can [...]. With practical and efficient teachings and with payment according to your means, TÉD assures you COURSES WITH JOB GUARANTEE” (our translation).

In a memorandum produced by the professional associations of the sector, defending the employment agencies fees, the monetization of candidates is presented as an economic necessity. Employment agencies blamed the employers who, for 95% of them, would not use the services of an intermediary if they were paying. According to this memorandum, employers would prefer to give up recruitments in this case. As stated by the labor market intermediaries, employers saw themselves as benefiting the agency and the applicant by “offering jobs,” which in their minds exempts them from contributing financially. Some employers felt as “job producers,” not labor force demanders: “There are also employers who, by offering the job, the vacancy, the position, understand that this will benefit both the agency and the candidate, which is why they refuse or do not agree in any way to any kind of commission”<sup>8</sup> (our translation). Job vacancy as a commodity that can be traded to the job seeker has become a convention between actors on this market.

### Performing profusion and collections of job vacancies

From the point of view of the unemployed person who relies on his or her social relations to get a job, job search is like a chronological succession of selection tests until a job is found. Job opportunities appear one after the other by meetings with friends, family, or ex-colleagues, or even by urban peregrination, in the door-to-door method. The unemployed person has no real knowledge of alternatives between several jobs at the same time. He or she takes the first job that comes along for which he or she is willing. In the advertising pages of mass-circulation newspapers, commercial employment agencies propose a completely different representation of the functioning of the job market. Newspapers first performed the profusion of job opportunities. Working on early personal announcement fold during the *Ancien Regime*, Ulrike Krampl reminds us that announcements of job or service offers appeared mixed with all sorts of announcements concerning objects, or other desires that occupy the *bourgeoisie*; so that “employment is automatically placed in a logic of consumption, which resembles, if not assimilates it to a good to be exchanged” (Krampl, 2017). In fact, the newspaper and the artefact “ad” determine a certain framing of uniform semiotic codes valid for all kinds of goods for sale in newspaper.

Ultimately, what strikes the reader looking for a job is the abundance of offers. Plenty of job opportunities are displayed on the full page in 2 or 3 lines inserts and arouse the hope in the mind of the unemployed that they will be able to find one – if not their dream job, at least a job. The price of the classified ad probably depended on the number of lines and the way it is highlighted (with the possibility, for example, of making it appear in bold), so that very short job offers predominated, briefly indicating the profession and the address where to go. The concentration of job advertisements by the employment agencies in the 1950s made them appear as a place where “good” jobs were concentrated and distributed.

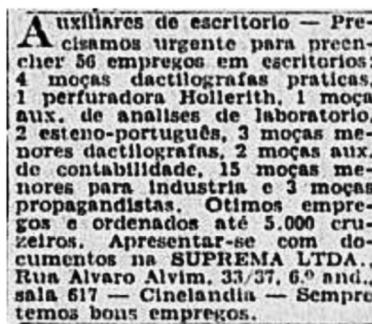
In 1966, the president of the professional association representing the interests of private employment agencies in Sao Paulo (AERESP) justified charging applicants as follows:

On this subject, let’s just say that Selection Institutes are sought out by candidates who believe they have an advantage, who find it convenient to pay a fee for a service that suits them, because they can choose firms, work locations, conditions, etc. (Schironi, 1967: 16-17, our translation).

Indeed, agencies worked hard to appear as places where to “pick up a job” among a large range of opportunities, a very different manner to “get” a job than it traditionally happens with strong or weak ties. The work of advertisers and job intermediation marketers is to make the unemployed feel as a privileged person able to choose his or her jobs without restriction among a collection of jobs made comparable by a certain scriptural and graphic organization of job information.

At the beginning, the agencies played the role of intermediary for the companies looking for candidates by publishing on their behalf ads of specific job offers, which are not very different from those published by the companies themselves. These classified ads take up very little space on the page and the agency often do not include its name. ATA, which publishes a very large number of classified ads, regularly adopts this strategy: “Typist for Itapiru – girl comfortable with the machine/ good looking. Cr\$ 3.500,00. Not for beginners. Rio Branco, 151, s/shop, s/ 209” (Empregos diversos, 1955: 1; our translation).

From their first public appearances in the job offers section, they also got into the habit of producing classified ads grouping together the recruitment of several candidates. The “office assistant” function allows concentrating various job offers in the same box and with a maximum saving of space (Figure 2).



**A**uxiliares de escritorio — Prec  
cisamos urgente para preen  
cher 56 empregos em escritorios:  
4 moças dactilografas praticas,  
1 perfuradora Hollerith, 1 moça  
aux. de analises de laboratorio,  
2 esteno-português, 3 moças me  
nores dactilografas, 2 moças aux.  
de contabilidade, 15 moças me  
nores para industria e 3 moças  
propagandistas. Otimos empre  
gos e ordenados até 5.000 cru  
zeiros. Apresentar-se com do  
cumentos na SUPREMA LTDA.,  
Rua Alvaro Alvim, 33/37, 6.º and.,  
sala 617 — Cinelandia — Sempre  
temos bons empregos.

Figure 2 – Grouped jobs ad by SUPREMA LTDA

Source: Empregos diversos (1955: 1).<sup>9</sup>

The advertisement for a job to be filled stems from the service provided to the recruiting company, but it can also serve as a lure for candidates coming to the agency that offers them paid services.

Nevertheless, the commercial agencies are going to publish less and less singular job advertisements to concentrate their means in the advertising inserts that praise the merits of what is gradually becoming a job supermarket. Thus, on the same front page of the JB, the ATA agency publishes 3 copies of this advertisement using different keywords:

Office jobs for professionals in general – ATA 100% correct, at your service at any time, every moment of the working days, has vacancies for great companies with good salaries. Always prefer ATA, which is a legal, licensed agency. If you are a good professional, ATA will place you in maximum 30 minutes. From the repair person to the accountant. In addition to these advantages, the girl or boy will enjoy the best treatment and a 100% supportive atmosphere. If you need an office job, come to ATA, do as hundreds and hundreds of candidates who trust us to improve their situation (Empregos diversos, 1955: 1; our translation).

Finally, in the last pages of the newspaper, the agencies publish larger advertising inserts. Figure 3 shows the TÊD with its logo clearly identified in two places on the page.



Figure 3 – Two grouped ads by the TÊD agency  
Source: Jornal do Brasil (1955c: 12, cad. 2).

These agencies then enter a brand logic: they display their names and logos, respecting the same graphic codes from one edition to the next in order to be recognized at first glance and build the basis for immediate identification. The use of the advertising method marks both the reinforcement of the clientelization of candidates and a change in their recruitment strategy.

In the field of alluring advertising techniques, the T ED agency was undoubtedly the most creative. As early as 1953, it offered a first free trial course, and then launched a competition to win a month's course and, as previously mentioned, a partnerships with the JB, the Olivetti typewriter brand, and an advertising agency for the organization of the typing competition.

The link with the commodification of training, as well as the anticipated use of newspapers in the job search, explains why the agencies only advertise to recruit candidates. Employer addresses are much rarer and do not draw the same demand for advertisement<sup>10</sup>. While these agencies undoubtedly invest resources in attracting recruiting companies, they make little use of advertising techniques and codes to reach them.

The advertisements targeting only candidates made the agencies appear as places where candidate – transformed into clients – can choose their job from a plethora of diversified vacancies. They are like job supermarkets, where young school graduates can come to make their choice. Within a small period of time, T ED begins to highlight the number of jobs available in its agency with large characters as seen in Figure 3<sup>11</sup>. These advertisements list the most diverse categories of functions (as in the advertisement for ATA: “*auxiliares de contabilidade, auxiliares de escritorio, datilografos (as), auxiliares correspondentes, auditor, Contador*”) to access the “best jobs” at the “best salaries,” in the “best companies.” They target a clientele of new arrivals into the labor market, as suggested by the systematic use of the word “girls” (“*moças*”) and “boys” (“*rapazes*”) to qualify the interested parties, the promise of “magnificent career beginnings,” and the evocation of the level of education (“*tendo o ginásial complete*” – completed high school)<sup>12</sup> or of the absence of professional experience.

This commodification of job vacancies also involves understating the selection made by employers and recruiters, since employment is not presented as a demand for work on the part of the employer but as an immaterial good for which the agency has exclusive rights. This cognitive reshaping of employment took place in the first years of the agencies' activity. In fact, the first inserts of the T ED agency still leaves a lot of room for the employers' requirements. The agency is looking for a “mechanical engineer with good knowledge of English,” “perfect English-Portuguese stenographers,” an “accountant up to 45 years old speaking Italian [...] plus three bachelors who can travel,” “agency inspectors, 24 to 30 years old, bachelors, good presentation, gymnasium level courses, perfect practice of accounting and commercial mathematics,” etc. (Jornal do Brasil, 1952: 12, cad. 2; our translation). However, by May 1953, the agency had removed the employer requirements from the inserts and focused solely on the job offer. Employment agencies avoided appearing as representatives of employers' interests and they banned the term “selection” from advertisements. It is therefore less as recruiters on behalf of companies than as distributors of jobs that the agencies present themselves.

Through their work, these job retailers organize a space of comparison of jobs, dictated by what they believe to be the drivers of job demand, since the advertising presentation of the job is supposed to attract jobseeker-clients. In this economy of job desire, and because every word counts, advertisements refocused on two types of information: the occupation and the salary. In most of the inserts, TÊD ranks available office jobs in descending order of salary<sup>13</sup>. The practice of systematically posting salaries in classified ads, even in the smallest nets, is a practice that strongly differentiates employment agencies from employers who post classified ads for their own purpose. The latter prefer to negotiate the salary with the hired candidate and not to disclose their salaries to the competitors. On the contrary, the emphasis on the salary in the advertisements is part of a strategy of labelling the product on the part of actors whose aim is not so much to make a single match as to massively increase the number of applications.

### **To be treated as a client, not as an unemployed**

The president of the AERESP gives another argument in her advocacy of employment services fees that puts us on track to the “clientization process”:

There are many of them (we are talking about Executives and Technicians) who feel humiliated to “offer” themselves directly. They prefer to entrust, for due study, to Selection Institutes their “Résumé” and to ponder, together with the Selectors, the pros and cons of another placement. (Schironi, 1967: 16-17, our translation)

The arguments in favor of the monetization of candidates developed by this representative of the interests of private employment agencies, very symbolically renamed “selection institutes,” refer to the social and distinctive function of the paid services offered to candidates, a function that we propose to call “clientization.” Promoters of fee-charging employment agencies not only stress the efficiency of the service but also its social quality. Independently of the final goal, to be hired, the symbolic values attached to the services makes it possible for the candidate to distance oneself from the social status of the unemployed by becoming a pampered customer. Only the price and the personalization of the services distinguished fee-charging employment agencies for executives from middle range employment agencies. The distinctive function of paid services remained the same.

We can in fact hypothesize that the practices of private employment agencies were part of an implicit symbolic hierarchy of job search methods. On the one hand, the agencies had to fight the degrading image attached to the domestic “labor rental agencies” that were still in operation in the 1930s, and which only the unemployed who were least integrated into the urban labor market, immigrants from abroad or from the interior, were using. On the other hand, direct door-to-door soliciting is also associated with menial workers.

Employment agencies banned the term “unemployed” (“*desempregado*”) from advertising inserts, as well as the term “worker” (“*trabalhador*”), which was used by the union employment offices. From the 1950s onwards, it was only “candidates” and “professionals.” Agencies attached to private courses used the terms “girls” and “boys” to attract young school graduates. A single insert of September 6, 1955, published by the CIT agency for its courses for beginners, refers to the “fight against unemployment”: “CIT fights against unemployment and gives competent employees their just value” (Moças..., 1955: 12, cad. 2, our translation).

The requalification of the unemployed into a customer is achieved by emphasizing the quality of service in the reception (“*atendimento*”) and the customer relationship. In the war waged by commercial employment agencies, ATA has made the customer relationship a constant selling argument. In its very first advertisements, it praises the “great and unrivalled treatment” given to candidates in its agencies. Appealing to the distinctive imaginary associated with access to the consumer society, the vocabulary used aims to reassure job seekers of a status that should not remind them of being unemployed or even workers. The reference to the treatment with “the greatest courtesy,” the service “without waiting,” “the most pleasant atmosphere,” or the “moral preparation” of the recruiters (Jornal do Brasil, 1955a: 6, cad. 3; our translation), elevates the job seeker to the status of a customer entitled to expect a level of service and to be pampered.

## CONCLUSION

Our article goes back to one significant stage of the development of commercial intermediaries of employment. It unveils different dimension of their performative work aiming at symbolically inscribing employment in the cultural codes of the mass market, that is to say, in a space of choice, which amounts to masking the matching function of intermediaries.

In our view, the monetization of job applicants stems from a double work of market labeling carried out by private employment agencies on the immaterial object “job vacancy” on the one hand, and on the subject looking for a job on the other. The symbolic and semiotic work of the private employment agencies that flourished in the 1950s, in Brazilian metropolises, consists in commodifying the vacant job and “clientelizing” the job seeker to monetize him. Only when elevated to the status of consumer in a space of distribution of jobs, which are “marked” as commodities, does the worker accept to pay for work.

In order to sell their job access service, these market actors carry out several cognitive and normative framing actions regarding the definition of the terms of exchange and the “thing” to be exchanged. They transform the employers’ demand for work into an assortment of jobs from which the unem-

ployed, symbolically relabeled as consumers, can come and help themselves. To do this, they apply to employment all the codes and meanings attached to consumer culture. The first element lies in the possibility of choosing from a rich assortment of comparable jobs under standardized criteria in an instrumental conception of work that is desired for the resources it offers in the consumer society. The second element of this consumer culture that these agents will transpose to become an immaterial consumer good is the symbolism of the commodity contract, which guarantees and determines the terms of the exchange. Finally, the last component of the commodification of job vacancies is the attachment of social distinction to the employment access service. With this, the lower middle class job seeker tears himself away from his unworthy condition of unemployed and worker in order to access the more enviable social status of customer of a company and citizen of the consumer society.

Received on 08-sept-2021 | Revised on 11-apr-2022 | Approved on 18-july-2022

**Léa Lima** got her PhD in Sociology at the Université de la Méditerranée in 2004. She had a post-doctoral position in the European Marie Skłodowska-Curie program at the University Milano-Bicocca (2005). She is Full Professor of Sociology at the Conservatoire National des Arts et Métiers (CNAM), senior researcher at the Laboratoire interdisciplinaire pour la sociologie économique (Lise) and associated researcher at the Center of Employment and Work Studies (CEET). Her work focuses on employment policies and labor market intermediaries in France and Brazil.

**NOTES**

- 1 Referring to the category of the “*auxiliares de escritório e de administração em geral*” of the Brazilian classification of occupations.
- 2 Source: Censos demográficos de 1950, 1960, 1970. Available at <<https://biblioteca.ibge.gov.br/?view=detalhes&id=767>>. Accessed on 19 Jan. 2023.
- 3 On September 7, 1952, it published its first announcement of the opening of a new “extra staff” recruitment service (“*peçoal avulso*”) looking for more experienced candidates. The text indicated that the agency was already operating in the field of permanent staff recruitment. It also announces the opening of registrations for its new courses for the month of October of the same year (*Pessoal avulso*, 1952: 12, cad. 3).
- 4 Launched by two ex-executives of TÉD (cf. *Jornal do Brasil*, 1955b: 10, cad. 5).
- 5 “*Agências têm prazos para se legalizar [Agencies Have Deadline to Legalize]*” (*Agências...*, 1968b: 8, cad. 1).
- 6 “*Agências de empregos ficarão sob controle [Employment Agencies Will Be Under Control]*” (*Agências...*, 1968a: 10, cad. 1).
- 7 “*Agências têm prazos para se legalizar [Agencies Have Deadline to Legalize]*” (*Agências...*, 1968b: 8, cad. 1).
- 8 “*Agências têm prazos para se legalizar [Agencies Have Deadline to Legalize]*” (*Agências...*, 1968b: 8, cad. 1).
- 9 “*Office Auxiliaries – We urgently need for 50 office jobs: 4 operational typists, 1 Hollerith punch, a girl lab assistant, 2 Portuguese stenographers, 3 minor typists, 2 female accounting assistants, 15 minors for industry, and 3 propagandists. Great jobs and salaries up to 5000 cruzeiros. Present yourself with your identity papers at SUPREMA LTDA, Alvaro Alvim Street, 33/37, 6th floor, room 617 – Cinelandia – We always have good jobs*”.
- 10 See an ad by CIT for instance: “*We do not ask for exclusivity, but the opportunity to serve, to be useful, to those who struggle with difficulty, not of candidates, BUT OF GOOD EMPLOYEES*” (*CIT...*, 1955: 10, cad. 6).
- 11 We found the first ad of this kind in the *Jornal do Brasil* (1953: 11, cad. 5).
- 12 Since the organic law of secondary education of 1942, the secondary level of education was divided in two cycles:

the first called “ginasial” (4 years) and the second called “colegial” (3 years). Each cycle ended with a selective examination. Having completed *ginasial* (“ginasial completo”) meant having completed educational level equivalent to high school.

13 See for instance: *Jornal do Brasil* (1955: 12, cad. 2).

## REFERENCES

Abreu, Jayme. (1961). Escola média do século XX: um novo fator em busca de caminhos. *Revista Brasileira de Estudos Pedagógicos*, 36, p. 5-26.

Agências de emprego ficarão sob contrôle. (1968a, 10 nov.). *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, LXVIII/23188, p. 10 (Caderno 1).

Agências têm prazos para se legalizar. (1968b, 7 set.). *Correio da Manhã*, Rio de Janeiro, LXVIII/23133, p. 8 (Caderno 1).

Appadurai, Arjun. (1986). Introduction: Commodities and the Politics of Value. In: Appadurai, Arjun (ed.). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 3-63.

Arnould, Eric J. & Thompson, Craig J. (2005). Consumer Culture Theory (CCT): Twenty Years of Research. *Journal of Consumer Research*, 31/4, p. 868-82.

A TÉD precisa. (1953a, 26 ago.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 63/196, p. 11 (Caderno 2).

A TÉD tem 78 vagas. (1953b, 31 maio). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 63/123, p. 15 (Caderno 5).

Autor, David H. (2009). *Studies of Labor Market Intermediation*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.

Auxiliares principiantes para escritórios. (1955, 6 set.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 65/208, p. 12 (Caderno 2).

Baudrillard, Jean. (2012). *The Consumer Society: Myths and Structures*. Los Angeles: SAGE.

Bons empregos para principiantes: mesmo sem prática: somente para escritório: a ATA. (1955, 28 ago.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 65/201, p. 14 (Caderno 5).

CIT: Empregos – Cursos. (1955, 10 jul.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 65/159, p. 10 (Caderno 6).

Cochoy, Franck. (2007). A Sociology of Market-Things: On Tending the Garden of Choices in Mass Retailing. *The Sociological Review*, 55/2, p. 109-129.

Cochoy, Franck & Dubuisson-Quellier, Sophie. (2000). Les professionnels du marché: vers une sociologie du travail marchand. *Sociologie du Travail*, 42/3, p. 359-68.

Cursos: treino rápido. (1962, 2 ago.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 72/178, p. 10 (Caderno 3).

Draibe, Sônia. (1985). *Rumos e metamorfoses: um estudo sobre a constituição do Estado e as alternativas da industrialização no Brasil, 1930-1960*. Rio de Janeiro: Paz e Terra.

Empregos diversos. (1955, 6 set.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 65/208, p. 1.

Empregos em escritórios: sempre a ATA. (1955a, 24 abr.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 65/93, p. 11 (Caderno 5).

Empregos em escritórios: sempre a ATA. (1955b, 27 fev.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 64/46, p. 12 (Caderno 5).

Escola "Velox". (1950, 1 dez.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 59/1, p. 27.

Esping-Andersen, Gosta. (1988). Citizenship and Socialism: De-commodification and Solidarity in the Welfare State. In: Rein, Martin et al. (eds.). *Stagnation and Renewal in Social Policy: The Rise and Fall of Policy Regimes*. New York: M.E. Sharpe.

Evju, Stein. (2013). Labour Is Not a Commodity: Reappraising the Origins of the Maxim. *European Labour Law Journal*, 4/3, p. 222-229.

Gottschalk, Simon & Berger, Arthur. (2002). Ads, Fads, and Consumer Culture: Advertising's Impact on American Character and Society. *Contemporary Sociology*, 31/3, p. 302-303.

Grupo TÊD de Serviços Ltda. (1980, 1 maio). 1º de maio: hoje é Dia do Trabalho. *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 90/23, p. 6 (Caderno 1).

Guimarães, Nadya Araujo. (2009). *À procura de trabalho: instituições do mercado e redes*. Belo Horizonte: Editora Argvmentvn.

*Jornal do Brasil*. (1961, 24 dez.). Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 71/301, p. 7 (Caderno 3).

*Jornal do Brasil*. (1955a, 25 dez.). Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 15/301, p. 6 (Caderno 3).

*Jornal do Brasil*. (1977, 30 jan.). Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 86/294 (Suplemento Especial).

*Jornal do Brasil*. (1955b, 10 jul.). Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 65/159, p. 10 (Caderno 5).

Jornal do Brasil. (1953, 31 maio). Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 63/123, p. 11 (Caderno 5).

Jornal do Brasil. (1952, 9 nov.). Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 62/263, p. 12 (Caderno 2).

Jornal do Brasil. (1955c, 6 set.). Rio de Janeiro: [s. n.], 65/208, p. 12 (Caderno 2).

Kjellberg, Hans & Helgesson, Claes-Fredrik. (2016). On the Nature of Markets and Their Practices. *Marketing Theory*, 7/2, p. 137-162.

Kopytoff, Igor. (1986). The Cultural Biography of Things: Commoditization as Process. In: Appadurai, Arjun (ed.). *The Social Life of Things: Commodities in Cultural Perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, p. 64-92.

Krampl, Ulrike. (2017). S'adresser à M. le Clerc, Huissier, rue S. Honoré... (1780) ou les intermédiaires de l'intermédiaire. *Presse d'annonces et emploi domestique à Paris à la fin de l'Ancien Régime. Mélanges de l'École française de Rome: Italie et Méditerranée modernes et contemporaines*, 129/1, p. 1-33.

Leopoldi, Maria Antonieta. (1994). O difícil caminho do meio: Estado, burguesia e industrialização no segundo governo Vargas (1951-54). In: Gomes, Angela C (org.). *Vargas e a crise dos anos 50*. Rio de Janeiro: Relume Dumará.

Lima, Léa (2022). L'Institutionnalisation du marché du placement des chômeurs au Brésil (1957-1972), *Brésil(s) [Online]*, 21.

Marchal, Emmanuelle & Bureau, Marie-Christine. (2009). Incertitudes et médiations au cœur du marché du travail. *Revue française de sociologie*, 50/3, p. 573-598.

Moças para iniciar em escritório. (1955, 6 set.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 65/208, p. 12 (Caderno 2).

Muniesa, Fabian et al. (2007). An Introduction to Market Devices. *The Sociological Review*, 55/2, p. 1-12.

Nunes, Clarice. (2000). O “velho” e “bom” ensino secundário: momentos decisivos. *Revista Brasileira de Educação*, 14, p. 35-60.

Offe, Claus. (1984). *Contradictions of the Welfare State*. London: Hutchinson Education.

O'Higgins, Paul. (1997). Labour Is Not a Commodity: An Irish Contribution TO International Labour Law. *Industrial Law Journal*, 26, p. 225-234.

Organização TÊD de Serviços Ltda. (1956, 13 maio). A mais completa agência de empregos do país. *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 66/110, p. 11 (Caderno 5).

Organização TÊD de Serviços Ltda. (1959, 6 set.). 384 empregos a sua espera. *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 69/209, p. 5 (Caderno 6).

Pereira, Luiz Carlos Bresser. (1986). *Desenvolvimento e crise no Brasil*. São Paulo: Brasiliense.

Pessoal avulso. (1952, 7 set.). *Jornal do Brasil*, Rio de Janeiro, 62/209, p. 12 (Caderno 3).

Pettinger, Lynne. (2006). On the Materiality of Service Work. *The Sociological Review*, 54/1, p. 48-65.

Polanyi, Karl. (1944). *The Great Transformation*. Rinehart. New York.

Radin, Margaret Jane. (2001). *Contested Commodities*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

Satz, Debra. (2010). *Why Some Things Should Not Be for Sale: The Moral Limits of Markets*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Schironi, Maria Concetta. (1967). A face desconhecida dos institutos de seleção (“agências de emprego”). *Revista de Administração de Empresas*, 7/23, p. 13-23.

Schwarz, Ori. (2018). Cultures of Choice: Towards a Sociology of Choice as a Cultural Phenomenon. *The British Journal of Sociology*, 69/3, p. 845-864.

Souza, Flavia Fernandes de. (2017). *Criados, escravos e empregados: o serviço doméstico e seus trabalhadores na construção da modernidade brasileira (cidade do Rio de Janeiro, 1850-1920)*. Tese de Doutorado. PPGH/Universidade Federal Fluminense.

### **THE COMMODIFICATION OF JOB VACANCIES: MARKET PRACTICES OF FEE-CHARGING EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES IN RIO DE JANEIRO (1950-1975)**

#### **Abstract**

“Labor is not a commodity”: One of the earliest understandings of this maxim concerns the intermediation of employment by supporting policies to extinguish the fees charged to workers for their placement. In Brazil, employment agencies fees never disappeared. The article goes back to the period of expansion of private intermediation in Rio de Janeiro, from 1950 to 1975, to observe their market practices. In order to attract job seekers and convince them to pay for an intermediation service, we argue that those actors performed the commodityhood of job vacancies. We analyzed a sample of 3556 job and employment agencies ads published in the *Jornal do Brasil*, from 1945 to 1975, highlighting three social processes of commoditization of job vacancies: the objectivation of job vacancies as “real things to be bought,” the performing of profusion and collection of job vacancies as “things to be chosen,” and the social ascension rhetoric of the unemployed to the status of customer. With the employment agencies work market, the world of labor appears as colonized by techniques, codes, and expectations from world of mass consumption.

#### **Keywords**

Consumer;  
Commodity;  
Labour Market Intermediation;  
Advertisement;  
Job Vacancies.

### **A COMODITIZAÇÃO DAS VAGAS DE EMPREGO: PRÁTICAS DE MERCADO DAS AGÊNCIAS DE EMPREGO COM COBRANÇA DE TAXAS NO RIO DE JANEIRO (1950-1975)**

#### **Resumo**

“O trabalho não é uma mercadoria”: Um dos primeiros entendimentos desta máxima diz respeito à intermediação do emprego, apoiando políticas para extinguir as taxas cobradas aos trabalhadores por sua colocação e para incentivar o desenvolvimento de um serviço público de emprego. O artigo propõe voltar à uma das fontes da convenção das vagas como mercadorias, examinando o trabalho comercial realizado por agências de emprego privadas entre 1950 e 1975 para seduzir os que procuram emprego e convencê-los a pagar por um serviço de intermediação. Pode-se argumentar que o mercado de trabalho foi colonizado pela cultura do consumidor quando essas agências privadas de emprego importaram técnicas, códigos e expectativas normativas específicas para o universo do mercado consumidor de bens materiais.

#### **Palavras-chave**

Consumidor;  
Mercadoria;  
Intermediação do mercado do trabalho;  
Publicidade;  
Vagas.

### **ERRATUM**

In the manuscript “The commodification of job vacancies: market practices of fee-charging employment agencies in Rio de Janeiro (1950-1975)”, DOI: 10.1590/2238-38752022v13112, published in *Sociologia & Antropologia*, 13(1):1-27 (according to the SciELO guidelines, the following mistakes are absent from the present version – and the corresponding pdf file),

**On pages 26,**

For:

“THE COMMODIFICATION OF JOB VACANCIES: MARKET PRACTICES OF EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES FEES IN RIO DE JANEIRO (1950-1975)”

Read:

“THE COMMODIFICATION OF JOB VACANCIES: MARKET PRACTICES OF FEE-CHARGING EMPLOYMENT AGENCIES IN RIO DE JANEIRO (1950-1975)”