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diversity in latin american journalism: conceptual insights



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ABSTRACT – This article proposes a conceptual framework as a theoretical-methodological contribution to the study of journalistic initiatives characterized by their connection with progressive social segments and their positioning as builders of “another possible journalism,” beyond the principles of neutrality and objectivity. Five typologies are presented as ideal-typical models: Journalistic Arrangements, Alternative Journalism, Community Journalism, Independent Journalism, and Periphery Journalism. They are grounded in a Systematic Literature Review together with a Content Analysis of 50 peer-reviewed articles that focus on Latin America. The authors of these articles were contacted and consulted on the conceptual dispersion identified in 21 expressions used to name journalism experiences.

Key words: Conventional journalism. Another possible journalism. Conceptual dispersion.

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DIVERSIDADE NO JORNALISMO DA AMÉRICA LATINA: pistas conceituais

RESUMO – O artigo analisa alterações no perfil de fontes de vazamento de informação e em suas rO artigo propõe um quadro conceitual como aporte teórico-metodológico sobre iniciativas jornalísticas caracterizadas pela aproximação com segmentos sociais progressistas e que se posicionam como construtoras de 'outro jornalismo possível', para além do assentado nos princípios de neutralidade e objetividade. Cinco tipologias são apresentadas como modelos típico-ideais: Arranjos Jornalísticos, Jornalismo Alternativo, Jornalismo Comunitário, Jornalismo Independente e Jornalismo das Periferias. Elas se fundamentam em uma Revisão Sistemática de Literatura, conjugada à Análise de Conteúdo, de 50 artigos revisados por pares com foco na América Latina. Autores dos artigos foram contatados para contribuírem com o debate sobre a dispersão conceitual identificada em 21 expressões usadas para nomear as experiências de jornalismo.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo convencional; Outro jornalismo possível; Dispersão conceitual

DIVERSIDAD EN EL PERIODISMO DE AMÉRICA LATINA: pistas conceptuales

RESUMEN – El artículo propone un marco conceptual como aporte teórico-metodológico sobre iniciativas periodísticas caracterizadas por su aproximación a segmentos sociales progresistas y que se posicionan como constructoras de "otro periodismo posible", más allá de los principios de neutralidad y objetividad. Se presentan cinco tipologías como modelos tipo-ideales: Arreglos Periodísticos, Periodismo Alternativo, Periodismo Comunitario, Periodismo Independiente y Periodismo de las Periferias. Estas se fundamentan en una Revisión Sistemática de la Literatura, combinada con Análisis de Contenido, de 50 artículos arbitrados con foco en América Latina. Los autores de dichos artículos fueron contactados para contribuir al debate sobre la dispersión conceptual identificada en 21 expresiones utilizadas para nombrar las experiencias de periodismo.

Palabras clave: Periodismo convencional; Otro periodismo posible; Dispersión conceptual

1 Introduction

There has been an increasing and expanding number of journalistic initiatives in Latin America's mediatized and platformized societies. Studies on these initiatives use a range of terminologies in order to facilitate understanding, conceptual dispersion being one (Patrício, 2023; Silveira & Ramos, 2022; Filho & Silva, 2019; Grohmann et al., 2019; Fígaro, 2018). Consequently, this scenario demands new theoretical-methodological frameworks in order to keep up with the constant change in journalism. This is not about abandoning traditional perspectives in the field, but rather being open to other perceptions. These

aforementioned terminologies can be analyzed from the perspective of boundary construction in order to demarcate the journalistic field, thus generating “continuous (re)conceptualizations” (Loosen et al., 2022).

To narrow our research, we identified 21 distinctive expressions that do not follow the conventional production model of another possible journalism. The first stage was inductive and consisted of grouping these expressions based on related terms, resulting in the following five main types: Journalistic Arrangements, Alternative Journalism, Community Journalism, Independent Journalism, and Periphery Journalism. Each model can be understood as a “sensitizing concept” that gives the researcher “a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances” and that “only suggests where to look!” (Blumer, 1954, p. 7).

The typology is composed of definitions and characteristics for each ideal-typical model (Giddens & Sutton, 2017; Weber et al., 1982), with distinctions and complementarities between them. There is no hierarchy here; they are all distinct perspectives on how to perceive, practice, disseminate, and sustain journalism. On the whole, these models contain both discursive and concrete manifestations of journalism, which allow them to be analyzed empirically.

It is in this context that this article poses the following questions to address conceptual dispersion: how are journalism models used in academic discourse? What does each one seek to designate? Are there elements that distinguish them from each other? And what are the possible approaches? These questions help us evaluate the roles of each ideal-typical model in research as well as the significant interests that emerge through them. To do this, we started with a systematic literature review (SLR), together with a content analysis, of peer-reviewed scientific articles from studies that focused on Latin America.

2 Conceptual dispersions in journalism studies

The varying perspectives within journalism are a result of different traditions and academic currents associated with the particular context in which journalism is practiced. “Realities designate the raw material par excellence of journalism! It constitutes and is also constitutive of these realities” (Patrício, 2023, p. 98). The emphasis on critical studies, particularly in Latin America, sees journalism as

an activity that is immersed in power relations, historically speaking (Freire, 2014; Kaplún, 2013; Kucinski, 2018; Kaplún & García, 1985). The local scenario is in contrast with the functionalist perspective commonly observed in the United States.

Heterogeneity in journalism is both a strength and a challenge as it makes for richer debates and broadens interpretative horizons, but also hinders conceptual convergence. It therefore weakens the supposition of journalism being a discipline or science and a field of research. Academic positions on the diversification of approaches to and about journalism stem from the recognition and acceptance of its interdisciplinary nature (Braga, 2020) or from the understanding that it is a subset of communication (Löffelholz & Rothenberger, 2014; Meditsch, 2010; Silva, 2009). There are also attempts at a disciplinarization of the field, which tries to establish a “journalistic science” (Groth, 2011) through the search for coherence and consensus in the field.

These understandings directly impact the ways in which theory is understood and employed in journalism research. Ahva and Steensen (2019) identify three separate viewpoints toward the adoption of theories in the field of journalism. The first constitutes a standard attitude, which implies conceiving it as accumulated knowledge based on identified or idealized regularities. The second viewpoint is socio-philosophical which understands theory as a result of investigations. The third viewpoint, pragmatist-participatory theory (which is characteristic of most journalism studies), is not necessarily the starting point for academic research. This means that journalism research is more heavily influenced by empirical rather than theoretical work.

For instance, 44 of the 50 articles that make up the sample of our literature review on journalism initiatives in Latin America are empirical works (88%), while only six are theoretical-conceptual (12%). Two factors can explain the preference given to empirical research: 1) the researcher wishes to remain in contact with the journalism he or she is investigating which, in fact, brings academia closer to journalistic experiences; and 2) the absence of specific theories that, if existed, would be recognized as a foundation in the theoretical-methodological paths of academic investigations of and about journalism. In either case, theoretical reflection should not be neglected, which means that academic research cannot do without “some kind of theory” (Kuhn, 1978, p. 87).

Since journalism does not operate on a single paradigm, what are the factors that influence conceptual dispersion, specifically concerning journalistic initiatives based in Latin America? In theory, the diversity of terms and expressions used to name them is the result of decisions and theoretical affiliations of the researchers who conduct investigations in Latin America. It is also a product of the concrete manifestations of each research context and, of course, of the perceptions and discourses of the journalistic initiatives themselves.

Dispersion is also the result of some perspectives on initiatives in terms of organizational structures, media ownership, forms of financial sustainability, contact (or lack of) with the public, among others. At the methodological level, choices regarding geographic and temporal scope also influence the variety of terms used in studies. This shows that the same nomenclature can mean different things depending on the context of analysis.

Cultural, economic, and political contexts also play a relevant role in the complexity of journalism. In Latin American realities, distinctions are established even within regions or states/provinces, where journalism in urban areas is different from what is perceived in peripheral areas. Regional differences, therefore, demonstrate that journalism is shaped by specific historical and structural conditions, making it difficult to categorize it under a single paradigm. Like social phenomena, journalistic initiatives are embedded in scenarios that are “plural, complex, and permeated with nuances that escape rigid classifications” (Rovida, 2020, p. 165).

What this means is that conceptual dispersion does not imply that journalism, as an epistemic field, is weak. On the contrary, it highlights an area of academic interests and professional practices that require constant revalidation in the face of the demands and realities of a changing society. This complexity is a first step, essential for building typologies and representative concepts that encompass (without the intention of exhausting) crucial aspects of journalistic initiatives that broaden the understanding of journalism.

3 Method: systematic literature review and content analysis

The five ideal types of journalism proposed in this article, aiming to look more in-depth at conceptual dispersion, emerged from a systematic literature review (SLR) of peer-reviewed scientific articles

with a focus of interest — empirical or theoretical-conceptual — on the realities of Latin America, published between January 2013 and September 2024. We combined SLR with our content analysis (CA) from the initial stages in order to guarantee validity, reliability, and replicability, epistemological assumptions shared by both techniques (Lycarião et al., 2023).

Content analysis can be used in a variety of ways; it can be the main technique used for research, it can be an intermediate method, or it can be used in conjunction with other techniques, such as interview content analysis (Sampaio & Lycarião, 2021). For our study, we used CA to ensure systematic procedures for selecting relevant studies, mostly for the research selection and coding phases. “In both instances, common CA procedures are recommended to establish the reliability of the SLR” (Lycarião et al., 2023, p. 4).

We prepared a Code Book (CB) to serve as a coding manual in the search, selection, coding, and analysis stages of the research. Based on eligibility criteria and other guidelines in the CB, we searched for empirical, theoretical-conceptual, or literature review articles in the following four databases: Web of Science (main collection), Scopus, SciELO, and the Capes Journal Portal (the Brazilian Federal Agency for Support and Evaluation of Graduate Education).

Our searches² in the four databases resulted in 214 articles, 50 of which met our pre-established inclusion and exclusion criteria and were therefore selected for our SLR sample. 20 articles were found in the Web of Science, 17 in the Capes Journal Portal, nine in Scopus, and four in SciELO. We recommend consulting the CB³ in the supplementary materials, as it provides details on the steps and decisions made in this study, from the search to the analysis of the articles.

After coding was completed, we contacted the authors of the studies and presented them with our identification of the nomenclatures, and then discussed the conceptual dispersion we identified by asking the following question (this one applies to one of the specific nomenclatures): “How would you define ‘alternative arrangements to media corporations’ and what would be the criteria for a journalistic initiative to be considered one? (If you wish to suggest another nomenclature, we ask that you also provide a definition and the criteria for a journalistic project to be identified in this way)”.

In addition to the authors of the articles in our SLR sample, we also contacted other academic researchers we researched while building this study. There are a total of 17 experts from seven Latin

American countries (Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Mexico, and Peru) who participated, as shown in table 01. The epistemological benefits of these dialogues were particularly important since “these are the sources that have the most intellectual control over the research and, therefore, their inputs guarantee an accuracy that is rarely achieved by others” (Lycarião et al., 2023, p. 9).

Table 1

Experts who participated in the debate on conceptual dispersion

Researcher	Institute and country	Typology
Claudia Nonato	University of São Paulo (Brazil)	Journalistic Arrangements
Afonso de Albuquerque	Fluminense Federal University (Brazil)	Alternative Journalism
Isaías José Molina Jácome	University of Santander (Colombia)	Alternative Journalism
Cicilia M. Krohling Peruzzo	Rio de Janeiro State University (Brazil)	Alternative Journalism, Community Journalism, and Independent Journalism
Maria del Carmen Fernández Chapou	The Technological Institute of Monterrey (Mexico)	Alternative Journalism
Natalia Vinelli ⁴	Institute of Latin American Studies (Argentina)	Alternative Journalism
Juan Daniel Montaño Rico	National Autonomous University of Mexico (Mexico)	Alternative Journalism
Paola Consuelo Ladino Marin	Agustiniana University (Colombia)	Community Journalism
Daniel Valdivieso Solórzano	San Gregorio de Portoviejo University (Ecuador)	Community Journalism
Mauro Marino-Jiménez	San Ignacio de Loyola University (Peru)	Independent Journalism
Abel Somohano Fernández	University of Communication (Mexico)	Independent Journalism
Cosette Celecia Pérez	National Autonomous University of Mexico (Mexico)	Independent Journalism
Vanessa Costa de Oliveira	Santa Cruz do Sul University (Brazil)	Independent Journalism
Carlos Manuel Rodríguez Arechavaleta	Iberoamericana University (Mexico)	Independent Journalism

Researcher	Institute and country	Typology
Raquel Aparicio	Veracruzana University (Mexico)	Independent Journalism
Raquel Paiva	Rio de Janeiro Federal University (Brazil)	Community Journalism
Guilherme Carvalho	Internacional-Untinter University Center (Brazil)	Alternative Journalism

This research is based on the academic point of view of journalistic initiatives that identify themselves as practitioners of a journalism that recognizes traditional canons, such as objectivity and neutrality, positioning itself as “another discursivity about reality” (Patrício & Santana, 2023, p. 156). Due to the limitations of this article and in accordance with its research questions, we intend to conduct further research on the perspectives of journalism initiatives at a later date. To do this, we will analyze the texts and editorial policies of eligible journalistic organizations from a total of 265 initiatives identified as empirical samples of the 50 articles that make up the SLR.

4) Five typologies of ‘another possible journalism’ in Latin America

As shown in table 2, Independent Journalism and Alternative Journalism are the most common terms in studies on journalism outside the mainstream press. All of these terms are typically conceptualized and discussed in the theoretical sections of articles, even leading researchers to access other sources and authors.

This might indicate that, despite being considered controversial and inaccurate, independent and alternative are terms that are staple in journalism studies as underlying currents. However, it is important to recognize that a term or expression does not have the same connotation for all authors and all contexts. The notion of “Communication and Emancipation” proposed by Villamayor (2022) was not considered a typology due to its low recurrence (n=1). However, the points proposed in the theoretical-conceptual article in question permeate the typologies. Next, we shall characterize each of these typologies.

Table 2*Number of articles per typology*

Typology	No. of Articles	%
Independent Journalism	23	46%
Alternative Journalism	13	26%
Journalistic Arrangements	5	10%
Community Journalism	4	8%
Periphery Journalism	4	8%
Communication & Emancipation	1	2%
Totals	50	100%

a) Journalistic Arrangements

We use arrangements to refer to new modes of journalistic organization and production that differ from how journalism has historically been practiced. As a response to the much-publicized crisis of conventional journalism, journalistic arrangements propose creative and innovative ways of producing, managing, and sustaining news in an increasingly uncertain media environment (Dancosky et al., 2021; Grohmann et al., 2019).

They represent an “effective alternative for work and employment” (Figaro et. al, 2021, p. 19) in a world of precariousness and reduced professional opportunities in the field. Journalistic arrangements are characterized mainly by flexibility in work relationships and the autonomy of the professionals involved (Grohmann et al., 2019). “This ‘arrangement’ includes the creation of companies, associations, a mix of individual micro-entrepreneurs, or other non-prescribed forms that support news production” (Claudia Nonato, personal communication, October 2, 2024).

The flexibility and decentralization of production processes is one of the major features of the arrangements as they are evident both in work relations and in organizational models (Lago et al., 2022). The initiatives are also distinguished for their creativity and innovation in areas such as financing, news circulation, and the way they handle their audiences.

Building a community from specific niches (Dancosky et

al., 2021) reflects these factors and involves journalism initiatives that work on causes such as educational, gender-sensitive, or environmental protection.

Two other characteristics of this typology are the incorporation of digital technologies and the contemporary challenges behind news organizations' maintaining financial sustainability. In terms of technology, news organizations tend to adopt social media platforms to disseminate their content. This is evident even though these types of support for content distribution and consumption have been identified as one of the main causes of precariousness in the profession (Nieborg & Poell, 2018). In terms of financial factors, a considerable number of journalistic arrangements do not receive regular financial support despite their innovative and creative potential, leading to uncertainty regarding financial viability, which is a central issue for these initiatives (Silveira & Ramos, 2022).

b) Alternative Journalism

In her assessment, Argentine researcher Natalia Vinelli (personal communication, November 11, 2024) claimed that "alternative communication, in reality, is more of a notion than a concept", its "differences in emphasis and matrices have to do with the projects of each media outlet⁵". Brazilian researcher Guilherme Carvalho's perspective (personal communication, October 2, 2024) of conceptual dispersion "refers to a fundamental epistemological problem" more important than nomenclature; it is necessary to consider the contexts in which the initiatives are embedded. "There is a world of variables that need to be considered in each case and in each context".

Initiatives within this ideal type are characterized primarily by a critical approach and commitment to transforming certain social realities. In Latin America, this type of journalism is historically linked to social movements, resistance movements, and marginalized situations or subjects seeking alternatives to totalizing discourses. A tradition of academic research in "alternative" communication emerged in Latin America between the 1970s and 1990s, which was concerned with "how to generate alternatives to dominant communication" (Kaplún, 2013, p. 71).

The expression "Alternative Journalism" (and its variants) is often criticized for the ambiguity the term "alternative" carries

due to its relational nature, which stems largely from an opposition to commercial, political and state media, in such a way that their political practices of contestation assume different interpretations depending on the context in which they exist (Waisbord, 2022). Afonso de Albuquerque (personal communication, September 30, 2024) argues that “the concept of alternative is necessarily relational and, therefore, is defined in opposition to something else”.

It is therefore argued that there could be more than one type of Alternative Journalism based on the political-ideological spectrum: progressive, conservative, and even fascist. The specificities of each microcategory within the typology involve understanding what motivates its producers as well as its audiences, which does not yet appear to be a consolidated field of research. This view of progressive or conservative Alternative Journalism is based on normative and democratic perspectives (Strömbäck, 2023).

From its policies of contestation (Waisbord, 2022) emerges one of the most evident characteristics of Alternative Journalism: the privilege of editorial autonomy, which allows it to develop resistance to power coming from governments, large media conglomerates, and dominant economic sectors. These initiatives seek autonomy “because they do not share the same political and ideological views as these actors” (Cicilia Peruzzo, personal communication, March 14, 2024).

In countries with authoritarian political regimes or fragile democracies, such as Cuba and Mexico (according to research at the time), alternative journalism initiatives are tools of resistance against censorship and information manipulation (Marino-Jiménez et al., 2023). This is achieved by addressing topics that are not often covered by mainstream media (Chapou, 2023; Rodríguez & Pérez, 2022). This contrast also occurs in initiatives developed by women in spaces predominantly occupied by men, like sports journalism (Lima et al., 2022).

A commitment to social justice is another hallmark of Alternative Journalism, through its defense of human rights, including information, and promoting social change. The focus is on resonating with the demands of marginalized communities or causes, such as the rights of women, ethnic minorities, and the fight against various forms of violence. This emphasis on social justice is one of the criteria highlighted by Chapou when classifying an experience as Alternative Journalism. “It focuses on social causes, such as human rights and justice, and acts as a means of denunciation⁶” (Maria del Carmen Chapou, personal communication, September 30, 2024).

Another prominent characteristic of this typology is collective participation, such as the establishment of horizontal organizational structures. In many cases, journalistic production is collaborative; a community is actively involved in its information production. "In general, these collectives are less hierarchical and more decentralized spaces, often resorting to voluntary practices that eliminate formal contracts or official remuneration for work" (Andrade & Pereira, 2022, p. 68). "It is journalism that gives a voice to underrepresented communities, it is committed to social change and fundamental rights, especially freedom of expression"⁷ (Chapou, personal communication, September 30, 2024).

Perhaps for this reason, Alternative Journalism initiatives are distinguished by their break from traditional journalistic formats, as well as experimentation in the production and distribution of information. This type of journalism can employ languages, narratives, and organizational methods that escape journalistic conventions. This ranges from the appropriation of new technologies and digital platforms to exploring new journalistic genres and formats (Rico, 2020), which can bring journalistic production closer together and encourage the contributions of non-professional contributors.

A distinctive feature of Alternative Journalism is the combination of journalism and activism, in such a way that "the border between journalism and political activism is diffuse or blurred"⁸ (Isaías Molina, personal communication, January 5, 2024). In contrast to the renowned objectivity of journalism, many alternative initiatives adopt positions on social and political causes. Adopting a more engaged style of journalism leads to more activist coverage that tends to ignore traditional objectivity.

c) Community Journalism

Community Journalism is a journalistic activity that focuses on the needs of a specific community, whether territorial or identity-based, and provides an alternative to the centralization of large media outlets. The typology has been used to "qualify the set of communication experiences within the scope of social movements, communities, other non-governmental organizations and civil society initiatives of a non-profit and emancipatory nature" (Peruzzo, personal communication, March 14, 2024). Practicing journalism, in

the case of this typology, involves understanding its value as a social mediator, both to visibilize aspects that conventional media neglects and to create solidarity networks for social mobilization (Montoya & Valencia, 2019).

A fundamental characteristic of Community Journalism lies in the fact that journalistic initiatives are developed with, by, and for the community. In other words, the communication production processes, particularly journalism, belong to the communities "from the point of view of control, content production and management, therefore indicating that there is a distinction from the alternative that has assumed somewhat distinct characteristics" (Peruzzo, personal communication, March 14, 2024). This means that this typology "stands up to media production insofar as it proposes to produce a narrative that is entirely in the interest of the community itself, carried out by it and for it" (Raquel Paiva, personal communication, October 2, 2024).

This type of journalism not only deals with the reality of communities previously excluded from the media circuit but also acts as an agent for social transformation (Solórzano, 2017). This occurs, for instance, by encouraging community organization and mobilization to find solutions to collective problems. Community Journalism "is the moment when the journalist decides to expose a real vision of a locality through any journalistic genre⁹" (Triviño et al., 2021, p. 45).

Community identity is another key factor in this typology because the events that occur in the community are both the starting point and the destination for news production. Thus, the cultural identity existing in these localities, composed of values, traditions, and symbols, plays a key role in building community journalistic narratives, strengthening the sense of belonging and social cohesion. In short, Community Journalism consists of "communication of resistance and, at the same time, shares proactive movements in the sense of demanding changes and the recognition of rights by subalternized sectors" (Peruzzo, personal communication, March 14, 2024).

d) Independent Journalism

Independent Journalism is a critical strand of journalism recognized for its pursuit of editorial and financial autonomy, free from corporate groups and political or state control. This typology

is particularly relevant in contexts of democratic crisis and media concentration, favoring autonomous narratives resulting from investigative reporting. Initiatives of this nature have become necessary “to counteract the lack of objectivity of the official media, which are under pressure from power groups¹⁰” (Marino-Jiménez et al., 2023, p. 2). The idea of ‘independent’ defending objectivity reinforces the idea of the diversity of perceptions of journalism due to the context in which it is inserted.

This particular form of practicing journalism is one more journalistic activity in the face of media ecosystems heavily marked by informational diversity and limited by strong media concentration, as is the case in Latin America (Becerra & Mastrini, 2017). Independent initiatives aim to address issues related to human rights, social justice, and the promotion of not only informed but also active citizenship. This is achieved by covering often-neglected topics that become niches for independent initiatives, such as gender issues, the environment, social inequality, and state violence (Rocha & Dancosky, 2018; Lima et al., 2022).

Independent Journalism is also in opposition to corporate and state-owned media outlets that “do not interact with their audiences or public to the point where it is possible to say, in the strict sense, that there is communication” (Raquel Aparicio, personal communication, November 8, 2024). This understanding highlights the notion of independence that characterizes these initiatives, although it does not seem to be evident or consensual (Patrício, 2020). Prioritizing independence results in editorial and financial autonomy, one of the main characteristics of the typology.

These particular media outlets seek to distance themselves from political or economic influences that could interfere with their production. This is directly reflected in the financing strategies, some of which are distinct from those used in conventional media, such as crowdfunding, audience donations, resources from international foundations, and more. For Vanessa Oliveira (personal communication, October 3, 2024), “it is professional journalism practiced outside of traditional newsrooms, with autonomy to define topics and their approaches, with an open agenda”.

Oliveira (2024) points out the multiplicity of understandings about Independent Journalism, “which include some researchers who choose not to use this nomenclature precisely due to its lack (or supposed lack) of criteria” (Oliveira, personal communication, October

3, 2024). She goes on to say how she chose to use other terminologies in previous studies, such as “new journalistic experiences”, because she didn’t feel comfortable amid so many different definitions”. Her choice, in her doctoral thesis (Oliveira, 2021), to use the expression “Independent Journalism” was based on the self-designation, as independent journalists, of professionals who work and lead such initiatives.

Another researcher we consulted referred to the following four criteria when defining Independent Journalism: “Representativeness, concerning the scope of coverage and attention to the needs of the public; collaboration with the public or institutions that uphold freedom of the press; diversity of points of view; and content verification¹¹” (Mauro Marino-Jiménez, personal communication, January 5, 2024).

Based on these perceptions, Independent Journalism is predominantly digital native, which facilitates the production and dissemination of content in a more accessible and lower-cost environment (Oliveira & Felippi, 2023). In an increasingly fragmented digital media environment, many initiatives tend to prioritize content aimed at specific niches, such as covering environmental, gender, or minority rights issues, which do not receive the same attention in conventional media (Díaz-Cerveró et al., 2024). This specialized format allows for more in-depth and contextualization analysis of topics and promotes investigative journalism, which seeks to offer a more comprehensive and well-founded scrutiny.

Some studies express a concern with “(...) a growing promiscuity among economic, political and media powers and governmental control over information¹²” (Tejedor et al., 2022, p. 20). This counter-hegemonic nature is especially visible in sensitive issues that Independent Journalism seeks to expose and challenge established political and economic powers.

In Cosette Celecia Pérez’s assessment, independent journalists hold similar and distinct elements from their peers in other types or forms of journalism, “and, based on specific references and ideals surrounding the profession, they shape modes of operation and narratives¹³” (Pérez, personal communication, March 4, 2024). When analyzing the Cuban reality, Abel Somohano Fernández (personal communication, January 20, 2024) highlights that Independent Journalism “(...) refers to a separation of this type of professional practice from the main media-partisan structure in the media system on the island¹⁴”.

e) Periphery Journalism

Periphery Journalism seeks to address the gaps in conventional media's coverage (or lack of) in peripheral communities. The view shared by initiatives in this typology is that journalism in these areas, when it exists, is affected by stereotypes that do not reflect the diversity of these areas. For this reason, Periphery Journalism, similar to other models, also contains elements "in opposition to conventional journalism" (Patrício, 2023, p. 90) and challenges the stereotypical reports presented through the lens of commercial media (Rovida, 2020).

Journalistic initiatives from the peripheries promote more comprehensive and diverse coverage, while also portraying the pluralities and specificities of the territories and their residents, using journalism associated with social transformation (Patrício, 2023). Rovida (2020, p. 15) defines Periphery Journalism as "professional journalism produced by peripheral subjects (...) who narrate the polyphony and polysemy of territories physically and socially distant from the structured centers of the metropolis".

Periphery Journalism stands out for its emphasis on narrative diversity. Unlike conventional media coverage, which often outlines peripheral territories as areas of violence and widespread social scarcity, this journalism model seeks to portray the complexity of the peripheries, acting as a tool for a variety of voices and perspectives that represent diverse local experiences and realities.

Another unique feature of Periphery Journalism is the journalists' proximity to the community. The professional work behind Periphery Journalism is driven by the journalists' closeness to the peripheral territory. "This other, peripheral perspective of independent journalism sheds light on the reality of the margins, the outer limits, the favelas, but from the perspective of those who live this reality" (Patrício, 2023, p. 156). Many professionals who practice this journalism live in the communities themselves, which allows them to build narratives that they themselves experience (Javorski & Bargas, 2020).

This reinforces the idea that Periphery Journalism is not just an external reflection of the community, but rather an active process of building collective narratives that occur "from the inside out" (Patrício, 2023). This "way of experiencing the real scene (...) of perceiving reality with every pore" (Rovida, 2020, p. 16), in addition to being poetic, emphasizes that "a journalist's relationship with his

or her people occurs in communion and not in rejection" (Medina, 2006, p. 86).

Creating spaces for dialogue that engage both peripheral audiences and other sectors of society is what distinguishes Periphery Journalism from other practices. Although their primary focus is the peripheral population, peripheral journalism initiatives also reach audiences outside their territories, thus exchanging perspectives and helping to build bridges between different audiences (Rovida, 2020).

Table 3 below summarizes the definitions and characteristics of each of the five journalism models, based on findings from our systematic literature review and interactions with researchers:

Table 3

Definitions and characteristics of journalism typologies in Latin America

	Definitions
Journalistic Arrangements	Represent new ways of organizing, producing, and sustaining journalism that are different from the traditional ways in which journalism has been practiced, historically speaking.
Alternative Journalism	Represents a type of journalism that differs from hegemonic media outlets by promoting a journalistic alternative or even an opposition to conventional narratives.
Community Journalism	Represents a type of journalism that focuses on the needs of a specific community, whether territorial or identity-based, that promotes an alternative to the centralization of major media outlets.
Independent Journalism	Represents a critical strand of journalism that distances itself from corporate, state, and political influences; it is guided by editorial autonomy and a strong commitment to the public interest.
Periphery Journalism	Represents a response to the gaps in conventional media's coverage of issues in peripheral communities or their portrayal of said issues as stereotypes that do not reflect the diverse experiences of these territories, and thus promotes emancipatory and dialogical communication.

Main Characteristics	
Journalistic Arrangements	Response to precariousness in the profession Flexibility and decentralization of production processes Creativity and innovation Building a community from specific niches Incorporation of digital technologies
Alternative Journalism	Editorial independence and resistance to power Commitment to social justice Community participation and horizontal structures Breaking from traditional formats and experimentation Combines journalism with activism
Community Journalism	Journalism developed with, by, and for the community Agent of social transformation News coverage that differs from large urban centers Community identity
Independent Journalism	Editorial and financial autonomy Commitment to human rights and social justice Digital production and niche focus Resistance to and criticism of the conventional model of journalism Innovation in business models and sustainability
Periphery Journalism	Plurality of voices and perspectives Closeness to the community and active participation Covers topics that are relevant to the community Creates spaces for dialogue and inclusion Overcomes media stereotypes

5 Final considerations

Identifying a strong conceptual dispersion was the starting point of this research, resulting from the wide range of terminologies for initiatives that propose new ways to perceive and practice journalism.

Many of these perceptions and practices are in contrast to some of the established standards of journalism, such as neutrality and objectivity when reporting on events. These positions are not exclusive to the five models proposed here. Journalism (including the mainstream press) has always held biased positions, even when

it proclaims to be impartial, unbiased, or neutral (Moraes, 2023). Rejecting the ideals of neutrality and objectivity has become an increasingly common element in journalistic initiatives that seek new models of journalism as they openly assume a commitment to certain social strata and causes. The professional ethos is then questioned in such a way that “in the context of the new journalistic ecosystem, taking a stand becomes a value to be pursued, and no longer a deontological transgression” (Barsotti & Vieira, 2023, p. 1).

In this regard, future research needs to recognize the conceptual dispersion that exists in initiatives that adopt a more positioned, engaged, activist, and contesting journalism. The spread of far-right portals shows that when initiatives define themselves as activist, alternative, or independent, they can be used for ideological and disinformation purposes. These types of proposals use journalistic discourse to praise the figure of a “national hero”, thus socially legitimizing political figures like Jair Bolsonaro. In doing so, they soften or hide “their discourses, steeped in authoritarianism and fascist principles, that foster intolerance and violence against minorities and ‘declared enemies’” (Weber, 2024, p. 220).

The way these types of journalistic discourse and praxis are used differ profoundly from the concepts of journalism (engaged, cause-based, activist) that this article analyzes. The typology of the five models identified in this paper displays these characteristics, and does so by defending human rights, strengthening democracy, social and territorial justice, and accurate narrative construction, rather than subverting information.

It is a fact that academic research (from our literature review) reflects a certain ‘tradition’ in field research, concretized by the prominence of certain research environments that also act as ‘centers of power’. The existence of infrastructural conditions (funding and dissemination of research, for example) can favor a certain typology because the ‘privileged’ research groups in these contexts use it to stand out.

It is also worth noting that not only are the boundaries of journalism being expanded, but the professional culture of journalism is being redefined. “Structured by positive-functional principles, this codification proposes an efficient form of collective communication, but it faces the contradiction of a discourse that is very non-interactive” (Medina, 1995, p. 177). They constitute an effective professional journalistic work environment, while at the

same time act as alternatives to verticalized and oppressive work environments (Patrício, 2024), which converts into a feeling of belonging to these other models of journalism.

As to what differentiates these five typologies from each other, our research found that the Journalistic Arrangements typology focuses on the collective modes of organization and sustainability; alternative experiences view journalism as a practice and a counterpoint to the more traditional form of conventional media journalism; community projects appropriate the media as a tool for social emancipation; independent collectives are not content with simply challenging the conventional press, they also challenge some traditional assumptions while developing a critical aspect of journalism beyond objectivist distancing; and initiatives from the peripheries respond to a lack of coverage (stereotyped or absent) in the conventional press about the peripheries.

On the other hand, some attributes intersect with journalism models and thus appear not to be stagnant categories. For instance, the counterpoint between the sign of diffusion and the sign of relationship stands out (Medina, 2006), the latter having the potential to achieve effective communication and mediations guided by “creative social interaction” (Medina, 2006, p. 15). Conceptions of territories also exist in more than one typology, so much so that we were able to identify an Independent Periphery Journalism. Other intersections include the pursuit of editorial autonomy, diversification of funding sources, greater engagement with audiences, the quest to transform social realities, and the guarantee of basic human rights.

Activism becomes a “bias” that mixes types of journalism, especially Alternative, Independent, and Periphery. According to Moraes (2023), it is a “political-reflexive practice” and a “conscious action” that can be carried out by journalists, even if not publicly announced, and that has no connections to groups or entities, thus granting greater independence. This approach seeks to overcome the supposed neutrality that, in practice, often obscures interests and reinforces power structures. According to the attributes presented in this research, these initiatives avoid the pitfalls of information manipulation by being guided by principles that reclaim and reinforce ethics and professional accuracy.

Therefore, when addressing biased journalistic practices (engaged, activist, etc.), this article emphasizes the ethical and professional aspect that seeks to intervene in social reality to promote democratic values and fundamental rights, maintaining investigative

accuracy and transparency, and clearly distinguishing itself from information used for ideological propaganda or disinformation. The intention is to emphasize that engagement, when guided by an “ethics of care” (Rodrigues & Aguiar, 2023) and a “hacker sensitivity” (Barsotti & Vieira, 2023) that “destabilizes naturalizations in journalism” (Moraes, 2022), can enrich journalism and contribute to greater democracy in the public sphere.

The failure to include initiatives and their professionals when discussing conceptual dispersion is one limitation of this study, which shall be addressed in the next phase of this research. We shall interview collectives and actors who define the everyday facets of journalistic experiences, and adopt a theoretical-methodological approach based on the “subject-subject” relationship. These initiatives have much to say about how they perceive and practice these possible types of journalism. We also want to establish dialogic relationships with them rather than a unilateral interpretation and distribution of knowledge. We believe in the epistemological gains that this engagement can offer.

NOTES

- 1 Original: “Instead, it gives the user a general sense of reference and guidance in approaching empirical instances” (Blumer, 1954, p. 7).
- 2 Search terms: “jornalismo Independente” OR “jornalismo Alternativo” OR “jornalismo comunitário” OR “jornalismo das periferias” OR “jornalismo periférico” OR “arranjo jornalístico” OR “periodismo independiente” OR “periodismo alternative” OR “periodismo comunitario” OR “periodismo de periferias” OR “periodismo de las periferias” OR “periodismo periférico” OR “arreglos periodísticos” OR “independent journalism” OR “alternative journalism” OR “community journalism” OR “journalism of the peripheries” OR “peripheral journalism” OR “journalistic arrangements” OR “meios do terceiro setor” OR “medios del tercer sector” OR “third sector media”.
- 3 Available at: <https://encurtador.com.br/xnvTI>
- 4 Dialogue with researcher Natalia Vinelli was conducted using

voice messages from the WhatsApp application, while the other authors were contacted and responded to via email.

- 5 Original audio transcript: "En realidad, la comunicación alternativa es más una noción que un concepto. Tiene resonancias connotativas y justamente los adjetivos que se utilizan para nombrar este modo de la comunicación tiene que ver, más que nada, con diferencias de énfasis e de matiz que tiene que ver con los proyectos de cada uno de estas emisoras y medios de comunicación" (Vinelli, 2024).
- 6 Original: "Se enfoca en causas sociales, como los derechos humanos y la justicia, y actúa como un medio de denuncia" (Chapou, 2024).
- 7 Original: "Se trata de un periodismo que se enfoca en dar voz a las comunidades subrepresentadas, comprometido con el cambio social y los derechos fundamentales, especialmente la libertad de expresión" (Chapou, 2024).
- 8 Original: "La frontera entre periodismo y activismo político es difusa o borrosa" (Molina, 2024).
- 9 Original: "Es el momento en que el periodista resuelve exponer una visión real de una localidad, por medio de cualquiera de los géneros periodísticos, sea el caso a través de la radio, prensa escrita, periódico mural, televisión, etc." (Triviño et al., 2021, p. 45).
- 10 Original: "First, in hybrid democracies, the presence of independent journalism has become necessary to counteract the lack of objectivity of the official media, which are under pressure from power groups" (Marino-Jiménez et al., 2023, p. 2).
- 11 Original: "Representatividad (respecto de la amplitud de cobertura y atención de las necesidades del público), Colaboración (con el público e instituciones que protegen la libertad de expresión), Diversidad de puntos de vista, Verificación de contenido" (Marino-Jiménez, 2024).
- 12 Original: (...) growing 'promiscuity among economic, political and media powers' and governmental control over information" (Tejedor et al., 2022, p. 20).

- 13 Original: "y, a partir de referentes e ideales específicos en torno a la profesión, van moldeando modos de funcionamiento y narrativas" (Pérez, 2024).
- 14 Original: "(...) ha remitido a una separación de este tipo de práctica profesional de la estructura mediático-partidista central en el sistema de medios en la Isla" (Fernández, 2024).

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