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OUTMANEUVERING REPRESSION:

cross-border collaborative journalism
and human-algorithmic counter-
information in the Venezuelan case
Operación Retuit



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ABSTRACT – This article analyzes Operación Retuit, a Venezuelan initiative that used Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) through synthetic news-reading anchors, used as strategic shields to protect journalistic activity in the face of intensified repression after the 2024 presidential elections. Based on a case study, documentary research, and qualitative content analysis of 38 articles about the case, it investigates how GenAI was appropriately used, going beyond automation, to mediate practices of resistance and human-algorithmic counter-information. Based on studies on GenAI expressions in journalism, responsible artificial intelligence, cross-border collaborative journalism and counter-information, the work identifies dimensions of meaning mobilized in this initiative, integrated in the explanatory framework “Human-Algorithmic Journalistic Architecture of Resistance to Repression”, contributing to the debate on innovative journalistic practices in oppressive contexts.

Keywords: Cross-border collaborative journalism. Generative artificial intelligence. Counter-information.

DRIBLANDO A REPRESSÃO: jornalismo colaborativo transfronteiriço e contrainformação humano-algorítmica no caso venezuelano Operación Retuit

RESUMO – Este artigo analisa a Operación Retuit, iniciativa venezuelana que utilizou Inteligência Artificial Generativa (IAGen) por meio de âncoras sintéticas leitoras de notícias, empregadas como escudos estratégicos para proteger a atividade jornalística diante da repressão intensificada após as eleições presidenciais de 2024. Com base em estudo de caso, pesquisa documental e análise de conteúdo qualitativa de 38 matérias sobre o caso, investiga-se como a IAGen foi apropriadamente utilizada, indo além da automação, para mediar práticas de resistência e contrainformação humano-algorítmica. Fundamentado em estudos sobre expressões da IAGen no jornalismo, inteligência artificial responsável, jornalismo colaborativo transfronteiriço e contrainformação, o trabalho identifica dimensões de sentido mobilizadas nessa iniciativa, integradas no quadro explicativo “Arquitetura Jornalística Humano-Algorítmica de Resistência à Repressão”, contribuindo para o debate sobre práticas jornalísticas inovadoras em contextos opressivos.

Palavras-chave: Jornalismo colaborativo transfronteiriço. Inteligência artificial generativa. Contrainformação.

DRIBLANDO LA REPRESIÓN: periodismo colaborativo transfronterizo y contrainformación humano-algorítmica em el caso Venezolano Operación Retuit

RESUMEN – Este artículo analiza la Operación Retuit, una iniciativa venezolana que empleó Inteligencia Artificial Generativa (IAGen) mediante anclas sintéticas lectoras de noticias, utilizadas como escudos estratégicos para proteger la actividad periodística frente a la represión intensificada tras las elecciones presidenciales de 2024. Basado en un estudio de caso, investigación documental y análisis cualitativo de contenido de 38 artículos periodísticos sobre el caso, se investiga cómo la IAGen fue apropiada estratégicamente, más allá de la automatización, para mediar prácticas de resistencia y contrainformación humano-algorítmica. Fundamentado en estudios sobre aplicaciones de la IAGen en el periodismo, inteligencia artificial responsable, periodismo colaborativo transfronterizo y contrainformación, el trabajo identifica dimensiones de sentido movilizadas en esta iniciativa, integradas en el marco explicativo “Arquitectura Periodística Humano-Algorítmica de Resistencia a la Represión”, contribuyendo al debate sobre prácticas periodísticas innovadoras en contextos opresivos.

Palabras clave: Periodismo Colaborativo Transfronterizo. Inteligencia Artificial Generativa. Contrainformación.

1 Introduction

In authoritarian contexts, where information control is systematic and press freedom is restricted, journalism is compelled to reconfigure its forms of production and distribution. In this scenario, Operación Retuit, conducted by Venezuelan journalists within a cross-border collaborative alliance, emerges as one of these contemporary reconfigurations, enabled by the use of Generative Artificial Intelligence (GenAI) tools. This unprecedented collaborative journalism initiative (Sambrook, 2018; Stonbely, 2017) is based on the use of synthetic anchors generated by GenAI to read and disseminate content filtered and validated by professional journalists from independent outlets, preserving editorial integrity in an environment of intense repression.

These anchors did not act as substitutes for journalists, as will be analyzed later, but were strategically mobilized as protective filters and amplifiers. Their function was to shield professionals from repression carried out by the government of Nicolás Maduro before and after the controversial Venezuelan presidential elections of July 28, 2024, while simultaneously ensuring the continuity of journalistic activity through the dissemination, on social media, of reliable and secure content about the country's sociopolitical reality (Pozzebon, 2024). Although the case analyzed is situated and unfolds between 2024 and 2025, the discussions in this article are also informed by the current context in Venezuela, marked by U.S. military intervention and the removal of Nicolás Maduro on January 3, 2026 (La Hora de Venezuela, 2026a).

Drawing on this framework, the article aims to present and critically examine Operación Retuit as a representative case study of innovative cross-border collaborative journalism in repressive environments, facilitated by GenAI technologies. Furthermore, it seeks to create an analytical typology that frames and elucidates specific dimensions of meaning essential to the initiative's success. This effort will enhance our understanding of how GenAI, rather than merely serving as an automation tool, can be harnessed as an instrument for journalism in contexts of repression, thereby bolstering counter-information practices aimed at resistance.

From this perspective, this study specifically seeks to elucidate the following questions: in what ways does Operación

Retuit adopt and innovatively guide the use of GenAI in cross-border collaborative journalism in the face of repressive contexts? How can GenAI technologies be appropriated beyond automation, constituting strategic instruments to support journalistic resistance in environments that restrict freedom of expression, and what dimensions of meaning does this appropriation reveal?

The methodological approach combines a case study with documentary research and qualitative content analysis (Schreier, 2012) of a selected set of 38 journalistic articles published in Portuguese, Spanish, and English about Operación Retuit (Appendix 1), covering the period from August 14, 2024, to June 18, 2025.

On the theoretical level, this article is based on studies on the expressions of artificial intelligence (AI) in contemporary journalism, with an emphasis on automated journalism and the use of GenAI anchors as news readers (Canavilhas et al., 2025; Sousa & Fontes, 2024; Cabral, 2022; Danzon-Chambaud, 2021; Dalben, 2018; Graefe, 2016; Dörr, 2016). The text is also based on perspectives of collaborative journalism (Mesquita & De Lima Santos, 2021; Stonbely, 2017) and cross-border collaborative journalism (Heft & Baack, 2021; Alfter, 2016, 2019), as well as the principles of responsible AI (Dignum, 2020; Leite, 2025). In addition, it incorporates the reflections of Baldelli (1972) and Deleuze (2001) on counter-information.

This work is organized into three primary sections. The first section articulates key conceptual ideas regarding the manifestations of AI in journalism, contextualizes the development of research in this area, and positions Operación Retuit as a unique instance of collaborative journalism within this framework. Additionally, the increasing utilization of GenAI in journalism is explored, examining its technological configurations and applications across various global contexts. The second section delves into the landscape of violence against journalists in Latin America, with a particular focus on Venezuela, and introduces the case that serves as the study's central focus. Finally, the third section outlines the methodological procedures employed in the qualitative content analysis, presents the findings, and discusses these results within the context of the established theoretical framework.

In fact, before moving forward, it is pertinent to underscore that the concept of collaborative journalism, in broad terms, is interpreted as:

a cooperative arrangement (formal or informal) between two or more news and information organizations, which aims to supplement each organization's resources and maximize the impact of the content produced. Collaborative journalism is not to be confused with "citizen-", "participatory-", "engaged-", "public-", or other types of journalism that solicit information from the public or consider interaction with the public a cornerstone practice (though an engagement element may be part of a collaborative project). (Stonbely, 2022, p. 14).

The concept of cross-border collaborative journalism specifically refers to the collaborative practices among newsrooms, journalists, and organizations from various countries working together to produce reports, investigations, or informational projects. This collaboration pools resources, knowledge, skills, and often technical infrastructure, allowing participants to tackle challenges that would be difficult for a single national newsroom to address (Heft & Baack, 2021; Heft, 2019; Sambrook, 2018).

In this context, the goal of analyzing Operación Retuit is not merely to describe and evaluate an innovative practice, but also to engage in a speculative exploration of how cross-border collaborative journalism, facilitated by GenAI, can cultivate and "offer spaces for resistance" (Mouffe, 2013, p. 88), drawing upon its current practices.

2 The expressions of GenAI in journalism

According to Cardaş-Rusu (2024), automated journalism, news anchors generated by GenAI, and the implications of AI in the process of detecting fake news constitute the three main directions in the development of these algorithmic systems within the field of digital journalism. Considering the objectives and space limitations of this text, the reflections proposed here focus primarily on the first two strands.

Interest in the dynamics of automated journalism (Graefe, 2016; Santos, 2016) – often referred to as algorithmic journalism (Dörr, 2016) or robotic journalism (Latar, 2018), among other terms – has surged significantly over the past decade, both in academic circles and within journalistic practice. This field encompasses a range of inquiries, from investigations into systems that automatically generate headlines and articles from structured data (Graefe, 2016; Dörr, 2016) to studies examining the interactions between journalists and algorithms within newsroom production processes (Carlson, 2015; Diakopoulos, 2019).

Souza and Fontes (2024), based on authors such as Diakopoulos (2019) and Graefe (2016), explain that the use of technologies based on Natural Language Generation (NLG) in the production of journalistic content has its origins in the 1960s, with the automation of weather forecasts. This type of automation expanded in the following decades to areas such as sports, medical and financial journalism, especially from the 1990s onwards. However, it was from the 2010s, with the advances in AI, that algorithms began to be used in newsrooms more widely in the processes of collecting, processing, writing, editing, and distributing news.

In this context, Graefe (2016) explains that automated journalism refers to the process of using algorithmic systems capable of generating news reports autonomously, with minimal or no human intervention after the initial programming. Thus, algorithms make it possible to automate all stages of journalistic production – from data acquisition and analysis to writing, editing, and publishing news.

Complementarily, Dalben (2018) and Silveira and Nunes (2023) emphasize the need to recognize, within this process, a collaborative ecosystem between humans and AI algorithms, thereby valuing, in this dynamic, both algorithmic processes and human agency in journalistic production.

Yeung and Dodds (2024) note that although algorithmic technologies in automated journalism are still in their infancy, they have already proven useful in generating routine news from structured data. This has been evidenced by initiatives from organizations like the Associated Press and The New York Times, particularly in financial and sports coverage over the past decade. However, various studies caution against the potential risks, including biases inherent in both AI systems and the programmers who develop them (Yeung & Dodds, 2024, p. 4). In this context, Dalben (2018) emphasizes that the integration of automated systems into journalism should adhere to principles of transparency and ethics, which are essential guidelines for their thoughtful and responsible implementation.

In recent years, numerous literature reviews have been conducted to map and understand the advancements in studies on automated journalism (Sousa & Fontes, 2024; Cabral, 2022; Grimme, 2022; Danzon-Chambaud, 2021; Dalben, 2018; Graefe, 2016; Dörr, 2016). These reviews, which include systematic analyses, bibliometric mappings, and examinations of various initiatives, have enabled researchers to identify key theoretical frameworks, methodological

trends, research gaps, and the principal debates surrounding the application of algorithmic technologies in journalistic practices. Notably, Kim et al. (2022) indicate that automated journalism – that is, the utilization of AI to generate news content – has garnered increasing attention from both academic circles and the professional sector (Carlson, 2018; Clerwall, 2014; Graefe et al., 2018).

However, in this context, there are still few studies that address GenAI in the role of news anchors, which highlights a gap in the understanding of the manifestations of this technology in the field of contemporary journalism, as well as the repercussions for the public in the face of the content conveyed by such technological resources. Although this is a recent application, the presence of GenAI anchors is already present in media outlets in different parts of the world (Canavilhas et al., 2025; Yoon, 2020). This aspect will be taken up later.

In the context of GenAI applications in journalism, this article examines the use of this technology in creating and utilizing synthetic news presenters. It proposes a nuanced analysis by introducing a relatively underexplored perspective in the literature: the appropriation of digital anchors based on GenAI, as demonstrated in Operación Retuit. This approach serves as both technical and strategic support for politically situated collaborative journalistic practices of resistance, guided by the principles of responsible AI (Leite, 2025; Dignum, 2020).

While most of the literature on AI in journalism focuses on stable institutional contexts, within established media organizations generally embedded in democratic ecosystems (Graefe, 2016; Dörr, 2016; Thurman et al., 2019), as will be detailed in the following sections, this article proposes an analytical shift toward scenarios such as the Venezuelan case, marked by repression, censorship, and political violence.

Specifically, GenAI-based digital anchors are synthetic human representations, created through emerging technologies such as deepfakes. These technologies, according to Maras and Alexandrou (2018), are products of Gen AI applications that “merge, combine, replace and superimpose images and video clips onto a video, creating a fake video that appears authentic” (Maras & Alexandrou, 2018, p. 1).

China is recognized as a leader in the utilization of these resources. In 2018, the state-run Xinhua news agency introduced

QiuHao, the world's first AI news anchor (Kuo, 2018). This virtual anchor promised to deliver news “24 hours a day, 365 days a year”, mimicking the appearance and voice of Zhang Zhao, a journalist anchor for Xinhua. However, despite garnering considerable public interest at the time, the initiative ultimately did not achieve widespread popularity.

In 2019, expanding its impressive lineup of news-reading avatars, the same agency introduced Xin Xiaomeng, the world's first female AI-generated synthetic news anchor (Cheng, 2019). The following year, in 2020, it unveiled Xin Xiaowei, a three-dimensional (3D) synthetic presenter that employs AI and 3D technology to create a sense of depth, thereby enhancing users' interactivity and engagement with the technology. It is noteworthy that these anchors were trained and modeled based on the data and behaviors of real journalists from the agency (Glover, 2020; Kim et al., 2022).

Shortly after China, in late 2020, cable TV channel MBN became the first broadcaster in South Korea to report news using a digital anchor named AI Kim. This synthetic persona was modeled and trained based on South Korean journalist Kim Ju-ha. In a public statement, the channel emphasized that, considering benefits such as reduced labor and production costs, with AI anchors, it is possible to “respond quickly to natural disasters and other emergencies, as well as report throughout the day” (Yoon, 2020) with significant cost-effectiveness.

In 2023, business news outlet CNBC Africa also introduced the African continent's first AI news anchor, Chanel AI. She was modeled and trained based on Chanel Retief, a journalist linked to Africa Business News (ABN), the parent company of CNBC Africa (Bizcommunity, 2023).

Expanding this context, Nur Fitria (2024) reports an increasing number of news agencies and media outlets in various countries also adopting AI anchors to present news, including Russia, Kuwait, India, and Indonesia. Milmo and Hawkins (2024) also note an initiative by the Ukrainian government, which introduced a GenAI spokesperson, Victoria Shi, who is officially authorized to use the image of Rosalie Nombre, a singer and media personality in the country.

In Latin America, in early 2023, in Mexico, Grupo Fórmula launched Nat, considered the first AI news anchor in the region (González, 2023). Later, in the same year, in Brazil, Rede Globo de Televisão presented its digital anchor, Eva Byte 2.3. It was originally

developed in 2004 by computer graphics and updated and reconfigured in 2023 with GenAI technologies. Eva Byte 2.3 collaborates with the presentation of Fantástico, one of the main journalistic programs in the country (Fantástico, 2023). Some of these and other illustrative cases were also mapped by Canavilhas et al. (2025).

Beyond synthetic anchors that are developed and validated by reputable institutions such as news agencies and media organizations, Milmo and Hawkins (2024) draw attention to the potential risks and negative consequences of using these technologies when their origins and development processes remain obscure. In such situations, these tools can be exploited for the intentional spread of disinformation, propaganda, and fake news. This issue is further compounded by the lack of a global regulatory framework for AI.

For example, these authors report that “Iranian state-backed hackers recently interrupted TV streaming services in the United Arab Emirates to broadcast a deepfake newsreader delivering a report on the war in Gaza”, and further add, citing a The Washington Post report (Verma, 2024), that “the Islamic State terrorist group is using AI-generated news anchors – in helmet and fatigues – to broadcast propaganda” (Milmo & Hawkins, 2024). Milmo and Hawkins (2024) further note, based on examples and statements from the U.S. big tech company Microsoft, that:

Chinese state-backed cyber groups had targeted the Taiwanese election with AI-generated disinformation content, including the use of fake news anchors or TV-style presenters. In one clip cited by Microsoft, the AI-generated anchor made unsubstantiated claims about the private life of the ultimately successful pro-sovereignty candidate – Lai Ching-te – alleging he had fathered children outside marriage. (Milmo & Hawkins, 2024).

However, despite highlighting a purported pioneering role of China in the use of synthetic anchors for the dissemination of disinformation, propaganda, and fake news on the internet, Microsoft emphasizes that, in practice, its researchers have not “encountered many examples of AI-generated content having an impact on the offline world” (Milmo & Hawkins, 2024).

In summary, the performative reconfiguration of journalism discussed in this section challenges the boundaries between humans and machines. This evolution prompts communication research to rethink the criteria of credibility, authorship, and responsibility in the production and circulation of automated content. Additionally, there is an urgent need to address the ethical and normative limits of using

GenAI in journalistic practices, particularly considering the potential for strategic manipulation and disinformation through synthetic anchors.

In light of this context, the subsequent sections will revisit and reflect on the case of Operación Retuit in Venezuela, placing its resistance practices within the framework of cross-border collaborative journalism facilitated by GenAI anchors.

3 Violence against journalists in Latin America and the Venezuelan context

According to the *Shadow Report 2024*, published by the Red Voces del Sur (VDS) in 2025, the landscape of violence against journalists in Latin America is alarming. The document monitors compliance with target 16.10.01 of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) (2015), which addresses the safety of journalists and human rights defenders. In 2024, 3.766 incidents of violence against the press were documented across 17 countries in the region, including Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Venezuela, among others, and in nearly half of these cases (49.3%), state actors were identified as the primary perpetrators. In the period analyzed, the murder of a journalist was recorded every twenty-six days, totaling fourteen deaths throughout the year. Honduras, Mexico, and Colombia stand out among the most dangerous countries for the exercise of the profession.

Venezuela represents, according to data from this report, one of the most striking examples of repression of press freedom in Latin America. These violations are not new but have intensified in the face of growing political instability and threats to President Maduro's hold on power. Since his ascension to the presidency in 2013, approximately 115 media outlets have been closed by 2018, including 65 radio stations, 9 television channels, and 41 print newspapers (De La Rosa, 2018).

The repression worsened, specifically, after Maduro's controversial re-election on July 28, 2024, whose legitimacy was widely questioned by national and international organizations. According to Free Press Unlimited, about 1.400 people were arrested for protests or dissent in the post-election period. Among them, at least sixteen journalists were detained during or after covering the elections, as pointed out by the Venezuelan organization Espacio

Público (Pozzebon, 2024). A set of new laws related to “anti-fascism”, “anti-terrorism”, and “cyberattacks” was also approved, expanding government surveillance of NGOs and repression of the press (Free Press Unlimited, 2024).

In this context, the Maduro government reinforced the narrative of a “media war” to delegitimize internal and external criticism of its administration (Phillips & Torres, 2024). This repressive environment led to the closure of media outlets, the persecution of journalists, and the widespread dissemination of fear, constituting systematic violations of the Venezuelan Constitution and international human rights treaties.

On January 3, 2026, the United States launched an invasion and military intervention in Venezuela, resulting in the capture of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. The Trump administration has accused them of operating a drug cartel and engaging in acts of terrorism. In retaliation, Venezuela has claimed that the U.S. seeks to gain control over its strategic resources, particularly oil and minerals, intending to undermine its political sovereignty (Ruiter & Ribeiro, 2026; La Hora de Venezuela, 2026a). As of now, both remain in U.S. custody awaiting trial. Following their capture, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez assumed interim leadership of the country (Sofia, 2026).

In the aftermath of these developments, on January 8, 2026, the Red Voces del Sur (VDS) expressed alarm over the increasing restrictions on freedom of expression, press freedom, and access to information within Venezuela following the intervention. So far, there have been at least 14 arrests of journalists and media professionals, in addition to the deportation of foreign reporters, blockades of media outlets, and severe limitations on access to public information. The Red indicated that these factors are not only indicative of persistence but also the intensification and complexity of the challenges facing press freedom, creating an increasingly hostile environment for journalistic coverage at a time when there is a high demand for reliable public information (Voces del sur, 2023; La Hora de Venezuela, 2026b).

In this context, emerging between Maduro’s contentious re-election in 2024 and the U.S. military intervention in 2026, Operación Retuit represents a pioneering case of resistance, facilitated through cross-border collaborative journalism mediated by GenAI.

4 Operación Retuit

The independent news program Operación Retuit was unveiled on August 13, 2024, across several social media platforms, including Instagram, YouTube, TikTok, and X (formerly Twitter). This initiative emerged from a collaborative effort between two journalistic coalitions dedicated to electoral coverage in Venezuela: #VenezuelaVota and #LaHoraDeVenezuela. The first coalition, spearheaded by the digital media outlet El Pitazo, mobilizes a distributed network of independent journalists, apprentices, and citizen reporters, creating a collaborative effort with national reach. The second coalition represents a cross-border alliance of Venezuelan and Latin American media outlets, coordinated by the regional platform Connectas¹, which focuses on producing critical journalistic content in environments with limited press freedom (Pennacchio, 2024). Operación Retuit unites a network of independent media that work together to disseminate verified information in the face of significant repression, often employing AI-generated avatars to safeguard journalists' identities and facilitate reporting that might otherwise be stifled by government censorship and violence.

Regarding the name of the initiative, Carlos Eduardo Huertas, director of Connectas and coordinator of Operación Retuit, explains that it reflects two purposes:

The first word challenges Operación TunTun, the name given by the Maduro government to operations targeting dissidents in Venezuela. "The word 'operación' has become a term that intimidates, misinforms, and silences. In this case, we want to express that we are strategic. This is an operation to inform" [...]. Secondly, "the word *retuit*, in Venezuelan youth slang, means 'I validate and I share'". For this reason, users are called upon to share content as "a dissemination strategy that does not have a centralized channel but seeks the greatest number of channels possible". (BBC News Mundo, 2024, our translation).

With this strategic leadership by Connectas, a reference organization in collaborative journalism in Latin America headquartered in Colombia, the first audiovisual news bulletins were published one day after the announcement of the initiative (Poder360, 2024). In the first season, held between August 14 and September 3, 2024, the project produced and disseminated fifteen episodes, available in Spanish and English. The videos of the program are available both on the Connectas² website and on the various social networks of the allied independent outlets.

In the opening video, the GenAI anchors El Pana (Friend) and La Chama (Girl) immediately clarify that they are not real (figure 1). El Pana states: “We were generated by artificial intelligence, but our content is real, verified, high-quality, and produced by journalists” (Poder360, 2024, our translation). According to Huertas, their appearance was determined through voting and consensus among the alliance members. Thus, it was collectively decided that “she would have tanned skin, long hair, and wear a brown dress with broad shoulders. He would have short hair and a beard and wear a plaid shirt. Both speak with a Venezuelan accent and appear to be in their early twenties” (BBC News Mundo, 2024, our translation).

Figure 1

AI News Anchor Avatars (La Chama and El Pana)



Source: Connectas (www.connectas.org/).

As Huertas highlights, aspects such as aesthetics, movements, voices, and gestures of AI-generated news anchors were meticulously crafted to establish a visual identity and foster empathy with the audience. Complementing this perspective, Huertas emphasizes that the decision to use AI-generated anchors as the “face” of the program’s published information had the central objective of “circumvent the persecution and increasing repression” of journalists by the government, since synthetic anchors eliminate the presence of individuals who could be arrested and, unlike human presenters, are not afraid to confront repression (Laguna, 2024; Pozzebon, 2024).

Huertas also stated that Operación Retuit exemplifies “an example of collective intelligence employing AI to fulfill the purpose of

reporting despite the siege imposed on Venezuela. [...] It represents an unprecedented exercise in collaborative journalism within the region [...]” (Poder360, 2024, our translation). This initiative successfully navigated the “information blockade and gave access to quality content. This strategy provided access to reliable sources, enabling millions of people to be pulled out of the quicksands of disinformation” (Operación Retuit, n.d.). In summary, Huertas believes that this initiative should also be viewed through the lens of “value journalism”, which considers not only the worth of the content produced but also the value that the journalists in the alliance bring to their profession in this environment of repression (Cascante, 2024).

Following the broadcast of the fifteen episodes in the first season, the coalition members published a report on the Connectas website, featuring essential insights and outcomes of the initiative. This document notes that Operación Retuit involved 235 professionals spread across 31 cities in Venezuela and an additional 15 cities internationally.

During the two-month execution period, 528 journalistic reports were produced and published through 74 partner media outlets across 18 countries. This substantial output underscores both the reach and the impact of the operation. It is estimated that the combined six million followers of the participating platforms generated an approximate total impact of 41 million people, highlighting the initiative’s effective communication and extensive reach.

According to data from the social listening tool Brand24, the campaign’s Advertising Value Equivalent (AVE) reached USD 2.780,000. This figure represents an estimated cost required to achieve a similar level of visibility through commercial campaigns, underscoring the significance and scale of the collective journalistic effort involved. Moreover, over 200 publications about this initiative were recorded in at least 10 different languages (Operación Retuit, n.d.).

On March 20, 2025, Operación Retuit was honored with the King of Spain International Journalism Award in the International Cooperation and Humanitarian Action category, a distinction presented by the EFE Agency and the Spanish Agency for International Cooperation (EFE, n.d.). This award, regarded as one of the most prestigious in the global journalistic arena, recognizes initiatives that exemplify professional excellence and commitment to press freedom. The jury acknowledged not only the initiative’s contribution to the right to information but also its innovative approach as a counter-information practice, capable of fostering resilience in repressive environments.

The methodological and analytical procedures utilized in the qualitative content analysis for this case study are outlined below. This analysis aims to establish an explanatory framework that can identify the various dimensions of meaning within the strategic architecture of the initiative mediated by GenAI, highlighting its distinctiveness as a collaborative journalistic practice that engages multiple actors across borders.

5 Qualitative content analysis

To achieve the proposed objectives, a methodological approach complementary to the case study was adopted, integrating documentary research and qualitative content analysis (QCA), as outlined by Schreier (2012). This research strategy, in this study, is systematically articulated with the codification principles of constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2014; Leite, 2015).

The analyzed corpus consisted of 38 textual journalistic reports published online in Brazilian media and international media outlets regarding Operación Retuit. The selection included productions in Portuguese, Spanish, and English to encompass different perspectives and discursive contexts, considering that the authors of this study are proficient in these languages. Appendix 1 presents a complete list of these news texts organized chronologically, including: (1) the name of the media outlet, (2) country of origin, (3) article title, (4) publication date, (5) language, and (6) URL.

To identify relevant documents, an initial search was conducted within the internal systems of the 15 news outlets boasting the largest number of digital subscribers worldwide, as ranked by FIPP World Media in 2019 (Poder360, 2019). The primary criterion for identification was the presence of the keyword “Operación Retuit” in Spanish, alongside its Portuguese variant “Operação Retweet” and the English equivalent “Operation Retweet”. Following this, a thorough review of the content revealed that only journalistic reports published online that substantially addressed the initiative and its developments were considered eligible. Audiovisual materials and duplicate publications, especially those republished from news agencies, were excluded from this selection.

This initial stage identified only two publications about the initiative: one in The Guardian (United Kingdom) and another in Folha de

S.Paulo (Brazil). In response, a second search was conducted using the same strategy, employing Google News and considering the first five pages of results in each language. This search returned 105 documents.

After reading each document and applying the pre-established criteria, a final corpus of 38 relevant articles was compiled: 26 in Spanish, eight in English, and four in Portuguese. The two publications identified in the initial stage were included in the corpus resulting from the second search. It should be noted that some Portuguese and English articles appeared in the Spanish search results due to the retention of the initiative's name in its original language.

These news articles were published between August 14, 2024, and June 18, 2025, covering the period from the launch of the initiative to its nomination and recognition by the King of Spain International Journalism Award. The data collection was concluded on July 14, 2025.

Following QCA guidelines, the authors conducted a second reading of all documents. This analytical reading, which marked the operationalization of the adopted data-driven strategy, aimed to identify how the documents textually reported on Operación Retuit, enabling the construction of a coding framework composed of codes and categories generated inductively from the relevant data. It is noteworthy that all 38 documents, accessed on the online pages of their respective media outlets, were converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) and imported into NVivo, a software tool supporting qualitative data analysis.

With the support of NVivo, the identified content was extracted, analyzed, and coded qualitatively, following QCA in combination with the coding techniques of grounded theory methodology (Charmaz, 2014; Leite, 2015). Accordingly, in line with Schreier's (2012) analytical guidance, all identified content was successively summarized, which involved paraphrasing relevant passages, removing elements deemed superfluous, synthesizing similar paraphrases into a single formulation, and using these paraphrases to generate category names. This process was conducted according to the procedures and techniques of open coding, adapted from grounded theory³. In this context, Schreier advises that:

Open coding from grounded theory can be adapted to build entire databased coding frames for QCA. Open coding consists of three steps: conceptualising, defining categories, and developing categories. Conceptualising involves identifying categories in your material; in defining categories, you group the concepts according to similarity into categories; and by developing categories, categories are arranged in a hierarchical structure. (Schreier, 2012, p. 115).

The open coding process, as has been clarified on other occasions (Leite, 2023, 2015), adheres rigorously to the data, focusing on actions within each segment rather than applying preexisting categories. Throughout this process, significant expressions recorded in the text may potentially be incorporated into the analysis in their literal form. These expressions are referred to as *in vivo* codes (Charmaz, 2014).

In summary, this methodological combination aimed to ensure rigor throughout the entire analysis process, guaranteeing that the procedures employed consistently reinforced the objectives of this study. In the following topic, the main results of these efforts are presented and discussed.

6 Results and discussion

As a result of the analytical coding process, 157 open codes were identified across the 38 articles analyzed. These codes were organized according to the coding procedures and techniques of grounded theory, as previously described, and were comparatively analyzed based on their similarities and recurrence (Schreier, 2012; Charmaz, 2014; Leite, 2015). This analysis enabled the construction of four primary categories, which, when articulated together, form the explanatory framework entitled “Human–Algorithmic Journalistic Architecture of Counter-Information Practices Oriented Toward Resistance” (figure 2). This framework seeks to elucidate and synthesize the strategic reasoning that organizes the main dimensions of meaning mobilized by Operación Retuit, integrating in a coherent manner: structure and organization (architecture), technological mediation (human–algorithmic), and sociopolitical function (counter-information oriented toward resistance).

The notion of architecture presented in this framework extends beyond the technical-informational infrastructure, seeking to capture the logic of strategic connections among humans, algorithmic systems, and discursive repertoires directed toward resistance in the production, protection, and circulation of collaborative journalism and its professionals under repressive contexts. As will be demonstrated, this articulation aligns with the objectives of the study and provides a meaningful foundation for the analysis and understanding of Operación Retuit’s impact, both at the operational and symbolic levels.

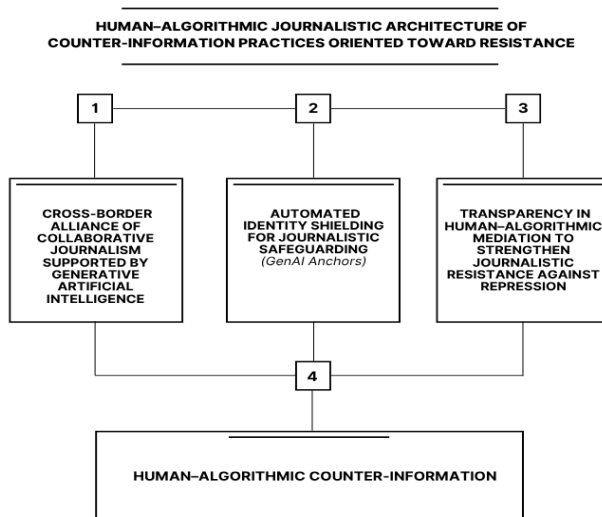
In this regard, the “Human–Algorithmic Journalistic Architecture

of Counter-Information Practices Oriented Toward Resistance” encompasses the following categories or dimensions of meaning: (1) “Cross-Border Alliance of Collaborative Journalism Supported by Generative Artificial Intelligence”, which emphasizes the connections among media outlets and journalists across different countries; (2) “Automated Identity Shielding for Journalistic Safeguarding”, which addresses data protection, anonymity, and operational security to ensure continuity of information; (3) “Transparency in Human-Algorithmic Mediation to Strengthen Journalistic Resistance Against Repression”, which guides objectivity in processes and fosters trust in the circulation and reception of information; and (4) “Human-Algorithmic Counter-Information”, which integrates and articulates the previous dimensions, reinforcing the strategic character of the collaborative journalistic production of resistance conducted by Operación Retuit.

These categories are discussed below in dialogue with the theoretical framework of this study. They are strategically connected within this text, but they can also be analyzed independently. To facilitate reading, the title of the explanatory framework is presented in capital letters, while their respective categories are highlighted in italics.

Figure 2

Human-Algorithmic Journalistic Architecture of Counter-Information Practices Oriented Toward Resistance



Based on the analysis of the content examined, the Cross-Border Alliance of Collaborative Journalism Supported by Generative Artificial Intelligence refers to the innovative articulation characterized by collaborative journalistic practices mediated by GenAI technologies. This dynamic involves journalists from the independent coalitions #VenezuelaVota and #LaHoraDeVenezuela, both dedicated to covering the 2024 presidential elections. The alliance exemplifies a transnational effort, mobilizing a network of 235 professionals distributed across 46 cities, both within and outside Venezuela, reinforcing its cross-border nature.

The institutionalization of the organizational structures of this collaborative journalism model (Heft & Baack, 2021) was facilitated and driven by Connectas, based in Colombia, as described in the case account. This technological and logistical mediation not only sustained the operation of the network, but also enhanced the integration of GenAI tools, optimizing the production and dissemination of journalistic content on a transnational scale.

This organizational architecture finds its concrete expression in Operación Retuit, which, according to Huertas, director of Connectas, represents an innovative paradigm of cross-border journalistic collaboration in Latin America. In Huertas's words, the initiative stands out by employing artificial intelligence in the service of collective intelligence in an unprecedented collaborative journalism effort as a mechanism to confront political repression (Li, 2025).

The dimensions of meaning analyzed within this category reveal a pathway that, beyond facilitating the circulation of information in repressive contexts, demonstrates the strategic potential of collaborative journalistic networks mediated by algorithmic technologies. These networks operate simultaneously to preserve journalistic practice and protect the integrity of professionals in territories where independent journalism faces systematic threats. Among the alliance members, there is a consensus that the initiative's core value lies precisely in its strategically collaborative nature, serving as "an example for when similar crises occur in other countries" (El Comercio, 2024).

This approach is theoretically supported by the work of Mesquita and De Lima Santos (2021), who identify cross-border journalistic collaboration as a historical practice, recently intensified by advances in information and communication technologies. However, the authors highlight a significant gap: the disproportionate focus of specialized literature on initiatives from the Global North, such as the

emblematic Panama Papers and FinCEN Files cases (Abraham, 2020; Sambrook, 2018), at the expense of analyses of the Global South.

Particularly in Latin America – a region that concentrates the largest Spanish-speaking population in the world, includes the largest Lusophone country, Brazil, and harbors globally relevant emerging economies – systematized knowledge of collaborative journalistic practices remains limited. Although recent studies examine intra-border experiences, such as the Press Consortium for covid-19 Data in Brazil, formed in June 2020 by organizations that coordinated to address the absence of official information from the Ministry of Health during the government of Jair Messias Bolsonaro (2019–2022) (Brenol & Rocha Júnior, 2025; Ferreira & Christofolletti, 2024), the field still lacks analytical consolidation and comparative research capable of identifying patterns of national and cross-border journalistic collaboration.

In this sense, Operación Retuit positions itself as an innovative paradigm, combining cross-border journalism with the pioneering use of GenAI as a mechanism of protection against state persecution (EFE, n.d.). Accordingly, conducting critical analyses of this innovative initiative, as this article attempts to do, reveals its dual academic significance: it simultaneously advances the understanding of cross-border collaborative journalism in the Global South and the investigation of GenAI applications in contexts of political repression.

Thus, the Cross-Border Alliance of Collaborative Journalism Supported by Generative Artificial Intelligence transcends mere technical cooperation, configuring a political strategy against repression. Through a structurally invisible professional network, enhanced by GenAI as a catalytic element, the initiative restores informational flows in hostile contexts while safeguarding its human agents. These dimensions are explored in greater depth in the next category, dedicated to the analysis of Automated Identity Shielding for Journalistic Safeguarding.

This category outlines the primary goals of Operación Retuit: to ensure the uninterrupted flow of information and, more importantly, to protect the identities of journalists working under imminent threat in authoritarian regimes like Venezuela. It is crucial to highlight that safeguarding the identities of journalists – especially female professionals in high-risk environments – continues to be a significant challenge in the realm of digital security (Posetti et al., 2021).

As previously highlighted, the initiative under analysis innovated by strategically implementing generative AI-based solutions, specifically the adoption of synthetic anchors that assume

the communicative function in place of human journalists. According to the project's spokespersons, this algorithmic shield ensured anonymity and operational security. By substituting direct exposure of professionals with AI-mediated presentation, the model simultaneously enabled the preservation of journalistic identities, the continuation of informative work under conditions of state persecution, and the uninterrupted flow of news to the population (Linares, 2024).

Automated Identity Shielding for Journalistic Safeguarding represents an innovative response of collaborative journalism to state repression, particularly against censorship and threats to the physical and psychological integrity of professionals. However, the content analysis developed in this study reveals that this approach also presents challenges and critical aspects that require more in-depth investigation in future research.

Among these challenges is the concrete possibility of replacing journalists with AI-generated automated anchors, a reality already documented in the literature on synthetic presenters. In the material analyzed regarding Operación Retuit (Appendix 1), this concern appears mitigated by predominantly positive discourse, which emphasizes the use of AI as a protective tool. By highlighting AI's role in expanding the visibility of the production process, there emerges the risk of obscuring labor, epistemological, and ethical issues inherent in journalistic automation. It is a crucial aspect that requires greater attention in research that aims to systematically examine the structural effects of algorithmic mediation both on human working conditions and on the regimes of meaning production in spaces of media reception.

Automated Identity Shielding for Journalistic Safeguarding also raises critical reflections on the concept of security through the use of AI anchors, a central element in the architecture of Operación Retuit. Among the material analyzed, only two publications – published by CNN en Español and CNN World on September 18, 2024 – presented critical perspectives on this predominantly celebrated aspect. As noted by Shelly Palmer, Professor of Advanced Media at Syracuse University, while acknowledging the innovative merits of the initiative, it is necessary to question what she terms the “artificial sense of security” generated by such technological solutions. According to the expert:

It is absurd to think, for even a single moment, that [AI] is a security tool. It is a clever idea, and I hope it lasts forever. [...]. But I would not want anyone to believe, even for a second, that by creating an avatar and a fake voice, or by cloning someone else's voice, you are hiding. Absolutely not: you are 100%

exposed. Unless you are an absolute expert at digitally covering your tracks, there is nothing covert about this". (Pozzebon, 2024, our translation).

This assessment aligns with the principles of Responsible AI (Leite, 2025; Dignum, 2020), which identify challenges such as the absence of global AI regulation, security and privacy issues, algorithmic opacity, systemic biases, and potential informational distortions generated by these systems.

Although insurgent and successful applications of GenAI on social networks, as demonstrated by Operación Retuit, merit recognition, they require critical scrutiny. This need becomes particularly relevant when considering that advanced GenAI systems, social media platforms, and their data repositories remain predominantly under the control of an oligopoly of large technology corporations – the so-called big techs – mostly headquartered in the Global North.

In this mosaic, privacy emerges as a crucial issue in the realm of contemporary information technologies (Van den Hoven et al., 2014), especially at the intersection of GenAI and social media. Operación Retuit exemplifies this convergence and highlights two critical concerns: the use of personal data, including sensitive information, to create synthetic anchors with deliberately obscured origins, and the safeguarding of data on journalists involved in the initiative. The content analyzed in this article reveals that alliance members hold daily virtual meetings to discuss and approve the journalistic content that the AI anchors will vocalize. This process underscores the complexities of digital exposure, even on encrypted platforms (Kobelinsky, 2024), which necessitates a deeper understanding when assessing this strategy of identity protection.

In the transnational context, the right to privacy is supported by instruments such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948) and the OECD guidelines on the protection of personal data⁴; however, there is no specific regulation for immersive technologies based on generative AI, which increases vulnerabilities, especially in authoritarian contexts.

This fragility is evident in Venezuela, where information legislation is inadequate and frequently subordinated to governmental interests, thereby undermining the protection of journalists. Regionally, Operación Retuit operates under the Colombian data protection framework established by Law 1581 of 2012, whose explicit exclusion of journalistic information and editorial content

databases from its scope leaves professionals' data without legal safeguards, amplifying associated risks and vulnerabilities.

The convergence between the absence of specific global regulation and the rapid advancement of intelligent technologies intensifies the exposure of these journalists. Easy transnational access to sensitive information weakens the effectiveness of protection initiatives, threatening the security, anonymity, and integrity of professionals. Moreover, the lack of regional rules – such as those in Venezuela and Colombia – aimed at regulating AI in contexts involving synthetic human representation exacerbates technical insecurity, while the ability of future legislation to ensure the protection of fundamental rights in the face of the challenges posed by such technologies remains uncertain.

In this scenario, the issue of transparency emerges as a critical point. Although regulatory guidelines tend to emphasize openness and explainability regarding the development and use of GenAI (Fjeld et al., 2020; European Union, 2024), Operación Retuit presents a unique situation in the operational dimensions of applying these systems, where intentional opacity, aimed at concealing journalists' identities, constitutes an indispensable element for their protection. This paradox underscores the urgency of balancing the demand for transparency with the need to safeguard the rights and security of professionals in repressive contexts, reaffirming automated identity shielding as a significant strategy for ensuring the continuity of journalism in environments where freedom of expression is restricted.

Building upon reflections regarding the dimensions of meaning that underpin the category of Automated Identity Shielding for Journalistic Safeguarding, especially concerning the balance between transparency and intentional opacity in the technical management of GenAI within the analyzed initiative, the discussion now progresses to the subsequent category: Transparency in Human–Algorithmic Mediation to Strengthen Journalistic Resistance against Repression. This transition necessitates viewing transparency not merely as a technical-operational component, but also as a guiding principle for audience engagement processes and for articulating the communication objectives of Operación Retuit.

The increasing adoption of synthetic anchors and other AI tools in journalism has raised ethical and regulatory dilemmas that still demand thorough debate and investigation. This contemporary scenario transcends the technical field of innovation applied to

journalistic production, opening space for more complex issues related to transparency, credibility, accountability, trust, and the very conception of journalistic practice (Ali & Ferrucci, 2025; Canavilhas et al., 2025).

Transparency in Human–Algorithmic Mediation to Strengthen Journalistic Resistance against Repression highlights how Operación Retuit integrates GenAI technologies with human editorial leadership and oversight. Within this framework, transparency in human–algorithmic mediation is not merely an ethical principle but a strategic component that enables the public to understand the origin, intent, and provenance of disseminated information, thereby reinforcing trust and credibility in the content.

In the initiative, this commitment not only legitimized the journalistic practices employed but also strengthened the symbolic connection between journalists and audiences, an essential element for mobilizing solidarity in a context marked by information blackouts and disinformation (Operación Retuit, n.d.). Transparent human–algorithmic mediation, coupled with rigorous ethical and editorial processes, ensured the integrity of information even with the use of synthetic anchors.

The transparency protocol adopted proved decisive in breaking information isolation, allowing millions of people to access reliable sources and fostering a communicative resistance grounded in credibility and the solidarity ties between journalists and audiences. Transparency in Human–Algorithmic Mediation to Strengthen Journalistic Resistance against Repression demonstrates that the strategic use of GenAI not only strengthened these bonds of trust and empathy but also preserved the humanized communicative experience through AI anchors, even when journalists were physically absent. According to the initiative’s spokespersons, this algorithmic mediation enhanced journalistic credibility, ensured informational integrity, and reinforced social empathy toward professionals at risk.

For Huertas, since the launch of Operación Retuit, the program’s content, published and shared on social media platforms, “generated positive attention among the public and achieved significant engagement despite restrictions on freedom of expression in Venezuela” (Li, 2025). However, these results, confirmed by the numerical indicators released by Connectas, still require complementary analyses – both quantitative and qualitative – that systematically investigate the program’s production process, the journalistic narratives it constructs, and the reception of these news stories, as delivered by AI anchors, among audiences.

As identified in the present analysis, Operación Retuit

achieved these results through a careful and responsible collaborative effort, guided by ethical principles, editorial verification, and constant human moderation, ensuring the appropriateness and integrity of content before dissemination by the synthetic anchors. This procedure constitutes, perhaps, a central element in the positive reception of the project: although GenAI technology functioned as support, journalistic decisions and production remained under human control.

This responsible approach contributed to preliminary findings indicating that, even with technological mediation, audiences recognized the authenticity and veracity of the journalistic practice – perceptions sustained by editorial intentionality and transparency adopted as a standard (Li, 2025; Penacchio, 2024).

Consistent investment in transparency regarding the intent and provenance of collaborative efforts proved to be a structuring principle for achieving positive audience outcomes, which were informed from the program's launch about its origin and objectives. The AI anchors themselves, responsible for reading the news, explicitly stated: "In case you haven't noticed, we are not real. We were generated by artificial intelligence, but all our content is real, with quality verified by journalists" (Cascante, 2024, our translation). This was complemented by the choice of a hyper-realistic aesthetic for the synthetic anchors, which demonstrated significant effectiveness in fostering audience engagement and connection.

In summary, this relational bond – facilitated by aesthetic elements yet grounded in a transparent protocol concerning intent and provenance – likely enhanced social perceptions of the legitimacy of transnational collaborative journalism mediated by GenAI. This, in turn, reinforced the effectiveness of resistance-oriented counter-information practices employed. These findings indicate that the initiative not only fostered acceptance and solidarity, effectively transforming viewers into informed allies, but also demonstrated that ethically structured GenAI technologies can strengthen the connection between journalists and society, even in repressive contexts.

Upon synthesizing the analysis presented, it becomes evident that the three previously discussed explanatory categories, when integrated cohesively, form the foundational dimensions of the Human–Algorithmic Counter-Information category. This serves as the structural axis that underpins and directs the journalistic framework of Operación Retuit's practices.

This emblematic case represents a potential example of

hybrid counter-information, characterized by the strategic integration of the critical capacity of collaborative journalism with the scalable potential of GenAI systems. Its distinctive contribution lies not only in correcting hegemonic narratives but primarily in actively disrupting informational monopolies, creating strategic breaches that challenge state surveillance mechanisms and establish resilient communication flows capable of evading repressive apparatuses.

In this context, Human–Algorithmic Counter-Information constitutes the explanatory category that directly articulates with the others, as, in the framework of the analyzed case, it synthesizes the practices mobilized by hybrid collaborations – driven by human collective intelligence and mediated by GenAI – with the objectives of protecting journalists, circumventing repression, and consolidating strategies and practices of counter-information resistance capable of challenging and destabilizing official narratives.

To understand the expression of counter-information in the case under analysis, it is relevant to revisit conceptual reflections that help clarify some of its meanings. Baldelli (1972), for instance, defines the concept as a set of communicational practices articulated with forms of political engagement that oppose the prevailing hegemonic order, while simultaneously working to establish new contests for hegemony.

According to the author, such action manifests both through alternative informational circuits created outside institutional media structures and through the tactical appropriation of gaps within conventional media. In this process, the political use of languages such as cinema, music, theater, press, and television is incorporated strategically, depending on the conditions and opportunities of each context. In the contemporary scenario, however, this conception requires updating to encompass neotechnological dynamics mediated by social media platforms and algorithmic GenAI systems, which have significantly reconfigured the modes of media production, circulation, and reception.

In this sense, counter-information constitutes a deliberate effort to promote the circulation of information regarding, for example, oppressive conflicts and socioeconomic inequalities – topics frequently excluded from official channels – relying both on independent circuits and on the strategic exploitation of internal fissures within dominant media (Baldelli, 1972 as cited in Fadul, 1982, p. 36).

Deleuze (2001), in turn, addresses counter-information in *The Act of Creation*, a transcript of his lecture delivered on March 17, 1987, at the European Foundation for Image and Sound. According to

the author, in countries under strict dictatorship, under particularly harsh and cruel conditions, counter-information exists.

In Hitler's time, the Jews who escaped from Germany were to tell us of the extermination camps—they were giving counterinformation. It seems to me that counterinformation never accomplishes anything. No form of counterinformation ever bothered Hitler. The only response would be when counterinformation effectively becomes efficient, when it becomes an act of resistance. And the act of resistance is not information nor counterinformation. **Counterinformation is only effective when it becomes an act of resistance.** (Deleuze, 2001, p. 106, emphasis added).

From this perspective, counterinformation, as a practice of resistance, arises from respect for differences, the appreciation of plural perspectives, and the active participation of people in the public sphere. It is a practice oriented toward expanding the understanding of social reality, enabling the formulation of sustained actions in defense of collective interests and playing a central role in safeguarding freedom of information (Silva, 2014, p. 79).

Deleuze's observation that Hitler was unaffected by counterinformation allows for a parallel to be drawn with the political situation in Venezuela discussed in this article. Similarly, despite Maduro no longer serving as president during the case analyzed, he remained in power, continually facing denunciations and criticism from both national and international media and authorities. This persistence was facilitated by the systematic use of state resources to neutralize and undermine resistance efforts aimed at exposing his authoritarian and anti-democratic actions.

In light of scenarios like this, Silva (2016) posits that counterinformation can be understood as both a practice of deconstructing distorted communications and a method for formulating alternative informational processes that are committed to broader and more critical interpretations of reality. Its effectiveness, however, hinges on its establishment as an act of resistance, whether at its inception or throughout its implementation, directly implying the potential to provoke tangible transformations in the context it addresses.

Building on the ideas of Deleuze (2001) and Baldelli (1972), it is understood that the work of counter-information is rooted in creating openings within systems of communication that capture and control. Its function aims to nurture spaces for the emergence of silenced voices and the construction of unforeseen communicational

trajectories, characterized by uncertainty and a lack of guarantees due to its inherently tentative nature.

By employing GenAI tools to disseminate journalistic content while safeguarding the identities of its authors, Operación Retuit moves beyond merely correcting disinformation propagated by state agents. Instead, it embraces the proactive confrontation and active subversion of mechanisms of surveillance and repression. This strategy intentionally creates fissures in the informational control apparatus, facilitating concrete possibilities for escape, reorganization, and the expansion of public discursive space.

In this context, the concept of counter-information needs to be updated to acknowledge its development as a hybrid practice, where human collective intelligence works in concert with GenAI algorithmic systems to produce resistance.

Thus, human-algorithmic counter-information can be understood as the adaptation of various resistance practices that are conceived, led, and strategically coordinated by humans, utilizing GenAI technologies as tools for support and amplification. These initiatives aim to generate and disseminate alternative narratives that promote more comprehensive, critical, and analytical interpretations of reality. They strive to create openings, challenge hegemonic discursive structures, and confront mechanisms of oppression.

The discussions regarding the explanatory framework Human–Algorithmic Journalistic Architecture of Resistance-Oriented Counter-Information Practices, developed in this study based on the dimensions of meaning that structured Operación Retuit, are concluded at this point, although, as discussed, several gaps remain open for future investigation.

In conclusion, it is essential to highlight the perspective of the journalists behind the Human–Algorithmic Counter-Information initiative. They emphasize that the strategic advantage of Operación Retuit lies not merely in the implementation of GenAI tools, but in the establishment of “a robust alliance and collaborative strategy, unprecedented in the region, which bypassed the information blockade and gave access to quality content” (Operación Retuit, n.d.).

Although it successfully navigated repression and garnered international recognition, the outcomes of Operación Retuit are viewed with ambivalence, as noted by Javier Melero, one of the project’s spokesperson journalists. For instance, winning the King of Spain

International Journalism Award highlights the significance of cross-border collaborative resistance journalism; however, this achievement stands in stark contrast to the ongoing Venezuelan crisis, where, in Melero's words, "people continue to suffer", (El Pitazo, 2025, our translation) even in the aftermath of U.S. military intervention and the removal of Maduro from the presidency (Voces del sur, 2023).

This analysis illustrates that while Operación Retuit exemplifies the potential of collaborative journalism and Human-Algorithmic Counter-Information practices to break information blockades and provide relief to society, its overall impact remains contingent upon the realization of structural transformations in the issues it addresses. These practices play a crucial role in exposure, denunciation, and mobilization; however, they cannot, on their own, effectuate structural change, which ultimately depends on coordinated collective action and political decisions that extend beyond the confines of the journalistic realm.

7 Final considerations

This study analyzed Operación Retuit as a representative case study of emerging forms of cross-border collaborative journalism, mediated by GenAI, beyond mere automation, in contexts of repression. The research objectives were satisfactorily achieved through the presentation and critical discussion of the Venezuelan initiative and the development of the analytical framework Human-algorithmic Journalistic Architecture Of Resistance-oriented Counter-information Practices. Furthermore, the study sought to elucidate how GenAI can be appropriated as an instrument of resistance, transcending simple automation.

The investigation comprehensively addressed the research questions. It demonstrated the innovative adoption of GenAI by Operación Retuit, particularly through the creation and mediation of synthetic anchors for news delivery, articulating a human-algorithmic journalistic model of resistance-oriented counter-information practices. The originality of the initiative lies in the alignment between human editorial oversight and the support of synthetic anchors, enabling the dissemination of credible content to audiences even in the absence of journalists' physical presence.

The academic relevance of this study is established, among other aspects, by its contribution to addressing two significant gaps

in the literature. First, by focusing on a case from the Global South, it helps reduce the scarcity of research on cross-border collaborative journalism in Latin America. Second, by providing a systematic analysis of the application of GenAI in repressive contexts, the study advances debates on digital journalism and responsible AI, particularly by reflecting on the challenge of balancing algorithmic transparency with the protection of journalists' privacy, taking into account the specificities of the context analyzed. Operación Retuit challenges traditional conceptions of authorship and presence in journalism, while also proposing an innovative model of digital collaboration and informational autonomy.

While the study has successfully met its objectives, it highlights new areas for further investigation. Future research could consider how GenAI-based anchors and automated interfaces can be designed with ethical and sociocultural sensitivity. Additionally, it could examine how these practices evolve across various contexts, whether in authoritarian or democratic settings. The concept of Human–Algorithmic Counter-Information, as illustrated in the case analyzed, represents a promising frontier for research aimed at understanding the interplay between journalism, technology, and power. The experience of Operación Retuit serves as more than just an isolated event; it embodies a model for the reinvention of journalism in the pursuit of press freedom and the right to information. This reinvention occurs within a global context characterized by the tension between collective intelligence and artificial intelligence, as well as the ongoing threats posed by disinformation and ignorance.

NOTES

- 1 Founded in 2013 by Carlos Eduardo Huertas during his residency at the Nieman Foundation (Harvard, USA), Connectas, headquartered in Colombia, produces its own investigations and collaborates with Latin American media outlets on transnational issues, providing technical and professional support through the ConnectasHub platform (Mesquita & De Lima Santos, 2021).
- 2 For more information, see: www.connectas.org/especiales/operacion-retuit/index-en.html
- 3 According to Charmaz (2014), grounded theory posits three main

types of coding for the development of qualitative codes, namely: open or initial coding, focused coding, and theoretical coding.

- 4 Retrieved August 12, 2025, from www.oecd.org/sti/ieconomy/15590254.pdf

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