

DOES COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION SET THE LOCAL PRESS AGENDA?

a view on deliberative and civic practices in the portuguese press

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ABSTRACT - What are journalists' perceptions of the citizen's role in democratic life? What is the role that journalists attribute to the public in the construction of the news agenda? The main goal of this study is to investigate the relationship between the local press, citizens and civic practices. It takes as starting point a dual theoretical approach, the theory of deliberative democracy and the public journalism movement, to assess the scope of the concept of "deliberative journalism." Under the aegis of the project "Citizens' Agenda: journalism and political participation in the Portuguese media", questionnaires were delivered to 45 journalists from the main regional newspapers in Portugal. Focusing on the importance of the citizen's agenda for the journalists' decision making process, the results show that although the journalists appreciate the principles underlying the public and deliberative journalism movements (which suggests that a deliberative consciousness is emerging), they also express the permanency of a conventional journalism approach. **Keywords:** Local press. Deliberative democracy. Public journalism. Journalism practices. Agenda setting.

PODE A PARTICIPAÇÃO DA COMUNIDADE SER GERADA PELA AGENDA DA IMPRENSA LOCAL?

Práticas deliberativas na imprensa regional portuguesa

RESUMO - Que percepção têm os jornalistas sobre o papel dos cidadãos na vida democrática? Qual é o papel que os jornalistas atribuem ao público na construção da agenda informativa? O principal objetivo deste estudo é investigar a relação entre a imprensa local, os cidadãos e as práticas cívicas. Toma como ponto de partida uma abordagem teórica dupla - a teoria da democracia deliberativa e o movimento do jornalismo público - para avaliar o alcance de uma conceção de "jornalismo deliberativo." No âmbito do projecto "Agenda dos Cidadãos: jornalismo e participação política nos media portugueses", um conjunto de questionários foi aplicado a 45 jornalistas dos principais jornais regionais em Portugal. Com o enfoque na importância da agenda do cidadão para o processo de decisão dos jornalistas, os resultados mostram que, embora os jornalistas apreciem os princípios subjacentes aos movimentos do jornalismo público e da democracia deliberativa (o que sugere que uma consciência deliberativa estará a emergir), também expressam a persistência de uma abordagem própria do jornalismo convencional.

Palavras-chave: Imprensa Local. Democracia Deliberativa. Jornalismo Público. Práticas de Jornalismo. Agenda-Setting.

¿PUEDE SER GENERADA LA PARTICIPACIÓN DE LA COMUNIDAD POR LA AGENDA DE LA PRENSA LOCAL?

Prácticas deliberativas en la prensa regional portuguesa

RESUMEN - ¿Qué percepción tienen los periodistas sobre el papel de los ciudadanos en la vida democrática? ¿Cuál es el papel que los periodistas atribuyen al público en la construcción de la agenda informativa? El objetivo principal de este estudio es investigar la relación entre la prensa local, los ciudadanos y las prácticas ciudadanas. Toma como punto de partida un enfoque teórico doble —la teoría de la democracia deliberativa y el movimiento de periodismo público— para evaluar el alcance de una concepción de "periodismo deliberativo". Dentro del proyecto "Agenda de los Ciudadanos: periodismo y participación política en los medios de comunicación portugueses", se administraron un conjunto de cuestionarios a 45 periodistas de los principales diarios regionales en Portugal. Centrados en la importancia de la agenda de los ciudadanos en el proceso de decisión de los periodistas, los resultados muestran que, aunque los periodistas aprecian los principios que inspiran el movimiento de periodismo público y la democracia deliberativa (lo cual sugiere que la conciencia deliberativa está surgiendo) también expresan la persistencia de un enfoque típico del periodismo convencional.

Palabras clave: Prensa local. Democracia deliberativa. Periodismo público. Prácticas de periodismo. Agenda-setting.

INTRODUCTION

For some decades now, the relationship between democracy and mass communication has been the subject of a large number of discussions, both in academia and in the field of professional practice, questioning the phenomena involving media communication (Barber, 1984; Barnett, 1997; Papacharissi, 2002). Among the various profiles assumed by the media, regarding the promotion of democratic institutions, journalism, with all the features and functions assigned to it (such as being a catalyst for the dissemination of information) occupies an important space, insofar as it provides an informational repertoire that enables the interpretation of facts, the evaluation of arguments and, not least, the promotion of rationally motivated actions (Dzur, 2002).

In the context of the many debates carried out, two very specific proposals have emerged in two interconnected fields, addressing a very precise and limited set of questions: on the one hand, from the debate on democracy, an understanding of what kind of democratic participation of citizens could we expect in a modern democracy, on the other hand the equal reflection on the essence of journalism - what functions must it perform, what is the civic nature of its practice (Schudson, 2008). Although these emerging proposals have some heterogeneity within each of the fields (journalism and democracy), we can briefly place the debate from two models that largely have largely guided academic discussions as well as the practical developments. We refer to public journalism and deliberative democracy.

The presentation and discussion of both models has been well developed, and, in spite of their being normative models in need of conceptual refinement, it is also true that they have been serving as an inspiration both to trends of contemporary journalism as well as to the more current political discourse - all also sufficiently documented (Barnett, 1997; Blumler, J. and Gurevitch, 1995). The purposes of this paper are much more specific and focus on a very particular point: in the light of the normative ideals associated with deliberative democracy, what can we expect from journalists in their relation with citizens? Or, in other words: will journalists be amenable to a professional practice committed to deliberative ideals?

Specifically, the aim of this study is to investigate the relationship between the local press, citizens and civic practices. As mentioned above, it takes as its starting point a dual theoretical approach, the theory of deliberative democracy and the movement of public journalism, to assess the scope of a conception of "deliberative journalism." To that end, it starts by distinguishing, briefly, the ideas of "canonical journalism" from "deliberative journalism." Then, from a set of questionnaires applied to a sample of 45 journalists from 8 Portuguese regional newspapers, it seeks to identify which model of journalism defines, in discursive terms, the idea that journalists have of their own profession. For the purposes of this study, it is crucial to understand the nature of the relationship between journalists and citizens. Thus, using information collected in previous questionnaires, we will have an assessment of the importance that citizens have as journalistic sources, from a discursive but also a procedural perspective. That will enable us to understand the importance that journalists attach to the principles underlying the movement of public and deliberative journalism (i.e. the existence or the possible emergence of a deliberative consciousness), and place it in relation to the stance that journalists commonly adopt.

1 THE LINK BETWEEN JOURNALISM AND DEMOCRACY

The traditional way of considering the relationship between journalism and democracy believed that journalists should report, citizens would read these reports, and some form of public opinion should be formed in order to facilitate the articulation of popular will with political action. In other words: in theory, correct information will ensure the mobilization and empowerment of citizens to participate in some form of intelligent self - government. However, towards the end

of the twentieth century, a viewpoint took shape, expressed by many scholars and critics of media and journalism, such as James Fallows and James W. Carey. The informative media not only contribute to a functional democratic system, but they could actually be a cause of its decline: rather than facilitating the relationship with the public, the media often make this task more difficult (Fallows, 1996).

A whole vast literature produced in the last few years points consistently to the facts that 1) citizens are dissatisfied with the political processes; 2) they consider the performance of the media weak or poor; 3) and that traditional models of communication, their relationship with the political issues and their role in civic engagement have become dysfunctional (Gans, 2003 and Fallows, 1996). However, it can be stated with confidence that today's political journalism is more available to the average citizen than at any other time in history. The news channels, with 24-hour coverage, proliferate, while the internet permanently tracks and updates the facts - which undoubtedly reflects strong interest and a higher demand from the citizens (McNair, 2009). A thorough critique of the problems faced by the system of political communication is beyond the scope of this article, we intend, however to note that many political actors, academics and media professionals have come to identify that dysfunctional character, while proposing a set of ideas for improvement or correction .

One of the important ideas that has emerged in recent decades has been the proposal of public (or civic) journalism, which, in essence, encourages a press more committed to the citizens, to facilitate their involvement in issues that concern and interest them. In the spirit of their proponents, it is the recovering of the inspiring ideas of the educator and critic of the press John Dewey, who, in the 1920s, asserted the need for newspapers to go beyond pure event reporting to become a tool for education, debate and structured discussion, on topics of public interest.

The relationship between the concepts of democracy and journalism has been subject of intense and passionate debate. Especially the last decades of the last century witnessed more concrete attempts to define the bonds of narrowing and separation between the two fields, in a debate whose conclusions we identified in another context (Ferreira, 2011). To this extent, journalists accept both the idea of the link between democracy and journalism as their responsibility to improve public life in its civic dimension. However, it is from the definition of the role of journalism that new major difficulties begin to arise - when it seeks to define how to operationalize the set of principles underlying public

journalism.

As a starting point, we define for ourselves some lines of action: if public journalism does what it expects to do, it should increase levels of public deliberation in ways that are identifiable. It should not only provide information but also help citizens, by themselves, to decide when and how they should act to solve their problems in their communities. Moreover, a civic dimension helps to strengthen some of the ties that bind the community (Friedland, 2000).

Thus, there are three dimensions that structure public journalism from a programmatic point of view, and that will frame our path in this study: 1. public deliberation, 2. the resolution of community problems and 3. building and / or strengthening community ties.

It is in this framework that the public journalism movement has been focusing on the issue of reader participation, and its potential to transform mere consumers of news into producers of texts that, according to some, may be eligible to be classified as journalism (Heinonen, 1999). The underlying argument is that if the new communication technologies and practices increase the willingness and ability of citizens to participate, the distance between elites and citizens tend to become shorter, and likewise journalists and readers would be closer. Ideally, the public awareness of journalistic discussions on the platforms would be strengthened. The news, from a model too elitist and focused on conflict, would be shaped into a live arena for dialogue among citizens, politicians and experts, and thus fulfill an important role in the activation and strengthening of democracy.

This line of thought conceives the task of journalists as being not only to inform citizens but also to improve the public discussion and give meaning to their participation (Rosen, 1991). It is from this matrix that some researchers have sought to develop theoretical proposals and practical applications that emphasize the participation of newspaper readers (Lawrence, 1993). In essence, it is considered that there is a need to encourage journalists and request feedback from the public, challenging people to interact with journalists and each other, as citizens concerned with public life. At the same time, it assumes the existence of a correlation between levels of democracy and citizen participation in the reporting process (such as sources). That's why the analysis and identification of models that increase citizen engagement emerges as a concern with meaning within the study and practice of journalism.

Although these objectives are likely marked by a strong charge of idealism, there are several arguments in their favor. Indeed, the

critique of journalism, expressed both in research on journalism as in the decreasing number of readers, shows that newspapers tend to consider citizens as spectators in relation to reports that they enunciate, thereby ignoring journalism's potential for dialogue and participation of individuals. To this extent, when the promoters of the idea of public journalism affirmed the importance of increasing the influence of readers in the newspapers, they had in mind two articulated aspects: at one and the same time to address the need for newspapers to defend their own markets and the important revitalization of public communication. In this perspective, the gains would be twofold: to increase opportunities for feedback corresponds to increasing newspapers image of trust and loyalty among its audiences (Lasica, 1998).

2 "CANONICAL JOURNALISM" AND "DELIBERATIVE JOURNALISM": A BRIEF SYNTHESIS OF TWO TRENDS

As stated in the previous section, in recent decades, the field of media has undergone a series of transformations that have profoundly altered the scope of journalism, its design, and by correspondence, the nature of their professional practices. In a brief and, therefore, necessarily reductive form, we can distinguish two trends in journalism - accepting, of course, the set of models that can be associated to each of these conceptions.

What is called "canonical journalism" is a form of journalism that can be designed as a professional practice, an activity directed towards the development and dissemination of information, guided by two principles that stand out among other assumptions, underlying the proper journalistic practice: the ideals of factuality and neutrality. These postulates have guided for centuries the action of generations of social actors who made journalism their profession.

However, another way of conceiving of journalism sees it as a "social fact", not in the orthodox pure Durkheimian sense, but as a set of norms and values in constant dialectic with their own society, in which they operate. To this extent, if in the contemporary world, as we know it, the pace of social change has quickened substantially, the practice of journalism has also undergone the influence of changes at the systemic level, while it continues to contribute significantly to the construction of social reality. In the 1990's, Merrit wrote precisely that telling the news is not enough, wishing, as he did, to contribute to enhancing the broad political debate, but also questioning the mainstream journalists'

perspective of the traditional “neutral”, non-interventionist, role of the press behind the reality of the politics (Merrit, 1998).

We should now consider a whole environment marked by a modern belief in the emancipatory capacity of individuals, by a growing reflexivity of social actors, the increasing variability of sources and information channels, all factors that result in an increased participation by social actors, and specifically a participation in the construction of the news. One of the prominent forms of this set of changes came in the form of what might be called “deliberative journalism”, which represents a kind of journalistic practice committed on the basis of deliberative theories (Romano, 2010). This kind of journalism emerges subsequent to the renewal movements of journalism, directly linked to the idea of citizenship and civic participation, following what is known as civic journalism. In essence, it means safeguarding the conditions of rational deliberation, through the deepening of practices that allow for the identification of the citizens’ ways of thinking on the issues that concern them (Correia, 2010: 96). That means enlarging the scope and plurality of participants in public sphere debates. It also presupposes a break away from limited routines and privileged sources. Finally it presupposes the press’s openness to civil society when defining news media agenda (Eksterowick and Roberts, 2000).

3 WHAT IS JOURNALISM FOR?

As journalists are privileged agents in the structuring processes of the public sphere, the study of the values, the beliefs and the behaviors of these professionals is especially relevant in this work. Thus, for the purposes of this study, it is important to analyze regional press journalists’ concepts of journalism, and to what extent this view favors journalistic practices that reinforce the citizens’ commitment to the community and to democratic deliberation in the public sphere.

To achieve this goal, the journalists in our sample were confronted with the evaluation of a set of seven functions - those that could be considered “the main functions of regional journalism.” Taking into account the objectives of this work, we associate each of the functions of the two tendencies present within the universe of journalistic practices, as described above. The trend of “canonical or conventional journalism”, as mentioned, is guided by the ideals of factuality and neutrality. The trend associated with the movement called “deliberative journalism”, is more concerned with the identification of ways of thinking of people around the issues that concern them, and it implies openness to external

agenda initiatives by social movements and groups of citizens (Correia, 2010). We believe that the distinction between these two trends, made by the journalists submitted to the inquiry, may help to define the profile of journalists in regard to the functions that they attributed to regional journalism.

So, the first set of options represents the so-called “conventional or canonical journalism”, and groups:

- defend the interests of the region,
- inform the public and clarify citizens,
- ensure social and political pluralism.

In turn, the second group, associated with "deliberative journalism," considers the following hypotheses:

- allow expanded participation in decision making,
- contribute to problem solving,
- stimulate debate within the region,
- foster public or ideological debate.

Looking for a thorough interpretation of this issue, we decided, for operational reasons, to consider "relevant" the items classified between levels 1 and 4, and "irrelevant" the ones located between 5 and 8.

Table 1 The main functions of regional journalism are (according to the “canonical journalism” indicators)

Levels of importance	Defend the interests of the region			Inform the public and clarify citizens			Ensure social and political pluralism		
	*Nº	%	%A	Nº	%	%A	Nº	%	%A
1	5	14.7	14.7	24	70.6	70.6	3	8.8	8.8
2	6	17.6	32.4	3	8.8	79.4	6	17.6	26.5
3	6	17.6	50.0	1	2.9	82.4	3	8.8	35.3
4	3	8.8	58.8	1	2.9	85.3	6	17.6	52.9
5	1	2.9	61.8	1	2.9	88.2	5	14.7	67.6
6	1	2.9	64.7	1	2.9	91.2	5	11.8	82.4
7	2	5.9	70.6	1	2.9	94.1	4	11.8	94.1
8	10	29.4	100	2	5.9	100	2	5.9	100

*Nº - Number of pieces; % - Percentage; %A - Accumulated Percentage n= 34 (number of regional journalists questioned)

Table 2 The main functions of regional journalism are (according to the “deliberative journalism” indicators)...

Levels of importance	Allow expanded participation in decision making			Contribute to problem solving			Stimulate debate within the region			Foster public or ideological debate		
	*Nº	%	%A	Nº	%	%A	Nº	%	%A	Nº	%	%A
1	1	2.9	2.9	3	8.8	8.8	1	2.9	2.9	1	2.9	2.9
2	6	17.6	20.6	6	17.6	26.5	4	11.8	14.7	0	0	0
3	4	11.8	32.4	8	23.5	50	5	14.7	29.4	3	8.8	11.8
4	3	8.8	41.2	4	11.8	61.8	5	14.7	44.1	4	11.8	23.5
5	2	5.9	47.1	5	14.7	76.5	5	14.7	58.8	5	14.7	38.2
6	7	20.6	67.6	4	11.8	88.2	5	14.7	73.5	5	14.7	52.9
7	8	23.5	91.2	1	2.9	91.2	9	26.5	100	4	11.8	64.7
8	3	8.8	100	3	8.8	100	0	0	0	12	35.3	100

*Nº - Number of pieces; % - Percentage; %A - Accumulated Percentage n= 34 (number of regional journalists questioned)

We believe that "deliberative journalism," as a professional practice, involves a set of values and norms, revealed in the daily practice, in which the dialogue between the different social actors and the journalists is a core value. To this extent, the chances of response that are potentially presented here reveal the existence (or not) of a predisposition for the establishment of this journalistic approach.

However, given the results, we found the existence of weak values in the four aspects associated with the "deliberative journalism." Of the four aspects under consideration, only one ("to help solve problems") has a modal value in the category of "relevant", more precisely the level 3, with 23.5%. We also verified that the remaining hypotheses that could be indicative of values and biases associated with the development of the deliberative journalism, present levels significantly below what would be expected.

It is possible to verify the existence of statistically significant differences between the two trends of journalism in analysis. The trend that groups the "mainstream journalism" hypothesis reaches an average of 65.7%; in turn, the trend of "deliberative journalism" does not exceed the mark of 42.7%.

4 DO CITIZENS MATTER?

In line with the framework of this study, namely the theories of deliberative and public journalism, it is important to collect indicators about the civic attitude of journalists, or if they are available to assume a role that has as its primary mission to enhance public life, strengthen citizenship and improve public debate. In that regard, as noted before, to revive the public debate, information alone is not enough, it is still necessary to challenge the citizens to participate in it, and accept their participation as valid. It was from this premise that we sought to know how citizens work as a source of information.

Thus, the study showed that:

- 91% of journalists surveyed say they receive contacts of common citizens with information about events.
- 76% frequently receive contacts (two or more per week) in order to provide information on events.

If it is true that these responses seem to indicate that citizens have an important role in the process of collecting information, it is important to assess how valuable the information carried by the citizens is, that is, to what extent the voices of citizens are or not considered in the preparation of journalistic pieces. In other words: to what extent do journalists take into account the information they receive from citizens? To try to answer this question, journalists were questioned about their opinion regarding the use of citizens as sources cited in the news.

We considered four possible scenarios about the use of citizens' voices. On one hand, there were two assumptions that underlie the trends of the deliberative journalism. We refer to the options which consider that the use of citizen as a source quoted in news "gives voice to those who have little chance to express themselves in public" and "adds points of view that may be important," since they consider both the plurality on the news and the free access, independently of power and interest arrangements.

On the other hand, we presented two hypotheses linked to a vision of traditional journalism, whose core values are the objectivity and credibility, and consider that citizen use as a source quoted in news "gives fewer guarantees of credibility" and "does not guarantee representation because common citizens speak only from a personal point of view." Journalist respondents were asked to rank each of these hypotheses according to four levels of importance: (1 and 2 as the most important, 3 and 4 as the least important).

Table 3 Use citizens as a source quoted in news

Levels of importance	Gives voice to those who have little chance to express themselves in public		Gives fewer guarantees of credibility		Adds points of view that may be important		Does not guarantee representation because common citizens speak only in a personal point of view	
	*Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%
1	10	29.4	4	11.8	18	52.9	4	11.8
2	16	47.1	3	8.8	10	29.4	7	20.6
3	5	14.7	7	20.6	2	5.9	16	47.1
4	3	8.8	20	58.8	4	11.8	7	20.6

*Nº - Number of pieces; % - Percentage; n= 34 (number of regional journalists questioned)

Analyzing the table, we realize that journalists believe that citizen use as a source quoted in news is mostly a way to give voice to those who have few opportunities to express themselves in the public sphere (76.5%), but also adds points of view that may be important (81.3%). Similarly, respondents regard as less important, or do not agree, that the use ordinary citizens as a source quoted in news gives fewer guarantees of credibility (79.4%), does not guarantee representation because citizens speak only in their own interest (67.7%). Thus, following those answers, we can assume that journalists consider, at least from a discursive perspective, the information conveyed by the citizens as very important.

Given that the contact with the citizens is common, and their use as a source for news is seen as important to ensure the plurality of voices in the news, it is not surprising that 97% of respondents replied that the newspaper they work in encourages readers through various mechanisms, ranging from providing the journalists' e-mail to other tools available in the online pages of the newspapers. Similarly, albeit in smaller numbers, 74% of journalists said that usually respond to comments from readers.

5 WHO SETS THE NEWSPAPERS' AGENDAS ?

We know that the source seeks visibility and media attention, aspire to make a public agenda and to impose certain themes as the

focus of collective attention. Given the importance that common citizens have from a deliberative perspective, it is important to understand, from the point of view of journalists, what elements and factors shape the newspapers' agendas.

To clarify this question, three hypotheses were proposed to the journalists, which they had to rank according to their importance. Thus, respondents had to say whether the agenda of the newspapers in which they work is guided "by local elites," "local citizens" or "the concerns of commercial media companies."

Table 4 Beliefs that the agenda of the newspapers is oriented

Levels of importance	Local elites		Local citizens		Concerns of commercial media companies	
	*N°	%	N°	%	N°	%
1	6	17.6	12	35.3	13	38.2
2	9	26.5	12	35.3	15	44.1
3	19	55.9	10	29.4	6	17.6

*N° - Number of pieces; % - Percentage; n= 34 (number of regional journalists questioned)

From the table we can observe that there is a balanced distribution of responses for different hypotheses, which in itself indicates heterogeneity of perceptions and opinions among the journalists surveyed. Thus, at the level of greatest importance (level 1), there is a balance between the responses considering that the agenda is driven by commercial concerns of media companies (38.2%) and those that indicate the concerns of local citizens (35, 3%), as a central aspect to set the agenda. In turn, the hypothesis that appears at the level of least importance (level 3) is the one which indicates that the agenda should be driven by local elites' concerns. It should be underlined that the responses in relation to the hypothesis of an agenda driven "by the concern of local citizens" are almost evenly distributed among the three levels of importance. This means that among the respondents, there is no clear understanding regarding the aspects that define the agenda of the newspapers in which they work.

Another key element that results from the analysis of these data is related to the meaning of the market for the actions of journalists,

ie, the economical perspective of the media, and how the nature of their property and the logic of competition influence the information process, according to the journalists surveyed. Finally, these data confirm the perception of the importance of citizens for journalists, with a pronounced importance in determining the agenda of the newspapers.

Given these results, we can ask to what extent these responses and this discourse are indeed a scenario of what happens in the publications. To that end, it is important to assess the perception of journalists of the regional news contents. The formulation of the questions follows the outline above, with the raising of three hypotheses that should be prioritized by level of importance, by every journalist. Thus, among the options to answer to "the news content of regional newspapers is ...", respondents were asked to indicate whether it is "balanced on the participation of elites and citizens", whether it is "too focused on citizens," or it is "too focused on the elites."

Table 5 The content of regional newspapers is...

Levels of importance	Balanced on the participation of elites and citizens		Too focused on citizens		Too focused on the elites	
	Nº	%	Nº	%	Nº	%
1	12	35.3	1	2.9	18	52.9
2	16	47.1	12	35.3	6	17.6
3	6	17.6	21	61.8	10	29.4
*Nº - Number of pieces; % - Percentage; n= 34 (number of regional journalists questioned)						

As seen in the table, journalists have clearly determined that the news content of regional newspapers is not too focused on citizens (61.8 % of respondents put it at level 3, the lowest level). Likewise, they also consider that news content of regional newspapers is too much focused on the elites (52.9% of respondents put it at level 1, the most important). In turn, the hypothesis of a balance between both perspectives is the most important for 35% of respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

We observed that the journalists surveyed idealize, at first, the existence of a newspaper agenda oriented in part by citizens, in which a minor role would be given to local elites. However, in the last question here presented, addressing the news content of local newspapers, the answers given by journalists are in line with the main trends reported in most studies on the regional press, which suggest a preferred approach to the elites to the detriment of the citizens.

If it is true that professionals, especially in a regional context, recognize that they often receive contacts of common citizens, the findings shows that the majority devalues them. Even from a deliberative perspective, this devaluation may due to the fact that the content of this information is often focused on personal issues and without common interest. However, and as a general way of action, this mode of relationship between journalists and public sources of information can contribute, in our view, to a growing division between citizens and newspapers.

Crossing the data of the questions here presented, we can suggest, in terms of assumptions, that the fact nominated by the journalists that the agenda of the newspapers is significantly driven by the commercial concerns of the corporate media can help us to understand why the content is focused on the elites. This means that the need to respond to market demands, with the publication of a daily or weekly edition of the newspaper, can somehow force the journalists to give priority to official sources, focusing on the elites, which ensure certain regular information. In this context, it seems that with news content focused on the elites there is too little space for civil society mobilization.

The results show that journalists appreciate some of the principles underlying the movement of public and deliberative journalism, especially in relation to the appreciation of citizens and the importance, in terms of normative principles, attributed to common citizens as sources (which suggests that a deliberative consciousness could be emerging). But the results still show a conventional journalistic approach, mainly revealed in the low levels of importance assigned to functions related to deliberative journalism and the value attributed to the practices associated with the canonical journalism. As a consequence, they show a conventional journalistic approach, which means a perception of journalistic content too focused on the elites and commercial concerns.

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