



Call for Papers

Journalism and the challenges of political communication and contemporary democracies

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In recent years, democracies have encountered a number of dilemmas that have compromised the public's trust in traditional institutions – including the media – as agents that can effectively represent society and respond fairly to the demands of different social groups. In a world of decentralized (Trejo Delarbre, 2022) and fragile democracies, any issue on the public agenda can be used by political actors who are not committed to the concept of democracy, and instead favor the systematic use of anti-political and anti-establishment discourse to obtain visibility and electoral advantages (Palau-Sampio, Garcia and Ianelli, 2022).

Populist communication strategies (us versus them) and *far-right* discourse that treats political opponents as ideological enemies are used to increase social media engagement and frame the nuances of the political game within the limits of simplified populist discourses (Engesser et al, 2016). They also take advantage of discursive opportunities (Koopmans and Olzak, 2004) by capitalizing on the spread of social dissatisfaction and increasing levels of political polarization.

In several countries, radical political discourse has led to delegitimizing traditional institutions of power, including the mainstream media, and the emergence of politically active radical groups, especially those ideologically aligned to the right, who use social media as a place of political violence, encouraging attacks against the Rule of Law and legally restricting the manifestation of freedom of expression (Caetano and Mayorga, 2020).

These problems are particularly relevant in Latin America given its long-standing democratic shortcomings and visible authoritarian tendencies. The outlook for

journalism and public expression remains challenging as governments increasingly scrutinize and harass reputable news organizations, as demonstrated by recent events in El Salvador and Nicaragua. While digital platforms are spaces that allow for differences of opinion and criticism to be expressed, the opportunities for reporting and critical views are not evenly distributed as powerful actors continue to try and control them through subtle and overt methods.

To this point, it is important to remember the events of January 8, 2023 in Brasilia, the capital of Brazil, when groups of Bolsonaro supporters invaded and attacked public buildings of highest importance (Planalto Palace, National Congress, and the Federal Supreme Court), privately supported by military police, one week after the inauguration of president-elect Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva.

This violence expressed by Bolsonaro support groups did not just focus on the aforementioned public institutions, but also chose to target those media journalists who were not aligned with the former government of Jair Bolsonaro. Attacks and harassment of professional journalists, particularly female reporters, and restricting the freedom of the press were distinctive features of this government, and even the former president himself acted as one of its main promoters (Report from the National Federation of Journalists - FENAJ, 2022).

On the other hand, the massive use and spread of disinformation and conspiracy theories (claimed as a right to freedom of expression and opinion by high authorities and political parties as they tried to delegitimize the electoral system and the Superior Electoral Court) are common in Brazil, as they are in other countries around the world, and are used to disrupt contemporary democracies which are increasingly dependent on the algorithms of private platforms for building public opinion (Bennett and Pfetsch, 2018).

Bennett and Pfetsch (2018, p.245) draw attention to disruptive political communication processes where complex variables such as fragmented information sources that cause divisions and moral relativism in public debate, the selective consumption of news by citizens, the increased attempts to discredit traditional media, and even the expansion of the hyper-partisan alternative media market creating parallel political realities, all profoundly affect the functioning of societies and journalism itself.

Faced with threats to democracies and the reconfiguration of contemporary communication processes, this call for papers aims to stimulate debate about **journalism's place in building public spaces of democratic resistance**. In other words, how professional journalism can help fight against the new authoritarian populism, the growing precariousness of rights, and the use of political violence (including by governments) to prevent freedom of expression.

To this end, we invite researchers to submit articles that may address the following questions:

- How can journalism reinvent itself as a political actor that promotes civic commitment to the collective construction of the democratic experience?
- Can journalism help solve the problems behind disinformation incorporated with anti-democratic movements?
- What is journalism's position in the emergence and consolidation of anti-democratic communicative and media spheres, criticisms of the mainstream media, and those with public interests?
- What political, economic, social and cultural factors explain these new media ecologies?
- How have professional journalistic practices helped promote media literacy dedicated to maintaining freedom of expression in democracies?
- What role does journalism and communication education play in preparing professionals who are committed to democratic performance parameters?
- How can journalism incorporate new practices to meet the collective demands for more democracy within the professional boundaries that characterize it?

Papers of a theoretical and empirical nature that are dedicated to analyzing, under different theoretical-methodological approaches, the relationships between Journalism, freedom of expression, democracy, and possible resistance in contemporary times will be accepted.

Articles must contain between 40,000 and 55,000 characters (with spaces) and can be submitted in Portuguese, Spanish, French and English. Submissions will be evaluated by the editorial committees at Brazilian Journalism Research and the Journal of Latin American Communication Research. Once accepted for publication, authors who have submitted their articles in Portuguese, Spanish or French must also provide an English version of said article.

All submissions for this call of papers shall be sent exclusively via Brazilian Journalism Research's electronic system, available on the journal's website:

<http://bjr.sbpjor.org.br>

Text formatting guidelines are available at:

<https://bjr.sbpjor.org.br/bjr/about/submissions>

Please send any and all queries to: bjreditor@gmail.com

Important Dates:

Article submission: until March 31, 2024.

Article approval: until August 30, 2024.

Publication of edition: December 31, 2024.

References

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