

INTRODUCTION

# JOURNALISTS IN NEWSROOMS:

## Professional roles, influences, and changes to journalism

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Journalism studies that focused mainly on the profession and its routines within the organizational structure of communication mediums, have been the most frequent points of convergence in academic analyses. However, the journalist, as a central agent in the journalistic process, has been overlooked for a long time. This special edition of **Brazilian Journalism Research** hopes to bring more recognition to journalists by assembling a collection of articles that deal specifically with journalists who work in newsrooms and the journalistic practices from different organizational and institutional environments. In that regard, the dossier also provides writers from Ibero-American countries with a space for their articles on the results from the international comparative study entitled *Worlds of Journalism Study*, which included data collected by researchers from 67 countries and from

newsroom journalists in print, audiovisual and online media. This international comparative project produced articles on Argentina, Portugal, Spain and, to a large extent, the experience of the organizers of this dossier and their work coordinating the project in Brazil and Ecuador.

All of these articles address specific aspects of Ibero-American media systems with recommendations on regulating the profession, on professional training and on journalistic practice, taking into consideration professionals' views on trust, ethics, autonomy, work conditions and the changes that technology have had on the profession. These are important issues for journalism and journalists, and provide more insight into the wide diversity of the profession and the individual and collective interests, patterns, and tensions of professionals in the field.

There are a few important points to consider in Ibero-American journalism, which is based on a complex model of conflicts, intersections and cultural interpositions (Oller, 2016). The first point is what the journalists see as influences and limitations – both internally (in newsrooms) and externally (society, culture, politics, economy, etc.). Second is the role that journalism and journalists have in political and social change. Third is preventing corruption. Fourth is the democratic consolidation in the countries of these journalists. The fifth and last point is the adaptation, assimilation and compliance that has faced the profession due to changes brought on by the internet and advances in technology.

The *Worlds of Journalism* collaborative project has been a source of support and strength for Ibero-American empirical research over the last decade, focusing on the study of journalism and communication, thereby breaking the cycle of too much theorizing and not enough empirical findings. Since the start of the millennium, Hallin and Papathanassopoulos (2002) have identified certain similarities between journalism practiced in Ibero-American sub regions (from the Southern Cone and Andes region, Central and North America, the Caribbean and the Mediterranean) and a significant increase in the number of studies, which shows us that even though these professional practices are historically and culturally similar, there are also some unquestionable differences: diverse types of dictatorial

and authoritative governments, abrupt changes to political trends and influences, the transitioning from totalitarian regimes to democratic ones over the last few decades, a low level of democratic development, marked differences in politics and ideologies, inter/multicultural character and mixed/diverse culture, economic freedom with partial and isolated attempts at emancipation, major social challenges to overcome such as recurrent crises, endemic inequality, endogenous violence, corruption, segregation, polarization, etc., technological exclusion and digital illiteracy, and cronyism, instrumentalization and concentration of media, among others.

Throughout the 2000s and into 2010, leftist governments in Argentina, Brazil, Ecuador, Bolivia, Uruguay and Venezuela all had an expressed interest in developing media policies for a diversified market and for journalism as a public service. However, this situation has reversed over the last five years due to changes to the political framework of some of these countries, namely Brazil, Argentina and Ecuador. These changes have generated debates and controversies around the role of journalism and journalists, as well as reassessments of legal frameworks and a new legislation for policies on media and communication due to the obvious antagonism between owners of private media conglomerates (market supporters), leaders of progressive governments who are considered to be populists, and communication professionals themselves (Oller, Amado & Moreira, 2016). In the case of Andean countries, the state has clearly had a hand in regulating journalism over the last few years with the creation of regulation agencies for media which promote the free expression of rights and opinions of citizens (Suing, Ortiz & González, 2016). But Mexico, Chile, Colombia and El Salvador continue to have a concentration of media ownership, conspiracies as part of their daily journalistic practices (Guerrero & Marquez, 2014; Hellmueller & Mellado, 2016; Garces & Arroyave, 2016), and attacks against journalists (Hughes et al., 2017).

The huge economic crisis in Mediterranean countries that started a decade ago (2008) brought to light a few of the endogenous characteristics of journalism in southern Europe, one of which being the concentration of media. One example of this is in Spain, where 58% of the media market is controlled by three companies (CMPF, 2016). On a similar note, the governments of

Greece, Spain, Portugal and Italy are democratically behind, their political parties have strong social alliances and political consensus (Hallin & Mancini, 2012) and journalism in these countries tends to be of lower quality and the circulation of newspapers is reduced (Peruško, Vozab & Čuvalo, 2013).

The heterogeneous nature of Latin America is a reason for the region's diversity of journalistic praxis and a reason for the considerable differences between it and other regions/countries in the world, including the Western countries that make up the "global north" and are referenced for their professionalism. There needs to be a detailed analysis of the specific traits of journalism in this region/locale, the ones related to its own social idiosyncrasies and archaeologies. This is an introspective and epistemological commitment which requires studies of the region to re-conceptualize and rethink the epistemological foundations of the theoretical-practical bases of Latin American journalism, and to also abstract and include characteristics of each of the local and universal realities that exist with one another, which are simultaneously disconnected and connected phenomena in the daily lives of citizens, and, of course, of journalists and professionals in communication. In other words, the ultimate goal of researchers in this field is to obtain a plethora of facts, realities, tasks and ideas that determine the meaning of journalism and journalist in Latin America. This challenge means taking off the "theoretical life jacket" and swimming towards the turbulent waters of journalists in Latin American media newsrooms and their everyday practices – traditional media and emerging media – in order to try and systematize, structure and normalize its praxis into a theoretical and conceptual body that encompasses journalism completely.

Studies of journalism in the region focus on analyzing the dynamic relationship between localism and universalism in the profession, and the continual negotiation of meanings and significance with the authorities in power in every Latin American country. This issue brings the question: what are the levels of observation needed in journalism investigations in order that researchers are able to find details and differentiate between local, regional and global journalistic cultures? This is a methodological challenge that defines the key points of the profession in each country and region in addition to the regional journalistic models

known as “*captured liberal*” (Guerrero & Marquez, 2014), a term describing the predominance of private commercial media organizations in Latin America, and the “polarized pluralist” model in Mediterranean countries in Europe. These are proposals that, while clearly valid and current, serve as overall regional references for journalism in the two sub regions and do require a detailed analysis of the local and specific realities which are particular to each country.

National journalistic cultures are based on national contextual “principles” and cross-border professional influences experienced via dissemination and transmission. Thus, journalism researchers in Latin America have to be familiar with the hegemonic journalistic models of North America in order to contrast them with the characteristics of the profession in Latin American countries and the resulting crossover that occurs when assimilating and adapting to these “universal” journalistic models. As verified, journalism and media systems are not autonomous and independent from other ones in the state, quite the opposite; they depend directly and indirectly on the power relations established throughout its many structures. This is even more evident in developing countries or during periods of democratic consolidation where the professional standards for journalists are based on rules, regulations, guidelines and criteria outside of the profession and fundamentally linked to economic, political, social and ideological processes.

Nowadays there is an inclination in international comparative studies on journalism beyond just studying democratic consolidation. Two recent editions of **Brazilian Journalism Research** focused on a theme very similar to this decentralizing process in Western countries. The first edition was called Journalism on BRICS (2016), the second, Journalism in Brazil and Africa: Cross-influences, Developments, and Perspectives (2017). While we do agree that journalism and democracy require and need each other, we also believe that journalism, as a profession, is practiced in non-democratic countries, ones under development with hybrid regimes, as is the case with most Ibero-American countries.

As part of a plan for “regional scientific inclusion”, this special edition addresses study results on the ethnographic character of Ibero-American journalism and gives experts in

the field a chance to present their own professional, social and cultural experiences. The theoretical and practical experiences shared bring about discussion and are keys to learning more about the abundance of journalistic and professional cultures which they belong to.

This dossier on journalists in newsrooms is made up of nine articles and one re-published text. We start with the article “Who Are the Spanish Journalists? Professional profiles and changes in the profession”, written by Berganza et al., which analyzes the sociodemographic profile of journalists in Spain using data taken from the research project *Worlds of Journalism Study*. The results show that Spanish journalists are typically male, in their thirties, are Communication or Journalism graduates and have around 15 years’ experience in the profession. The article points to significant levels of insecurity in the profession and differences of gender and hierarchy within newsrooms. This article also talks of the importance of the public/the audience to journalism and the economic hardships felt by the Spanish media, and how these are the most important changes that have occurred to the profession in the country.

In the article “*Mutatis Mutandis? The stable evolution of Portuguese journalism*”, Rui Novais presents a comparative diachronic study of Portuguese journalists and their autonomy, their trust level in social institutions, their professional ethical ideas and their perception of contextual influences. The article demonstrates the stages of change which Portuguese journalism is going through due to the inclusion of new technology in the profession and the media market. It also addresses some of the situations that are worsening professional working conditions for journalists and their public credibility, as well as the devaluation of the ethical standards in journalism. Another article from Portugal, “Gatekeeping changes in the new media age: The Internet, values and practices of journalism”, Gil Baptista Ferreira goes over literature that explains how news selection processes were affected by technology, and how this ended up challenging one of the basic ‘truths’ of journalism: the journalist is the one who decides what the public reads or sees. Ferreira concludes that the impact this change has had on journalism, particularly digital journalism, is based on new interactions with the society which are now more participative and are more aware of the value of practicing citizenship.

Focusing on journalism in Argentina, Adriana Amado and Silvio Waisbord, authors of the article “Journalists and media ownership: Practices and Professional Conditions of Argentine Journalism”, use national results from the *Worlds of Journalism Study* to show the multiplicity of factors that have affected Argentinian journalists and the country’s journalistic culture. They analyzed legal frameworks, union safeguards, organizational guidelines, ethical standards and more, and reached the conclusion that media ownership does not affect work conditions nor does it affect the professional models of the journalists who work with them. Keeping with Argentina, we have the article “Ideology of Objectivity in Political Journalism. Attitudes, Values and Beliefs around Truth as a Possible Horizon?” written by Ana Pamela Paz García. She works with the concept of objectivity and the self-perception of tasks within the profession. She also examines the current connection between sources and journalists in the city of Cordoba and how this city’s public sees the events that unfold there. One of the main findings in this study was a clear connection between the answers journalists gave in the study conducted from 2012 to 2014 and the expectations of local consumption.

Three articles examined journalistic activity in Brazilian newsrooms. In “The journalist between the profession and the newspaper’s interest: values and routines in the production of *Folha de S. Paulo*’s editorials”, Mont’Alverne et al. assess the editors’ positions at this paper. They looked at the values and work routines of these editors by conducting in-depth interviews and studying political roles, the target audience, the production routines and company values. The results showed that editors at *Folha de S. Paulo* have limited autonomy and adapt to the company’s ideological approach. Bárbara Maia Cerqueira’s article “Journalists and a profession in mutation: The voices of the professionals of a Curitiba radio” looks at the changes that have occurred to a radio journalism newsroom in convergence with the changes to economy, to society and to media production. The semi-open interviews conducted with journalists from broadcaster CBN-Curitiba revealed that digital technologies brought changes to the production process, and that economic and political interests have the most influence on journalists and their work. The third article from Brazil, written by Giovana Borges Mesquita, also looks at the complex relationships that develop in digital journalism and affect professionals and news production. In

“Two newsrooms and the daily reinvention of journalism”, Mesquita reveals the results from a comparative study of online versions of Brazilian newspaper *Diário de Pernambuco* (one of the oldest in the country, founded in Recife, 1825) and Catalan newspaper *La Vanguardia*, from Barcelona, which belongs to the Spanish group called Godó. She analyzes what is known as “potent audience” and how this new agent changes agendas and the relationship between media vehicles and consumers.

The last article in the dossier, “A mouthpiece for truth: Foreign Aid for Media Development and the Making of Journalism in the Global South”, from Jairo Lugo-Ocando, explores the role that international assistance projects play in developing information structures. He explains how this cross-border development is crucial for the evolution of journalism models in countries from the southern hemisphere, promoting convergence in journalistic values, norms and cultures. Even still, Lugo-Ocando points to the fact the relationship between outside help and media development in the global south is still a complicated and dynamic phenomenon, more than what traditional critical analyses have shown.

This edition also contains a re-publication of an article from Andrés Cañizales entitled “Venezuela: Journalists Work in a Fragile Context”, originally printed as a research report conducted with 365 Venezuelan journalists from eight cities in Venezuela between 2015 and 2017. This text looks at the data from previous surveys on the local journalism market, identifies the main tasks performed by the interviewees, the type of media they work for, the types of contracts they have, and the forms of censorship and self-regulation that exist. The decision to republish this text came from the lack of specific studies on journalism in Venezuela.

Made apparent in this collection of articles, Ibero-American journalism is going through a period of fast and necessary change brought on by the digitalization of routines (Salaverría, 2016) and the advance of neoliberal economic policies (Mastrini & Becerra, 2006). All of this means having a detailed look at journalistic culture on an individual level and also in comparative studies. Analyses of these two levels can help towards understanding that journalism, both as an institution and through its discourse, represents a space for debating national and regional issues which are highly influenced by politics,



economics, society, culture, media and technology. Even at a time in history where technologies are changing the nature of journalism worldwide, the online media in Latin America is not using its full potential because the switch to internet and the information and communication technology that comes with it has not been fully achieved (Said & Arcila, 2011).

In addition to analyses on normalizing processes introduced by the media market, by economic and financial conglomerates, by the apparatus of governments, and by academia, in this edition of **Brazilian Journalism Research** we had the opportunity to work with concepts which are often out of context, dispersed, globalist and universalized, and create a new theoretical construct that can be measured and supported empirically throughout Ibero-America. It is a proposal as an end in itself inasmuch as the scientific theories that “essentialize” journalism from a reductionist, standardized and stereotyped point of view were overcome by a more flexible and inclusive approach that defends a diversified, dynamic, heterogeneous and multifaceted professional identity which forces us to answer the key question - what is journalism? – and other questions like, who is it for, when is it and where is it? These are all questions that could be better answered by longitudinal studies that establish time/space relationships which are representative of journalism itself.

Gaps between journalism theory and practice in Ibero-America lie within the normative interpretation of the profession which, until today, has adopted standards based on political and economic models used in countries from the northern hemisphere. There is current empirical evidence suggesting there is a new interpretation of journalism in other regions far from the “hub” of Europe or North America.

In Ibero-American countries, democracies in evolution give rise to a kind of bipolar journalism in which some journalists consider media to be “platforms for public dialogue” (Waisbord, 2010) and support national development and denouncing the abuse of power and corruption as a way to give citizens some power back. This pro-active professional role, together with the social responsibility of journalism, encounters many obstacles in the form of economic and political interests from media owners, politicians and journalists. These are some of the situations and peculiarities that come with the transgression of ethical codes and professional

codes in Ibero-American journalism. They make reaching the levels of professionalism difficult that would make it a profession which is recognized for its regional and global consolidation.

The institutional nature of journalism allows it to be a “profession” in Ibero-America. Even still, journalism is abandoning the “essential truths” which have, up until a few years ago, sustained it so it is able to summarize the practical and concrete facts that define it, in contexts which it interacts with and is influenced by. It is a professional empirical agreement that journalism is based on, it is made up of formal and informal norms, manifested in standards which are accepted and presumed by both journalists and society. These professional “empirical” models evolve and change over time as technology advances and new social, economic and political realities arise, legitimizing and ensuring the existence of a “typical” Ibero-American journalism with its own professional rules, practices and conventions merged with the customs, traditions, taboos, beliefs, ceremonies and folklore of an intercultural and multiethnic region.

Even though it cannot be denied that journalism practiced in different Ibero-American territories do share professional standards similar to those practiced around the globe, the idiosyncrasies of its sub regions suggest there are rules that shape the daily life of journalists and legitimize their professional actions and practices; a range that implies journalism being practiced in a complex space full of uncertainty, where diverse interests from civil groups and associations, public organs and private entities converge.

In this process, journalists incorporate professional principles that are established through socialization in communication media newsrooms. Over the last few years, higher education and specialized training in journalism and communication has created some challenges regarding the principles of the profession. The new generations of journalists in the market do not always use traditional media staff, but follow the theoretical recommendations learned in university and apply them to the daily empirical experience their work provides them. This is different from traditional processes because, even though the new generations share with veteran journalists, they possess more digital training and are able to follow newsroom routines more easily. Therefore, professional tradition and habits that used

to define communication mediums starts to give way to a growing community of professionals who are able to work quicker and more dynamic, meeting the needs of the market and the norms that regulate the profession. It is a situation that, on one hand, strengthens the identity of journalists as a diversified group of professionals who specialize in mass communication, and on the other hand, abandon the traditional foundations of journalism.

Even though education in Ibero-American countries today follows standardized models which are not contextualized and do not meet the regional and local needs of the media market, journalists maintain a flexible attitude, encouraged by contextual events and the constant reshaping and renegotiating of professional parameters established on current theoretical levels and norms in different countries. Panizza and Miorelli (2013) state that journalists feel obligated to accept that the norms, values and practices of journalism make up part of a broader field of meaning, led by a discursive process that defines the object of their knowledge and their professional practice.

The current systems in the Ibero-American region create and maintain ideas about the profession and filter in to the critical discourse of journalists in interdependent media systems. This contextual reality establishes parameters for ownership and approval of media discourse, and helps establish a journalistic identity for society. However, there is a dynamic intrasystemic relationship which reshapes journalism as an organization, journalists as agents of communication and the social environment in a never-ending internal adaptation of the profession. These actions and measures change country to country and generate different news.

To talk about the global characteristic of journalism might seem questionable, especially in regions both geographically and symbolically far away from the global north where the profession's normative codes are quite different from the real practice of journalism. The role of journalism, the levels of trust and autonomy that journalists have and the ethical standards within the profession all become established once there is interaction with context. That is why the issues addressed in this dossier are an exercise of Ibero-American academic consistency where empirical studies on regional and local realities are prominent. These approaches help us study national journalistic cultures

through the eye of experienced academics and journalists. Thus, this edition hopes to reach an understanding of the significance of Ibero-American journalism and its institutional, structural and discursive variants which are all part of regional, national and local journalistic cultures.

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