

Collaborative Journalism and Normative Journalism: Lessons from Latin American Journalism*

Lucia Mesquita
Dublin City University
mesquitalucia@gmail.com



Submission date: May 2022
Accepted date: May 2023
Published in: June 2023

Recommended citation: MESQUITA, L. (2023). "Collaborative Journalism and Normative Journalism: Lessons from Latin American Journalism". *Anàlisi: Quaderns de Comunicació i Cultura*, 68, 27-44. DOI: <<https://doi.org/10.5565/rev/analisi.3541>>

Abstract

Collaboration in journalism has become increasingly important, in the face of the challenges posed by digitalisation and platformization. The development of information and communication technologies has led to collaborative journalism committed to democratic and public-oriented methods. However, it is unclear how this commitment is reflected in practice, and whether it varies according to political, economic and media system contexts, especially in non-democratic and authoritarian regimes. Latin America is a diverse region with a history of social, economic and political instability, alternating between authoritarian and democratic regimes. This context can help answer the research question of this study, which aims to understand the commitments, norms and values of practitioners of collaborative journalism in various contexts. The thematic analysis of 36 semi-structured, in-depth interviews conducted in Latin America found that practitioners of collaborative journalism commonly share normative journalism roles, practices, values and norms. The study suggests a need to reinforce, restore and reform normative journalism norms and values, particularly in non-democratic, authoritarian, and developing democracies. This study can be a valuable resource for future researchers exploring journalism, collaborative journalism and investigative journalism beyond the context of Western liberal democracies.

Keywords: journalism; collaborative journalism; normative journalism; democracy; authoritarian regimes; platformization

* This study was funded by the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie Skłodowska Curie grant agreement, grant number 765140.

Resum. *Periodisme col·laboratiu i periodisme normatiu: lliçons del periodisme llatinoamericà*

La col·laboració en el periodisme ha esdevingut cada vegada més important a causa dels desafiaments que plantegen la digitalització i les plataformes de xarxes socials i altres plataformes tecnològiques. El desenvolupament de les tecnologies de la informació i la comunicació (TIC) ha donat lloc a un periodisme col·laboratiu compromès amb mètodes democràtics i orientats al públic. No obstant això, no queda clar com aquests compromisos es reflecteixen en la pràctica i si varien segons els contextos polític, econòmic i del sistema mediàtic, especialment en règims no democràtics i autoritaris. L'Amèrica Llatina és una regió diversa amb una història d'inestabilitat social, econòmica i política, i alterna entre règims autoritaris i democràtics. Aquest context pot ajudar a respondre la pregunta de recerca d'aquest estudi, l'objectiu del qual és comprendre els compromisos, les normes i els valors dels professionals del periodisme col·laboratiu en diversos contextos. Segons l'anàlisi temàtica de 36 entrevistes en profunditat semiestructurades realitzades a l'Amèrica Llatina, els professionals del periodisme col·laboratiu comunament comparteixen rols, pràctiques, valors i normes del periodisme normatiu. L'estudi suggereix la necessitat de reforçar, restaurar i reformar les normes i els valors del periodisme normatiu, particularment en democràcies no democràtiques, autoritàries i en desenvolupament. Aquest estudi pot ser un recurs valuós per a futurs investigadors que explorin el periodisme, el periodisme col·laboratiu i el periodisme de recerca més enllà del context de les democràcies liberals occidentals.

Paraules clau: periodisme; periodisme col·laboratiu; periodisme normatiu; democràcia; règims autoritaris; plataformes

Resumen. *Periodismo colaborativo y periodismo normativo: lecciones del periodismo latinoamericano*

La colaboración en el periodismo se ha vuelto cada vez más importante debido a los desafíos que plantean la digitalización y las plataformas de redes sociales y otras plataformas tecnológicas. El desarrollo de las tecnologías de la información y la comunicación (TIC) ha dado lugar a un periodismo colaborativo comprometido con métodos democráticos y orientados al público. Sin embargo, no está claro cómo estos compromisos se reflejan en la práctica y si varían según los contextos político, económico y del sistema mediático, especialmente en regímenes no democráticos y autoritarios. América Latina es una región diversa con una historia de inestabilidad social, económica y política, y alterna entre regímenes autoritarios y democráticos. Este contexto puede ayudar a responder la pregunta de investigación de este estudio, cuyo objetivo es comprender los compromisos, las normas y los valores de los profesionales del periodismo colaborativo en diversos contextos. Según el análisis temático de 36 entrevistas en profundidad semiestructuradas realizadas en América Latina, los profesionales del periodismo colaborativo comúnmente comparten roles, prácticas, valores y normas del periodismo normativo. El estudio sugiere la necesidad de reforzar, restaurar y reformar las normas y los valores del periodismo normativo, particularmente en democracias no democráticas, autoritarias y en desarrollo. Este estudio puede ser un recurso valioso para futuros investigadores que exploren el periodismo, el periodismo colaborativo y el periodismo de investigación más allá del contexto de las democracias liberales occidentales.

Palabras clave: periodismo; periodismo colaborativo; periodismo normativo; democracia; regímenes autoritarios; plataformas

1. Introduction

Journalism is increasingly losing its role as the fourth estate and its position as a guardian of democratic values, due to the digitalisation and platformization of society (van Dijck, Poell and Waal, 2018; Evens, Raats and Rimscha, 2017) and the re-emergence of authoritarian regimes worldwide. Scholars argue that the boundaries of journalism have vanished or been stretched due to the insertion of new actors and different types of organisations into news production (Domingo et al., 2008). However, journalism is more important than ever, especially in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis (Nielsen et al., 2020).

One mode through which the media continue their work and fulfil their role in society is through news organisations and journalists engaging in alternative work arrangements via innovative and creative forms of production and business models, such as collaborative journalism. Described as a solution to the terrifying moment when journalism suffers a lack of funds and staff (Alfter, 2016; Sambrook, 2018), collaborative journalism aims to supplement an organisation's resources and maximise its impact (Graves, 2018). Thus, journalists worldwide rely on collaboration to restore professional normative values and motivations (Graves and Konieczna, 2015).

However, present and past discussions around collaborative journalism have not reflected on the commitments of its practitioners, nor on the various contexts in which the practice emerges, evolves and develops, and the impacts of these elements on collaborative journalism practices, norms and values. Moreover, little is known about how the re-emergence of authoritarian and non-democratic regimes might affect these elements and their practice. Thus, the present study poses the following research question:

RQ: What are the commitments, norms and values of practitioners of collaborative journalism in various contexts?

To identify and understand the commitments of journalists and news organisations that are conducting or are part of collaborative journalism initiatives in Latin America, I conducted 36 interviews with journalists and practitioners of news organisations in ten countries in the region. Using thematic analysis to identify emergent themes in the data (Clarke and Braun, 2014), I was able to identify patterns in these journalists' views and meanings toward their commitment to normative values and how and whether they are related to their work in collaborative investigative initiatives. Additionally, the data also shed light on the aim of journalism in different countries. The analysis was carried out considering inductive reasoning. Following the example provided by Clarke and Braun (2014), I prioritised the participants' constructions and meanings and the data itself, rather than theoretical assumptions. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework was built from normative journalism and collaborative journalism theories and concepts. It was used as

a set of interpretative concepts “to render visible issues that participants did not explicitly articulate” (p. 60).

2. Theoretical background

2.1. *Normative journalism*

Normative journalism can have many interpretations. The norms change according to ideological constructions and cultural contexts. These rules and norms also change over time according to external and internal factors. For instance, some have argued that digital and other types of journalism, such as broadcasting or the print press, might have different ideas of what normatively good journalism is (Steenen and Westlund, 2020; Witschge et al., 2016). However, some patterns exist that are possible to explore – namely, the norms, roles and functions that help a society to identify and legitimise the profession. These form the basis of the professional identities by which journalists distinguish themselves from others in the industry, and how they evaluate, criticise and judge other journalists and forms of journalism.

The normative function of journalism has been continually renegotiated due to many factors; however, most authors agree that the many changes to the practice and the relationship with audiences brought about by the development of information and communication technologies (ICTs) challenge the normative journalism paradigm. The functions of journalism are mostly related to external perceptions and its role in society and other institutions (Deuze and Witschge, 2018). These functions are thus tied to social expectations that are mostly circumstantial and utilitarian. This means that to society, journalism has a role to play and a function that is mostly regarded as an ideal of society or a self-perception of this society (Görke and Scholl, 2006). These circumstances, again, change according to the needs and contexts in which journalism operates (Mellado, 2020). Nevertheless, practitioners also carry these ideal functions with them and attempt to incorporate them into their routines, not only through commitments and behaviour but also through practices, such as guaranteeing the diversity of voices and narratives. However, the function that journalism should fulfil in society is a rather ideological one that is shared by both journalists and society.

The ideological component of journalists operates at the level of their civic and moral guidelines, which remain the framework orientating journalists worldwide; in contrast, for society, journalism functions are much more straightforward, such as informing citizens with fact-based, relevant information (Deuze and Witschge, 2018). On the other hand, according to many scholars, journalism also plays a crucial function in democracy, through the support of, for example, its watchdog and monitoring roles, and also through the representation and participation of citizens and political parties, among others (e.g., Christians et al., 2010). Nevertheless, few studies have focused on public and societal expectations of journalism functions, with most stud-

ies focused on the perceptions of journalists and practitioners regarding their functions in society.

According to Christians et al. (2010), the democratic function, for instance, is established by the normative roles and functions of journalism, which range from a “facilitative role” to a “radical role”. Christians et al. (2010) describe the facilitative role as the commitment of these journalists to a civic democratic environment, one in which they promote and act as facilitators of civil society participation, representation and deliberation. The radical role is characterised by radical criticism and strong resistance to dominance and hegemony; delivering this role is based on challenging power and popular approach. They argue that these two elements constitute some of journalism’s many roles and functions in society, which translate into moral obligations and responsibility for democratic ideals and practices.

Even in authoritarian, less democratic contexts or developing democracies, journalism’s civic role and function, its ethical commitments to democracy, plurality and access to information, and its adherence to normative professional roles and norms are widespread. Yet circumstantial and contextual factors contribute to some functions being viewed as more important than others.

Moreover, the concept of normative journalism is open to interpretation and evolves over time due to various external and internal factors. The development of ICT has allowed new social actors, such as audiences and bloggers, to participate in news production. At the same time, new players such as NGOs and advocacy organisations have access to information once monopolised by journalists. These new players also include news outlets such as start-ups and independent organisations which distance themselves from traditional media and which strive to produce normatively good journalism by promoting social change and transformation. This evolution and innovation within the industry challenges the normative journalism paradigm (see Witschge et al., 2016; Steensen and Westlund, 2020; Esser and Neuberger, 2019; Hanitzsch et al., 2019; Mellado, 2020; Powers, 2015; Boczkowski, 2005).

In addition to introducing new actors, the development of technology and the crisis of traditional business models have resulted in the boundaries of journalism becoming blurred (Carlson and Lewis, 2015). Media organisations and journalists must expand their activities beyond traditional limits in order to compete in a competitive environment. Journalism establishes its limits based on its own principles, with the intention of restricting the involvement of external parties to ensure its independence. Studies suggest that commercial and technological challenges have challenged this sense of work boundaries, lowering the walls between newsrooms and commercial departments and consequently affecting the public perception of and trust in the news.

However, while the norms and values of journalism may change due to various conditions, some ground rules define what journalism is and what it is supposed to do. The ability of journalists to deliver what they believe is required is limited by various factors, including time pressure and precarious

working conditions. Therefore, journalistic performance is a collective and relational action in which normative journalism and media ecosystems and systems intersect with political, economic and cultural contexts. According to the circumstances, the change in values and norms of the journalistic narrative might be more critical than others. The ability to perform the journalistic role is influenced and impacted by the new forms of participation in news output and the introduction of new actors (e.g., Mellado and Dalen, 2014; Nee and Santana, 2021).

The COVID-19 pandemic has emphasised the facilitative role of journalism, while racial and gender tensions have increased the emphasis on diversity and representativeness in journalism. Therefore, the performance of journalism depends on the situation; in Latin America, political and economic constraints and the overall situation of media systems have strengthened the need for stronger ties to normative journalism and greater socially committed practices. This is reflected in the growing number of organisations developing collaborative initiatives. Hence, it is relevant to understand the definition of collaborative journalism in the literature, which is the starting point for this study.

2.2. Collaborative Journalism: a brief literature review

In recent years, scholars and practitioners have become increasingly interested in collaborative journalism. Collaboration has always been part of journalism (Lewis, 2018; Stonbely, 2017), but it reached a new level with the emergence of new information and communication technologies and their many effects on journalistic practices, production, distribution and business models. The development of ICTs is also at the root of the rise of a networked society (Alfter and Cîndea, 2019), which is considered one of the main factors that have contributed to the emergence of collaborative and participatory practices in journalism.

Collaboration is regarded as the capability of organisations or individuals to share resources, practices, information, rules, etc., to benefit all group members (Thomson, Perry and Miller, 2009). The collaboration principle has been understood as a differential of collaborative journalism practice compared to other forms of participation and collaboration. Different theories exist in the literature regarding collaborative journalism as a cooperative practice between various organisations; these organisations are not necessarily journalistic entities and can include civil society organisations, start-ups and academic institutions (Jenkins and Graves, 2019). Collaborative journalism can also include partnerships between journalists and experts in other fields (Sambrook, 2018).

Moreover, more attention has focused on providing a definition and description of collaborative journalism, with the necessary background of collaboration in journalism, its emergence and its impacts on the practice of journalism (Deuze, 2006; Graves and Konieczna, 2015). A considerable number

of published studies describing the role of collaboration in journalism have focused on analysing practices essential to identify the phenomenon's features and characteristics, and the factors that led to the emergence of collaborative journalism.

The literature has consistently provided a general understanding of collaborative journalism as a journalistic practice and a consequence of journalism's transformations due to the development of ICTs, the rise of the networked society, and the digitalisation of the media. However, a relatively small body of literature concerns motivations, commitments and how they might change according to different circumstances. Little is known about the influences and relationships of organisational, economic, political and media system contexts in practice and the commitments of practitioners of collaborative journalism.

Journalists and news organisations have been using collaborative journalism to continue working despite the difficult conditions, conducting quality investigations, and, most of all, trying to re-establish some of the central secular values of journalism to society, especially in countries with less developed economies and democracies and/or under authoritarian regimes, such as many in Latin America (Mesquita and de-Lima-Santos, 2021; Mesquita and Fernandes, 2021). Therefore, to better understand these commitments and the current state of collaborative journalism in Latin America, this research conducted an empirical study of several organisations involved in collaborative journalism in the region, as outlined below.

3. Methodology

This study conducted 36 interviews with members of organisations responsible for collaborative journalism projects. The interviews were conducted virtually, in Spanish and Portuguese, during March and May 2021. Interviewees were selected through an open call to practitioners in the Latin America region. They were invited to respond to a survey, and those who agreed were invited to participate in an in-depth discussion via interview. Of the 120 organisations that responded to the survey, 36 agreed to be interviewed on Zoom, Google, or WhatsApp. The survey results are available in a separate article, published in 2021 (see Mesquita and de-Lima-Santos, 2021). The interviews were based on a semi-structured script that guided the discussion while providing live space for further questions (Ahlin, 2019). All interviews were recorded, with the consent of the interviewees. The interviews each lasted approximately 45 minutes.

The qualitative data analysis follows a thematic analysis approach. Codes, rather than the literal meaning of words and sentences, are the basis of interpreting statements and information from interviewees to the researcher. To this end, the researcher followed the instructions of Clarke and Braun (2014), which involve systematically analysing qualitative data to distinguish different themes and their relationships.

Table 1. Profile of the interviewees

Organisation	Country	Age	Gender	Role
Coletivo Bereia	Brazil	18–25	Male	Editor-in-chief
OCCRP	LATAM	26–35	Male	Editor-in-chief
Bichos de Campo / El Café Diario Puntocom	Argentina	46–55	Non-binary	Journalist/Reporter
Site da Baixada	Brazil	26–35	Male	CEO
O Eco	Brazil	36–45	Male	CEO
Agência Mural	Brazil	26–35	Male	CEO
CDD Acontece	Brazil	36–45	Female	CEO
24Horas / Factchecking.cl	Chile	26–35	Female	Editor-in-chief
Canal Caribe	Cuba	18–25	Female	Journalist/ Reporter
Boletín Ecológico	Nicaragua	36–45	Male	CEO
Diario La Prensa	Panama	56+	Male	Journalist/ Reporter
Núcleo Jornalismo	Brazil	36–45	Male	Editor-in-chief
Cajueira/Redação Virtual	Brazil	26–35	Female	Editor-in-chief
Mídia Ninja	Brazil	36–45	Male	Editor-in-chief
Ipys	Peru	46–45	Female	Editor-in-chief
Maré de Notícias	Brazil	46–55	Female	Editor-in-chief
Periodismo Negro	Mexico	46–55	Male	CEO
Factor4	Guatemala	26–35	Female	Editor-in-chief
BaudóAP	Colombia	26–35	Female	CEO
Generación Paz	Colombia	36–45	Female	Editor-in-chief
Mutante	Colombia	18–25	Female	Journalist/Reporter
Consejo de Redacción	Colombia	26–35	Female	Editor-in-chief
Congresso em Foco	Brazil	56+	Male	CEO
Portal Catarinas	Brazil	36–45	Female	Journalist/Reporter
InfoMercado	Peru	36–45	Male	CEO
Comprova	Brazil	56+	Male	Editor-in-chief
Alma Preta	Brazil	26–35	Female	Editor-in-chief
Freelancer	Brazil	36–45	Female	Freelancer
Notícia Preta	Brazil	36–45	Male	Editor-in-chief
Abaré	Brazil	18–25	Non-binary	Editor-in-chief
Desenrola	Brazil	–	Male	Director
Sem Migué	Brazil	–	Male	Founder
The Intercept Brasil	Brazil	–	Female	Editor
Fakebook	Brazil	–	Male	Editor
Favela em Pauta	Brazil	–	Female	Editor and co-founder
ConfereAI	Brazil	–	Female	Editor and co-founder

Source: Author's own.

The research conducted a thematic analysis, with the support of NVivo, on the state of collaborative journalism in Latin America. Seven main themes and sub-themes were identified through deductive and inductive approaches. These themes covered the concept of collaborative journalism, processes

involved in collaborative journalism, collaborative practices, benefits of collaborative journalism, results and impacts of collaborative journalism, challenges and limits, and the context of collaborative journalism in Latin America. The sub-themes explored how practitioners and organisations achieved and addressed their values and missions, the structures and types of collaboration, and the impacts of collaborative journalism on policy-making, social transformation, and communities.

4. Results and discussion

Collaborative journalism for Latin American practitioners is about restoring and giving back. It is about restoring the social responsibility of journalism in society, as defined by Benson (2008) and other scholars who stress the importance of journalism to democratic societies (Christians et al., 2010; Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009). They want to return the power of narratives to the people that most need free and committed media. It is widely accepted among practitioners that collaborative journalism is a tool to produce a kind of normative journalism they believe in and think is needed. This journalism, they argued during the interviews, strongly relates to normative theories and the place of journalism in society, especially relating to the importance of journalism to democracy. However, clarifications are needed regarding some of the interviewees' statements, such as the contexts in which Latin American journalism operates. According to Hanitzsch and Mellado (2011), economic and political factors are among the many influences that make journalism different in various parts of the world. For instance, some academics have criticised the established and traditional mainstream media in these countries, which are characterised by over-concentrated ownership in the hands of a few families and are dependent on political and economic powers (Guerrero and Márquez-Ramírez, 2014). In addition, Latin America suffers from low levels of press freedom, and this has deteriorated recently (RSF, 2020).

It is not uncommon among interviewees to understand collaborative journalism in activist terms. This activism is related to what journalism is, how it should be performed, and whom it should serve. For one of the interviewees, a freelance journalist working in São Paulo (Brazil's largest city), collaborative journalism reports and acts on issues. It is a kind of journalism that connects with the problems in society in a deeper way. "If you're reporting on the Amazon and behind you, there's a fire, you throw water; it's not just reporting". For her, acting directly on issues is a form of restoring the function of journalism in society, not just reporting from a distance, objective and cold. This journalist wants to be involved, to promote social transformation and to be part of the solution. This confirms some of the recent discussions around the topics of the transformation of journalistic norms and values.

Similarly, for a journalist from *Mídia Ninja*, an organisation founded in Brazil during the protests of June 2013 and which describes itself as a media activist, being inside the communities on which you report is key to doing a

kind of journalism that represents the lives, the voices and the narratives of the people that journalism should serve. To this interviewee, collaboration is an essential *modus operandi* without which it is impossible to understand social issues. “In collaborative action, you get to understand, to know the actors who are on the street, the tensions there, and better understand the relationships. It serves all reporting, so collaboration brings great power to the reporting”.

Another journalist, part of a feminist collective, shares the sentiment of being inside a problem to promote a deeper representation of social issues. According to this interviewee, her collective was established as a collaborative initiative based on the demands of the feminist community to change the dominant narrative around women and their issues. The interviewee from Portal Catarinas, a feminist collective that reports and acts on women’s issues in the south of Brazil, explains that traditional and mainstream media have always misrepresented and underreported women. According to studies, women account for approximately 25% of the sources and subjects of news articles worldwide (Global Media Monitoring Project Report, 2020). However, there has been a valorisation of women in news-making, especially among independent news organisations (Blanco-Herrero, Alonso and Calderón, 2020; Salaverría et al., 2018). Among organisations conducting collaborative journalism, women have been in leadership positions (Mesquita and de-Lima-Santos, 2021). Nevertheless, as the interviewee points out, collaboration among activists and journalists has changed the narrative around women by adding new voices, different points of view and different forms of interpreting the world.

The literature around collaborative journalism has pointed out the important role of collaboration in promoting a diversity of viewpoints (Alfter, 2018). Some organisations and practitioners understand collaborative journalism as a way of achieving this diversity. As explained by the interviewee from Comprova – a movement to spread fact-checking worldwide, which brought together 24 news outlets in its first phase – audiences tend to trust these pieces because they feel represented by at least one of the outlets involved in the initiative:

The big advantage, I think, is its diversity. People from the right [of the political spectrum] started complaining about the checks. Still, they saw that *Gazeta do Povo*, an outlet more focused on the right, or that harbours more opinions from the right, was signing up, so we saw a retraction in the critics [from this group].

For a journalist who works in an organisation in the Complexo do Alemão zone of *favelas* in Rio de Janeiro, collaboration is the *modus operandi* to connect with the community, bring audiences what is important to them, and change the narrative of mainstream media. The journalist comes from the community, and started working on a journalistic project during the Olympic games in Rio de Janeiro in 2016. She found collaboration with the community

to be journalism she believes in. Journalism serves its purposes and represents the voices and the reality of the people living in these communities. The interviewee describes how these populations living in the favelas are represented by the mainstream media:

The television narrative about the favela or any space like that, it's always the perspective of the camera entering the favela and never from the perspective of whoever is in the favela and receives the police, so the press itself is protected by the police because it comes after the police, always looking from the outside to the inside.

The statement from the interviewee from *Favela em Pauta* illustrates a news media industry problem that has been identified in other parts of the world but has stronger implications in Latin America: the profile of journalists working with news organisations worldwide. It is not uncommon for journalists and practitioners interviewed for this study to refer to the profile of journalists, especially those in mainstream and legacy media. They criticise their lack of connection to the lives of much of the population. Journalists and news practitioners are normally located in the largest cities and are normally white males. Nevertheless, these critics reflect a commitment that is not opposed to normative journalism but advocates restoring those values that reflect the needs of the society that journalism should prioritise.

The tone of the discourse among journalists and collaborative practitioners on the peripheries of big cities and those reporting from places outside the big centres of power and trying to connect with populations in remote areas tend to converge. Territory and change in the narratives are always present in the interviews of these journalists. Place has an important meaning of belonging and diversity for these practitioners. For instance, for a journalist in Colombia, traditional journalism cannot embrace the narratives, voices and realities of people living in remote areas. For her, collaboration is an essential tool to connect with these populations, but also a way to provide a platform for journalists in these areas. The journalist works with *Baudó Agência Pública*, which has been conducting collaborative investigations in Colombia focusing on topics that affect communities' lives. They promote collaboration on two fronts: a more traditional one with other news organisations, focusing on broader investigations; and a second one focusing on forming a network of journalists and professionals in remote areas of the country to promote journalistic investigation and training local professionals. A journalist from Chile reinforces the importance of collaboration to connect with audiences in even the most remote areas. According to this journalist, there are cities and communities in Chile that even television cannot reach. For her, collaboration with journalists and practitioners in these regions is essential to make information accessible to these populations.

Thus, the territory offers two levels of input for understanding the importance of collaborative journalism. One is connected with the idea of diversity

and the feeling of belonging and representation; the other focuses on audiences and the democratic imperative of access to information. Using the paradigm offered by Christians et al. (2010), the normative journalism norms and values of journalists and news practitioners in collaborative initiatives range from the “facilitative role” to the “radical role”. The facilitative role is described by the authors as the commitment of professionals to a civic democratic environment; they act as facilitators of civil society participation and deliberation. The radical role is characterised by radical criticism against hegemony; its routes are based on standing up to power and on a popular approach. It is possible to state that the concept of collaborative journalism lacks the dimension of normative journalism, since the norms of journalism top the list of reasons journalists and news practitioners decide to collaborate.

The meaning of collaborative journalism is connected to ideals that are not always homogeneous, such as the mission and values of journalists and news organisations. Mellado (2020) explained that journalism is conditioned by context, which may lead practitioners to perform a kind of journalism that might not be seen as professional. For instance, CDD Acontece is a page on Facebook that reports on the daily life of Cidade de Deus, a neighbourhood in the western part of Rio de Janeiro. According to the interviewee, CDD Acontece’s mission is to rebuild a sense of community and pride in the population of Cidade de Deus. It does this through a collaborative approach with the community, reporting from and for the community, paying local reporters, and promoting the local economy. One of the biggest achievements of this journalist is to promote social change through collaboration.

The interviewees agree on a critique of journalism that goes beyond its state of crisis and the emergence of new technologies as the main enabling factor of collaboration. How journalism is carried out in the region, its alliances with power and its elitism are most commonly criticised. For many interviewees, collaboration has created an independent market that defies the commercial logic of traditional journalism and promotes the normative role of journalism and the restoration of its social function.

The interviewee from *Redação Virtual* stated:

I think the maximum word of independent journalism must be collaboration. If we enter this market to dispute spaces, scoops and articles, like in the commercial market of traditional media, it doesn’t make any sense. We are inaugurating a new independent journalism market.

This is seconded by the interviewee from *MídiaNinja*:

We do not start from this conception of academic journalism, which is a person who, based on a trade or a profession of being a journalist manages to abstract from the world and have an objective vision. No, we understand that we are always positioned in the world, your gaze is positioned, and this position is much richer when built collaboratively.

This constant criticism against objectivity is another common thread among practitioners of collaborative journalism, which is seen as a practice that normalises the elite discourse (Harcup and O'Neill, 2017) and has been substituted by more engaged reporting.

Criticism of the hierarchical nature of traditional journalism adds another layer of analysis. To the interviewee from Maré de Notícias, the hierarchical decision-making processes are the stages of the traditional journalism organisation:

The process of discussion of the agenda in traditional journalism is like this: the agenda comes from above, it has a dynamic of a hierarchy very different from ours, a construction and a look very different from ours.

Site da Baixada emphasises collaboration to encompass the different narratives and viewpoints on issues which, according to the interviewee, go beyond the traditional looks at both sides of the story. However, the greatest concern in the interviews is the stereotype perpetuated and normalised by the traditional media. According to the interviewees, traditional, corporatist, mainstream media have lost their ties (if they ever had any) with the actual experiences of the people; they have lost sight of who they are supposed to inform and benefit – the majority of the population, the voiceless, the people in favelas. According to the interviewee from 24horas and Fact-checking.cl, traditional media have a rigid structure which prevents them from engaging in collaboration. The Consejo de Redacción interviewee reinforced the need for economic independence to pursue investigative journalism.

For the interviewee from Congresso em Foco, traditional media are failing in their primary role in the defence of democracy, which is related to the economic dependence of the media on the state and big advertisers. The interviewee cites the recent campaign they launched to impeach the then-president of Brazil, Jair Bolsonaro. They did not receive support from most traditional news organisations in the country; they even lost advertisers because of their position. However, he sees that as a small price to pay considering the risk to democracy if Bolsonaro had stayed in power: “I believe that the great collaboration needed in Brazil today is the consolidation of ties to defend journalism, democracy”.

This sentiment is that corporatist, mainstream media have given up on journalism's social commitment, mission and values. This goes with disturbing accusations of the media covering up social and political issues and their close relationship with power in many countries – such as the case denounced by the Colombian news organisation Generación Paz, in the case of the False Positives. The interviewee confirms what many entities, activists, civil society and independent and alternative media have been saying: The traditional, corporatist media have engaged in criminal behaviour by omission or consent over the military assassination of thousands of people (Morales, 2019; Wallace, 2011).

In summary, through this analysis and discussion, it was possible to verify that collaborative journalism emerges as a force to restore journalism's function in society. The values of collaborative journalism are closely attached to democratic aspirations and counter to the position of the captured liberal media in Latin America.

5. Conclusion

Collaborative journalism is often described as a model of journalism that brings together professionals from different news organisations and other industries and institutions, such as universities and advocacy organisations, to carry out a journalistic investigation that otherwise would not be possible. The literature points out that investigations may not be possible due to the lack of expertise, technology or just because there is too much information. Investigations need as many people as possible to make sense of this information (Sambrook, 2018). Most concepts in the existing literature related to working together, fulfilling each other's lack of expertise, personnel, technologies, data and information (Stonbely, 2017). However, what collaboration means for practitioners is mostly disregarded. The study investigates whether the concept of collaborative journalism is understood by its practitioners and how they perceive collaboration in their daily routines. Questions remain unanswered: Is collaborative journalism just a change in the *modus operandi*, a new form of collecting data, or is there a more profound ethos of collaboration in journalism?

The present study assumes that people's meanings of collaboration differ in different parts of the world. It contributes to the literature by interpreting the possible similarities and differences in collaborative journalism practices in terms of motivations, purposes, meanings and understandings of collaborative journalism and journalism itself. The present study goes to a region underrepresented in recent research into collaborative journalism. It expands on it, adding the particularities and different contexts in which the practice has evolved in different directions. The study demonstrates that the concept of collaborative journalism for Latin American practitioners is not confined to a set of practices but rather to an ethos embedded in a normative idea of journalism and how it should be carried out.

The research question posed in this study ("What are the commitments, norms and values of practitioners of collaborative journalism in various contexts?") is answered positively, highlighting the strong relationship between collaborative journalism and normative journalism, as well as other theories relating to the social role of journalism in society and its place in democracies. While Latin America is known for its inequalities and the emergence of authoritarian and non-democratic regimes, it is necessary to discuss the connection with normative journalism and its possible impact on the view of collaborative journalism in Latin America and beyond.

Results show that contrary to the negative beliefs regarding the dissolution of boundaries in professional journalism, practitioners of collaborative

journalism in Latin America use this fluidity (blurred barriers and boundaries) in their favour to counterattack restrictions of press freedom and to produce normatively good journalism. However, mainstream and partisan media have also discovered in collaborative journalism a way to sustain themselves and continue to support authoritarian regimes. This leads to the argument that normative journalism should be considered within the concept of collaborative journalism. In summary, collaborative journalism in Latin America shows the complexity of the profession of journalism and the region's political, social, economic and cultural contexts. Moreover, understanding the underlying issues regarding the norms and values of the profession of journalism in Latin America may also contribute to investigating these aspects elsewhere, in less developed economies and democracies, especially those under authoritarian regimes such as Russia, China, Hungary, etc.

Finally, this study identified that collaborative journalism has many meanings to journalists and practitioners. A commitment to normative journalism, its mission and values and its role in society are guiding principles for most interviewees. According to the analysis, collaborative journalism in Latin America is about restoring the role of journalism in society and promoting democracy. It is also about giving voices to the voiceless, empowering communities and establishing a more democratic form of communication with communities. Above all, practitioners do not distinguish between their mission, values or practices. Collaborative journalism is interpreted by many practitioners as a form of producing a kind of journalism that they believe in. For them, collaborative journalism translates into the involvement of other news organisations, professionals from other industries, universities and, most importantly, communities. Mainly, collaborative journalism is an ethos, a form of thinking and acting that goes beyond the boundaries of the profession but is based on the professional principles of diversity and plurality.

Bibliographical references

- AHLIN, E. (2019). *Semi-Structured Interviews With Expert Practitioners: Their Validity and Significant Contribution to Translational Research*. London: SAGE Publications Ltd.
<<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526466037>>
- ALFTER, B. (2016). "Cross-border collaborative journalism: Why journalists and scholars should talk about an emerging method". *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*, 5 (2), 297-311.
<https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms.5.2.297_1>
- (2018). "New method, new skill, new position? Editorial coordinators in cross-border collaborative teams". In: R. SAMBROOK (Ed.). *Global teamwork: The rise of collaboration in investigative journalism*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- ALFTER, B. and CÂNDEA, S. (2019). "Cross-border collaborative journalism: New practice, new questions". *Journal of Applied Journalism & Media Studies*, 8 (2), 141-149.
<https://doi.org/10.1386/ajms.8.2.141_1>

- BENSON, R. (2008). "Journalism: Normative Theories". *The International Encyclopedia of Communication*.
<<https://doi.org/10.1002/9781405186407.wbiecj007>>
- BLANCO-HERRERO, D., ALONSO, M. O. and CALDERÓN, C. A. (2020). "Las condiciones laborales de los periodistas iberoamericanos. Diferencias temporales y geográficas en Brasil, México, Chile, España y Portugal". *Comunicación y Sociedad*, 17, 1-39.
<<https://doi.org/10.32870/cys.v2020.7636>>
- BOCZKOWSKI, P. J. (2005). *Digitizing the News: Innovation in Online Newspapers*. Cambridge: MIT Press.
- CARLSON, M. and LEWIS, S. C. (2015). *Boundaries of Journalism: Professionalism, Practices and Participation*. London: Routledge.
- CHRISTIANS, C. G., GLASSER, T., MCQUAIL, D., NORDENSTRENG, K. and WHITE, R. A. (2010). *Normative Theories of the Media: Journalism in Democratic Societies*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.
- CLARKE, V. and BRAUN, V. (2014). "Thematic Analysis". In: T. TEO (Ed.). *Encyclopedia of Critical Psychology*. New York: Springer, 1947-1952.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-1-4614-5583-7_311>
- DEUZE, M. (2006). "Collaboration, participation and the media". *Media & Society*, 8 (4), 691-698.
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/1461444806065665>>
- DEUZE, M. and WITSCHGE, T. (2018). "Beyond journalism: Theorizing the transformation of journalism". *Journalism*, 19 (2), 165-181.
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884916688550>>
- DIJCK, J. van, POELL, T. and WAAL, M. de. (2018). *The Platform Society: Public Values in a Connective World*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- DOMINGO, D., QUANDT, T., HEINONEN, A., PAULUSSEN, S., SINGER, J. B. and VUJNOVIC, M. (2008). "Participatory journalism practices in the media and beyond: An international comparative study of initiatives in online newspapers". *Journalism Practice*, 2 (3), 326-342.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512780802281065>>
- ESSER, F. and NEUBERGER, C. (2019). "Realizing the democratic functions of journalism in the digital age: New alliances and a return to old values". *Journalism*, 20 (1), 194-197.
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/1464884918807067>>
- EVENS, T., RAATS, T. and RIMSCHA, M. B. von. (2017). "Business model innovation in news media organisations – 2018 special issue of the European Media Management Association (emma)". *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 14 (3), 167-172.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/16522354.2018.1445164>>
- GLOBAL MEDIA MONITORING PROJECT (2020). *Who Makes the News? 6th Global Media Monitoring Project*. [report]. Retrieved from <<https://whomakesthenews.org/gmmp-2020-final-reports>>.
- GÖRKE, A. and SCHOLL, A. (2006). "Niklas Luhmann's Theory of Social Systems and Journalism Research". *Journalism Studies*, 7 (4), 644-655.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/14616700600758066>>
- GRAVES, L. (2018). "Boundaries Not Drawn". *Journalism Studies*, 19 (5), 613-631.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1196602>>

- GRAVES, L. and KONIECZNA, M. (2015). "Qualitative Political Communication | Sharing the News: Journalistic Collaboration as Field Repair". *International Journal of Communication*, 9, 19.
- GUERRERO, M. A. and MÁRQUEZ-RAMÍREZ, M. (2014). "The 'Captured-Liberal' Model: Media Systems, Journalism and Communication Policies in Latin America". *The International Journal of Hispanic Media*, 7, 53-64.
- HANITZSCH, T. and MELLADO, C. (2011). "What Shapes the News around the World? How Journalists in Eighteen Countries Perceive Influences on Their Work". *The International Journal of Press/Politics*, 16 (3), 404-426.
<<https://doi.org/10.1177/1940161211407334>>
- HANITZSCH, T., HANUSCH, F., RAMAPRASAD, J. and DE BEER A. S. (2019). *Worlds of Journalism: Journalistic Cultures Around the Globe*. New York: Columbia University Press.
- HARCUP, T. and O'NEILL, D. (2017). "What is News?". *Journalism Studies*, 18 (12), 1470-1488.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2016.1150193>>
- JENKINS, J. and GRAVES, L. (2019). *Case Studies in Collaborative Local Journalism*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved from <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/our-research/case-studies-collaborative-local-journalism>>
- LEWIS, C. (2018). "Tear down these walls: Innovations in collaborative accountability research and reporting". In: R. SAMBROOK (Ed.). *Global teamwork: The rise of collaboration in investigative journalism*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism.
- MELLADO, C. (2020). *Beyond Journalistic Norms: Role Performance and News in Comparative Perspective*. London: Routledge.
- MELLADO, C. and DALEN, A.V. (2014). "Between Rhetoric and Practice". *Journalism Studies*, 15 (6), 859-878.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/1461670X.2013.838046>>
- MESQUITA, L. and DE-LIMA-SANTOS, M.-F. (2021). "Collaborative Journalism from a Latin American Perspective: An Empirical Analysis". *Journalism and Media*, 2 (4), 545-571.
<<https://doi.org/10.3390/journalmedia2040033>>
- MESQUITA, L. and FERNANDES, K. (2021). "The New Praxeology of Digital Journalism in Latin America: Media Organizations Learn How to Walk by Running". In: R. SALAVERRÍA and M.-F. DE-LIMA-SANTOS (Eds.). *Journalism, Data and Technology in Latin America*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 23-53.
<https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65860-1_2>
- MORALES, M. (2019, May 27). "Publicar o no publicar: Los medios y el escándalo de los falsos positivos". *Razón Pública*. Retrieved from <<https://razonpublica.com/publicar-o-no-publicar-los-medios-y-el-escandalo-de-los-falsos-positivos/>>
- NEE, R. C. and SANTANA, A. D. (2021). "Podcasting the Pandemic: Exploring Storytelling Formats and Shifting Journalistic Norms in News Podcasts Related to the Coronavirus". *Journalism Practice*, 16 (8), 1559-1577.
<<https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2021.1882874>>
- NIELSEN, R. K., FLETCHER, R., NEWMAN, N., BRENNEN, J. S. and N. HOWARD, P. N. (2020). *Navigating the 'infodemic': How people in six countries access and rate news and information about coronavirus*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved from <<https://reutersinstitute.politics.ox.ac.uk/infodemic>>

- how-people-six-countries-access-and-rate-news-and-information-about-corona-virus>
- POWERS, M. (2015). "NGOs as journalistic entities: The possibilities, promises and limits of boundary crossing". In: CARLSON, M. and LEWIS, S. C. (Eds.). *Boundaries of Journalism*. London: Routledge.
- RSF (2020). *2020 World Press Freedom Index. Reporters Without Borders*. RSF. <<https://rsf.org/en/ranking>>
- SALAVERRÍA, R., SÁDABA, C., BREINER, J. G. and WARNER, J. C. (2018). "A Brave New Digital Journalism in Latin America". In: M. TÚÑEZ-LÓPEZ, V.-A. MARTÍNEZ-FERNÁNDEZ, X. LÓPEZ-GARCÍA, X. RÚAS-ARAÚJO and F. CAMPOS-FREIRE (Eds.). *Communication: Innovation & Quality*. Cham: Springer International Publishing, 229-247. <https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-91860-0_14>
- SAMBROOK, R. (2018). *Global teamwork: The rise of collaboration in investigative journalism*. Oxford: Reuters Institute for the Study of Journalism. Retrieved from <<https://ora.ox.ac.uk/objects/uuid:4a2d40ba-c7c3-482d-9f59-cc67b0c7f555>>
- STEENSEN, S. and WESTLUND, O. (2020). *What is Digital Journalism Studies?* London: Routledge. <<https://doi.org/10.4324/9780429259555>>
- STONBELY, S. (2017). *Report: Comparing models of collaborative journalism. Collaborative Journalism*. Retrieved from <<https://collaborativejournalism.org/models/>>
- THOMSON, A. M., PERRY, J. L. and MILLER, T. K. (2009). "Conceptualizing and Measuring Collaboration". *Journal of Public Administration Research and Theory*, 19 (1), 23-56. <<https://doi.org/10.1093/jopart/mum036>>
- WAHL-JORGENSEN, K. and HANITZSCH, T. (2009). *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*. London: Routledge.
- WALLACE, A. (2011, July 14). "Colombia ya no se conmueve tanto con los 'falsos positivos'". *BBC News Mundo*. Retrieved from <https://www.bbc.com/mundo/noticias/2011/07/110714_colombia_falsos_positivos_condena_medios_aw>
- WITSCHGE, T., ANDERSON, C. W., DOMINGO, D. and HERMIDA, A. (2016). *The SAGE Handbook of Digital Journalism*. London: SAGE.