

Journalism in Latin America:

Journalistic Culture of Ecuador

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ISBN

978-84-608-56800-1

EDITA

Edicso Editorial

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Introduction

This book presents the analysis of the journalistic culture of Ecuador as representative of the Andean region and Latin America. Since the last two decades of the twentieth century, a steady increase in research in journalism has focused on the analysis of the journalist and their products – contents. However, it is only relatively recently that it has also taken into account the context in which the environment and the various systems – political, economic, social, cultural, media, technological, etc. – surrounding the journalists and the media are present.

This decontextualized perspective has been, and is being, much criticised for being reductionist, partial and homogeneous. For these reasons, and for others which will be discussed throughout the book, this study includes the work of journalists, their perceptions and their professional practices as integrated activities in a characteristic context and with a unique idiosyncrasy.

Based on this idea, it attempts to show a vision, as closely as possible, of the journalistic culture of Ecuador and the professionals who are immersed

in it. To this end, from a multilevel analysis, we analyse the dimensions of 1) self-perception of the professional role, 2) idea of objectivity, 3) ethical guidance, 4) perception of autonomy, 5) trust level in institutions, and 6) assessment of the influencing factors.

The study is based on theoretical foundations, in order to subsequently focus on the “operationalizing” – how to empirically measure the theoretical proposals – and the “empirical conceptualisation” – how to theoretically explain the practices and standards – of the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

The book is structured in three parts. In the first of them (chapters I and II) the concept of Journalistic Cultures and its implications to the communication and studies in the area is developed and an approach to the concept and the reality of the journalistic culture characteristic of Latin America as a region is carried out. The second part of the work (chapters III to VI) begins with the location and contextualization of our object of study, the journalistic and communicative reality of Ecuador. Not only some of the great features that define the journalistic culture of the Andean country, but also the media system in which it is encompassed and its implications for our subject of study are analysed on these pages. In this regard, it is important to mention the new Ecuadorian law (Law of Communication, June 25, 2013), since it has come to change the communication system of the country and its relationship with both the political power and the society itself. These chapters also develop two of the current debates in Ecuador: the professionalization process on which journalism has been embarked and the proposal to incorporate communication as a public service.

This theoretical basis will allow the reader to reach the third part of the book (chapters VII to XIII) with sufficient conceptualizations and context management to delve into each of the dimensions of the journalistic culture addressed. After a methodological and conceptual framework explanation of this Journalistic Cultures of Ecuador project, the results of the same are thoroughly analysed in each of the following chapters. Thus, the project addresses the main factors that Ecuadorian journalists perceive to be the most influential in their daily work and the performance of the functions of the media in which they work; the perception that they have of the ro-

les and functions that their profession meets today; ethical guidelines that lead their profession; the degree of autonomy with which they feel they develop journalism in Ecuador and the level of trust that the various public and private institutions in Ecuador deserve, analysed in relation to public (dis)trust in these institutions.

For the development of this study we have worked with a sample of 31 Ecuadorian journalists, with a profile representative of the journalistic profession in terms of age, gender, position in the media, legal nature of the media (public, private and community) and format (television, newspaper and radio). All of them were interviewed in depth, following international standards in order to carry out analysis to be compared with the results obtained in other countries. Although the results presented in the following pages are not statistically significant and can not be extrapolated to all journalists of Ecuador, they are interesting for the analysis and are valid for a first approach to the Ecuadorian journalistic culture. This approach will allow to know not only the context in which the communicative work of this country is developed, but also the level in which external factors are influencing - if not determining - the development of the Ecuadorian journalist and Latin American media system itself, in which the different media laws passed in the last few years (including that of Ecuador) have come to reshape the map of communication, establishing themselves as an alternative proposition from Latin America.

PART I

Journalistic Cultures

Chapter I

Journalistic Cultures

I. Culture and Communication

The current concept of journalistic culture comes from the late 18th century, when the so-called “developed countries” adopted the democratic ideal as a principle of organisation of political power (Thompson, 1995: 2). This development of the representative institutions of democracy was forged in a market economy and a capitalist regime that included the media. For these reasons, the mediation of modern culture, where “cultural and ideological experience is deeply shaped by the spread of symbolic forms through different mass media” (Thompson, 1993: 291-292), sets out an endless number of conceptual possibilities of so-called journalistic culture.

Within Communication Sciences, the concept of journalistic culture is heterogeneous and can be formed based on a thin line that separates national cultures and the almost unlimited concept of culture as a lifestyle:

Hofstede (1980) refers to “national cultures” within a macro-level that includes the attitudes, values and beliefs. Smith, Peterson and Schwartz (2002) understand that culture is more focused on the micro or individual level as the analysis of individuals in all national studies becomes necessary. Williams (1958: 18) defines it as a “complete lifestyle”. Hall (1959: 31)

states that “it is the way of life of people”. Wallerstein (1991: 159) alludes to it as “a path of many others in which the groups get differentiated from each other”. Alvesson (2002: 3) laments that “culture is a tricky concept in the sense that it easily covers everything but does not relate to anything”. Archer (1996: 2) says that “culture is a problem that sinks into a conceptual swamp from which a proper sociological concept of culture could not emerge”.

As shown in the previous paragraph, culture has been interpreted from different perspectives. In the fifties, anthropologists like Kluckhohn (1950) and Kroeber (1952) listed more than 164 definitions of the term “culture”. Specifically, Kluckhohn (1951: 89) defined it as “a pattern of ways of thinking, feeling and reacting, acquired and historically transmitted mainly by symbolic means that constitute the distinctive of certain human groups”. Meanwhile, Kroeber (1952: 104) stated that “culture is transmitted by the inter-conditions of zygotes that are transferred through people and tend to an anonymous and supra-personal character that create regular patterns of styles and meanings that embody certain values and meanings”.

Mendez (2003) argues that culture brings us to something that builds (or it is build according to) the way of our relationships, which means taking into account three main ideas:

The first one affirms that social reality is made of constructions and creativity, that is, it is not a fact or a set of facts themselves, but it consists of a series of processes that meet and separate dialectically.

The second one refers to the relational, dialogic and multi-logical component of culture. This is where communication strengthens its links with culture to its full assimilation. That is, the cultural is meant as a way of taking full advantage of the interactive possibilities of the relationships built through action.

The last idea refers to the fact that talking of culture as a social practice leads to confirm that there is no culture without society, and no group or individual without culture(s).

Along the same lines that connect culture and communication, Martín Barbero (2001) raised the need to analyse the communication from the cultural sphere because the redefinition of culture is the key to understand its communicative nature. That is, its character of producer process of meanings and not of merely a flow of information and, therefore, in which the receiver is not a mere decoder, but also a producer.

Thus, from this perspective, culture is presented from information as a dynamic organization based on transformation, evolution, change and self-construction; “consequence of the transformation and self-production of culture as a community” (Sierra and Suárez, 2000: 22), so that communication, from the cultural point of view, begins from social relations as central components of social practice. Pasquali (1978: 51-52) affirms that in regard to the following:

The term communication should be reserved to the exchange of messages at an anthropological level between agents and human patients in genuinely reciprocal or dialogic action, including development and mental understanding of the message. Information is equally a process of broadcasting of messages, but rather saves affinity with the relational category of causality. Therefore, communication or the rapport of communication in its pure state is the human community relationship that consists on the emission and reception of messages between interlocutors in a total state of reciprocity, thus being an essential factor of coexistence and a determining element of the forms that human sociability assumes.

The functions that Park (1938)¹ gives to communication in the cultural process are mainly four: 1) communication creates, or at least it makes possible, that consensus and understanding among the individuals composing the social group that ultimately provides them the character, not only of society, but of cultural unity; 2) the communication establishes the framework of customs and mutual expectations that unites social entities as diverse as family, trade unions or market bargainers; 3) communication maintains the necessary harmony that allows the functioning of society; and 4) the family group, the labour organization and other forms of so-

¹ Cit. in Berganza Conde (1999: 68).

ciety, with the exception of the most fleeting ones, have a history and a tradition. Through communication that tradition is passed on. Thus, the continuity of public enterprises and social institutions is ensured.

Therefore, talking about journalistic culture means affirming the bilateral relationship between communication and culture: "Culture is manifested in language patterns, activities and behaviours that act as models in acts of common adaptation to some communication styles that allow us to live in society and in a particular geographical environment with a particular technical development and in a particular period of time [...] culture is persistent, permanent and omnipresent" (Samovar, Porter and Jain, 1981: 24-25).

2. Professional ideology

The ideas of journalistic culture and professional ideology must be differentiated, preventing them being used indifferently. According to Hanitzsch (2007), professional ideologies in journalism are understood as the whole and the relationships of the values, the orientations and articulated predispositions as the dominant professional culture. These professional ideologies occupy a specific position within the space of journalistic culture and organise themselves against other types of ideologies. From this point of view, the journalistic culture is more than the ideology, it is where the different professional ideologies come together to reach an interpretation of the social function and the identity of journalism.

In the analysis of journalism, ideology is understood, first, as a system of ideas and, secondly, in terms of dispute over control and power (Hanitzsch, 2007).

1) When it is understood as a system of ideas, ideology is constituted as organised thoughts that form consistent ways of internal thought that are manifested as a set of values, guidelines and predispositions (Lull, 2000). Therefore, "ideology is seen as a cohesive, conciliatory and socialising strength" (Shoemaker and Reese 1991: 54), "former of a shared professional

ideology that acts as a cultural basis” (Deuze, 2005: 446-447) showing journalists as a group and journalism as a profession; being this foundation the identity of journalism.

2) When it is raised as control and power, ideology maintains a critical position, where the perspectives of structure of power networks and threads of hegemony are included, developing the concept of merchandise as the process in which the social metabolism (Marx, 1989) and “state spirit” appear as a continuation to the past and the future (Gramsci, 1972: 27). Regarding journalism, ideology is a sharer in the concepts of “state spirit” and “merchandise” when it is displayed as an expression of western cultural hegemony over journalistic practices that differ from these standards.

These professional ideologies occupy a specific position within the space of journalistic culture, which are within it and they organise themselves against other types of ideologies. Therefore, the journalistic culture includes all the main orientations (values, attitudes and beliefs), practices and artefacts (products and texts) of journalists (Hanitzsch, 2007).

3. Journalistic Culture

The heterogeneous nature of the concept of journalistic culture causes it to be considered from different angles: news culture (Heinderyckx, 1993); journalistic cultures (Waisbord, 2000; Hollifield, Kosicki and Becker, 2001; Donsbach and Patterson, 2004; Patterson and Donsbach, 2006; Keeble, 2005); information culture (Deuze, 2002); newspaper culture (Knott, Carroll and Meyer, 2002); news production culture (Schudson, 2003); journalistic culture (Campbell, 2004; Gurevitch and Blumler, 2004); professional culture (Esser, 2004), etc. Hofstede (1980) interprets it as the thin border that the different national cultures form, and Barnhurst (2003) as a constellation of practices that have acquired a special level within the broad domain of communication. According to Hanitzsch (2007), the ideas, or specific cognition, of the journalist are based on his cultural ideas, through which he creates his own significant reality that allows him to form his professional behaviors within the collective knowledge.

From these definitions, it is clear that journalism and journalists' attitudes are established in a journalistic culture that contains the typical and traditional value of a common way to act. In consequence, these journalistic cultures are "unique" and "singular" and, according to Esser (2004), can not be understood as homogeneous communities of values. Rather, they are hybrids in which traditional national elements linked to international ones participate, interacting with each other dynamically.

Thus, "journalism can only be defined in its own work, always fast, innovative and difficult to codify" (Canel and Sádaba, 1999: 15) that "builds the identifying features of the roles and routines that, in the abstract level, represent the symbolic framework of a collective. Its knowledge, then, becomes essential to the professional because journalistic culture defines the perimeter surrounding his work" (Oller and Barredo, 2013: 10).

Due to the wider range of the idea of journalistic culture, the main challenge of a research that analyses it lies in the epistemological domain of this concept. First because researchers, when analysing a cultural and journalistic context different to theirs, tend to see it as a kind of "safari research" (Hantrais and Mangel, 1996: 4) in which "different journalistic cultures are compared based on their own cultural values" (Hanitzsch, 2009b: 422). Therefore, a thorough understanding of the journalistic culture of a country or region carries a kind of cross-cultural study that often implicitly assumes a methodological, theoretical and conceptual universalism.

For this reason, the Journalistic Cultures of Ecuador Project (Proyecto Cultura Periodística de Ecuador) approaches an analysis of the journalistic culture of Latin America and Ecuador from the conceptual addition of all the definitions given above, avoiding the discard system. Primarily because rarely is the concept of journalistic culture studied in a country in an in-depth way that takes into account all the structural dimensions of the concept and the empirical realities that are involved in the journalistic profession, the media and journalists.

Studying the journalist in a contextualised way entails establishing a structural framework of individual analysis (or developed from relatively homogeneous groups) that allows obtaining unique results of the subject

of study. Because “the *nomos*² of the journalistic field is reflected in the traditional values that are deeply integrated into the professional cultures of journalists” (Hanitzsch, 2010: 479).

It is thus considered that “the identity and personality of journalist act as a research centre on the journalistic culture” (Oller and Meier, 2012: 31); so it is possible to study the links between journalism and cultural context (Hanitzsch, 2007).

Conclusions

As seen throughout this chapter, the concept of professional culture (Pasti, 2005; Viall, 1992) appears close to the concept of professional ideology (Golding and Elliot, 1979; Schudson, 1990). This professional ideology, associated with the values of impartiality, objectivity and accuracy (Golding and Elliot, 1979), often shows the universal ideal status for journalists and researchers in the development of their practices and studies. These questions lead authors such as Hanitzsch (2007) to propose whether there is actually a common professional culture in the different regions around the world or Reese (2001: 178), who delves into the debate over the existence of a kind of “cosmopolitan journalism” that shares an ideology and a common professional conceptualisation in the world of journalism.

In order to answer these questions it is essential to have a clear operational conceptualisation of journalistic culture within a diverse cultural context. Only then, would it be achieved, as Hanitzsch (2007) states, the maximum stability and conceptual validity within the different cultural contexts.

This project takes as one of its starting points the questioning that many studies of journalistic cultures conduct “because of the considerable gap between theory and practice” (Josephi, 2005: 576). This problem includes two central features of the term “culture” within the Social Sciences: “inclusion” and “openness” (Hanitzsch, 2009b: 428). On the one hand, the

2 *Nomos* is understood in the Social Sciences as standards, rules and social conventions around a field of study.

concept of journalistic culture is inclusive enough to integrate very diverse academic discourses on concepts such as professionalism, objectivity, professional perceptions of journalistic roles, ethical standards, etc. On the other hand, journalistic culture is open to a constant reformulation and reconstitution: like culture in general, it is a process of continuous change, renegotiation and redefinition (Hanitzsch and coll., 2010).

The international research being carried out in many countries is showing that there is a quick advance of “glocalization”³ and convergence in the guidelines and journalistic practices of the media. Therefore, when analysing empirically the concept of journalistic culture, it is understood that it contains elements with a universal character and own elements that determine their characteristics and idiosyncrasy. When studying Ecuadorian journalists in the Latin American context, results are different from those of any other country in the world. Despite this, it will maintain a greater number of connections and features in common with the countries of Latin America – e.g. strong influences from the West; democratic instability; State and Catholic Church interventionism; the assumption of economic models from northern countries; and so on.

The issues raised in these lines lead this theoretical reflection about journalistic cultures to the concept of “intermediate journalistic cultures”⁴ (Oller and Barredo, 2013) in Latin America, where “global media standards are reinterpreted based on the local political structure and cultures are combined with ‘indigenous’ practices” (Hallin and Mancini, 2012: 285). In conclusion, as Oller and Barredo (2013: 20) claim, in order to understand the intermediate journalistic cultures – including Ecuador – it is necessary: 1) “to define journalists as symbolic producers, able to conceptualise, build and transmit meanings of cultural forms, but also to articulate and disseminate the ideologies that identify a nation”; and 2) to emphasise the importance of these symbolic managers because in these countries (postcolonial, developing or under undemocratic regimes) are the major producers of strategic meanings ordering reality (Mahon, 2000).

3 The relationship between intercultural and multicultural communication defines journalism of a region as the Andean and identifies the Ecuadorian journalistic culture as their own.

4 Recovered 18/02/15: http://www.revistalatinacs.org/067/cuadernos/CAL_35_Oller.pdf

Nowadays, theoretically and empirically, the commitment of academics to the study of journalistic culture, is associated with its ability to provide a more intuitive way of knowing the diversity of journalistic practice, mainly driven by a general trend towards comparative research within communication, media, and journalistic culture.

Chapter II

Journalistic culture of Latin America

Abstract

Journalistic cultures that differ from the Western standard – intermediate journalistic cultures – are first studied under a local paradigm, based on the contextualization of the mass media field of the region or the country analysed. This new investigative archetype has meant that journalists are studied within their context – individual level, institution level, and system level. The theoretical analysis of this project shows how the journalistic culture of Latin America is still imbued with colonialist and imperialist connotations that constitute and define their media systems and communication values. However, a qualitative and quantitative change regarding the communication policy in this region can also be seen today. Therefore, we can say that the so-called “Latin American intermediate journalistic culture” is defined on the basis of its multicultural and multiethnic character and from its own particularities and idiosyncrasies. For these reasons, in this chapter it is analysed from a dynamic and “glocal” point of view of culture; reflection of the transformations, influences and social, political, economic, cultural, historical, ideological and media inconsistencies in this region. These aspects have exposed the unifying characteristics of journalists and the media in relation to the main structural cores of current Latin American democracies.

Introduction

One characteristic of Latin America is its diversity and multi-nationality, even beyond geopolitical boundaries that form each one of the countries in this region. The American subcontinent, even today, continues to be characterised by the conjunction of a group of regions defined from its own natures and singularity. This is the reason why, from the research point of view, it is a difficult region to analyse at theoretical and practical level.

Since journalism began to be studied back in the nineteen thirties, an enormous number of studies have attempted to decipher the parameters that define this profession. However, in Latin America there was not a real push focused on the area of journalism and communication until the last three decades of the 20th century; moreover, initially, these studies were performed in a decontextualized way, isolating the object of analysis in question. As Mellado (2009: 10) states, “the research topics have been more oriented towards the receiver, the medium or the message for themselves, not to the transmitter as subject influenced and conditioned by a contextual and professional reality”.

The need to know the context surrounding the journalist and the media of a region, has caused contextualised studies about journalistic cultures of different regions of the globe to have appeared in recent years. This is the case in Latin America where, under the paradigm of intermediate journalistic culture, journalism is studied based on local – social, political, ideological, technological, historical, ethnic and economic aspects – and global and regional characteristics – influenced from Western journalistic culture, impregnated with commercial, standardised, colonialist and imperialist connotations.

For the reasons listed above, the analysis of the journalistic culture of Latin America must start from the concept of a dynamic and changing culture, reflexion of the passage of time and social transformations. Studies of culture performed in the late 20th and early 21st century show that one of the central cores of change has been the communication that, due to the instability that has existed in the region, has acted as shaft of:

1) autocracies –Governments in which the authority rests with one person and without any limit; 2) dictatorships –political developments emerged in the 19th century and spread in some countries in the Latin American region until the late 20th century, based on the governing of a leader established by informal mechanisms – sometimes authoritarian –and supported by a great amount of people; 3) the liberation wars – based on the anti-imperialism, economic neocolonial dependence and national liberation processes which emerged throughout the 20th century in Latin America; and 4) civil wars – war conflicts within a same country with two opposing political groups. In some Latin American cases these were the product of the aim of secession of part of a territory in the wars of decolonisation (Caccia Bava, 2009; Chavero and Oller, 2014).

This new communication construct has emerged as a key point in the time when the people have been aware of: 1) the need to play an active role within their society and 2) the needs created at all levels in the Latin American region. This situation has led to a change, generator of libertarian social movements based on self determination. The ability to self determination is based on the possibility of political and communication education for each of the people that form an “active part” of the societies in which they live. Primarily due to the fact that, even today, there is the risk that the Latin American civil society acquires the passive role of the past and that current democracies grounded in social policy, in most of the countries of Latin America collapse (Chavero and Oller, 2014).

Obviously, to strengthen these democracies many/any obstacles should be removed. Some of these are underpinned by the lack of a political and civic culture within society. Today, the Government, the political parties, the media and the citizens maintain a heated debate on the appropriateness of the democratic regime, without actually considering the multiple variants of this. In the case of Latin America, virtually all political systems are based on representative democracies established by universal suffrage. This situation means that Latin American citizens are entitled to vote, but do not have any influence on the final decisions of Government when it is in power.

However, there are studies, such as the one carried out by LAPOP (Latin America Public Opinion Project) in 2006 in 16 countries in Latin America, which corroborate that citizenship, in general, advocates a “procedural representative democracy”, expanding the attributes of minimalist democracy (based on the status of electoral democracy) and adding basic freedoms to ensure participation and competition at the elections (Berrueto and Navia, 2013). This cause confirms that the election is a necessary condition but not sufficient, as O'Donnell (2007: 41) ratifies, stating that “the definition of democracy must include procedures and not be reduced to a kind of elections”.

This chapter shows that Latin American democracies share a relatively homogeneous structure despite the complexity of establishing a common framework of analysis. Thus, in order to establish the characteristics that define the journalistic culture of this region, it must be known: the political and economic system that defines it, the structure of the media system, the professional status of journalists, the new role exercised by the academy, the possibilities of access to information of the population and the role of civil society in a process of communication defined by phenomena such as globalization and localisation.

1. Defining characteristics of the journalistic culture in Latin America

The journalistic culture is understood as the specific idea of the journalist within the collective knowledge. Thereby, all actions, attitudes and ideas of journalists are established within the journalistic culture of a country or region, “setting a common course of action” (Oller and Meier, 2012: 31). For these reasons, “the study of journalistic cultures should focus on social values, beliefs and attitudes that define those cultures” (Hanitzsch, 2013a: 191).

Understanding correctly and comprehensively the journalistic culture of Latin America entails completely assimilating the concept of intermediate journalistic culture and the preliminary analysis of Western journalistic culture, since this last one has been taken as a model throughout the globe, both in the newsrooms and in academic environments.

Although nowadays this homogenising and normalising pro-Western conception persists, it is time to break these static concepts in order to go for more complex and profound reflections posed by intermediate journalistic cultures as media systems with its own characteristics within different contexts. Therefore, researchers should create a research structure with schemes and autochthonous approaches.

Therefore, the paradigm of intermediate journalistic cultures is defined as a form of journalism that acts as a counterpart to the centre/periphery concept, with its own characteristics that differ from Western journalistic standards that, to this day, have acted under a centrist character. Consequently, from ideas that determine journalists as “cultural intermediaries” (Bourdieu 1984: 354) and as an “interpretive community” (Zelizer, 2004: 52), in this work takes place a reconceptualization of their profesional role within media in these journalistic cultures.

Intermediate journalistic cultures are in regions of the world constituted by underdeveloped, developing, post-colonial countries and with totalitarian political regimes or unconsolidated democracies. This situation leads them to create a particular media community defined by externally imposed rules and assumed as its own by journalists in their speeches. This circumstance makes that journalism appear in a situation of constant negotiation and relativism in relation to the different cultural perspectives (Oller and Barredo, 2013).

The Latin America region, considered within the intermediate journalistic cultures, has been traditionally studied as whole, although it is composed of different territories and countries that have important differences between them and that is determined by a kind of journalism characterised by the multiplicity and multipolarity. This situation is causing the abandonment of studies based on journalistic internationalisation, marked by a strong homogenising character and a western perspective of the profession.

Concerning the Latin American region, the ideas of colonialism and imperialism continue to permeate the communication values – sometimes

considered, under Western standards, as underdeveloped and with a poor media culture. Luckily, this perception has been changing in the recent decades, supported by the multinational and multiethnic character that defines its diverse journalistic cultures. Therefore, the current studies of the Latin American journalistic culture tend towards an analysis of “the complex nature of Ibero American communication, known by its geopolitical contours and ethno-religious backgrounds, which are the main variables to understanding the multicultural network of its mixed identity” (Marques de Melo, 2010: 9) and the definition of journalists as producers, managers and receivers of symbols and meanings.

The modern history of Latin America is dotted with a number of problems and issues that have defined the idiosyncrasy of this region because it is a multicultural territory formed by a huge mosaic of identities and hybrid cultures (García-Canclini, 1990). This leads it, from a media perspective, to present a more diverse than homogeneous set of systems (Buckman, 1996) and to become very difficult to establish a common structural framework for this region (Mellado, 2009a). Despite these difficulties, there are common features that characterise it:

Totalitarian Governments; instability; continuous, traumatic and abrupt power changes and transitions to representative democracies throughout the last years: “During the eighties, American countries were moving from military regimes to democratically elected governments” (e.g. Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay) (Rodríguez and Murphy, 1997: 35).

This situation has meant that even nowadays most of the countries of Latin America have a low level of democratic development⁵. As Mellado and Lagos (2013: 10) claimed, “in many Latin American countries, decentralisation and regionalisation have been considered as priorities in the process of re-democratisation. Centralisation and certain decision-making have marginalised regional participation of many countries, something that has affected, undoubtedly, the development of the media and its operation”. Besides, a wide gap remains on an ideological and political level. One the

5 Recovered 18/02/15: https://portoncv.gov.cv/dhub/porton.por_global.open_file?p_doc_id=1034 (Democracy Index, 2012).

one hand, “the incursion of a ‘new right’ that develops unevenly in the different countries of Latin America is observed from 2010” (Cancino and Christensen, 2010: 11). And, on the other hand, the ‘renewed left parties’ that abandoned the strategy of taking power through insurrection, and integrated the democracy into their ideological principles as a permanent value in their conceptions of society” (Cancino and Christensen, 2010: 13).

The current crisis in Latin America is one of credibility, although it is also happening globally. Parts of the world’s Governments are experiencing a lack of leadership that is driving their political leaders to have lower and lower credibility rating⁶. Situation characterised by a minimum degree, or even a break in the most serious cases, of cooperation and interaction between the Government and social actors. The result of this is a reduction in the social order with serious economic consequences.

The existing dispute over the meaning of “continental integration” (Caccia Bava, 2009) is due to an authoritarian and discriminatory culture, political disputes and cultural and social diversity caused by “a melting pot of different, heterogeneous and distinct races and cultures, resulting from the union of the indigenous with European, African and Asian emigrants” (Zárate, 2011: 1). The proof of this is that today, Latin America remains one of the regions with greatest social and economic disparities in the world [figure 3]. Although the fact that “the Latin American region has suffered, and suffers, problems of poverty, social and economic inequality and exclusion” (Zárate, 2011: 1) cannot be ignored, the efforts made are paying off in recent years, ensuring that the poverty level has dropped in most of the countries⁷.

Consequently, despite the attempt to talk of a united continent at an economic, cultural, political and social level, there are discrepancies that do not allow this cohesion, although there are common goals such as creating a stable, equitable civil society capable of assuming the responsible exercise of citizenship.

6 According to the Latinobarómetro survey (2011).

7 Recovered 19/02/15: http://www.undp.org/content/dam/venezuela/docs/undp_ve_IDH_2013.pdf (Survey about Human Development, 2013).

The opposite effect to the previous last years, is based on the assimilation of cultural and social diversity of each of the Latin American regions, defined by being multicultural territories formed by a broad mosaic of identities and hybrid cultures (García-Canclini, 1990). Since, as Shome (2012: 147) argues, “minority ethnic groups have a cultural identity that is not only different to the dominant cultures, but researchers have advocated a multiculturalism that recognises the identity of these marginalised groups”. That is a main factor in the study of journalistic cultures, since “the kind of citizen in a particular environment and political, social and historical moment, is a factor to be taken into consideration when different media systems and journalistic models are analysed” (Mellado and Lagos, 2013: 12).

The polarization of economic policies between neoliberal (last three decades) and contrary reactions to these have led to a rise in discriminatory and segregating attitudes and the increase of problems of poverty and social inequality. The implementation of neoliberal policies were an ideological tool at the service of the private capital, producer of a dissimilar development in favour of small privileged minorities and against a marginalised majority formed, mostly, by socially subjugated groups as indigenous or Afro-descendants. This model was proposed in Latin America from the liberal models emerged in England, France or the United States and applied without any contextualising parameter; based only on the trinomial formed by the political, moral and economic cores attached to liberalism (Zárate, 2011).

This situation has led to diametrically opposed economic policies. On the one hand, at the end of last century, in almost all Latin American countries neoliberal thinking was introduced as an ideal, whereas on the other hand, during the first decade of the 21st century, characterised by a bipolar trend, there was a relative consensus about the desirability of maintaining liberal economic policies – as in the case of Chile and Brazil – (Borges, 2010; Cancino and Christensen, 2010) and other opposite trends based on a social policy – with the examples of Venezuela, Bolivia and Ecuador.

The quantitative and qualitative increase in citizen participation and social movements: “the public sphere is not now reserved only for institutional

or illustrated actors, since now it is understood from the point of view of civil society” (Maigret, 2005: 362; Cañizález, 2011: 28). The importance of social movements, within Latin American realities, has led to a dynamic communication where everything is part of the global social system, a social system that has pushed for the creation of a new political scenario based on leftist Governments and consolidated in strong social movements in support of these.

Moreover, democratic innovations have opened new paths through the institutionalisation of citizen participation. The ability and the possibility of public participation, when speaking of communication, come from the possibility of access to the information of the population. If citizens do not have this access, they cannot play an active role in decision-making in the democratic process. And likewise, democratic strata cannot have feedback from the results of the ideology of the population, a key component of the ideological renewal in which any democracy that enjoys good health is based. Therefore, the role of corporate communication of Governments and public institutions becomes essential when acting as the backbone and channeller element of the information assembled, produced and directed to citizens.

The high proportion of Latin Americans that prefer economic development before the consolidation of democracy⁸. According to Caputo (2004), to a larger part of the population of Latin America it would not matter if they returned to authoritarianism in the interests of a greater material welfare.

The existence of deep social and political influences from southern European countries like Spain or Portugal (Buckman, 1996) and the ideological and religious influences grounded in the Catholic Church (Winn, 2006).

The flow of migration that has been increasing across the whole continent towards European capitals, causing changes in the drawing of the boundaries of the different Latin American cultures (Waisbord, 1998; Zárate, 2011).

⁸ According to a survey by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

The media in Latin America, through the years, have maintained a steady trend towards concentration (Sánchez, 2009) in some cases; and, in many other cases, “the role of Government has exerted a more negative than positive influence on the media system regarding press freedom, from its intervention in the system of public service broadcasting and the strong legal protections” (Hallin and Mancini, 2012: 297).

In recent decades, two major events have changed the Latin American and global society: globalisation and digitalisation (Carelli, 2014). According to Martín-Barbero (2014: 138), “globalisation is not merely an avatar of the economy and the market; it is a movement that builds communication and information, the key to a new model of society. This one pushes all societies to an increase of connection and conflicts within the network, exposing cultures together like never before”.

In addition, this relationship between culture and technology is defined by a marked technological determinism. These are processes that are dramatically changing the Latin American culture: the revitalisation of the identity and the technological revolution (Zárate, 2011). Definitely, 2.0 technologies are transforming spaces destined to the interaction and participation (Said and Arcila, 2011); favouring the process of “globalisation” (Cancino and Christensen, 2010).

As can be seen, in Latin America the history of media and its journalistic culture have evolved in parallel, and have influenced each other, within a context of economic instability and enormous political transformations (Rodríguez and Murphy, 1997). Specifically, Senecal (1986) refers to the business, the Government and the social and cultural movements’ logic. Roncagliolo (1996) distinguishes an economic logic based on the benefits that characterise commercial mass media, a political logic identified with the Government media or those associated with certain political parties and socio-cultural logic that defines community media. Brunetti (2000) states that if the mass media add the educational element, this could easily help to encourage agents to improve the conditions and capabilities of their audience.

In this context, it is possible to detect three levels of contextual influence on journalism: 1) beliefs, values and knowledge that journalists have and apply in a particular work activity, and in the personal characteristics that define them; 2) characteristics of the places of work – physical and digital structures, roles and routines –, as well as organisations and educational and professional entities related to the journalist, and 3) knowledge and social structures in journalism (Mellado, 2009b).

Finally, the defining characteristics of contemporary Latin American societies, mentioned above, have meant that the media play a main role; being generators, mediators and receivers of information, and creators and trainers (at least partly) of the –public, media and political – agendas that set public opinion. Considering this, currently, there are two thoughts determined by the objectives of the media: “to influence and to profit” (Borrat, 2002: 58).

2. The effect of the processes of globalisation, convergence and localisation in the journalistic culture of Latin America

Benítez-Rojo (2001) takes as a starting point in his analysis of the phenomenon of cultural globalisation in Latin America the words of Martí (1971) [1891] from his work *Nuestra América* (Our America): “Graft in our republics the world; but the trunk must be that of our republics”. The author places special emphasis on the analogy between the “trunk” and the “culture”, by taking these concepts as something alive, something growing. This dynamic nature of Latin American journalistic culture is manifested in each of the parts – countries and regions – that compose it. Although disparities exist at the individual level, the differences between the countries have been decreasing over time due to the effect of globalisation. To the extent that the existence of a single global model of journalistic culture based on values, attitudes and professional practices shared by journalists is considered. This issue brings to the table the need for analysis of the influence and the effects that the processes of convergence or homogenisation and globalisation of the media system in the journalistic culture in Latin America have.

Currently, the most powerful set of localisms is the “neoliberal globalisation”, also called, synonymously, “hegemonic globalisation” or “globalisation from above” (Santos, 2001: 76). It can be understood that neoliberal globalisation implies a new way of epistemological and cultural imperialism (Aguiló, 2010) due to this new colonialist trend in Latin America:

In the late 20th century, when the third wave of globalisation took an irreversible dynamic, the ethnic-national movements, that included in their speech a strong rejection of the ‘globalisation’ as a whole and in some cases to the accelerated modernisation processes, began to manifest (Cancino, 2008: 79-102; Cancino and Christensen, 2010).

This process has led authors, like Hannerz (1998), to state that we should speak of interrelated cultures – creole cultures – because globalisation involves two contrary processes. According to Featherstone (1990), in the first one, we all increasingly approach our positions and ideologies causing a general standard based on consumerism and knowledge of the other and, in the second one, we find the opposite effect caused by the process of cultural integration and disintegration (Chavero and Oller, 2014).

The phenomenon of globalisation is producing a parallel effect based on localism, in which increasing attention is dedicated to the reference group at local and national level (Chavero and Oller, 2014). This new polarisation has attracted, according to Bauman (1999), agoraphobia, new space utopias and territorial changes that have marked, according to the idea of Jensen (1997: 3), “the sense of intercultural communication [...] where participants in this process of globalisation are forced to belong to the majority or more powerful culture”. A situation that, as Friedman (1994: 82-84) suggests, “causes many problems of formation of the personal identity amid all the impersonal forces at a global level”.

Currently, the field of study of journalism has expanded and become more complex due to the relationship between journalists, media and political and economic organisations within a local, regional and global space. These complex relations developed between the different structures and at different levels entail the need to deepen the analysis of journalistic cul-

tures that differ from Western standards. Today, studies are being carried out – Hanitzsch (2009), Esser (2004), Donsbach (2008), Donsbach and Patterson (2004), among others – where the dominant paradigm so far, the Anglo-American, has begun to be questioned. To this is added the existing dissonance between journalism and academia, which echoes the irregular existence of the different journalisms that characterise the regions of the world (Wahl-Jorgensen and Hanitzsch, 2009).

Regulatory tasks listed take a special relevance today because the process of globalisation of the media is constantly accelerating and increases their participation more and more motivated by technological advances (Wasserman and Beer, 2009). As Franco (2009: 34), in his work *Anticipating questions that the digital revolution will bring*, states: “There are, hardly, other activities in which the word ‘globalisation’ has as much meaning as in the media and digital journalism, thanks to the internet. Even, the argument of low connectivity is easily controversial: just look at the accelerated introduction of mobile telephony on the continent. It certainly will happen the same way with the introduction of the internet”.

Finally, at a time when the media are an inseparable part of the social environment and in which the world is becoming a “mediapolis” – Figure 1 – (Silverstone, 2007: 25), normative tasks presented as fundamental are: first, to define “who is journalist and what is journalism” (Ortega and Humanes, 2000b; Wyatt, 2007: 239-240); second, to decide and define what we understand as global perspective in journalism studies (Murray and Moore, 2003) and, thirdly, “how can these be investigated” (Löffelholz and Weaver, 2008: 285-294) and “have become in the ‘new-ness’ in this era of globalisation” (Sparks, 2007: 126-130).

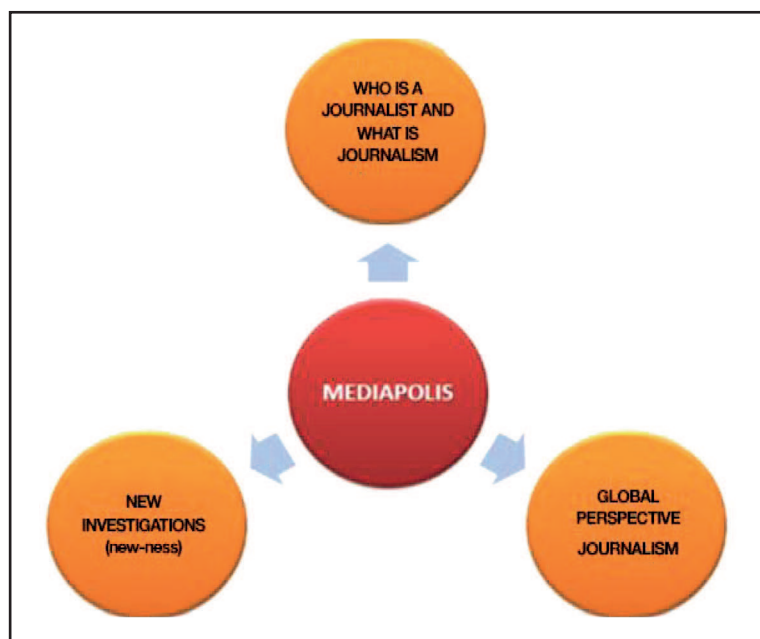


Figure 1. The world as a mediapolis
Source: Prepared by the author from Silverstone (2007: 25).

2.1. The glocal phenomenon and its effects on Latin America

According to the Oxford Dictionary of New Words (1991: 134), the term “glocal” is an acceptance that unites into a single concept the phenomena of globalisation and localisation. While culture globalises, as Bolívar (2001) points out, harder claims from primary cultural identities reappear: deterritorialization causes new cultural territorial actions. This point appears as particularly important, since despite the global market economy, there are cultures – and journalistic cultures – strongly marked by its cultural characteristics and even more accentuated by the phenomenon of globalisation. Hence, their study cannot be conducted in the same way as in Western journalistic professional cultures (Oller and Barredo, 2013).

From an analytical and interpretive point of view, the concept of globalisation – which involves the acceptance of glocalisation – has assumed the simultaneity and the interpenetration of what is conventionally called the global and the local, or – more abstractly – the universal and the particular (Robertson, 2000). Such that to understand the reasons of the differences between nations we should analyse the global media market from its adap-

tations to the local - or particular - conditions. These particularities will give the key to the heterogeneity that defines the journalistic micro-cultures that comprise the overall macrostructure. In other words, this diversity provided by those journalistic cultures of the so-called “intermediate countries” offers the key to understand the current journalistic phenomenon in Western countries (Oller and Barredo, 2013).

Therefore, according to Robertson (1997), the concepts of culture and civilisation are distinguished globally in this study, ignoring the old idea of ‘good’ culture and ‘bad’ civilisation, since each of these signifiers has a field of action. The interesting thing is that in the new paradigm, “local culture becomes a fact of national culture and civilisation in a global fact of global nature” (Oller and Barredo, 2013: 47).

2.2. Intercultural communication versus multicultural communication?

Understanding the processes of globalisation and localisation involves understanding that intercultural communication occurs when individuals influenced by different cultural communities negotiate different shared meanings in their interaction. “In these interactions and comparisons, cultural, collective and individual variables are involved” (Ting-Toomey, 2003: 600). The analysis of intercultural communication depends on the concept we have of the culture itself. Therefore, the term can be understood widely: from a concept based on communication between individuals of different nationalities to a broader idea that adds interethnic and interreligious communication or even interregional communication and between people of different sexual orientations. This led Martin and Nakaya (2004: 74) to state that “in this sense, trying to understand our culture is like trying to explain to a fish that it lives in water”.

In the same way, all interactions that occur can be arranged along a “continuum of interculturalism” (Gudykunst, 2003: 163) in which the identities, values, languages, prejudices, behaviours and relationship styles of individuals from different groups interact. This interaction causes relations to move along a continuous line from more intercultural to more interpersonal, getting the identity of this group through communication.

For Collier and Thomas (1997: 113-114) “cultural identity” is defined “as the identification and perception accepted within a group sharing symbol systems and thoughts as well as rules and standards of conduct”. Furthermore, these authors continue, there are two traditional theories regarding group identity. The first one defines that identity is created from the set of demographics characteristics and the role of each individual in the group. In this case, the identity is associated with physical appearance, ethnicity and other stereotypical associations. The second one states that identity is created from the reference group in which individuals are in a culture.

The concept of interculturalism can hardly be understood if the role that the media have in a multicultural society is not discussed. Either “in specific or more general contexts multiculturalism assumes a variety of forms and meanings” (Deuze, 2005: 453). According to this author, issues relevant to media and journalistic multiculturalism fall under three main themes: 1) the knowledge among journalists of cultural and ethnic differences; 2) the representation that they maintain on multifaceted and diversity issues, and 3) the perception of their social responsibilities in a democratic and multicultural society (Deuze, 2005). These proposals show the idea that journalists have about the different methods of intercultural communication when working in a culturally diverse society.

3. Current situation of journalists in Latin America

During the last decades a constant increase in research on journalism and the role of journalists has been observed. Some major studies are conducted by Weaver (1998); Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1976); Donsbach and Patterson (2004); or Hanitzsch (2007). However, “many of them did not take into account the contextual analysis and have been limited to the study of individuals in isolation and without taking into account the media, cultural, political, social and economic systems around the professionals of information” (Oller and Meier, 2012: 23). Moreover, “one of the main problems that arises from studying the journalism and the journalist in Latin America is to define a common structural framework that defines them” (Mellado, 2009b: 194). Despite of this lack of homogeneity, there are some common features that define the situation of journalists in Latin

America, since they are forced to multiple employment, precariousness, and to loss of professional stability⁹ (Iglesias, 2004). A survey conducted in 2011 by the research group “Clases de Periodismo” and headed by Vargas of 463 journalists¹⁰, reflects a part of the harsh reality faced by journalists in Latin America: “While living under the risk of crime, drug trafficking and the pressures of power, reporters and editors have - in many cases - to survive on low salaries, which leads them to accept multiple freelance jobs, to sell advertising and to work on two and up to three media”. In addition to the numerical data, this survey allowed them to collect a series of testimonials that demonstrate the depressed employment situation from journalists. In addition to that, Latin America was the second most dangerous region for journalists in 2011, just after the Middle East. 18 cases of journalists being killed were recorded according to the annual report of the Reporters Without Borders (RWB)¹¹.

The first decade of the 21st century has defined the traits and characteristics of the media labor market in Latin America (Mellado, 2009b: 197): “Free market, high migration, environmental issues, global flows of finance, unmet social demands, high economic concentration and attempted establishment of the knowledge society, where the technological revolution, the media convergence and the role of consumers have transformed the rhythms and the ways in which the messages and the forms of expression of journalism, occur”.

Moreover, as Rincón (2010a: 7) says, there is a divorce between the media and journalists: “the media are different from journalists. In Latin America, the media choose to defend the business world and so they become political actors with an agenda of liberal market model. Journalists and the quality of information are not interesting for them. Therefore, journalists are running out of credibility, with no job and no place in the world. They are abandoned and attend the separation from ‘their husband’, the media”.

9 Data obtained from the American federation of press Federación Latinoamericana de Periodistas (Felap) on the World Press Day in 2002.

10 This survey was conducted in the following countries: Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, El Salvador, Spain, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Puerto Rico, Dominican Republic, Uruguay and Venezuela.

11 Recovered 18/02/15: <http://es.rsf.org/> (Reporters Without Borders, 2011).

These changes that are occurring in the early 21st century are not isolated within a region or a particular market in Latin America. They are occurring globally due to the existence of a large concentration in the media, the transformation of media structures and the impact of globalisation as a way of adjustment to the new market needs. "If we make a detailed analysis on a global level, we can see how all these features are occurring in many other countries around the globe" (Oller and Barredo, 2013: 36).

4. The Latin American civil society in the media environment

In order to develop the concept of Latin American civil society, and following the analysis of Sorj (2012b), eight basic points must be considered:

- 1) In Latin America there are case studies on civil society, but they are based on theoretical frameworks that were built with the reference of the historical experience of the United States and/or Europe.
- 2) In Latin America, where the authoritarian impulses, both right and left wing, are still present, civil society risks feeding, or being co-opted by, these forces.
- 3) The main problem of democracies in Latin America is a culture of transgressor individualism that permeates everyday sociability and all the institutions. The collective expression of this transgressive individualism is that social movements and political institutions are vectors of both progress and backwardness in the development of democracy.
- 4) A reflection on what the objectives of society are must be made from a critical analysis of the legal systems and social relations that arise within society itself and manifest in the market and the State.
- 5) In the region, civil society has difficulties to establish itself as a distinct field, as the market does, let alone the State, can constitute themselves as relatively autonomous subsystems. Networks and particularistic values (either personal or corporate) easily overcome universalism and penetrate the State, the market and the NGOs, since values of everyday sociability carry a willingness of transgressing the legal and universal rules.

6) The new agenda of the Latin American civil society can not have a vision that is limited to the demand of rights and that assumes that society is naturally virtuous. Otherwise this situation would lead to the De-Responsibilisation of citizens.

7) The fragmentation and specialisation of NGOs in the defence of specific rights hinders their ability to develop an agenda that supports an overview of society.

8) Civil society has not a privileged locus of action. Theories of civil society mobilise an impressive analytical framework, but are extremely modest when trying to finally identify social subjects that would indeed represent it.

The contemporary revival of the concept of civil society in Latin America is related to opposition movements [...] and to the military dictatorships (Sorj, 2005). From the organised struggles of population against the military dictatorships, that ruled most of Latin America countries throughout the 20th century, the concept of civil society began to take prominence, especially from the nineteen sixties. This circumstance created an anti-authoritarian model based on a neoliberal concept that, according Birle (2000), caused most of the countries of the region to stand for an individual economic freedom that favours deregulation.

However, the Latin American civil society was not adapted to a model based on individual interests due to the needs created at a group level, which made them dependent on each other. That is, a civil society that is better understood from the Hegelian philosophy. Therefore:

Latin American society has adapted to these social adjustment policies that, although it had negative social impacts, were supported - at least passively- by most of the population, which perceived them as the only way to stop hyperinflation and lower the increasingly unacceptable corporatist privileges accumulated by employers and middle - class sectors employed by the Government or by State companies (Sorj, 2005: 28).

From this moment, social policies in Latin America begin to realise the importance of adapting to the needs of society; encouraging a perspective beyond the global dynamics based on “a political realignment that is the result of deconstruction of democratic discourse worldwide” (Hanitzsch, 2007: 372).

During the last two decades of last century and the first of the current, Latin American policy – and therefore the society – has been turning towards a democratic model that has produced a more independent media system of Government agencies (Buckman, 1996). The approach is based on the idea that citizens require full information to enable them to be well informed when making their own decisions (Kodrich, 2009).

This new reality leads to a rethinking of the role of citizens based on the concept of “global civil society” (Paffenholz and Spurk, 2006: 6). Considered, according to Clark (2003: 4), “as a potentially positive reflection to influence within the framework of a local Government, fostering debate and combating the unbalanced social division”. Specifically, from an analytical and descriptive point of view, the term “global civil society” refers to the “study of institutions, actors and events, examining its complex dynamics – using theoretical distinctions, empirical investigations and judicial reports – to raise some conclusions about its origins, current development patterns and consequences” (Keane, 2003: 3). Timoteo (2005: 314) goes further and mentions the appearance of a “collective intelligence”, before which, the Power is – metaphorically – managed in a diluted form¹².

4.1. The right of access to information in Latin America

Representative democracy, enjoyed by all Latin American countries, is based on access to justice, access to information and the possibility of citizen participation. As Pérez and Makowiak (2004) claim, at the theoretical level of fundamental rights and freedoms it is important to place, to start off, access to information. Different democratic laws of the Latin American countries underline the right of access to information and communication from inclusive, participatory, diverse and inter-multi-poly-cultural public

¹² The most critical researchers refer to the lack of legitimacy of the supposed “global civil society” (Anderson and Rieff, 2004).

policies in all spaces and physical and digital media from the own models and symbols of diverse social groups - defined by their multi-ethnic and intercultural condition.

In Latin America there are a number of characteristics that determine the rights of access to information:

First, the heterogeneity that marks the existing social disparity. The great social differences define the accessibility to the population. Latin America, in regard to economic disparities, is one of the regions in the world with the highest income inequalities [Figure 2].

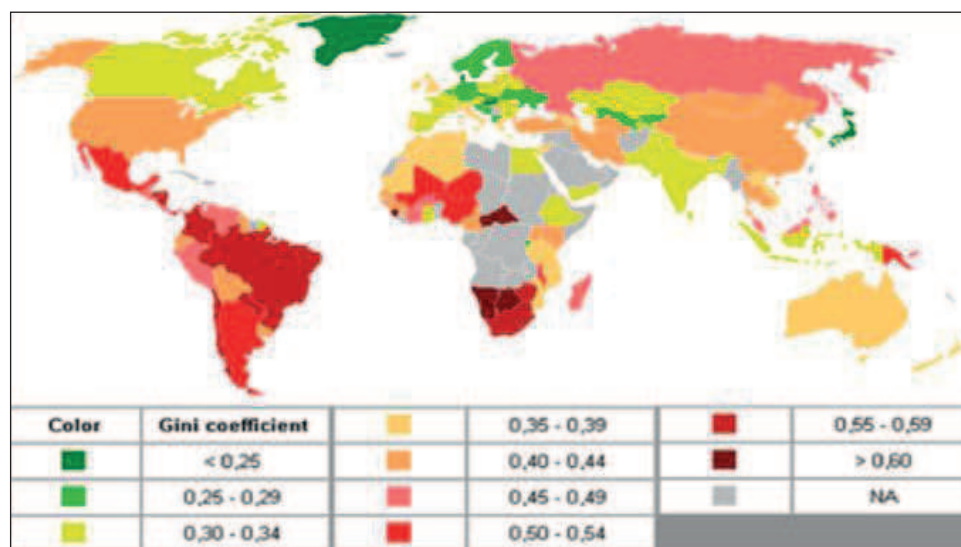


Figure 2. Income inequalities between countries
Source: Human Development Report by the UN (2005).

Measured by the Gini coefficient, where 0 corresponds to perfect equality and 1 to total inequality, red countries have more inequality than countries in green.

However, there are grounds for optimism in Latin America, since currently it is situated as the second lowest unequal region after Europe and Central Asia [Figure 3] - according to the results of the Human Development Report (2013) published by UNDP (United Nations Development Programme).

HDI rank	Human Development Index (HDI)		Inequality-adjusted HDI (IHDI)		Inequality-adjusted life expectancy index		Inequality-adjusted education index		Inequality-adjusted income index		Income quintile ratio	Gini coefficient of income
	Value	Value	Overall loss (%)	Difference in rankings	Value	Loss (%)	Value	Loss (%)	Value	Loss (%)	2000-2010 ^a	2000-2010 ^b
	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012	2012 ^a	2012	2012 ^a	2012	2000-2010 ^a	2000-2010 ^b
Regions												
Arab States	0.652	0.486	25.4	—	0.689	16.7	0.320	39.6	0.538	17.5	—	—
East Asia and Pacific	0.683	0.537	21.3	—	0.711	14.2	0.480	21.9	0.456	27.2	—	—
Europe and Central Asia	0.771	0.672	12.9	—	0.716	11.7	0.713	10.5	0.594	16.3	—	—
Latin America and Caribbean	0.741	0.550	25.7	—	0.744	13.4	0.532	23.0	0.421	38.5	—	—
Southern Asia	0.558	0.285	29.1	—	0.531	27.0	0.267	42.0	0.436	15.9	—	—
Sub-Saharan Africa	0.475	0.309	35.0	—	0.335	39.0	0.285	35.3	0.308	30.4	—	—

Figure 3. Human development Index
Source: Human Development Report (2013).

Furthermore, the use of new technologies could help to reduce this gap¹³ between rich and poor. For this reason, public institutions – even the private – should exploit these tools to facilitate the access to information for all people.

Second, the coexistence of the not contemporary – asynchrony –. In Latin America, elements of the past and the present live simultaneously. This relationship, which at first is not causal, causes, depending on the social stratum, certain groups to carry out the same – or similar – activities with very different resources; determining their different possibilities of access. This is a reality that must be taken into account by both the political authorities, when approving their public policies, and media professionals in their daily work. Their capacity of “adaptation” to the actual situation of the population will define their professional sufficiency, being able to find the tools and resources that enable them to reach all population groups and strata that, due to their situation of asynchrony, are in a state of exclusion from the communication process.

Third, the access to decision-making process in the National and State public policies. Public policies, according to the Observatory in Public Po-

¹³ With good usage, since improper usage can increase the gap.

licies of Latin American (OPPAL)¹⁴, are a set of formal decisions that are interrelated, depending on the intention and determination of a group of individuals and institutions; but they may also consist of the inaction by the authorities, that is, the decision not to act on an issue or problematic situation requiring their intervention. Therefore, public policies are considered as the responsibility of the Government, of those who have been invested with legal and legitimate power to make binding decisions for the whole of society and act for the common good. These public policies must be legitimised based on the right of access to information of the citizens and the notion of transparency in public decisions. If transparency is an emerging concept in Political Science, access to information must be characterised from a legal point of view thanks to the theory of Human Rights and Civil Liberties (Pérez and Makowiak, 2004).

The reality that exists in Latin America, according to Chavero and Oller (2014), is that these public policies are characterised by inconsistency, instability and lack of continuity. Changes that cause the population so see the increasing difficulty of their effective participation in public decisions, creating the greatest need from the point of view of access to information: having the necessary continuity that allows the final execution of the projects proposed and planned by the authorities responsible for the development of public policy. This situation creates a gap in communication between the community and the Government agencies, prompting a requirement on the part of society, improving the communication policy of the State, allowing for greater and more fluid participation of the population in the decision making.

Fourth, the access initiatives of the people as nature on which is based the right of free access to information. The exercise of this right should be a requirement of the society within contemporary democracies, aimed at having a direct or participatory democracy where citizens have a greater role in Government decisions.

Although, primarily, the fundamental and the second generation rights – economic and social – have to be accomplished, at present, the Latin Ame-

¹⁴ Observatorio de Políticas Públicas para América Latina.

rican region must be forged on the basis of a society capable of forming an active part of the process of achieving the so-called third generation rights - self determination; solidarity rights; right to peace; national identity; peaceful coexistence; international justice; common heritage of mankind; dignified life; food, demographic, educational and ecological problems solutions; and a healthy environment.

Latin America, even today, is in a context in which public policies must be adapted to the various social realities under an innovative paradigm. In addition, they must endure over time and space for the people to actively participate in them, breaking the gap between the State and the community for concrete and operational results that will allow effective enforcement of rights access by the Latin American population.

Conclusions

Throughout this chapter, showing a perspective that leads the reader to have a static view of the meaning of journalistic culture in Latin America from a global, local and citizen perspective has been avoided. Even more so when the historical, political, social, cultural, ethnic and ideological development of this region transcends the limits of a profession such as the journalistic.

Today, most of the researches carried out in this region maintain the Western stamp, ignoring national differences of each of the countries, nations and territories defined by values, norms, practices and attitudes that structure and support their journalistic cultures.

The journalistic culture of Latin America cannot be measured from the binomial “success-failure” when we only consider whether the identification of distinctive and unique features in an investigation has been achieved or not. If we act in this way we will fall into a reductionism that will hide the wealth from the cultural and media “miscegenation” of a journalism that emanates from the influences from abroad and the diverse and rich heritage of each of the countries and territories that make up this region.

As a final summary, it can be said that Latin American countries are included within the paradigm of intermediate journalistic culture and maintain common characteristics such as: 1) a media industry with low levels of professionalism and managed by an - economic and political - elite; 2) a high level of financial influence of private capital; 3) a strong direct State intervention - media legislation and ownership; 4) a late and maturing democratic process; 5) a high level of asynchronicity and differences in access to information by the population; 6) a lack of professional consensus among empirical journalists - with more experience - and the new professional graduates; and 7) low pay across the board - although there are countries like Ecuador where a wage increase was approved in December 2012¹⁵.

Therefore, this chapter theoretically frames two fundamental aspects that constitute its media reality. First, an analysis of the socio-economic, demographic, political, cultural and professional conditions that structure the common features that determine the values, perceptions and attitudes of journalists in a country or region within the so-called Latin American intermediate journalistic culture. And, secondly, it raises a new role of a civil society that, today more than ever, has the opportunity to exercise that “citizen power” that generates the opportunity to participate in decisions, public services and policies as from exercising their right to information and communication in a democracy that must be as participatory as possible.

¹⁵ Recovered 02/11/15: <http://www.presidencia.gob.ec/gobierno-anuncia-historico-incremento-del-salario-basico-de-periodistas-y-trabajadores-de-la-comunicacion-quito-22-dic-andes-ante-la-ausencia-de-los-representantes-de-los-trabajadores-y-de-los/>, website of the Presidencia. República del Ecuador.

Journalistic Culture of Ecuador

Chapter III

Journalistic Culture of Ecuador

Abstract

The Government of Rafael Correa, elected in 2007, has opted for a democratization of communication, following the line proposed in other Latin American countries like Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia and Uruguay. This proposal is causing a drastic change in the journalistic culture that defines the country through actions such as: 1) the strengthening of public institutions on communication issues; 2) the reorganisation of the media market for the development of the public and community service media supported by the principles of universality, diversity, independence and specificity (Analysis of Media Development in Ecuador, 2011), producing a strengthening of community media; 3) the equitable redistribution of radio frequency spectrum in which 33% is for the public media, 33% for private media and 34% for community media; and 4) the increasing of the public spending on official and institutional advertising in media. Despite the Government efforts, even today (2015), over 90% of the media is privately owned and nearly 75% of journalists work within it.

Introduction

The so-called “globalised journalism”, though is crossing national and cultural borders (Löffelhoz and Weaver, 2008: 3) since the global nature of Western journalistic culture has so far acted as an epicentre, begins to subside due to the appearance of hybrid journalistic cultures that share own identity characteristics and others adopted from standardised models. In order to approach the study of communication from the cultural perspective, the “redefinition of culture is fundamental to understand their communicative nature” (Martín-Barbero, 2001: 228), raising that as “a system of transformation, development, social change and self-construction” (Oller and Meier, 2012: 25) where journalists share the typical and traditional values of a common way of acting (Hanitzsch, 2007). These characteristics lead to introducing the concept of journalistic cultures based on their heterogeneity, “with specific characteristics, specific political systems, communicative variables and social, technological and economic elements that define them” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 271).

The peculiarity of each region or country means that “the analysis of journalistic cultures is subject to a defined geographical area” (Hanitzsch, 2013b: 186). As has been raised in the previous chapters, in Latin America the journalistic culture maintains certain characteristics, a structure and idiosyncrasy that differentiate it from the so-called Western journalistic cultures: 1) The transition from totalitarian Governments to democratic regimes in the recent decades; 2) the assimilation of cultural and social diversity of each of the Latin American regions; and 3) the diametrically opposed economic policies that have been in operation for the past four decades. To these can be added 4) the rapid technological developments - which are taking shape in an inequitable and asymmetric way; and 5) the influences from the outside - with the conflicts for which the processes of globalisation/localisation are responsible.

Ecuador is part of the Andean region, being fitted within the intermediate journalistic cultures that differ from the Western standard. Therefore, it maintains common characteristics with the rest of Latin America. In this chapter, all processes that define the current journalistic culture in this

country will be developed, beginning with the rise to power of the current President, Rafael Correa (2007), when a fundamental change was proposed in communication issues.

1. Journalistic Culture of Ecuador

The journalistic culture in Ecuador began to be defined from the consolidation of the press in the late 19th century and the emergence of some of the first daily newspapers that, even today, continue to be published (El Telégrafo was founded in 1860, El Comercio in 1906 and El Universo in 1922) (Analysis of Media Development in Ecuador, 2011)¹⁶.

Like other Latin American countries, the journalistic culture of Ecuador in the late 20th century was defined by the privileged position of economic powers “by taking advantage of privatisation processes, a very permissive legislation and a diversification promoted by new technologies, including political instability” (Checa-Godoy, 2012b: 126). Although Ecuador has had since 1975 the Law on Radio and Television, which includes measures against media monopoly, reformed for the first time in 1992, a second time in 1995 and the last time in November 7, 2002, and the Organic Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information (LOTAIP) adopted 2004, the most serious obstacle to the practice of journalism in these years, according to Walton and Layton (2010), was that all media were in the hands of people connected with the business elite, politics or particular groups. The presence of banks in the media was evident, especially after 1998 with the “deepening financial crisis in the country” (Checa-Godoy, 2011: 39), which led to the fact that the links between the financial power of the country and the media were accentuated (Checa-Godoy, 2012a; Flor, 2013).

This structure, based on the extreme capitalism, gave the information and communication an essential role in the economic development (Bolaño, 2005). This “commercial character acquired by the use of information resources meant the inevitable subjection to the laws governing the overall production and realisation of goods” (Torres and Zallo, 1991: 64; Macaroff, 2010). In Ecuador, this situation meant that the public policies of deregulation

¹⁶ Based on the application of the Media Development Indicators from UNESCO.

lation and liberation – in seeking to promote the competitiveness of the media industry – lead to a monopolistic concentration of media, producing, as Abad (2009) states, citizen restrictions on the use of information for the benefit of private interests.

In the country, the first decade of the new millennium marked a substantive change to all levels – social, political, economic and media. As Murillo-Ruiz (2011: 177) affirms, “from 2005, political parties, left and right wing, suffered a collapse from which they have not recovered yet. The emergence of a rebounding speech of the country was gaining momentum and those who championed it were precisely those citizen movements that bet on another way of practising politics”, situation that led to a radical change from 2007, when Rafael Correa became President of the Republic and began with its so-called “Citizens’ Revolution” (Revolución ciudadana).

From the beginning, Rafael Correa’s Government decided to restructure the media system within the country, in which a small group of business owners exercised a symbolic [and media] power and legitimised the deepest values of neoliberalism, positioning itself as the only defender of freedom of expression (Reyes, 2014). To carry out this process, in the Constitution passed in 2008 in Montecristi, there was a reference to the need for creating a new communications law that came about – after a process of assembly of four years – on June 25, 2013 with the approval of the Communications Law of Ecuador. This was the most important Government proposal seeking a democratisation of communication, following the proposal in other Latin American countries such as Argentina, Venezuela, Bolivia and Uruguay¹⁷.

The firm commitment in communication carried out by the government of Rafael Correa has been supported by international organisations such as Reporters Without Borders (2010)¹⁸ that have bet on a legislation in Ecuador that ensures a better balance between the different types of media and that confers a greater visibility to some sectors of society. Although

¹⁷ In 2014 and 2015, countries such as Mexico and Brazil adopted new laws on media, and Brazil, Paraguay and Peru are in full debate.

¹⁸ According to Hervieu and Samson (2010) in *El Volcán Mediático y su delicada Regulación. Informe sobre Ecuador*.

they also clarify that this requirement implies not getting confused with a media regulation based on coercive control of the activity of journalists.

The measures taken by the Government of Rafael Correa are fundamentally changing the media landscape and the basis of journalistic culture of Ecuador:

The cultural revolution based on the democratisation of communication¹⁹ and a policy of regulating the media market from the adoption of new legislations on communication. The prime example is the adoption on June 25, 2013 of the Law on Communications (and regulations of this law). As mentioned previously, this legislative policy of Ecuador is in line with countries in Latin America as Argentina - Law of Audio visual Communication Services, 2009; Venezuela - Telecommunications Organic Law, 2000; Uruguay - Regulation of radio and Community Open TV, 2002 and Community Media Law, 2008; and Bolivia - General Law of Telecommunications, 2011; as well as countries such as Brazil or Mexico, who are discussing their respective laws in recent years. Despite past difficulties in reaching its approval, the political commitment to media regulation was evident in statements like Ramos (2013): “the three years since the beginning of the discussion of the law have shown that media power, in Ecuador, is not only a metaphor”.

The creation and strengthening of public institutions in the area of communication: the National Telecommunications Council (CONATEL), the Superintendency of Telecommunications (SUPERTEL), the Ministry of Telecommunications and Information Society (MINTEL) and the National Communications Secretariat (SECOM).

The establishment of organisations responsible for control, regulation and punishment: the Superintendency of Information and Communication (SUPERCOM) and the Council for the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication (CORDICOM).

¹⁹ According to the rapport Ecuador 2013-2017: Hacia nuevos retos políticos y económicos published by Llorente & Cuenca (2013), analysts from different sectors say that the changes proposed by the State must be reflected from different milestones, including the democratisation of communication.

The reorganisation of the national media system with the strengthening of public and governmental offering based on the development of public service media²⁰ through the creation of the public radio Radio Pública del Ecuador (2008); the television channel Ecuador TV (2008); the newspaper El Telégrafo (2008)²¹; the newspaper El Ciudadano (2008); the newspaper PP, El Verdadero (2010) and the Public News Agency of Ecuador and South America -Andes (2009). Moreover, the proposal of the strengthening of community media²².

The communicative and advertising proposal of the State. Firstly, the implementation from 2007 of the space Enlace Ciudadano, an information space of 3 hours in length which is broadcast live simultaneously on radio and public television. This is the most used resource by President Rafael Correa when transmitting the management of his Government, a format that aims for accountability. And, secondly, the increase of the spending on institutional advertising. According to Checa-Godoy (2011: 51) “official advertising in 2008 represented about 17 million dollars [...], in 2009 reached 40 million dollars and in 2010 exceeded 60”. Thus, “the Correa Government has succeeded in implementing a successful media campaign and public relations, based mainly on a constant appearance in the media” (Punín, 2011: 6)²³.

The redistribution of the radio frequency spectrum, as stipulated in Art. 106 of the Communications Law, with 33% directed to public media, 33% to private media and 34% to community media.

The empowerment of citizens through the creation of platforms and agencies to assess communication processes and media. Thus, “throughout the entire process of the Law, the right of persons to organise at public oversight committees and citizens media observatories is founded” (Ramos and Gómez, 2014: 303; Chavero, 2014).

20 The action of public broadcasting is based on four fundamental principles: universality, diversity, independence and specificity (Analysis of Media Development in Ecuador, 2011).

21 This year it became a public company.

22 According to data provided by the Telecommunications Authority, in 2010 there were only two community radio and no television channel in Ecuador (Checa-Godoy, 2011).

23 Data estimated by these authors, they are not official.

Approximate numbers indicate that in Ecuador there are around a thousand media of radio, print and television work (Rincón, 2010a). According to the National Telecommunications Council (CONATEL), in 2010 there were 849 radio stations, 84 television stations and roughly one hundred print media. Despite Government efforts, today the media distribution in Ecuador, according to the Register of Media offered by CORDICOM (June 2014), is 91% for private media, 5% for public and 4% for community media. As Abad (2009) states, Ecuador has a journalistic culture formed essentially by private media. Proof of this is that in the latest report on professionalisation of journalism presented by the CORDICOM in September 2014²⁴, of the 5619 interviewed journalists, 4049 (72%) work in private media.

As Abad (2009) and Macaroff (2010) affirm, this has led to an alignment of most private media against the Government's proposal on almost all fronts. Hence, to understand well this difficult relationship between the private media and the State it is necessary to consider the current political circumstances in Ecuador, because, as Abad (2013: 19) considers, "the vigilant and the challenger speech to the media are not in charge of the citizenship but the political power".

Conclusions

Despite the strong commitment of the State to change the Ecuadorian media landscape, even today over 90% of the media is in private hands and nearly three quarters of the journalists are working in it. This situation is a reality in Ecuador even though the Government develops a policy based on the democratisation of information, the reconfiguring of the media field, the development of new information practices (Abad, 2013) and "during the last years the President has repeatedly questioned the conditions of media production and has shown their business, financial and political ties with other traditional sectors of power" (Ramos, 2013: 71).

²⁴ Recovered 19/02/15: <http://www.cordicom.gob.ec/resultados-de-la-encuesta-nacional-de-profesionalizacion-a-los-trabajadores-de-la-comunicacion/> (National Survey of professionalisation to communication workers, 2014).

The new governmental policies and the firm commitment to the regulation and control of the media have created a situation of polarisation and tension, in which Rafael Correa accuses the Ecuadorian mass media of being companies linked to the economic power and to lack of journalistic ethics and professionalism. This attitude causes a confrontation between the Government and mass media, in which both try to seize control of public space production (Reyes, 2014) and of social opinion, and this has created a framework of uncertainty (Abad, 2013).

For its part, the private media accuse the President of a management that places him as part of the Latin American left populist (Levitsky and Roberts, 2011 in Basabe-Serrano and Martínez, 2014) through practices such as “tecnopopulism” - which involves incorporating high public officials experts - and radicalisation of the confrontation, personalism and the idea of the demanding, enlightened and redeemer leader (De la Torre, 2013). To the extent that opponents such as Samuel Pinheiro Guimaraes, former senior civil servant of Mercosur in reference to Ecuador - and Bolivia, Paraguay and Venezuela - say that although these Governments were democratically elected, they don’t govern democratically (Ramos, 2012).

Chapter IV

Public Policies in Communication and Media System in Ecuador

Abstract

This chapter analyses the characteristics of the media system in Ecuador, given its political, economic, social and cultural peculiarities. In this regard, the Government of Rafael Correa (2007) maintains standards with other Latin American countries in the elaboration of public policies in matters of communication based on the elimination of the concentration of private media ownership among the main objectives. The reconfiguration of the radio spectrum and the creation of two regulatory agencies (Regulation and Development Council of Information and Communication, CORDICOM and the Superintendency of Information and Communication, SUPERCOM) are the most important changes Ecuador has undergone since the adoption of the Communications Law in June 2013, but they are not the only ones: the professionalisation of journalism or the increasing of citizen participation are some of the outstanding challenges in the country.

Introduction

Traditionally, in communication studies, when analysing the media system of a country, the proposal made by Hallin and Mancini (2004) has been much embraced, since it establishes three ideal types of media systems based on the interaction that is generated between the market, the State and the media. As proposed by these authors, the configuration of a particular media system is the result of certain features:

- a) Press industry. By studying this aspect, it is taken into account when and how the birth of the media market, its consolidation, the scope of the runs and the consumer profile of the media occur. The financing of the media or the degree of freedom of expression are among the variables studied in this section.
- b) Political parallelism. At this point it is worth studying the relationship between the media and the political system. And it should be analysed whether we are dealing with media with features of party press, or one fully independent of any political affiliation or an intermediate model between both.
- c) Professionalism and independence of journalists. It is not only to analyse the level of training of communication professionals, but everything that surrounds the profession: autonomy to exercise it, intrusion, ability to act as a lobby, regulation, membership or association, existence and respect for ethical codes, etc. "The shortage of associations is, for some authors, due to the lack of professionalism" (Ortega and Humanes, 2000a: 165).
- d) Role of the State. In its role as guarantor of the fulfilment of certain fundamental rights such as the access to information, States have the possibility to intervene in different ways: direct (as the owner of the media and related) and indirect (giving the frequencies of the radio spectrum or as a legislator in this matter).

The combination of these factors gives rise, according to these authors, to three types of media systems. The first of them is the North Atlantic or Liberal, typical of countries like the United States, Canada, Great Britain or Ireland and characterised by medium volume of circulation, an eminently commercial and independent press and good levels of professionalisation. The second model is the Corporate Democratic, present in the North of Europe and with significant volumes of circulation, a commercial neutral press and highly levels of professionalisation. Finally the polarised pluralism system, typical of the Mediterranean countries and characterised by medium volume of circulation, relatively low levels of professionalism with high political parallelism and State intervention in the media sector.

However, these models have not only the limitation of being ideal types with needed nuances, but their own authors acknowledge that the models could be changing, especially because of the change of direction media models such as the US one began to give to systems with Southern Europe features. Besides this, the Hallin and Mancini (2004) proposal suffers from being based on European and North American countries that, even if they share characteristics with Latin America, enjoy a relatively consolidated democracy and stay away from the Latin American idiosyncrasy. In this regard, authors like Oller and Barredo (2013) include the analysis of these ecuadorian media systems within the called intermediate journalistic cultures when defining journalism in post-colonial countries, with under-democratic and underdeveloped political regimes that differ from Western standards (a proposal that is much more suited to the contextualised study we do).

1. Criticisms to the Hallin and Mancini model

Although traditionally this analysis model has been used and its applicability has been demonstrated for many countries, the proposed models by Hallin and Mancini (2004) suffer from an excessive functionalism, because reality has shown that the media are not an autonomous part of the social system. According to a functionalist logic, the liberal model would work autonomously, but the authors of the book *Comparing Media Systems*, by talking about “counter-tendencies”, are careful to warn that the liberal

model is not the tendency to follow. Not surprisingly, the liberal model itself is questioned at the time of one of the observed counter-tendencies has meant the growing media polarisation and the consequent political alignment of the media in the country where the liberal model found its greatest exponent, the United States. Moreover, this proposal reflects an overemphasis on the “manipulation” of the media as a result of its politicisation, although other authors have shown that media can get to act according to their own logic and interests (Chavero and coll., 2013).

In the last few years, other researchers have highlighted the weaknesses of the proposal made by Hallin and Mancini in 2004. To Albuquerque (2012), one of the influencing factors is the crisis of the traditional model of independent journalism in the last few years, mainly influenced by the emergence of digital media (progressive bloggers). Another factor that this author attributes is the excessive dependence on Western point of view, a position that is beginning to be questioned at different levels. One of the revisions proposed by Albuquerque is the reconceptualisation of “political parallelism”, a concept that can have two levels of analysis. The first one, based on the relationship between the parties and the media, that must take into account three variables of analysis: organisation (type of link between the party and the media: direct administration or informal control), partisan goals (degree to which positions of the party and the media coincide) and the support provided by the party (coherence between media party preferences and readers). Second, the relationship that exists between party systems and media systems, that is, the relationship between specific media readers and the votes received by the parties associated with those media.

Another warning about the model is that the initial proposal is made based on the study of 18 countries with specific characteristics. However, countries and regions with different features and historical processes, such as the countries in Latin America, would be left aside (Pfetsch, 2013). Even in research, as Mellado (2009) states, the most worrying aspect of journalism in this region is that it has become a product and hybrid knowledge between American and European perspectives.

These peculiarities and idiosyncracies make it not possible to make a direct extrapolation of the models of Hallin and Mancini (2004) to all countries. Latin American countries are included in the so-called “third wave democracies” (Huntington, 1991), countries that start the process of democratisation in the 70s; the youth of these democracies, in combination with the weight of previous authoritarian regimes, are elements that ultimately influence the media system.

In the case of Ecuador, according to the Democracy Index, prepared by The Economist Intelligence Unit²⁵, in 2012 it was ranked as 87th (out of 167) with a score of 5.78 (on a scale of 0-10), which puts it in the category of “hybrid regime”. In response to the measurement categories of democracy, Ecuador scored as follows:

	Electoral process and pluralism	Government run	Political participation	Political culture	Civil liberties	Average score	Ranking position
Ecuador	7,83	4,64	5	4,38	7,06	5,78	87

Table 1. Democracy Index 2012. Data for Ecuador
Source: The Economist Intelligence Unit (2012).

In 2006 (the first elaboration of this index), Ecuador’s score was 5.64. This index data suggests that, while many Latin American countries are making progress in democratisation, in the region there are still many countries with weak democracies (14 countries in the region fall within the category of “flawed democracies”), while there are countries with full democracies (Uruguay), reflecting the heterogeneity of Latin America and the presence of significant differences between countries.

There are, in short, many reasons why it is necessary to present an alternative model to Western analysis. According to Albuquerque (2010):

²⁵ Democracy Index by the The Economist Intelligence Unit is one of the most widely used to measure the quality of democracy. This index has five measuring dimensions: electoral process and pluralism, civil liberties, functioning of Government, political participation and political culture. Depending on the result, countries are classified into four types: full democracies; flawed democracies; hybrid regimes and authoritarian regimes.

- a) Direct extrapolation of the initial analysis models keeps the viewpoint of the West for the analysis by taking as a reference Western democracies.
- b) Hallin and Mancini (2004) models are made based on stable democracies, a feature that is not true for Latin American countries. In the case of Ecuador, in the first decade of this century there were two coups d'état (2000, 2005) and another attempted (2010).
- c) Absence of a more complex dynamic perspective, taking into account a scenario of transition to a democratic goal which does not have to be proposed by the West.
- d) Journalism proposed models require a competitive political environment and institutional stability, premises that can be (or not) on a different scale.

The importance of the media system configuration lies in the dual role it plays: “economic agent and ideologizing agent” (De Moraes, 2013: 4l). This is because of its own characteristics organised by this author:

- a) Its ability to set directions and ideologies, form opinions and draw prevailing social imaginary lines: it produces and disseminates content, imposing its own rules without allowing other options, alterations or visions.
- b) Appropriation of different lexicons available to its particular objectives, incorporating them into the dominant discourses.
- c) Strengthening of the market as the organisational hub of society, presenting itself as the actor capable of regulating contemporary life.
- d) Selective control of information and measures of value that socially circulate, silencing or decontextualising what might become critical analysis (De Moraes, 2013: 20ff.).

2. The media system in Latin America

For a proper analysis of the media system it is necessary, therefore, to consider the Latin American context in general and the Ecuadorian in particular. In its media history, Latin America has some common characteristics (Becerra, 2014: 63):

- a) Business logic as the protagonist of how cultural industries work.
- b) Absence of governmental public services and use of media management organs of State as government discourse propagators.
- c) Processes of concentration of ownership of the media systems.
- d) Centralisation of production of news content and entertainment in major urban points of each country.
- e) Poorly regulated systems but tightly controlled by the relationship they had with Governments (Becerra, 2014). In Latin America, the conflict between industrial actors and Governments expresses the breaking of a model that Fox and Waisbord (2002) described with a paradox: “the business model of the Latin American audiovisual was in many cases not heavily regulated and strongly controlled at the same time” (ibid.: 69).

Historically, the majority of Latin American States have had difficulty putting in place clear media policies, to which we must add that the populist model favoured in the 40s and 50s the development of the subaltern cultures and cultural industries (Mastrini and Becerra, 2001). In the media market, Latin American countries were pioneers in the introduction of television, but not in the development of technologies; it is in the 60s when the process of economic modernisation and cultural renewal is consolidated mainly by foreign capital inflows (ibid.). “Media management had a family, patriarchal and artisanal development to the extent of the informational factor, as a core in the economic structure, coinciding with the growth of the economic size of the media and their integration in the global trading

system” (ibid., 2001: 3). In the 60s a model of fundamentally private television was consolidated, with production concentrated in large cities and large presence of foreign capital –although in the case of Ecuador most of the investment was internal. In some countries, public television began to appear, but still at low penetration levels and based on the Government political propaganda. Specifically, Ecuador, along with Paraguay, is the South American country with the weakest State presence in the informative media. Until the end of the last century, Ecuador lacked public television and national public radio. The only public medium before the arrival of President Rafael Correa, created in 1961 by José María Velasco Ibarra, was abandoned in the mid-nineties (Checa-Godoy, 2011) until its revival in 2008.

Regarding the daily newspapers in Ecuador, it is in the late 19th century when they were consolidated. In 1860 *El Telégrafo* was founded, the first national newspaper that is still published today; in the 20th century two of the largest circulation newspapers were born: *El Comercio* (1906) and *El Universo* (1922).

According to 2010 data, there are about 35 local, national and regional daily newspapers. In the field of broadcasting, in accordance with the information provided by the Superintendency of Telecommunications, in December 2010 there were 1,205 radio stations on shortwave, AM and FM, and 444 television channels, including matrices and repeater stations of open signal on VHF and UHF, both private and public and community property. Based on the data of the same institution, 83% of televisions were privately owned, 17% of public service and community were not represented (0%). Regarding radio, 89% were private, 10.8% of public service and community just 0.2%. In 2007, with the arrival of Rafael Correa to the presidency, the public media Ecuador TV, Radio Pública de Ecuador (replacing Radio Nacional) and *El Telégrafo* (seized by the State to a former banker²⁶) were created. In addition, the governmental newspaper *El Ciudadano* and the Public News Agency of Ecuador and South America (Andes) were created and in 2010 the public daily PP, *El Verdadero* was born, printed on the premises of *El Telégrafo* (Unesco, 2011).

26 The Deposit Guarantee Agency had seized it from Fernando Aspiazu, former owner of Banco El Progreso.

In parallel to the development of the media market, the debate on the state of communication in Latin America is ongoing. At its congress in 2002, the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers set some goals (Marques de Melo, 2010: 27)²⁷:

- a) Facing communication as a social process, encouraging studies on the behaviour of broadcasting and effects.
- b) Having theoretical autonomy, fostering methodological criticism. Generating knowledge that can improve the quality of media products demanded by society.
- c) Recovering empirical knowledge with its three dimensions: autochthonous – indigenous –, mestizo and popular.

The challenges in the Latin American communicative context appear therefore clear: pluralism, frequency of distribution and enabling spaces for the different types of media (Hervieu and Samson, 2010). Meeting these challenges means making progress in the so-called “democratisation of communication”, this aims to reverse the current general situation of concentration and media power. In order to achieve the democratisation of communication, Macaroff (2010) proposes to act in three lines of work: strengthening the various types of media, including public; working in the formation of critical audiences and improving journalistic practices.

Today, the defining characteristics of the media system, according to Pascual Serrano (2013) in De Moraes (2013: 68), are:

- It is an appendage of corporate economic groups (usually the owners of the media manage business empires).
- It gets to have more power than the three traditional powers²⁸.

²⁷ Authors such as Marques de Melo (2010) defend the thesis of the information society understood as a practice to achieve the knowledge society in which it is argued that is not enough with the provision of technical equipment, but it is necessary to implement cognitive processes to reach the entire population and allow the construction of a new partnership between all citizens, ending the authoritarian processes in Latin America.

²⁸ In the case of Ecuador, it has five functions –powers–: the traditional three are joined by the 1) Electoral and the 2) Transparency and Social Control.

- It has no democratic legitimacy; it is not elected by any democratic institution, which makes it a factual power.
- It has achieved significant levels of impunity.
- It is not subject to financial controls as the rest of powers.
- It has no countervailing power²⁹.

2.1. Characteristics of the media system in Latin America and Ecuador

The historical, economic, social and political situation of Latin America – and with it, Ecuador – has been shaping a media system with the following characteristics:

a) Strong levels of corporate concentration

The characteristics of the Ecuadorian media system are influenced by the history of the country and the region. “Latin America is a region that since the colonial times maintains an extremely dependent relationship with the centres of power. Dictatorships, disappearances and crises realise the difficulty of regional hegemonic classes to articulate a model of accumulation that integrates the whole of society. [...] The high degree of concentration of media ownership in the hands of the economic and political elites has closed until now the options of a more democratic development. The concentration of wealth in very few hands marks that this, unfortunately, is not only a problem of the audiovisual sector” (Mastrini and Becerra, 2001: 17).

When making public policy, one of the challenges is the heterogeneity, that is, “to find public policies that raise the heterogeneity of the public and, therefore, that are capable of enabling the presence, the visibility of social diversity” (Martín-Barbero, 2008: 11).

²⁹ This point is nuanced since authors. For instance, Candón (2012) speaks of citizenship in the network as an anti-establishment movement to traditional media.

Venezuela, Bolivia, Ecuador and Argentina are the most active countries in public policies against private media concentration. According to De Moraes (2013), among the positive measures to the right to communicate, new broadcasting laws are included; the strengthening of State and public media; the supporting to alternative and community media; the promoting of independent audiovisual production; the guarantees of greater fairness in access to technologies; the emphasis on the generation; and distribution of regional and local contents and the cultural integration into cooperatives and non-commercial basis. Some of the most significant: 1) Law on audiovisual media services of Argentina, 2) Community broadcasting Law of Uruguay, 3) National cinematography Law of Venezuela, 4) Radio network of native peoples in Bolivia, and 5) creation of State television channels that offer other logics of cultural information and entertainment programming such as Encuentro (Argentina), Vive TV (Venezuela), Ecuador TV (Ecuador), Telesur (Venezuela).

Major private media conglomerates in Latin America are Grupo Clarín (Argentina), Organizaciones Globo (Brazil), Grupo Televisa (Mexico) and Grupo Cisneros (Venezuela), but there are other local groups as Garafulic (Bolivia), Caracol (Colombia) and Azteca (Mexico). It is also important the foreign investment to the region, such as the Spanish Grupo Prisa (Trejo, 2010). The behaviour of these large groups is similar to that of global players: “they are multimedia groups with ramifications to other communication activities (telecommunications, information technology, printing industry, etc.) but also other branches of industry and commerce. These groups have crossed each other, as well as woven and unwoven international partnerships with stakeholders of a greater weight in the global business market” (Mastrini and Becerra, 2001: 8 ff.).

“Latin America increasingly resembles a large media oligopoly, dominated by powerful transnational groups of communication and its regional partners” (Mora, 2010: 169). De Moraes (2013) uses the image of a tree to represent the media system, whose branches would be the information and communication sectors, linked by an invisible thread that weaves them together generating a common circuit of design, irradiation and content marketing, which ultimately remains in the hands of a small number of corporations.

Following the global trend in the communications market, in Ecuador we find conglomerates of various kinds which include media among their assets – the banks here are not far from media ownership. The 1999 banking crisis, according to Checa-Godoy (2012a), showed how the media were used in defence of financial interests. In the radio spectrum, 19 families control 298 of the 384 broadcast TV frequencies and 45 families run 60% of the more than a thousand AM and FM radio concessions (Alaniz, 2013). For decades, the only public medium was Radio Nacional, created in 1961, being the only Government representation for years.

Before the passing of the Communications Law, there were eight major media owners, according to data compiled by the Audit Committee of Television and Radio Frequencies: Grupo Eljuri³⁰, Grupo Isaías³¹, Grupo Vivanco³², Grupo Egas³³, Grupo Alvarado³⁴, Grupo Mantilla³⁵, Grupo Pérez³⁶, and Grupo Martínez (Unesco, 2011).

Since the arrival of Correa (2007), several measures have been taken to limit media concentration in private hands. First, bankers are forbidden to hold shares in the media. As established at the Article 312 of the 2008 Constitution:

Art. 312.- “The private financial system institutions and private media companies of national character, their directors and principal shareholders may not hold, directly or indirectly, shares in companies outside the financial or communication activity, according to the case. The respective control agencies will be responsible for the regulation of the provision, in accordance with the constitutional and legal framework in force.

30 It managed Telerama and its 12 frequencies.

31 It was the owner of media like TC Televisión, GamaTV and TV Cable.

32 Owner of the journal La Hora with 14 regional editions, it would also manage Radio Planeta, Revista Judicial, Satnet (Aggregates Services and Telecommunications) and Editorial Gran Tauro, which publishes the magazine Vanguardia in partnership with Grupo Martínez, owner of the journals Extra and Expreso.

33 It was in charge of the television Telemazonas, Revista Mundo Diners, Agencia Delta Publicidad, the magazines Gestión, Soho, Fucsia and Cosas.

34 It was also responsible for Ecuavisa, the magazines Vistazo, Generación 21, Hogar, Estadio, a channel in an UHF open channel in the United States and Spain.

35 Owner of El Comercio (its shares were sold at the beginning of 2015), Últimas Noticias, Radio Quito, Radio Platinum, Ecuadoradio and the company of theatres and cinemas of Quito, in partnership with Grupo Mantilla-Anderson, of the journal Hoy (already disappeared). It has also shares in Megadatos, Access provider of Internet, business deals inn Cofiec and was partner with the group Egas Grijalva at Metropolitana de Seguros y Consorcios del Pichincha, in addition to links with automotive companies. Grupo Mantilla-Anderson, however, is responsible for the journal Hoy, radio Hoy, TVHoy (already disappeared), some magazines and the company of theatres and cinemas of Quito.

36 Owner of the newspapers El Universo and Súper, and Radio City. It is also a member of Grupo Alvarado Roca in the pay TV system Univisa.

Participation in the control of capital, investment or capital of the media, to entities or financial groups, their legal representatives, board members and shareholders, is prohibited.

Each entity of the national financial system will have a customer advocate who is independent of the institution and appointed in accordance with the law”.

The Constitution provides a period of one year to reverse the media owned by banks (transitional provision 29):

“The shares that private financial system institutions and private media companies of national character, their directors and principal shareholders in various companies involved in the sector have, will be sold within a year from the passing of this reform referendum.

The shares of the legal entities of the financial sector, their legal representatives and board members and shareholders with shares in the paid social media will be sold within two years from the entry into force of this Constitution.

Note: First part replaced by the reform approved in the referendum and the plebiscite of May 7, 2011, given by the National Electoral Council Resolution No. 00, published at the Official Gazette, Supplement 490 of July 13, 2011”.

After several attempts by the Banking Board to change the rule and some conflicting decisions by the Government itself, finally bankers were forced to comply with the standard, which affected 118 shareholders (Checa-Godoy, 2012a).

Secondly, some media were seized within the politics of seizure to ex-bankers carried out by the Deposit Guarantee Agency (ADG) as a result of the financial crisis of 1999. Among the goods seized, some were media: Gamma TV, TC Televisión y Cablesnoticias, in addition to two radio stations (Carrusel and Super k) and two magazines (El Agro and La Onda). Currently, these seized media remain state-run, but it is expected that they are part of the redistribution of radio spectrum.

Thirdly, the redistribution of radio spectrum into thirds, so that 33% of the spectrum is assigned to public media, 33% to private media, and 34% to community media.

The main objective of these measures is to break the global trend towards the concentration of ownership of the media, to avoid the media contributing, according to Sanchez Ruiz (2007) cited in Trejo (2010: 48), to:

an order of authoritarian governance, legitimising interests and actions of very particular elites, imposing decisions in a not participatory manner, but with the appearance of consensus and legitimised. Therefore, the media are involved as obstacles to a more broadly participatory and democratic governance. In turn, in a vicious circle, in this -political and economic- concentration process, media consolidate increasingly their status as powers, allowing them to participate in a hegemonic order, producing consensus on a development process from which a few, with a “democratic” facade, benefit.

Another consequence of the high levels of concentration is the discrimination of social minorities, resulting in an increase in the exclusion of some social and collective sectors particularly vulnerable, besides the perpetuation of the invisibility to which these groups are subjected. “The more television broadcast stations or audiences assemble, the less diversity of television of each country there is” (Trejo, 2010: 39), even, this concentration of media extends its influence to the levels of trust in democracy, claiming that there is a “greater confidence for democracy in countries with lower rates of concentration of television” (p. 46).

An example of the relevance of the media is a survey of Latin American political leaders in 2002; 65.2% of them acknowledged that media are the second largest real power, only surpassed by the economic and financial groups and well ahead of the constitutional powers (Caputo, 2004 cited in Sánchez, 2009). Aspect that show that “media concentration is not important only for building and consolidating democracy, but also for the formation of the political culture that every democracy needs” (Trejo, 2010: 21).

b) Relaunch of community media and other tools to achieve an alternative communication

The alternative communication is defined as “a tool for communication in the popular field, without neglecting the social activism, being implied that journalists and/or communicators in the conflict must be provided with a clear tendency to democratise the word and the information”³⁷. In Ecuador, the Latin American Information Agency (ALAI) bets on the “shaping of a new communication, democratic, comprehensive, decentralised and multi-cultural fabric, in line with the processes of social transformation” (in De Moraes, 2013: 114).

In this context, it should be highlighted the important role of alternative network agencies in Latin America due to its characteristics (De Moraes, 2013): 1) They understand communication as a common good and human right, which may not be appropriated nor distorted by economic and political ambitions of corporations. 2) They denounce and combat the monopolist media concentration. 3) They seek to evaluate social issues and renew the journalistic practices, through more flexible and collaborative methods. 4) They politicise the use of technologies, disseminating, as much as possible, accurate information and content that help accentuate the variety of worlds that the world contains.

The rise of other kind of communication (and media) shows a change - at least an attempt to accomplish it - in roles that each of the actors in the public sphere in Ecuador have traditionally played. In the words of Abad (2006: 5), “the media and political parties no longer look to society, it is society that looks and judges”.

c) State intervention

In the 70s, some Latin American countries (Venezuela, Mexico) had already spoken of the democratisation of communication, with concepts such as public service, access and participation, condemnation to the imbalance

³⁷ Acceptation proposed by the Alternative Media Forum of Argentina at the National Meeting of Alternative Media the 9, 10 and 11, October 2004 in Neuquén (Argentina) and collected in De Moraes (2013).

in the international flow of information, right to information and right to reply (Mastrini and Becerra, 2001; McBride, 1980). But with the 80s and the global rise of liberal policies, the failure of these democratising policies came. In the recent years, this discourse has been taken up and the media laws are being passed or debated in many Latin-American countries: Argentina in 2009, Venezuela in 2004, Uruguay in 2007, Ecuador 2013, Mexico discussed in 2013, Bolivia made constitutional changes reaching the media sector; in Brazil and Chile, for several years, there have been initiatives of civil society with a tenuous support of the political system. In most of these countries there is consensus assigning more than 30% of audiovisual licenses for the nonprofit sector of society (Becerra, 2014).

The Laws of Venezuela and Ecuador do allude to the control of the content, contrary to those of Argentina and Uruguay, which limit the access to licenses by non-profit organisations. State intervention in the distribution of television stations came to change the television landscape in 2008, completed in the case of Ecuador by the creation of public and pro-government media and the seizure of several media and the Agency News of Ecuador and South America (Andes), public news agency created in 2009. Besides, the Government of Rafael Correa has a weekly program of accountability (Enlace Ciudadano, mandatorily broadcasted by the public television networks, which however goes beyond the boundary of accountability and becomes at times in Government advertising) and the national television networks, with spaces dedicated to publicise Government works.

At this point, we should differentiate between the public and the State: the public is made of State, but also of society (Martín-Barbero, 2008). This same logic could be applied to the media: public media are not State media, but media at the service of the whole society.

In addition to the generation of public policies and allocation of radio spectrum, there are other forms of State intervention, as Government advertising. In Ecuador, although there is no official data, the Government has been, in recent years, the largest advertiser: 5.8 billion dollars in 2009 according to some estimations (Abad, 2010), 60 million in 2010, 10 of which

would have been Presidency investment, according to other estimations (Checa, 2012b). In 2009, the President announced that he would not invest in institutional advertising in media with bank accounts in tax havens, which led to the mobilisation of the shareholders of some media. Despite this rise in Ecuador, Latin America is the continent that has invested the least in advertising (3.8% versus 44.2% in North America or 27.4% in Europe) in the first part of the 21st century (Marques de Melo, 2010).

d) Low professionalism in the sector, understood not only as the level of education of journalists, but also as its degree of autonomy, associations or intrusion on the exercise of the profession

According to data from a survey made of 372 Ecuadorian journalists in 2008 and 2009, 41.4% of journalists admitted having been pressured or censored on any or several occasions (Abad, 2010), reflecting the lack of independence in the development of the profession. Problems similar to those found in the mid-90s, when major problems for Ecuadorian journalists were, in this order: lack of independence, pressure from owners or political interests, low wages, professionalisation and training, access to news, ethical problems, personal safety, job opportunities and lack of solidarity among peers (Virtue, 1994).

In the 90s the minimum wage established by the Government for Ecuadorian journalists was \$99 a month, 72.4% of the sample declared to earn less than \$400; 17.3% between 400 and 800 dollars a month (Virtue, 1994). At present, 48% earn between 340 and 650 dollars a month, 18% between 651 and 900 dollars and there is a 15% of journalists who earn less than the minimum wage in Ecuador (\$341), according to data from the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication Council³⁸.

“The formation of journalists not only contains communication techniques but also knowledge about the political, economic, social and geopolitical context” (Ramonet, in De Moraes, 2013: 96). In Ecuador the professionalisation of journalism is taking the certification of occupational profiles³⁹

38 Recovered 10/12/14: <http://www.cordicom.gob.ec/resultados-de-la-encuesta-nacional-de-profesionalizacion-a-los-trabajadores-de-la-comunicacion/> (CORDICOM, 2014).

39 There is a classification of 6 categories of occupational profiles: 1) Host broadcaster for radio and/or televi-

of people engaged in this activity⁴⁰, which currently stands at 17,000 in all areas of communication in Ecuador⁴¹. CORDICOM, along with SENESCYT⁴², SECAP⁴³ and SETEC⁴⁴ have made during the second half of 2014 a process of “public, documented and formal recognition of labor capacity demonstrated by a worker, performed based on the evaluation of his competences in his job performance and not being necessarily subject to the completion of an educational process. In Ecuador, this formal recognition of skills involves the issue by an authorised institution (Agency of Conformity Assessment⁴⁵) of a certificate confirming, documentary, the competence”⁴⁶ (Oller and Chavero, 2014).

e) Low ICT penetration, low press circulation and a huge consumption of television, which makes it an eminently audio-visual market

According to the National Institute of Statistics of Ecuador (2012), 31% of Ecuadorians affirm reading the press, against 46.7% of teens who devotes 1-5 hours a week to learning via television and 35.4% who spends as much time on online information (Marín and coll., 2013). According to some studies, 26% of Ecuadorians spend over three hours a day watching television and 13% between two and three hours a day (Mitau, 2011).

In the configuration of the radio spectrum, the Church (Catholic and Evangelical) maintains, even today, some presence, as it has several radio stations, including some of the most popular in the Andean region. In total, there are more than 90 Catholic radio stations in search for Ecuador and about 30 evangelical radio stations (Checa-Godoy, 2012b).

sion; 2) TV floor worker; 3) Media and multimedia photographer; 4) Technical coordinator for community media programming; 5) News cameraman and 6) Producer of contents for community media.

40 CORDICOM conducted a nationwide survey from 3 to July 17, 2014 on the level of training that communicators, journalists and employees connected and related to communication have. Recovered 21/09/14: <http://www.cordicom.gob.ec/caminemos-juntos-hacia-la-profesionalizacion/>

41 According to data provided by the CORDICOM. Recovered 09/12/15: <http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/politica/item/ecuador-tiene-17-mil-personas-que-trabajan-en-el-area-de-la-comunicacion.html>

42 Recovered 3/02/2015: <http://www.educacionsuperior.gob.ec/> Ministry of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation of Ecuador.

43 Recovered 3/02/2015: <http://www.secap.gob.ec/> Ecuadorian Vocational Training Service.

44 Recovered 3/02/2015: <http://www.secretariacapacitacion.gob.ec/> Technical Secretariat of Vocational Training.

45 Recovered 21/09/14: http://www.inn.cl/pdfs/acreditacion/Evalu_de_la_conform.pdf Agency of Conformity Assessment.

46 Recovered 21/09/14: <http://www.cordicom.gob.ec/certificacion-de-competencias-laborales/>

In addition, the rate of penetration of information technology in Ecuador remains low: 31.4% of the population has access to Internet (INEC). Of those, 32.6% use it to communicate, while 31.1% use it for information. The State should, therefore, ensure citizens' access to this technology.

f) Crisis of trust in the media, which affects their credibility and social legitimacy

This lack of trust is not exclusive to the media in Ecuador or Latin America.

	Government	Press (TV +)	Assembly	Judiciary Branch	Political parties	Armed Forces	Public Administration	Local government	Church	State
Some/ A lot	61,9%	45%	45,8%	32,2%	33,7%	57,3%	49,1%	50,8% some:43,8%	68,5%	49%
Few	26,1%	38,2%	34,5%	41,8%	37,2%	30,2%	36,7%	34,2%	22,8%	34,8%
None	11,5%	16,2%	18,2%	24,9%	28,5%	11,4%	17,2%	14,5%	8,1%	15,5%

Table 2. Trust of Ecuadorian citizens in institutions
Source: Compiled from data from Latinobarómetro 2011.

If we look only at social trust in different media, data for Ecuador yields the following table:

Level of confidence	Press	Television	Radio
A lot	6,8	8,5	6,7
Some	38,2	41,4	38,8
Few	38,2	35,3	38,5
None	16,2	14,3	15,5
n/a	0,6	0,4	0,6

Table 3. Trust of Ecuadorian citizens in the media (data in percentage)
Source: Latinobarómetro-Ecuador Study 2011 (N = 1,200).

As can be seen in the table, television is the media in which Ecuadorian citizens most trust, in a context, however, dominated by distrust in all conventional media - more than half of respondents do not trust any of them -. Nevertheless, consumption data remains high, especially in the case of television and radio.

g) Media map of Ecuador

Once the system characteristics of the Ecuadorian media has been analysed, then the configuration of the media map of the country is presented⁴⁷.

In the audiovisual landscape, the commission in charge of conducting the audit of radio licenses available in 2009 revealed a high number of irregularities, which reach the political field (concessions made to leaders). However, almost none of these licenses have been reversed almost two years after the approval of the LOC.

In the field of printed media, Ecuador has had in the last years over 35 written journals, of which a dozen are nationally broadcast (Checa-Godoy, 2012b). The reading index in Ecuador remains low: 50.3% of Ecuadorians read between one and two hours a week (INEC, 2012). Circulation and distribution data provided by the media are not completely reliable, since most of the companies dedicated to the press, provide their advertisers with higher circulation figures (Jordan and Panchana, 2009). Not surprisingly, one of the legal duties of the Superintendent of Information and Communication is to establish a system of measuring the diffusion of the media.

- **Public media**

The public media are regulated in Articles 78 to 83 of the Communications Law, which states among its objectives “to produce and disseminate contents that promote the recognition of human rights, of all priority groups and nature; to provide public, of truthful relevance, verified, timely, contextualised information services, with respect to the principles of professional independence and pluralism; to facilitate democratic debate and free expression of opinions; to promote gender equality and multiculturalism; to encourage the exchange of information and mutual understanding be-

⁴⁷ Since the objective of this work is not the study of each of the media, the media operating in Ecuador are not detailed in here. For the means of national character, the reader is referred to the record prepared by the Council for the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication. Recovered 3/03/15: http://issuu.com/cordicomec/docs/listado_de_medios_de_car__cter_naci?e=9990954/9627320

tween the peoples of Latin America and the world; to promote national production and dissemination of audio-visual contents; to find and implement mechanisms for cooperation and liaison with public media at national and international levels; to implement spaces for the promotion of productive activities in the country and provide educational, cultural, recreational and entertainment contents that contribute to good living”.

According to the articles of the Law, the public media are born by decree, ordinance or resolution and their structure is formed by an editorial board and city council (except the case of official ones). They formally enjoy editorial autonomy and among their objectives is the dissemination of contents that promote respect for human rights, to transmit accurate, timely and contextual public information, to facilitate democratic debate, the gender equality, the exchange of information and knowledge, to stimulate domestic production and to advocate for educational, cultural and recreational contents.

Funding for public media of Ecuador (with the exception of official public media) comes from the budgets of the institution itself, in addition to advertising, marketing of their products and donations.

Within the public media, the existence of the public official media, responsible for disseminating the official position of the State and autonomous Governments, is contemplated. El Ciudadano and PP, el verdadero are recognised as official media. The funding of these media comes from the budgets of the role of the State or the autonomous decentralised government that creates it, in addition to selling advertising to public institutions.

Especially significant, is the Correa government created, for the first time, public media in Ecuador. The following table lists the official public media of Ecuador.

Media	Reference	Web
<i>Ecuador TV</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - First public channel - 99 channels - 72% nationwide - Cultural content/news 	ecuadortv.ec
<i>Radio Pública Ecuador</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News and entertainment - National coverage - Provinces - One of the five most listened 	radiopublica.ec
<i>El Telégrafo</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - National + local editions - Economic, political, cultural...information - 14.000 copies - Source for 200 radio stations in provinces 	telégrafo.com.ec
<i>Radio Asamblea Nacional</i>		
<i>Agencia Andes</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - News agency - Multimedia - National media, international media and public in general - Spanish, English, French and Portuguese. - 70,000 visitors per week - 205 countries 	andes.info.ec

Table 4. Public media in Ecuador
Source: Prepared by the authors.

- **Official media (governmental)**

In the typology established by law, within the public media, there are the official media, responsible for transmitting the work and actions of the Government:

- › El Ciudadano: fortnightly newspaper with a circulation of 120,000 copies in 221 counties of 24 provinces.
- › El Ciudadano TV, El Ciudadano web, El Ciudadano Radio, La Ciudadana: audiovisual formats of the official newspaper.
- › El Gobierno a sus mandantes: information channel of the National Communications Secretariat responsible for transmitting the activities of the President and other public entities.
- › Enlace ciudadano. Popularly known as La sabatina (Saturday), is the weekly accountability program of the President of the Republic, which takes as its inspiration the old Aló, Presidente of the

former Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez. It is held every Saturday in a different city in Ecuador (usually in public places and always in front of a live audience) and transmission is required for all public television and radio channels.

› Habla Ecuador. Official information channel of local authorities.

- **Private media**

Private media are regulated by the Article 84 of the Communications Law, which defines them as those “natural or legal persons of private law or non-profit, whose purpose is the provision of public communication services with social responsibility”.

On television, some of the main channels are TC Televisión, Gama TV (seized by the State, the frequencies are not redistributed yet)⁴⁸, RTS, RTU and Oromar, among others.

On radio, the main private broadcasters are América, Carrusel, Sucre or Caravana, among others.

The print has El Comercio, El Universo or Expreso among its main private headers, after the disappearance in 2014 of the newspaper Hoy (in June the paper version and also the digital version in August).

- **Community media**

Community media are regulated by Article 85 of the LOC (85 to 87), where they are defined as “those whose ownership, management and direction correspond to social groups or non-profit organisations, to communes, communities, nations and nationalities”. The purpose of these media is to promote plurality, diversity, multiculturalism and multi-nationality through educational and cultural contents.

⁴⁸ Some other seized media were Htv, TV Cable and the national pay channels CN3 and CD7. Moreover, TC Radio, Radio Súper K800 and magazines El Agro, La Onda, Valles and Samborondón of Editorial Uminasa (Jordán and Panchana, 2009).

To achieve this goal, the State must promote public policies for the creation and strengthening of community media, through ease of access to preferential loans (for training and equipment purchases), tax breaks, access to training workers, etc. The financial means for community media come from their own services and products, advertising, donations and cooperation funds.

Currently, as noted in previous sections, community media barely reach 3% of the radio spectrum, being most local media, mainly radio stations. One of the most important projects is the work being done by the Coordinator of Community, Public and Private Local Media Network (CORAPE), which has been developing its activity since 1990, with 45 radios and a presence in 21 of the 22 provinces of Ecuador.

As established by law, that 3% must become 34% of the spectrum, which is presented as a long and winding road. The first difficulty to reverse this situation lies in the process of creating community media in essence. To start this process, the application to create a community medium must be accompanied by a proposal for programming and a profitability report, which is inconsistent with the object of these media, non-profit. On the other hand, these conditions place community media in the same situation as private media, which means community media has a disadvantageous position difficult to solve if special conditions are not proposed for them.

3. The Communications Law (LOC) of Ecuador

Until the arrival to Government of Rafael Correa (Alianza País⁴⁹), journalism in Ecuador had been governed by the law on professional practice of journalists of 1975, which required the certification and licensing. In 2004, by citizen initiatives, the Organic Law of Transparency and Access to Public Information (LOTAIP) was approved, although its implementation has not been as efficient as expected. In 2008 the new Constitution was approved, and it recognised the access to information rights and freedom of expression. From that moment, the Government gave a period of one

⁴⁹ Alianza País, rather than a political party, is defined as a political movement born in 2006 and whose President is Rafael Correa.

year to pass a Law on Communications; the project was discussed at the National Assembly since November 21, 2009 until its approval on June 25, 2013, but in an interrupted way and with discrepancies.

In December 2009, the project was submitted to an evaluation of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR) at the request of the Government. Thus, consensus was achieved to exclude any direct censorship. In 2010, a first discussion occurred and, thereafter, the process stalled, including the resignation of Betty Carrillo, president of the Parliamentary Commission (Checa, 2012b).

In the absence of consensus for the new law on communications, Correa decided to incorporate some questions related to this project in the constitutional referendum and the popular consultation held on May 7, 2011 (a total of 10 questions). The question was posed as follows:

Do you agree with the National Assembly, without delay within the period specified in the Organic Law of the Legislative Branch, issues a law on Communications to create a Regulation Council governing the dissemination of contents from television, radio and publications of newspapers that contain violence, sexually explicit or discriminatory messages; and to establish criteria for further responsibility of journalists or media broadcasting?

The results for this question were as follows:

Option	Votes		Percentage
Yes	3.882.379		44,96
No	3.630.263		42,04
Invalid ballot	454.337		5,26
Blank vote	667.397		7,73
Total	8.634.376		100%

Table 5. Results of question 9 of the referendum, based on the Communications Law
Source: Personal compilation based on data published in the Official Gazette the July 13, 2011.

With these results, the draft law is prepared and approved in the National Assembly on June 25, 2013, with 108 votes from the 135 (total 137) Assembly members present: Alianza País and 3 independent. Until then, criticism of the process had increased and the confrontation between the President and the media had grown; one of the criticisms of the final text is the inclusion of the figure of the media lynching (Art. 26) and the creation of the Superintendency of Information and Communication, entities whose creation had not been discussed in the process (Almeida, 2014).

In this process, UNESCO made certain recommendations. At the legal level, some of these suggestions were the creation of an independent regulatory body, the editorial independence of political and commercial interests, the mandatory certification, the criminalisation of defamation and contempt, the right to rectification and the establishment of mechanisms of liability, the transparency of public institutions, the promoting of citizen participation or the assumption of liability in case of limiting the freedom of expression (Unesco, 2011: 64ff.).

Against these recommendations (that showed support - with improvements - to the project), the liberal organisation Fundamedios warned of some risks (Ricaurte, 2010 cited in Checa, 2012a: 48): a) Imposing further liability rules that act as censorship, b) forced professionalisation, c) broad and discretionary sanctions regime, d) creating a broad and diffuse National Communication System, e) National Council of Information and Communication has the power to punish and even close media, and f) registration of media that acts as a previous operating license.

In an analysis of the final text approved by the National Assembly, major (and controversial) points that Communications Law in force in Ecuador since 2013 can be summarised as follows:

1) Redistribution of radio spectrum (Art. 106): Continuing the line taken by other countries in Latin America, Ecuador is committed to a redistribution of frequencies that promotes community and public media (nonexistent in Ecuador until 2008), to the detriment of the private media, up to now owners of more than 90% of radio frequencies, according to data from

the audit frequency developed by the committee in the National Council of radio and Television (Conartel). Redistribution set by law will have to finish as follows: 33% of the spectrum to private media, 33% for public media and 34% of the spectrum for community media. This is, undoubtedly, one of the great challenges of the bodies responsible for carrying redistribution, reversing the media map for a part of the 90% of private media fail to perform and yield space to community media, that just have a presence of 3% (including print media). In order to make it, Art. 106 states that “it will be gradually achieved and mainly formed by assigning the still available frequencies; reversion frequency for breach of technical rules, legal for their operation or purposes for which they were concessioned and their subsequent redistribution; and the frequencies distribution that return to the State as provided by law and the equitable distribution of frequencies and signals that will allow the digitalisation of radio and television transmission systems. In all these cases, the distribution of frequencies and signals will prioritise the community sector to ensure the equitable distribution established in this article”. However, the fact is that more than two years later the entry into force of the Communications Law, the new distribution of frequencies to community media has been practically zero, and media seized to date remain in State hands.

2) Creating regulatory bodies (Art. 47 to Art.59): The LOC gives rise to the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication Council (CORDICOM) and the Superintendency of Information and Communication (SUPERCOM), the latter even more controversial than the first. The CORDICOM is the body responsible for regulating: the access to information, the contents and slots, in addition to authorising (by binding report) the granting of frequencies and to preparing studies on the behaviour of the community in relation to media contents. For their functions, it uses the regulations that the body itself produces in each of the areas; until the end of 2014 it had issued ten regulations, but among them there were not some of the most important points, as the regarding to the community media or the discriminatory content. These have appeared throughout 2015 (referred to the intercultural communication – April – and redistribution of radio spectrum – October).

The members of CORDICOM⁵⁰ are: 1) a representative part of the Executive Branch (President), 2) National Equality Councils, 3) Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control, 4) Autonomous Decentralised Governments, and 5) Commissioner of the State.

On his behalf, the Superintendency of Information and Communication (SUPERCOM) is, as defined by the law itself (Art.55), “the technical surveillance, auditing, intervention and control organism, with penalising ability, of decentralised management with legal personality, its own estate and administrative, budgetary and organisational autonomy, which has broad powers to enforce the regulation rules of information and communication”. Its functions are, among others, to ensure compliance with the law and regulations and apply appropriate sanctions.

3) Right to confidentiality of sources (Art. 40) and right to professional secrecy (Art. 41), assuming one of the recommendations made by UNESCO, with which the professional activity of the journalist is protected: “The right to confidentiality of sources is legally protected in the Constitution, however, a recent case showed the possible violation of this right. The future communication law should specify, with clear and exhaustive terms, the exceptional cases in which this right is not recognised. Training of the different actors of the judiciary in matters of doctrine and inter-American jurisprudence in this area would also be advisable” (Unesco, 2011: 64).

4) Right of rectification (Art. 23) and right of reply (Art. 24), with which it is intended to protect the citizen against bad journalistic practices. Regarding the first, the media have the obligation to publish the relevant corrections in the 72 hours following submission of a claim, in a publication with the same characteristics, dimensions, space/time and section where the incorrect information was published. That same 72 hour deadline to exercise their right of reply is available to individuals or groups that consider their rights to dignity, honour or reputation to have been affected.

⁵⁰ The members of Cordicom (One of them leaves the Council in 2014). Recovered 19/02/15: http://www.cordicom.gob.ec/miembros_consejo/

5) *Defence Counsel of Audiences* (At. 73): figure created to defend the interests of the audiences and readers that all national media should have, prior appointment by the Council of Citizen Participation and Social Control. The defence counsel of audiences should take office in January 2015, but only in the last quarter of 2014 the requirements, responsibilities, salary, dependency ratio, etc, began to be discussed. In October 2014, the Council for the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication approved the regulations for this figure, however some important aspects of requirements for the selection of the defence council of audiences and readers remained unclear. That same month, CORDICOM issued a report indicating that the 61 national media should have a defence counsel of audiences. The choice of this person, as is established by law, must be by public tender.

As established by the corresponding resolution of CORDICOM, there are 61 media of national character: 34 radios, 20 television channels and 7 print media. For such identification, the national media with coverage over 30% of the population of the country covering, at least, two regions, and those with more than 6 repeaters (audiovisual) were considered. In the case of the radio stations, those with permanent networks of AM, FM and shortwave were counted. For print media, the national media with regional editions, the daily papers of an average of more than 8,000 print runs and with coverage of more than 30% of the population were taken into account. In March 2015 there were not selected yet any defence counsel of audiences and CORDICOM acknowledged the difficulties in the process⁵¹.

6) *Media lynching* (Art. 26): It is one of the biggest controversies of the Communications Law, which however is outside the subsequent regulation implementing the law (January 2014). It prohibits the dissemination of information that “directly or through third parties, is produced in concert and published repetitively via one or more media in order to discredit a natural or legal person or to reduce its public credibility”.

51 Recovered 02/11/15: <http://www.telegrafo.com.ec/noticias/informacion-general/item/reyes-reconoce-dificultades-en-seleccion.html>

7) *Professionalisation of journalism* (Art. 42 to 44): The LOC states that “permanent journalistic activities conducted in the media, at any level or position, must be performed by professionals in journalism or communication, except for those who have spaces of opinion and professionals or experts from other branches that maintain specialised programs or columns” (Art.42). This requirement does not affect, however, people who work in languages of indigenous nationalities or peoples.

The transitional arrangement l6 sets a period of six years to meet this qualification, which commits the media and public bodies to cooperate with the professionalisation process facilitating the needs of workers.

8) *Content regulation*: One of the most contentious issues of the LOC in international communication lies in the regulation of media content, which is a limit to freedom of expression. In the case of this law, it prohibits (Art.62) the dissemination of “discriminatory contents which have the purpose or effect of impairing or nullifying the recognition, enjoyment or exercise of human rights under the Constitution and international instruments”, as well as the contents that are advocating or inciting violent acts or practices based on discriminatory messages. Violent contents (Art. 67) and the broadcast of sexually explicit contents in a non-adult schedule (Art. 68) are also prohibited.

Conclusions

Throughout these pages we have analysed the Ecuadorian media system configuration and change process - still incomplete - that has been occurring. Although there are studio working models that have been accepted of a large number of countries, the academic literature, the historical, social, political, economic and cultural factors that define a region like Latin America make the development of its own model necessary, in order to attend to the particularities of the region and to not be limited to the models constructed for established democracies and countries with long media tradition.

The arrival to power of Rafael Correa (2007) meant a continuation of the Latin American public policies that proposed the democratisation of communication, and that meant taking the State from its responsibilities as a guarantor of citizens' rights to social empowerment towards equality and justice in communication. In this regard, in 2009 a Communications Law began to take form, however, it will not be ready until 2013 after a non-exempt controversy path: accusations of restricting freedoms from the private media and demands for greater transparency and social participation from professional and academic sectors. The law that was finally approved in the National Assembly contains among its main points the redistribution of the radio spectrum, which from now on should reach the following levels: 33% of the spectrum for public media, 33% for private media and 34% for community media. However, almost two years after the adoption of the Law, few changes have occurred in this area: around 90% of the media remain private, community media barely reach 3% and private media seized by the State are still in its hands. This new configuration tries to end a media concentration that some authors have called "media latifundia" (Mora, 2010) and implies that, for the first time, Ecuador has a system of public media, so far non-existent in the country, and official media responsible for reporting the work of the President and other public entities (the five functions of the State and autonomous Governments). Another important point of the Law is to create regulatory and surveillance organisms to impose penalties, trying to end bad media practices but that are received by the private media as mechanisms for restricting freedom of expression.

In addition to the Communications Law, the Government of Rafael Correa took other measures in the field of communication by maintaining an open confrontation with some sectors. The most significant is the prohibition to bankers to have a presence in the ownership of the media, as it was taken in order to break the traditional ties between the financial power and the media power. Another of the actions taken is the seizure, after the serious financial crisis in Ecuador, of some goods, including some media.

With all this, the Government aims to stop the general tendency towards concentration of private ownership of the media and to establish the State and the citizen as 'owners' of the communication process, to the extent

that the public policies implemented protect the citizen against the media power. It is, in any case, a process that has just begun in Ecuador and that lacks a long journey, being necessary the State support with mechanisms that allow the real citizen participation and also protect the journalist in a market too dependent on economic development.

Chapter V

Professionalization of journalism and professionalism of journalists in Ecuador

Abstract

This chapter presents a theoretical reflection on the discussion which emerged in 2014 in Ecuador focused on the professionalization of journalism and the professionalism of journalists. The model of journalism practised currently in Ecuador maintains characteristics that define and determine it. With the arrival to the presidency on January 15, 2007 of Rafael Correa, the adoption of the Constitution on 20 October, 2008 and the entry into force on June 25, 2013 of the Communications Law - and subsequent regulations - there have been a number of changes in the regulation of the media and journalism, causing a restructuring of the idea of professionalization of journalism and the consideration of professionalism in the journalists. Primarily focused on the relationship of the information and communication activity and the new needs of Ecuadorian society, offering a character of the journalistic profession based on the readaptation in which journalists, media and journalism schools join forces to strengthen the concept of professionalization of journalism in Ecuador.

Introduction

Journalism is a dynamic profession whose characteristics are changing and constantly adapting to the communicative, social, political and economic system in which it is integrated. Hence, journalism is in a constant restructuring based on new models emerging and defining media systems and society in general.

When speaking of professionalization of journalism, this chapter refers to the process through which an activity, a task or job becomes a profession based on ethical and legally stipulated rules or norms. This concept causes the subjects or individuals that engage in this activity of journalistic professionalism to embrace the idea of professionalism as a way of exercising the profession. Thus, the classic debate continues in the line of defining who journalists are; if, on the one hand, they are graduates in Journalism at the University or empirical professionals with over a decade of work in the media; or if, on the other hand, the people whose main source of income comes from their work in the media.

Currently, in Latin America - and therefore in Ecuador - it is impossible to speak of journalism as a homogeneous and unified professional activity because of the many influences and variables that define it. This diversification and plurality of tasks causes it to be very difficult to define journalism and, therefore, the boundaries that characterise the professionalization of this multidisciplinary activity and professionalism of individuals who carry it out can not be easily drawn. So the attempt to know the identity of Ecuadorian journalism involves analysing the context, generator of the influences that shape and structure the concepts of professionalization and professionalism, giving them distinctive traits.

From the arrival to Government of President Rafael Correa and the adoption of the Constitution, the approval of the Law of Communication produced a series of changes in the regulation of journalism and the media and the idea of professionalism among journalists in particular and among citizens in general. Primarily focused on the correlation of the information and communicative activity and the new needs of Ecuadorian society;

offering a character of journalism based on the search for a “professional identity” and a retraining in which journalists, media and journalism schools join forces to strengthen the concepts of professionalism and professionalization.

This conception of cultural and professional identity leads to raise in this chapter “the concepts of professionalism and professionalization that have always been the subject of a heated debate, with ambiguous borders and definitions that have suffered repeated reinterpretations” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 30; Oller and Barredo, 2013). More so in a region like Latin American with professional identity problems based on the lack of an entrenched own journalistic model (Oller, 2014) and where the idea of professionalism departs from a Western prejudice (Starck and Sudhaker, 1979).

1. The concept of identity and communicative theory of identity

Today, journalism is in the middle of a discussion about what journalism is and who a journalist is. The meaning of professionalism and professionalization is based on the identity theory and the theory of communicative action in which Habermas (1987) joined the concepts of personality – competences that allow an individual to take part in the processes of understanding and that claim its identity based on language and actions; culture – mode in which citizens that are part of a society or community interpret and understand the world; and society – relationship and interaction that people have in a group and that cause their stability and solidarity. Like this author, Hecht and coll. (2005) consider the communication of identity theory by claiming that the belonging to a professional group is not a static quality or an attribute set, but it is a concept based on a dynamic interaction between cultural laws, professionals, a type of language – verbal and nonverbal –, symbols, and discursive strategies. Connected, in turn, to the relationships established between media professionals and other political and social actors (Chavero and coll., 2013).

The context in which a group is situated establishes different professional and cultural identities. The identity of the journalistic community is defined by “the journalists that belong to this and share training, practices and

common values” (Katz, 1997; Tsfati, Meyers and Peri, 2006: 154). According to Collier and Thomas (1988) these ones are divided into three dimensions: 1) the field of activity of the identity - different aspects of behaviour and beliefs of a person determine their professional and cultural identity; 2) the intensity in the interpretation of the identity - the way a person adopts an identity; and 3) the preponderance of the representation of the identity - it determines the effect of the cultural elements on the identity of people in their daily routine.

The idea of identity causes a debate focused on the concepts of professionalism and professionalization since, as stated by Hallin and Mancini (2004: 30), “its borders are ambiguous and its definitions have been repeatedly reinterpreted”. Accordingly, in a media context such as Ecuador, where new legislations such as the Communications Law have caused a feeling of change in journalists, sometimes disturbing and uncertain, the foundations of the current journalistic culture Ecuador must be consolidated⁵². This sense of change and dynamism places journalists and the media at a point in which, in order to gain a professional identity, they must set the professional standards that determine journalism as a solid profession and differentiate it from others. Even in a society like the present one defined by a “liquid modernity” (Bauman, 2003) based on variability and mutability, where solids retain their shape and persist over time: they last; while liquids are misshapen and are constantly transforming: they flow. Like the deregulation, easing or liberalisation of markets.

Ecuador, following the adoption of the 2008 Constitution, has secured a socialist Government where the State is working in a democratic society based on the philosophy of “Good Living” (Buen Vivir) and in which the media conglomerate shows how Government intervention is increasingly growing in this market. Moreover, the idea of professionalization of journalism lives with global concepts -like those of multiculturalism, globalisation, (de)regulation and free market- and local concepts -of multiculturalism, location, intervention, socialisation and integration. This situation

⁵² The so direct Government involvement in the approval of the LOC has caused its consequences on the creation of a particular model of journalism because of the confrontation that President Rafael Correa has with certain media sectors that have branded this law as a “gag law” that consolidates the official voice.

causes the identity of Ecuadorian journalists to be forged on the basis of their common set of professional features that distinguish the profession as such within society, confirming or denying their professionalism and the level of professionalization of journalism⁵³.

2. Is journalism a profession?

Journalism is an activity that does not have the tradition of liberal professions such as medicine or law. However, as Hallin and Mancini (2004) state, there are three dimensions that reinforce the professionalization of it: 1) the professional autonomy of individuals, 2) the standards or rules that determine professional performance modes based on the ethical and professional codes⁵⁴, and 3) the idea of public service of communication and journalism⁵⁵.

The controversy stems from the idea of whether “journalism is merely a profession or a trade” (Becker and coll., 2005: 37). Proof of this is that “there is no other profession in contemporary societies where the gap between its undisputed importance for the whole society and the perception of its boundaries, structures and competencies is so large” (Donsbach, 2009: 38). In the last century various studies were conducted in order to analyse the professionalization of journalism and the professionalism of journalists (McLeod and Hawley Jr., 1964; McLeod, 1965) in the United States. Subsequently, McLeod and Rush (1969) replicated this work in Latin America, confirming the existence of a greater number of similarities than differences in the concept of professionalism among US and Latin American journalists. Although, as Donsbach (1981: 64) stated, “these comparisons between different countries show that professionalization is neither universal nor was based on a neutral concept”. Specifically in Ecuador, following the idea of Collins (1990), we cannot speak of a single type of professionalization. On the one hand, it is based on “private government” (private capital media

53 The purpose of this chapter is not to display if Ecuadorians are considered professionals or if journalism is in the process of professionalization. Rather, it seeks to raise the theoretical assumptions that reinforce these ideas in the context of the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

54 The Communication Law of Ecuador, in its Art. 9., states that “The mass public, private and community media will have to issue their own codes of conduct aimed at improving their internal management practices and their communication work”.

55 This idea has been developed more extensively by Chavero and Oller (2014) in the article “Communication in Ecuador, right or a public service?”

and a liberal point of view) and on the other hand, focused on a political struggle for control (public, governmental and community media and a polarised pluralist dynamic).

As raised by Hanitzsch (2009), the concepts of professionalization and professionalism must be distinguished. The first is the process by which a trade becomes a profession and “where the practical exercise of journalism carries an institutional product characterised by a high degree of objectivity, factuality and neutrality” (McQuail, 1994: 198) and, the second, is the idea that journalists share or chase, “that which justifies them within their own group and against outsiders” (Humanes, 2003: 48) and “allows them to build a professional identity” (Elliot, 1947; Ortega and Humanes, 2000: 165a). In both cases, the meaning of “journalism” should be clear, affirming that it is “a kind of collective communication of information and opinion nature that is characterised primarily by its relevance and social interest” (Real, 2006: 347) in which, according to Benito (1995: 16-17), “the considered journalist offers a service to society, providing information to the public of that most outstanding part of universality, which is the present”.

Therefore “the journalist is presented as the person responsible for interpreting the social reality so that citizens can understand it, adapt to it and modify it” (Gomis, 1991: 35). This idea is based, first, on a career guidance supported by “strong professional features” (Donsbach and Patterson, 2004: 281) and, second, on “the adoption of an ideology of journalism as “custodian of public trust” (Hallin and Mancini, 2004: 33).

It is important to note that the concept of professionalism in journalism has evolved from a Western idea and, therefore, cannot be interpreted in the same way in non-Western societies (Starck and Sudhaker, 1979) as in the case of Ecuador. Consequently, the process of professionalization of journalism and the concept of professionalism of Ecuadorian journalists are unclear concepts where still today the different career options and diverse occupational structures are being studied. Proof of this is the work that is being done by certain regulatory bodies such as CORDICOM. More so, as Mellado (2009: 12) states, in favour of a “journalism that seems to continue beyond mass media, where the professional capacity to develop

this profession in the newly emerging areas of the field of communication, as well as the social legitimization achieved, are still in doubt”.

In Ecuador, the professionalization of journalism is being built based on the influence of contextual values divergent from: 1) recent and ongoing changes at the legislative, political, educational, media, economic, cultural and social level; 2) the approval of new laws and regulations that directly affect the structure of the media system of the country; 3) the proliferation of new faculties and schools of Social Communication and Journalism and technical and technological degrees; 4) greater State intervention in areas such as the licensing of the media, the redistribution of radio spectrum and a firm commitment to the development and an increase in the number of public and community media; and 5) the current configuration of the media market where, according to the Unique Register of Media of CORDI-COM, there are 1,190 communication entities, of which 91% are private media, 5% are public and 4% are community media in the frequency distribution of the current radio spectrum in Ecuador .

There is another aspect within public discussion in Ecuador: the need to create different bodies or institutions of professional journalists seated in “a collective organisation capable of assuming both wage claims and labour issues, as well as a broader range of objectives consistent with the role of journalism and the media in our societies” (Aznar, 2005: 159). In this regard we can speak of 1) press associations, 2) professional associations of journalists⁵⁶, 3) unions directly responsible for defending the occupational interests of the media professionals, 4) forums of journalist organisations responsible for creating a common space for international media organisations, and 5) international federations of journalists within the international collaborative plane. This type of professional organisation and colla-

56 The Inter-American Court of Human Rights held on November 13, 1985 an Advisory Opinion OC-5/85 for the compulsory licensing of journalists. His arguments were that 1) the licensing is a way to guarantee society an objective and truthful information by means of a system of ethics and professional responsibility, based on the common good; 2) it is a way of strengthening unions and thus a guarantee of the freedom and independence of these professionals and a requirement of the common good; 3) the freedom and independence of journalists is an asset that must be protected and guaranteed; 4) it prevents the exercise of journalism to those who are not members of the school and limits the access to this to graduates of a particular degree; and 5) the direct link that journalism has with freedom of expression differs from other professions.

boration, which entails taking into account the journalist from a collective and empowered perspective, is also necessary for the professionalization of journalism.

3. Who is/are (a) journalist/s?

The answer to this question, seemingly obvious, has countless nuances. It could be determined, from an academic point of view, that a journalist is a person licensed in Journalism. The most heterodox authors use larger concepts and claim that a journalist is a person who writes in newspapers. Materialist authors emphasise the fact that a journalist is the one that makes journalism his main source of income. And, even, some argue that “journalists are all of us” (Chivite, 2006: 92).

The proposal of different definitions based on the sociology of professions and professional socialisation models presented by Sherlock and Morris (1967), and later by Moore (1970), aims to identify the factors and processes that provide the values for which the journalist becomes considered a professional in communication (Oller and Meier, 2012):

- a) diversity and journalistic activity based on “the nature of the profession itself after the academic training received” (Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman, 1976: 123);
- b) academic training and “the kind of education or professional training received” (Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman, 1976: 123); and
- c) autonomy at work, hence that “a professional is the one who puts special emphasis on his service, on his intellectual activity, on his autonomy, on his influence and is in possession of specialised intellectual techniques that enable efficient service to the community” (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933: 284; Aldridge and Evetts, 2003).

Despite the attempt of many other researchers to define who journalists are that can build “a professional identity” (Ortega and Humanes, 2000a: 165; Oller and Meier, 2012: 45), even today it is of enormous complexity to

answer this question. Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1976) identified a number of common values of the journalist as a professional from his education and training, the type of career followed, and the demographic environment and social relationships. In addition, today could be added to these values the influences from new technologies and context - audiences or users, media and market relations or power struggles. This shows the fluctuating, flexible, contextual and relational nature of what is defined as journalism and journalist.

4. Professional diversification in journalism

The journalism profession today is shown to be more diverse than homogeneous due to multiple variants such as new technologies, the journalistic culture of a region, the media market and personal characteristics of journalists. The plurality of occupations within journalism makes it very difficult to define the profession and that has to be approached from the multifaceted and multidisciplinary point of view (Ortega, 2003). Studies such as the one carried out by Mellado and coll. (2007: 141) provide results that show how “in recent years the career opportunities and labour markets that receive the new journalists are changing”. Proof of this is that in Latin America an increasingly greater number of students majoring in Journalism and Mass Communication do not work in traditional media (Willnat and Weaver, 2006)⁵⁷.

This labour and academic diversification of journalism is redefining journalism where the journalist today has a broad spectrum of possibilities and internships outside the traditional media structure (Mellado, 2009c). In addition, according to Weaver and coll. (2007: 3), “one of the challenges of journalism education today is how to address the growing percentage of students who graduate and do not work in traditional media and move to other fields like corporate communication or advertising”.

Consequently, any attempt to determine the different identities defined as journalism depends on the context and the economic, social and cultural

⁵⁷ According to a study carried out by Mellado and coll. (2007), 65% of journalists in Chile is not work in mainstream media (Mellado and coll., 2007). Another study by the Mexican Labor Observatory (2012) argues that 70.5% of journalists in Mexico is engaged in activities unrelated to their training.

circumstances of a country, suffering variations and temporal and spatial fluctuations. Authors such as Pereira (2005: 427) emphasise that “today we are witnessing a shift away from journalism of media as an area preferably within communication where the journalist appears as a strategist and as a designer of various proposals of communication” and the professional career in journalism, according to Muñoz (2006: 187), has become “a career of service, adjusted to work in interdisciplinary fields and increasingly away from the formal structures of the mass media, which means that students, teachers and universities assume responsible, plural and realistic training, opening up alternative career paths without losing their journalistic identity”.

One of the current professional fields in which there has been more progress is the one linked to the production of institutional information. There is a significant percentage of professionals who possess a degree in Journalism and work within the communication offices. For this reason, and linked to the to this relationship between these cabinets with the media, they are considered as journalists by some authors. Hence, this classification of journalism shows an “independent journalist of the media and, within this, the scope of reality in which his work is centred, that is, the specialty or thematic content that s/he addresses” (Real 2005: 136; Oller and Meier 2012).

5. University education and journalism

Currently one of the bases of the professionalization of journalism is university and professional training. According to Oller and Meier (2012: 49), “is not intended to state nor deny in any way that we can get (or not) a ‘better’ journalism if there has been a university degree in journalism and then we have learned the journalistic techniques in an editorial office”. To assert this would fall into the reductionist area and would be fully retractable because it would move away significantly from communicative reality, especially in Ecuador.

At first, the educational training of future journalists influences their perception of the profession and “leads them to realise their professional

practices in certain ways” (Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha, 2003: 319). However, their experience in the media “produces an effect that is more powerful than the formative attitudes and aspirations that future journalists who are in the educational process receive” (Sanders and coll., 2008: 148). Furthermore, journalists also construct their identity as professionals from informal channels such as contact with fellow students at university (Elliott, 1947) and by contact with the other journalists in their working places with whom they interact, acquiring an experience assimilated as osmosis (Breed, 1955).

The truth is that the training of media professionals is controversial because “there is no doubt that it is a university area that is continually questioned and there is still debate whether it is a scientific discipline or whether it is just a field of multidisciplinary study” (Lozano and Mariño, 2010: 261). In Ecuador, due to this indecision, universities have opted for a formation of inter and trans disciplinary character in their university training proposal related to Communication Sciences (Punín and Martínez, 2013; Oller, 2014).

In Ecuador there is an open conflict between “graduate journalists” - usually with less experience - at university and the “empirical journalists” - with a long career in the media - that have conducted their training in the newsrooms of the media where they have worked.

With this exposure, we intend to clarify and avoid this conflict based on the duality between “empirical” or “academic” journalists. The really important aspect, according to the study of Ortega and Humanes (2000b), is that journalism training at universities is the result of three variables: 1) the interest of the media in improving the qualifications of their workers; 2) the decision taken by universities, faculties of communication and colleges to provide training based on scientific and quality criteria; and 3) the consideration by the political system to create communicative level functional institutions. In practical terms this training is also important because, as stated by Machin and McNally (2007), unemployment decreases among individuals who have a university degree, although it should be noted, according to Sánchez-Olavarría (2014: 50), that “sometimes they do not work in the area in which they studied”.

The debate on journalism as an academic discipline in universities has been occurring in recent years not only in Ecuador, but in most countries of the world. Aspect that shows how the balance between the media industry and university education remains over time (Deuze, 2005). Academics such as Aguinaga (1980) and Iglesias (2004) defend the importance of a regulated journalism education, the first based on the importance of incorporating studies of journalism and mass communication for the professionalization of this activity and, the second, on subversion of the right to press freedom in the academic and university community. Other authors such as Diezhandino, Bezunartea and Coca (1994: 42-43), however, do not discuss the need for a solid university education or the guarantee of a degree in Information Sciences, but about “the flexibility of access to a media that, it cannot be forgotten, is an industry for profit as well as public service”.

Another fundamental issue in this debate on the journalistic profession is the regulated training of journalists in universities and their access to practice in a controlled manner (Sánchez, 2005), since “there is now an overabundance of professionals and lack of jobs” (Arroyave and Blanco, 2005: 367). the proof of this is that according to FELAFACS, Latin America had 1,026 programs offered in faculties and schools of Communication and Journalism in 2005, but “very few schools of Journalism in the Latin American region have plans that allow the graduate student to access professionals fields that are not part of the media industry” (Chong and Rodríguez, 2006; Mellado, Salinas and Barría, 2009: 94).

In Ecuador, since the creation of the first Faculty of Social Communication at the Central University of Ecuador in 1943, the academic training in the field of communication has been strengthened to total 29 Colleges and Schools of Communication and Journalism today⁵⁸. Despite this, university curricula (mallas curriculares) are characterised by the standardised, theoretical, outdated contents and not very set to media reality of Ecuador and the new information technologies (ICT). This is not new, but a continuation of the academic proposals of past decades. A study in Latin America, conducted in 1994 by the School of Journalism and Mass Media at Flo-

58 Most offer the degree on Social Communication.

rida International University, concluded that the education the journalists received in college “was so bad that some of them, and some executives, praised journalistic training received by the Armed Forces” (Virtue and coll., 1994: 87). At the beginning of this century Buitrón and Astudillo (2005), in their analysis of journalism in Ecuador, stated that: 1) the educational system was poor and no college facilitated the intellectual and methodological tools necessary for a professional future, and 2) teachers had not enough training and experience in journalism.

This outdated academic system and these mismatches between training in universities and career opportunities in Ecuador has caused an imbalance between supply and demand of professionals that is leading to the collapse and saturation of certain journalistic tasks - especially those developed within the media communication; while others, by their vagueness, are still in legislative limbo and, on many occasions, are defined by the meddling and the intrusion of professionals from other areas - secretariat, economy, public relations, etc. Thus, in Ecuador there is still the same mistake that has been occurring in the Latin American context and that Mellado and coll. (2007) emphasise: “to assume that the professional who does not work in the mass media is not a journalist”.

In the process of professionalization of journalism conducted by CORDICOM, “the actual demand of professionals is being identified to design the degrees at universities and other schools - together with SENESCYT”⁵⁹ ⁶⁰. Thus, these public organisms follow the proposal by Punín and Martínez (2013) stating that the multidisciplinary position of journalism in Ecuador and Latin America and market trends are leading to a humanistic training and a technical training of the future professionals. However, in this process of professionalization, the continuous training in newsrooms is not contemplated, as confirmed by the results of the Development Media Evaluation Report 2011 carried out by UNESCO, as the single-level support of the media is low. Proof of this is that 60% of respondents confirm they did not receive any support from their media for their personal continuous development and only 7.5% have received it via distance learning.

⁵⁹ Journalism has a higher education degree lasting 9 semesters. Furthermore, in the areas of Audiovisual, Photography and Radio, technical and technological studies will be started with duration of 5 semesters.

⁶⁰ Recovered 27/03/15: <http://www.cordicom.gob.ec/profesionalizacion-carreras-tecnicas/>

Finally, although there is no uniform position on the need for regulated academic and vocational training in the process of professionalization of journalism and in the sense of professionalism of journalists, as Hallin and Mancini (2004: 30) say, “formal training is increasingly common and often plays an important role in the definition of journalism as an occupation or social institution”. But besides, they point out that “it is not essential to the practice of journalism, since there is not a strong correlation between professional autonomy and formal training”.

6. Autonomy as one of the pillars of professionalism

The autonomy of a social system is defined as “the ability of the system to manage or to self-regulate the relationship between the external references and self-references” (Luhmann, 1968: 708). Systems are structurally oriented to the environment and, without it, they could not exist: therefore, it is not an occasional contact or a mere adaptation. The systems are formed and maintained through the creation and preservation of the difference with the environment and use their boundaries to regulate this difference. Without this difference, self-reference would not exist because it is the premise for the function of all self-referential operations. In this regard, the conservation of limits is the conservation of the system (Luhmann, 1998).

The media system would be autonomous if it was able to be independent of its environment, selecting certain features and rejecting others as a method of protection. The autonomy of journalists determines their capacity as self-referential since, according to Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), it protects them from the influences that come from external levels – the specific professional rules regarding autonomy could not govern the practice of journalism if this practice was controlled by external actors (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) and from legislative context, among other factors. Some authors have shown the strong influence that is given by the economic and political system (Chavero, 2015); and internal – the degree of professional autonomy that a journalist, at the individual level, can enjoy is directly related to the organisational structure of his media (Scholl and Weischenberg, 1999). Although there are other authors for whom professio-

nalization in journalism arises from the criteria that journalists share on newsworthy news, regardless of their political orientations. And the fact that journalists tend to define their position in the field according to their fellow journalists' opinions and not to other external actors (Scholl and Weischenberg, 1999; Oller and Meier, 2012).

In Latin America, journalists have a professional dispute where “there is a division between the tight control of the media system and the journalistic autonomy” (Ruótolo, 1987: 132). Ecuador is no exception, as the results obtained from the project “Journalistic Culture of Ecuador (JCE)” show how the Ecuadorian journalists interviewed feel, especially, the pressure from regulatory organisms such as the CORDICOM and SUPERCOM, the Communications Law and communication policies implemented by the State. If we talk about professionalization of journalism in Ecuador, the level of autonomy is a feature that determines whether a journalistic culture is healthy (Oller, 2014) since this concept represents the freedom of the journalists in their work without being controlled by external or internal forces (Scholl and Weischenberg, 1999).

“Journalism has sometimes been considered a semi-profession since its autonomy as work or independent and singular profession has not been well defended and established” (Weaver and coll., 2007: 71)⁶¹ and because “the level of autonomy of journalists is a dynamic concept flowing and that continually meets the needs of journalism” (Sjovaag, 2013: 164)⁶². Despite certain difficulties, in Ecuador the existence of professional standards is evidently and directly related to the level of autonomy of journalists. However, there is a negative attitude on the part of certain media and journalists⁶³ regarding media control from the State and regulatory agencies because it is considered invasive and imposed since it comes from outside and institutions that are separate from journalism.

61 Vagueness.

62 Dynamism.

63 An example is the filing of the complaint against the Communications Law on September 4, 2013 by people like former mayor of Quito Paco Moncayo, former Assembly members María Paula Romo and César Montúfar; writers Hernán Rodríguez Castelo, Iván Carvajal and Marco Antonio Rodríguez; and journalists Diego Oquendo, Andrés Carrión and Jeannette Hinojosa, among others. Recovered 24/09/14: <http://www.elmercurio.com.ec/396059-politicos-y-periodistas-presentan-demanda-contra-ley-comunicacion-en-ecuador/#.VCK86Ranr3g>

Hanitzsch and coll. (2008) confirmed regarding professional autonomy in journalism that the perception that journalists have depends mainly on the political and legal influences, which are responsible for structuring the parameters by which media systems are regulated (although the limits imposed by the media organisations and commercial imperatives are raised increasingly by journalists as challenges to overcome for journalistic autonomy). The conclusions drawn by the authors could be applied to the Ecuadorian journalistic context because they shed light on the current debate because the perceived level of autonomy of journalists and the media in the country is inversely related to limitations imposed from outside.

The main influences on the level of autonomy that journalists in Ecuador experience do not differ too much from those found by Weaver and coll. (2007) in the US in 2002. These authors classified the main limitations to the autonomy of journalists into four large groups: 1) those required by agents outside the media organisation; 2) those imposed by the main beliefs that guide the work of journalists; 3) those imposed by trade and economic issues; and 4) those imposed by policies, processes or practices within the media. Thence, it can be seen how there are some worldwide limiting shared factors regarding the autonomy of journalists; and that, therefore, “increasing the autonomy and professional independence of those who work in the media goes, first of all, to recognise that journalism is a profession” (Aznar, 2005: 136).

Conclusions

This chapter has described some of the theoretical foundations of what is considered as professionalization of journalism, a process that Ecuador is now undergoing, and professionalism of Ecuadorian journalists. Nothing is further from the intent of this chapter than the attempt to determine what would be considered as journalism in Ecuador. Through the different sections, it has been shown how much of the exposed theoretical assumptions can be refuted or have a counterpart that could contradict them. The most important point that we obtain from such discussion is that today, in Ecuador, the importance of this process of professionalization lies in reaching the social recognition of journalists and media professionals that, for

a proper exercise of journalism, must have optimal working conditions in a changing environment and an increasingly diverse market.

The process of professionalization of journalism in Ecuador should be analysed based on the current media reality and the political, social and economic context of the country, recognising, as Mellado (2009) raises, that professional diversity goes beyond media communication. The professionalization of journalism must revolve around the professionalism of journalists that in no case should be based on professional standards considered globally, but in the socialised and joint decision of a group of professionals belonging to a specific country or region that develop a consensus activity based on shared ethics capable of generating a type of communication adjusted to the needs of society. As Buitrón and Astudillo (2005: 29) stated, “the attitude of opening the spectrum allows the journalist to be different, more professional, rigorous, serious, democratic, not committed to any power, any sector, with no partisan, business or hegemonic groups interest”.

Regarding the relationship between universities and the training of journalists, the joint work of academia and the practice of adapting university curricula to the needs and the real diversity of the journalistic and communication activities of Ecuador is a key factor in the professionalization of journalism. In a context in which the media contribute increasingly to shape our image of reality, in which the (good) information is the subject of (demanding) processes of elaboration, selection, contextualisation, and so on, we cannot continue saying that journalists do not require special preparation (Aznar, 2005: 143). In these aspects the State supports his ideas to require legally a university degree to journalists in Ecuador. Although, following on from the idea of Aznar (2005), the risks arising when determining the aspects that define the professionalization of journalism in Ecuador from legal and not social requirements cannot be ignored: 1) to institutionalise the professional corporatism of communication and journalism; 2) to restrict the plurality, variety, multiplicity and diversity of voices and criteria; 3) to promote the standardisation process; 4) to support standardisation; 5) to tend to professional isolation and to a minor involvement with the social environment; and 6) to facilitate political instrumentalization.

By exposing the risks of a possible surplus of legislation by the Ecuadorian Government we do not pretend to show a situation of “cause and effect” but we try to give an overview of all the edges of the legal requirement of the university degree. Furthermore, we should not overlook the fact that, despite a high level of training in journalism being considered indispensable, “the requirement to hold a specific university degree to practice journalism does not exist in any developed country in the world” (Aznar, 2005: 152).

The ability of the media to self-regulate is based on the autonomy that journalists have in their practice. This autonomy is not focused only on the development of contents, but in the possibility of making decisions in their media and in their profession regarding State regulators, the market and society. This media self regulation – in case it works – would ease the work of organisations like CORDICOM and SUPERCOM, which could focus on the functions of monitoring, supervision and collaboration. In order that sanctions aimed at journalists or media, which make worthy actions, would be taken by consensus with the majority of journalists and media – based on the current legislation and ethics codes.

Currently, “the concentration, the technologisation and the sophistication of the newsroom have favoured the professionalization of journalism” (Aznar, 2005: 143 and 145). Therefore, to establish the importance of new information and communications technology as a cross matter in Ecuadorian journalism and as “fundamental tools” in the journalistic professional work, is one of the main tasks of the professional in communication. As well as understanding, by the owners of the media, the journalists, the regulators organisms and the State, that “the one that upholds, finances and maintains the information business is society [...] and that journalism must serve it with efficiency and professionalism” (Buitrón and Astudillo, 2005: 26).

Paradoxically, one of the most disturbing aspects about the professionalism of journalists in Ecuador are the words used by Weber (1919, 1991) to describe the state of journalism in the early 20th century in Europe: 1) lack of professional identity, 2) lack of minimum conditions to be considered as

a decent and stable activity, and 3) lack of ethics and prestige of those engaged in it. If we analyse carefully the different sections of this chapter, we come to the conclusion that the current situation of Ecuadorian journalists shares many similarities with these journalists that Weber mentioned - with a time difference of more than 110 years and a spatial difference of about 9000 kilometres. Although it should be clear that it is not an exclusive situation of journalists in Ecuador, but a trend relating to the current economic crisis, at regional and global level.

Finally, the professionalization of journalism in Ecuador should be based on freedom, pluralism, independence and security of the media, as states the report Freedom of expression and media development global trends: regional situation in Latin America and the Caribbean, published by UNESCO in 2014.

Chapter VI

Communication in Ecuador, right or public service?

Abstract

Communication, because of its relationship to power, has been one of the fundamental aspects that Governments of some countries have taken into account in their mandates. In recent years the trend to regulate the information and/or communication has grown continuously in Latin America. One year after the adoption of the Communications Law of Ecuador, 2014, the socialist Government of Rafael Correa proposed a constitutional amendment so that communication would become a public service, still outstanding in 2015. This chapter outlines the questions and conflicts that can arise from this measure carried out in different areas: legal-normative, economic-financial, social-democratic and communicative. The implications in these considerations and the significance of the adopted measures show, for the first time in the country, that communication is a strategic sector.

Introduction

Communication has been, in recent years, one of the areas subject to legislation in Latin America. Not surprisingly, the reformulation of the existing regulations on communication has become a common pattern in Latin America and the Caribbean. According to UNESCO, of the 33 countries that make up Latin America and the Caribbean, 19 have undertaken this task or have announced their intention to do so.

In the case of Ecuador, the Law of Communication of 2013 was followed by the proposal by the Government of Rafael Correa to make communication into a public service. This has caused a political and social debate in the country in polarised terms. This chapter provides a review of fundamental issues that could have this measure and the implications that it could have in various fields.

Academic literature has tried to explain the motivations that lead a citizen to choose public service as their career choice. In this sense, there are three categories of analysis: rational, normative and affective (Perry and Recession, 1990). In response to this formulation, from the rational perspective, the participation in the formulation of public policies or ideological affinity programs to form part of public services is argued (*ibid.*). From a normative perspective, some of the explanations given include loyalty to the country or the pursuit of social equity. From the affective point of view, identification with a program or the sense of patriotism are several of the motivations that literature associates with public employees (*ibid.*).

These are proposals that different authors have suggested, often in combination with each other and with others, some of the fundamental motivations of citizens to choose the public sector. These motivations to join the public sector have been under study for a long time. But nevertheless, in this chapter, we adopt a different perspective: what leads the State to adopt certain public services or others.

In Latin America and the Caribbean there has been, historically, a trend towards concentration of ownership in the media, especially in recent de-

cadres. In this context, the proposal of the Government of Ecuador can be understood as an attempt to disoligopolise (from private hands) the media landscape. Added to this, it should be noted the distrust shown by Ecuadorian citizens regarding the media. According to the study *Latinobarómetro-Ecuador* (2011), distrust is significant in the case of the written press (54.4%), television being the media in which the Ecuadoreans interviewed deposited a greater confidence index. This distrust is also evident in other institutions. Distrust levels are particularly significant towards the unions (67%), the judiciary (66.7%), and political parties (65.7%).

1. The meaning of public service

The activities designated as public service are those that are associated with the strategic sectors of a country and that, because of these and other peculiarities, remain in State hands (or controlled by it) to ensure proper management for the benefit of citizens. One of the main aspects of public services is the (lack of) competitiveness: "From the economic point of view, this – competitiveness – increases the efficiency in the allocation of goods and services. From a political standpoint, it decentralises the power and prevents limitations of the power of consumers" (Solanes, 1999: 18). But public services have other specific characteristics (Phillips, 1993, quoted in Solanes, 1999: 11 ff.):

- › They are activities in which there is not always competition, regulated by the Government on grounds of public interest.
- › Some public services seem to work more efficiently as monopolies, but this way of acting sometimes is required by legal regulation.
- › Their regulation comes from the public interest and results are control and service rates.
- › There is often conflict between public and private interest because they have different objectives.
- › Regulation of management and entities varies according to the circumstances and needs.

The following sections show the main areas that could be affected in the event of communication in Ecuador becoming a public service.

2. Implications of the proposed constitutional amendment

2.1. Legal-normative aspect

Traditionally, information and communication have been considered as fundamental rights, expressed through different formulations: freedom of expression and opinion, freedom of information and freedom of the press. In this way they are collected by national (Constitution of Ecuador, article 16; Communication Organic Law Article, 17) and international legal texts (Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 19; American Convention on Human Rights, Article 13; Declaration of Chapultepec; Declaration of Windhoek or the International Code of Journalistic Ethics).

In national legislation, the third section of the Constitution of Ecuador is dedicated to Communication and Information (Art. 16–20). It recognises the right to “a free, intercultural, inclusive, diverse and participatory communication in all areas of social interaction, by any means and form, in its own language and its own symbols” (I) and to the “creation of media and equal access to the use of the radio spectrum frequencies to manage radio stations and public, private and community television, and to the free use of wireless networks bands”. The Constitution establishes the State’s obligation to foster plurality and diversity in communication (Art. 17) and to not allow monopolies or oligopolies, direct or indirect, the ownership of the media and the use of frequencies (Art. 17.3).

The seventh section of the Constitution (dedicated to social communication) completes the definition of the communication system of Ecuador. In the article 384, the components are listed: institutions and actors of public nature, policies and norms and private actors, citizens and community that voluntarily integrate into it. In that same article the Government committed to formulate the public communication policy, “with full respect for freedom of expression and communication rights enshrined in the Constitution and the international human rights instruments”.

The constitutional amendment formulation submitted by the Government proposes a reform in this article (384), with which communication would be considered as a public service, provided by public, private and community media, according to the proposal. Communication, in case this amendment is approved, would move from be a right (or a good in the case of information, as the Organic Law of Communication states) to be a public service, category that strategic sectors of the country have.

To understand what is meant by “public service”, we should go to the Ecuadorian Constitution again. Article 314 establishes what the public services are: drinking water and irrigation, sanitation, electricity, telecommunications, roadways, ports and airports and others determined by law. These are the responsibility of the State, which will be responsible for ensuring that “public services and provision meet the principles of obligation, generality, consistency, efficiency, accountability, universality, accessibility, continuity and quality. The State will ensure that the prices and tariffs for public services are equitable and will establish their control and regulation”. According to the supreme law, the management of these sectors will depend on public companies that the State constitutes for it, reserving the right to delegate the management to public companies in which the State has a majority shareholding and, exceptionally, to private companies and popular and solidarity economy⁶⁴.

In light of this proposal, a conflict between two articles of the Constitution is perceived, because on one hand the right of all citizens to be part of the communication system constituting a plural and diverse system is guaranteed and, on the other, the management of communication is reserved for the State. However, the initial proposal for amendment would allow the management by private companies: “Communication as a public service will be provided through public, private and community media”. In the event that the management is offered to private companies and an infraction or offence was committed, it is necessary to clarify what the

64 Article 315 of the Constitution of Ecuador: “The State shall establish public enterprises for the management of strategic sectors, the provision of public services, the sustainable use of natural resources or public goods and the development of other economic activities” and Article 316: “The State may delegate participation in strategic sectors and public services to joint ventures in which it has a majority stake. [...] It may, exceptionally, delegate to the private sector and popular and solidarity economy the pursue of those activities”.

responsibility would be and of what type, just as the type of violations in which it would be incurring and their consequences.

When speaking of public services, the ability to regulate may be in the hands of the Executive, but can also be independent of the same, as is the case in the USA (Solanes, 1999). That is, there are different levels of independence of the regulator of public services and companies that offer them (public, private or mixed). Regardless of the regulatory body, it must also be subject to some kind of accountability in terms of its responsibilities (financial, activities, legal, social, etc.). This would imply the existence of some other body with skills and superior capabilities, able to exercise a degree of control over the regulator.

But there is also another conflict: national treaties (Constitution) vs international treaties that recognise communication as a right; Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes the one to not being harassed because of their opinions, to seek, receive and impart information and ideas, regardless of frontiers, by any means of expression”. Along the same lines, Article 13 of the American Convention on Human Rights, adds that “the right of expression by indirect methods or means cannot be restricted, such as the abuse of Government or private controls over newsprint, of radio frequencies or the equipment used in the dissemination of information, or by any other means tending to impede communication and circulation of ideas and opinions” (Art. 13.3) and that “everyone has the right to freedom of thought and expression. This right includes freedom to seek, receive and impart information and ideas of all kinds, regardless of frontiers, either orally, in writing or in print, through art or through any media of his choice” (Art. 13.1).

2.2. Economic-financial aspect

The open debate in Ecuador on the possibility of communication being considered as a public service raises, in addition to legal disputes, some doubts so-far unresolved. Would all media professionals become public servants? Would be State authorisation be required to practice as a journa-

list? Does the direct management of State suppose a regulation of contents, of radio spectrum, in the price of paper or any other type? Would it still be the delegation of management exceptionally to private companies?

From the economic point of view, public services can be managed both publicly (Europe) and privately (USA). For those who defend private management, “the regulation of public services is an anti-consumer, monopolistic and rates fixer plan” (DiLorenzo, 1996: 49). The experience of cable TV in Sacramento (USA, 1987) is an example that natural monopolies, in this field, “are mercantilist schemes where a monopoly is created for the benefit of cable companies, that share the loot with the politicians through campaign contributions, free air time for ‘public service’ programming, contributions to local foundations favoured by the politicians, shareholdings and consulting contracts for well related and various kinds of gifts to the authorities that grant licenses” (DiLorenzo, 1996: 55).

For those who, on the other side, defend public management of services, this is a way to guarantee protection for citizens, since the State would be responsible for managing the services that, due to their high cost, are impossible to meet for individuals and enterprises. Thus, fulfilment of services that refer to universal rights/basic services would always be guaranteed regardless of the profitability of the same, once the State has defined the form of financing and fees that the ‘new’ public service would mean for the citizen. For this to be fulfilled, the Government department responsible must be in agreement with the ideological proposals that defend this position of the State. Experience in other countries has shown that privatisation of public services has meant that citizens fade into the background, behind purely economic interests. In the case of Ecuador, the Government have a favourable public opinion, given that 57% of the Ecuadorian population consider as beneficial a process of privatisation of State companies, according to data from *Latinobarómetro* (2013), although in the survey the type of activity of these organizations is not collected.

If it becomes a public service, the State would undertake to ensure the access of all citizens to communication, with affordable rates for all social sectors. To this we must add other items of interest to consumers of public services according to Solanes (1999):

- › That the principles of benefits of public services are common to all services.
- › That fundamental criterion for the profit of the companies is the principle of fair return to efficient services.
- › That the publication of the criteria upon which the rates are set is a must for regulators.
- › That a detailed analysis of options under consideration is provided.
- › That the possible outcomes of different choices are stated in enough detail to know the opinion of consumers.
- › That there is a possibility of informed and timely participation in the debate.
- › That the reason for decisions is known.

All this bearing in mind that it is not about traditional consumers/users of public services, but citizens who need access to information of public interest to make their own assessment of the issues that concern them.

The deregulation experience in the telecommunications market, which has led to a purely economic struggle, suggests the need for State intervention to protect the rights of citizens, but it does not seem clear whether treatment of communication as a public service is the most appropriate way to achieve it.

2.3. Social-democratic aspect

Universal access to information is essential to achieve healthy and desirable levels of democratic debate, for which it is necessary to have a minimum grade of plurality and diversity. When the communication affects the entire population, it becomes an aspect of public interest, being more

important in the case of Latin America because of its historical characteristics based on the existing dispute over the meaning of continental integration; the onslaught with an authoritarian and discriminatory culture; neoliberal policies and their segregating consequences; the crisis of governance; democratic innovations; the institutionalisation of citizen participation and the importance of social movements (Caccia Bava, 2009).

In response to citizen participation (and institutionalisation), the categorisation of communication as a public service could help to reduce the risk of Latin American civil society assuming the passive role of the past. To avoid this fact, the State must provide and ensure universal access to accurate and plural information. Access to a variety of information is fundamental to effectively exercise the right to political participation.

If all the communication system has to go through the State, we would be talking of a new phenomenon of “globalisation” in the country. Globalisation, for some authors, generates two opposing processes: firstly, the positions and ideologies are close, causing a general standard and, secondly, the opposite effect caused by the process of integration and cultural disintegration occurs (Featherstone, 1990). The phenomenon of globalisation is producing a parallel effect based on localism, in which increasingly more attention is dedicated to the reference group at local and national level (Chavero and Oller, 2014). This new polarisation entails, according to Bauman (1999), agoraphobia, new space utopias and territorial changes that have marked, according to the idea of Jensen (1997: 3), “the sense of intercultural communication [...] where participants in this process of globalisation are forced to belong to the majority or more powerful culture”. A situation that, as Friedman (1994: 82–84) suggests, “causes many problems of formation of the personal identity amid all the impersonal forces at a global level”. As Noëlle-Neumann (1995) warned when she formulated the theory of spiral of silence, the individual makes an analysis of his environment to determine if he is isolated or not: “watching his social environment, estimating the distribution of opinions for or against his ideas, but above all evaluating the strength and the mobilising and compelling character, and the chances of success of certain point of views or proposals”. In this context, if his opinion is contrary to the majority, the citizen, feeling

isolated and unsure, tends to reserve it for himself, thereby avoiding the punishment of his environment.

The implementation of public policies in Latin America is characterised by inconsistency, instability and lack of continuity. The constant changes (the consideration of communication as a public service would be one more) cause people to see their possible effective participation in public decisions as increasingly more difficult. Therefore, the need from the point of view of access to information is created: to have the necessary continuity that allows the final execution of the projects proposed and planned by the authorities responsible for developing public policies. This situation creates a gap in communication between the community and the Government agencies, prompting a requirement on the part of society to improve the communication policy of the State, allowing for greater and more fluid participation of the population in the decision-making process. In this regard, the Special Rapporteur of the UN in its 2000 report had an impact on “the importance of the right to information for democracy and freedom, but also for the right to participate and achieve the right to development” (in Mendel, 2008: 9).

Therefore, communication becomes an essential element for linking the various actors in the public sphere. As the European Court of Human Rights said:

“Freedom of the press affords the public one of the best ways of discovering and forming an opinion of the ideas and attitudes of their political leaders. In particular, it gives politicians the opportunity to reflect and comment on the preoccupations of public opinion; so that everyone can participate in the free political debate which is at the very heart of the concept of a democratic society” (in Mendel, 2008: 20).

As has been previously noted, the information law has experienced a growing trend globally. The first law on the right of access to information was born in Sweden in 1766; thereafter, other countries followed the trail: Colombia 1888; USA 1967; Denmark 1970; Norway 1970; France 1978; Netherlands 1978; Australia 1982; Canada 1982; New Zealand 1982; etc. There were

a total of 69 countries in 2006 with laws on the right to information with different perspectives. This demonstrates the importance of information for the consolidation of a democratic regime. Any restriction of the right to information must meet three requirements: 1) to be accurately provided by law; 2) to have a legitimate purpose; and 3) to have a pressing social purpose (Mendel, 2008).

Major international agencies have established the characteristics that a regime of right to information must have (Mendel, 2008: 31 ff.):

- › Principle 1. Maximum transparency: The legislation on freedom of information must be guided by the principle of maximum transparency.
- › Principle 2. Obligation to publish: Public entities must be obliged to publish key information.
- › Principle 3. Promoting open Government: Public bodies must actively promote open Government.
- › Principle 4. Limiting exceptions: Exceptions must be clearly and demandingly defined, and subject to strict tests of “harm” and “public interest”.
- › Principle 5. Processes to facilitate access: Requests for information must be processed in a timely and fair manner, and must be available for independent review of any refusals.
- › Principle 6. Costs: Individuals can not be prevented from requesting information by excessive costs.
- › Principle 7. Open meetings: Meetings of public organisations must be open to the public.

- › Principle 8. Transparency takes precedence: Laws which are inconsistent with the principle of maximum disclosure must be amended or deleted.
- › Principle 9. Protection for plaintiffs: Individuals who provide information on wrong actions (plaintiffs) must be protected.

The Declaration of Principles on Freedom of Expression adopted by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights in 2000 also warns of the risks of monopolistic systems in this field: “Monopolies or oligopolies in the ownership and control of the media must be subject to anti-monopolist laws, as they conspire against democracy by limiting the plurality and diversity which ensure the full exercise of the right to information of citizens. In no case should such laws apply exclusively to the media. The concession of radio and television frequencies must consider democratic criteria that provide an equal opportunity for all individuals in accessing them” (Principle 12).

2.4. Communicational and professional aspect

Considering the communications field, the fact that communication becomes considered as a public service generates, firstly, a change in the media system. The media type of a country model is a combination of a set of factors (Hallin and Mancini, 2004):

- › Industry news: Origin and evolution of the market of the media, which takes into account the consolidation of the trade press, the circulation, the profile of the reader, etc.
- › State intervention, which can be direct (when someone owns the media) and indirect (when someone is in charge of making the allocation of radio spectrum).
- › Degree of autonomy and professionalism of journalists: Existence and power of professional associations, regulating access to the profession (degree of intrusion), level of education.

- › Political parallelism: Relationship established between the media and political actors.

The combination of these aspects, in which the economic, political and social system must be taken into account, defines the type of media system in each country from some ideal types. Communication as a public service would mean an increase in State intervention in the media map of Ecuador, which would be reconfiguring the Ecuadorian media system to its own model.

From the point of view of communication as a profession, this new approach raises some questions for journalists: Do they require State authorisation to exercise their profession? Does the communication as a public service imply some kind of regulation or control of media content? How is the difference between the public, governmental, private and community media going to be established? How is it going to affect the dimensions of analysis of the Ecuadorian journalistic culture? All these issues raise in fact a substantive uncertainty about how the new regulation would affect the independence of media professionals and, consequently, to the quality of Ecuadorian journalism.

In any case, communication professionals do not play a passive role in this process. At an individual level, it is their responsibility to be aware of the regulatory changes that will affect them directly and that are generated over time. The journalist, as a professional, plays an important role in social transformations and helps to improve democracy. The eighth principle of the International Code of Journalistic Ethics of Unesco (1983) also mentions his/her contribution in the establishment of “an atmosphere of confidence in international relations, so that it affects all peace and justice, distention, disarmament and national development. It is for the journalist, by professional ethics, to know the existing provisions on the subject and that are contained in international conventions, declarations and resolutions”.

In essence, the debate raised is in terms of State intervention and, therefore, freedom of expression. This includes two fields: the right to express thoughts and ideas (individual) and the right to receive them (collective).

However, it should be noted that the guarantee of freedom of expression and access to public information does not mean that the communication process is fulfilled, *per se*, in a democratic way. The experience and academic literature warns of the growing media coverage of the public sphere, where the media go on to become involved in the political sphere itself (Mazzoleni, 2010; Chavero et al., 2013).

In this context, the State must provide the legal framework that allows the performance of the communication activity in conditions of freedom for the worker and in which citizens are not excluded. As José Miguel Insulza, Secretary General of the OAS, said, “it is natural that we reject any attempt to restrict freedom of expression. But at the same time, the enormous task of keeping our citizens informed of the developments in their societies and their Governments increases the responsibility of the media. Exercising this responsibility is a moral obligation to society” (Dragnic, cited in Izarra, 2008: 243). Along the same line, Martí (2008) proposed in the Latin American meeting that the evaluation of the media has to include a monitoring of the private media in order to check whether they duly inform for the purposes mentioned. Nelson del Castillo (FELAP)⁶⁵, on his behalf, proposed at that meeting the generation of public policies that strengthen Latin American informative sovereignty of the people.

Conclusions

From the first law passed in the informative field (right of access to information, Sweden, 1766), the number of countries with legislation in this area has continued an upward trend. The right of access to information, freedom of expression (in its different versions) or the media regulation are the main legislative lines followed in Latin America. In 2014, one year after the adoption of the Communications Law of Ecuador and its respective regulations, the Government of Rafael Correa has put forward the possibility that communication become a public service, with the resulting debate that generally is developed from polarised ideological positions.

⁶⁵ Latin American Federation of Journalists.

Throughout this chapter we have made considered the main aspects that could be affected if communication were to be considered in the Constitution of Ecuador as a public service. Therefore, we have addressed the contradictions and regulatory challenges that may be incurred (should the Constitution be adapted to the legislation or vice versa?), the opportunities and risks from economic point of view (will the State be the only one responsible for managing communication or will it delegate management in private hands?), the democratic aspects (does it imply a control over the access to the media?), the civil (will the citizen participation in communication increase?) and professional ones (what influence will have this in the performance of the activity?) for communication. This chapter is far from giving categorical answers; rather it questions new and potential issues that should be analysed to understand the real scope of the constitutional amendment proposed in Ecuador.

The treatment of the communication system of a country means addressing the two sides involved: freedom of expression and opinion (both individual and collective) and freedom of the press and the social communication system in which it operates (both media and companies). Beyond the legal, social and political arguments that reinforce each of the positions, the Correa Government's proposal reveals, for the first time in the country, that communication is a strategic sector.

Journalistic Culture of Ecuador (JCE) Project⁶⁶

66 Website of the project Journalistic Culture of Ecuador. Recovered 3/03/16: <https://journalisticcultures.org/>

Chapter VII

Conceptual Framework

Introduction

The Journalistic Culture of Ecuador (JCE) project is the result of work done by the research group coordinated by Dr. Martín Oller Alonso. The purpose of JCE project is to study the journalism that takes place in Ecuador, so as to open new manners of analysis to enable researchers and all political and economic leaders to understand the conditions that determine the structure of the journalistic culture from within the country.

The main effort in this research lies in the important changes and transformations that are occurring in the communication and journalism field in Ecuador. These changes are anchored to the new global picture that is transforming societies at local, regional and global levels.

The JCE project strives towards the highest standards of scientific collaboration and collective publication, the reason why a common methodological framework for several countries such as Spain, Switzerland and Cuba has been created for future international comparisons. This draft of national nature - in a first phase - in which this book is based, and international nature - in a second stage - has four main objectives:

- 1) To evaluate the state of the journalistic culture of Latin America in general and of the Republic of Ecuador in particular, at a time in which radical changes in the media system of this country are being accomplished, as well as a restructuring in communications that the Government, presided over by Rafael Correa, is holding.
- 2) To evaluate, through a multilevel model, the main contextual factors of influence that determine journalism in the Republic of Ecuador.
- 3) To compare the state of journalism in the Republic of Ecuador with other countries in order to track the differential evolution of journalism.
- 4) To foster international collaboration and exchange of knowledge in journalism studies, contributing to the creation of an academic body that comparatively studies the state of journalism at the local, regional and global levels.

The JCE project is grounded in the work *La Cultura Periodística de España y Suiza* (The journalistic culture of Spain and Switzerland), coordinated by Dr. Martín Oller Alonso and Mag. Katrin Meier made between 2008 and 2012, based on interviews to 39 journalists from more than 10 news organisations in both countries. Moreover, it is based on the theoretical and practical basis of the international project *Worlds of Journalism Study* (WJS) coordinated by Prof. Dr. Thomas Hanitzsch.

1. JCE project conceptual framework

The JCE project takes as a focus of study the attitudes and perceptions of journalists when carrying out their work. To get to know the professional context we must revert to the concept of journalistic culture, since without a thorough analysis of the aspects that define and conceptualise it, the meaning of journalism cannot be fully understood.

The focus of this research considers two fundamental characteristics of the journalistic culture: it is universal and is diverse. Its universality is manifested from ideological consensus formed and collectively shared by

journalists from different media and countries or areas of the world. The “typical-ideal” aspects of the “cosmopolitan” journalism happen when 1) the journalism is a professional activity carried out in a highly organised context and also 2) is a public service that provides relevant and appropriate information, that 3) is primarily oriented towards the facts and that 4) requires at least some autonomy and intellectual independence. These elements are the common ground in which different cultures articulate their professional journalistic philosophies about diversity (Deuze, 2005; Kovach and Rosenstiel, 2001; Hanitzsch and Seethaler, 2009).

In Ecuador, as in other countries, the influence of “quality media” is evident because of their special influence within the media system, intervening decisively in the formation of public opinion. This journalistic quality can be understood as professional excellence in the collection, processing and communication of news information and in the building of its opinion and interpretation products. “This implies, firstly, that the journalist should be subject to the technical and ethical rules of the profession and, secondly, that intellectual honesty and rigour must always be present next to the sense of the public interest service of that the profession informs” (Torrico, 2004; 2006: 5).

Quality media are particularly suitable for international comparison, “because there are many similarities in the national press of the respective quality media” (Jarrett and Vogel, 2008: 18). Along with the similarities already recognised within the quality media of a nation, too, “its journalistic culture, issues and interpretations that quality media perceive and the consequences they have are determinants” (Jarrett and Vogel, 2008: 19). Thus, journalists from different newsrooms within the quality media of Ecuador are examined, with their different ways of thinking and their cultural differences, to see how they understand and perceive the dimensions discussed in the JCE project.

Its diversity is manifest from individual perceptions that journalists have about some of the main dimensions studied in the analysis of the JCE project:

- 1) the self-perception of the professional role
- 2) the concept of objectivity as an ideal and as a method
- 3) ethical guidelines
- 4) the perception of professional autonomy
- 5) the level of trust in public institutions
- 6) the perceived contextual influences

These issues, analysed in a contextualised way, are the focus of the study of the current journalism research, having a direct practical use for both journalists and society.

2. Methodology

Ecuador forms a virgin field for research in journalism because there are few previous studies conducted in Latin America that take into account the Ecuadorian media reality, even less, under an international comparative perspective. The JCE project aims to be the turning point for the profound change in this situation.

This study is based on a qualitative method, so that the field work is accompanied by a thorough prior theoretical research that serves as a reference, as recommended by authors like Mayring (1995, 2002) and Oller and Meier (2012). In this study, journalists are analysed within the context of the journalistic culture of Ecuador in order to understand the perceptions and attitudes of professionals around the dimensions of: 1) the self-perception of the professional role, 2) the idea of objectivity as an ideal and as a method, 3) journalistic ethics, 4) the perception of autonomy; 5) the level of trust in institutions; and 6) the perceived contextual influences.

The research team is aware that it is not possible to generalise the results obtained from research based on a qualitative method, but, as Mayring

(2002) states, a series of data that goes unnoticed in a quantitative investigation can be achieved. The qualitative method provides full guarantees of a greater deepening in specific cases, providing more accurate and comprehensive information of the subject of study. This aspect will help the study to avoid the emission of stereotypical judgments or reproduction of clichés in the results (Kleinstauber, 2003).

2.1. Sample

The JCE project does not propose a significant sample of the media and journalists in Ecuador because today they are still working on a census that officially estimates the total number. For this reason, a method of sample selection based on the construction of an informative media system image of Ecuador and the journalists has been established.

Therefore, data is collected over:

- a) the number and distribution of regional media,
- b) the structure of the media system in terms of ownership and type or other relevant parameters, and
- c) the number of journalists.

This data was obtained from available sources, such as national guides to the media, the official data on the media, the national associations of journalists and editors and the census data.

This project considers “mass media” only the organisations with own programming or news section. Media not producing news contents are excluded. Moreover, the study focuses on “professional journalists” (obtaining at least 50% of their income from journalism) that belong to the following media: newspapers, television stations, radio stations and their online versions.

2.2. Sampling

The sample selection was based on parameters that allow greater representation of journalists and the media in Ecuador. For its configuration, a selection of criteria were followed, based on quota sampling (non-probabilistic), formed by individuals in proportion to the population, according to gender characteristics, media nature and liability in the same.

However, although the sample is not quantitatively representative for being very small, according to Wyss (2002), a qualitative study with a total of 31 interviews - as is the case of JCE project - is an acceptable number that is useful to provide a clear reference and sufficient data for the research at the time of its treatment.

Being qualitative interviews of individual nature, a small sample of media is selected in Ecuador. Thus, within the "level of institution", a greater and deeper analysis of contextual factors is achieved. The six selected organizations are print and broadcast media of private, public and community property defined as quality media. These are characterised by having a specific editorial line, participating in the formation of opinion process through the sale of information, the care of a particular journalistic culture and being the benchmark for other national and international media (Jarrett and Vogel, 2008; Oller and Meier, 2012).

Some of these in the sample are the main media in Ecuador that, currently (2015), have higher estimated rates of diffusion.

In the selection of study subjects, people positioned in leadership or senior official positions were avoided, focusing on the analysis of journalists who work directly, and daily, with the information (writers, editors, reporters, presenters, speakers, etc.). This allowed a better comparison because, in quality media, these are the professionals who work directly with information. In selecting the cases, the variable of gender was also estimated.

The sample consists of a total of 31 active ecuadorian journalists [Table I] with editorial responsibility in the hierarchy of each medium:

Basic parameters of the interviewed journalists	Ecuador
Interviewed journalists	31
Female journalists (%)	32
Age (M)	35
University degree in communication (%)	81
Years of experience as journalists (M)	11,1
Years of work in the current media (M)	6,3
Sociodemographic data	
Ideological self-location (%)	Left or Centre-Left: 41,9 Centre: 35,5 Right: 6,5
Occupation of a political office (%)	No: 96,8 Yes: 3,2
Interest in politics (%)	Sufficient or a lot: 45 Medium: 29 Few or nothing: 26
Data media	
Media ownership (%)	Public: 42 Private: 51 Community: 7
Media type (%)	Broadcasting: 58 Print: 42

Table I. Basic parameters of the sample of the study Journalistic Culture of Ecuador (JCE)
Source: Prepared by the authors.

2.3. Data collection: qualitative interviews

Research based on a qualitative method, as mentioned above, is accompanied by previous theoretical research work that serves as a reference (Mayring, 2002). Thus, an acceptable theoretical basis is obtained prior to conducting in-depth interviews face to face.

Qualitative interviews are particularly suitable for presentations of topics and general and specific opinions of journalists about their profession. In the words of Lamnek (2005: 342), “we can consider this type of interview as an open tool that facilitates communication”. Qualitative interviews are less structured than quantitative interviews, since these ones are carried out from a series of questions of closed character. But “specific questions on a topic are asked so that later those interviewed can respond freely” (Schnell, Hill and Esser, 1999: 355). The interviewer may ask additional

questions that do not appear explicitly in the script. Thus, “respondents may react spontaneously and openly to questions, determining the course of the interview” (Mayring, 2002: 69–70). For this reason, “a qualitative interview requires spontaneous and continuous assessment of the responses and adaptation of the interviewer’s questions” (Schnell, Hill and Esser, 1999: III).

This is a clear advantage over “quantitative surveys in which answers are usually related to superficial aspects” (Lamnek, 2005: 341). Unlike a quantitative analysis, “the qualitative interviews are based on the analysis of an isolated case which can be interpreted entirely in search of deeper and more accurate results” (Mayring, 2002: 42). The disadvantage with qualitative interviews is the little comparability of results. This can be compensated for by performing a detailed and well-structured interview. So that it stays the same structure in all the interviews and all the issues and areas of research have the same treatment (Schnell, Hill and Esser, 1999). Thus, the work of the final data extraction and subsequent comparison will also be facilitated (Mayring, 2002). Hence, there are clear advantages for our research in the use of qualitative interviews, such as the adaptation to the cultural context, frankness, avoid confusion, etc.

To complete the analysis, within depth interviews there are some closed nature questions with the intention of guiding the respondents in some areas that may be uncertain. These help to “overcome the problems in the treatment of qualitative research data, achieving a more general image of the object of the investigation” (Flick, 2004: 68).

The questionnaire used for interviews is divided into six sections relating to each of the dimensions of analysis plus a series of general and socio-demographic questions⁶⁷. Finally, the in-depth interviews were conducted face to face during the first half of 2014 in the newsrooms of each analysed media.

67 Annex I: Model of questionnaire used in the interviews in the JCE project.

2.4. Method of multilevel analysis of contextual influences

The analysis model of the context in Ecuador is based on the concept of intermediate journalistic culture, adapting this project to the inter and multicultural characteristics of the country.

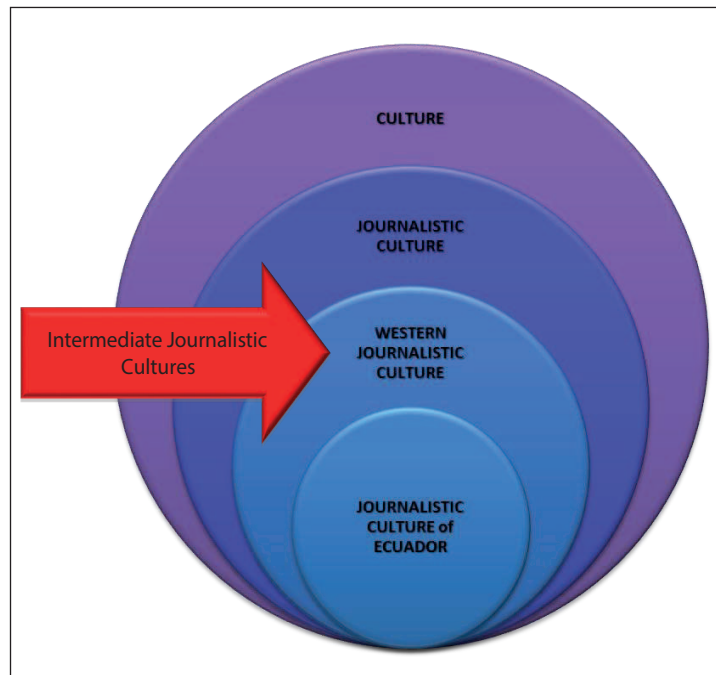


Figure 1. Multilevel model of analysis of the context of journalistic cultures
Source: Prepared by the authors.

This analysis is supported by the study of different levels of influence from the contexts of Ecuador. In order to consistently study journalistic culture, we have designed a multilevel model of analysis from the main multilevel models constructed over the last half of the century. Finally, the “Organic multilevel model” (Oller, 2015)⁶⁸ has been based on the “integrated model” of Oller and Meier (2012) and the approach offered by Luke (2004: 4) who states that “much of what we study in nature is multilevel, so we must use the theories and analysis techniques that are also multilevel. If we do not do this, we have serious problems”.

68 This model was presented at the Annual Conference SGKM in Bern (Switzerland) on March 13, 2015.

To analyse the journalistic culture of Ecuador, the Organic Multilevel Model is built on multilevel models and the concept of organic analysis of journalism (based on the idea of dynamism, change and heterogeneity).

The structure of this model changes the concept of superposed levels where journalists are in the middle. This structure, based on nature, is more logical because the “roots” are the more important systems, Systems Level, and the base of a country: political system – role, parallelism, professionalization, constitutional powers; economic system – market structure; social system – citizen groups; academic system – training; historical/social system; mass media system; and technology.

The “trunk” symbolises the Institutional Level, where the institutions and organisations of media are found and are held up under the principal systems level: media organisation; media structure; media routines and processes; editorial line and rules; and profile journalists – as group.

Lastly, “branches” and “leaves” represent the journalists as individual actors within the Actor Level due to their irregular position, diversity and number – the perception and ideas of journalists within a country are not homogeneous: sociodemographic factors; economic factors; political factors; and professional/personal roles.

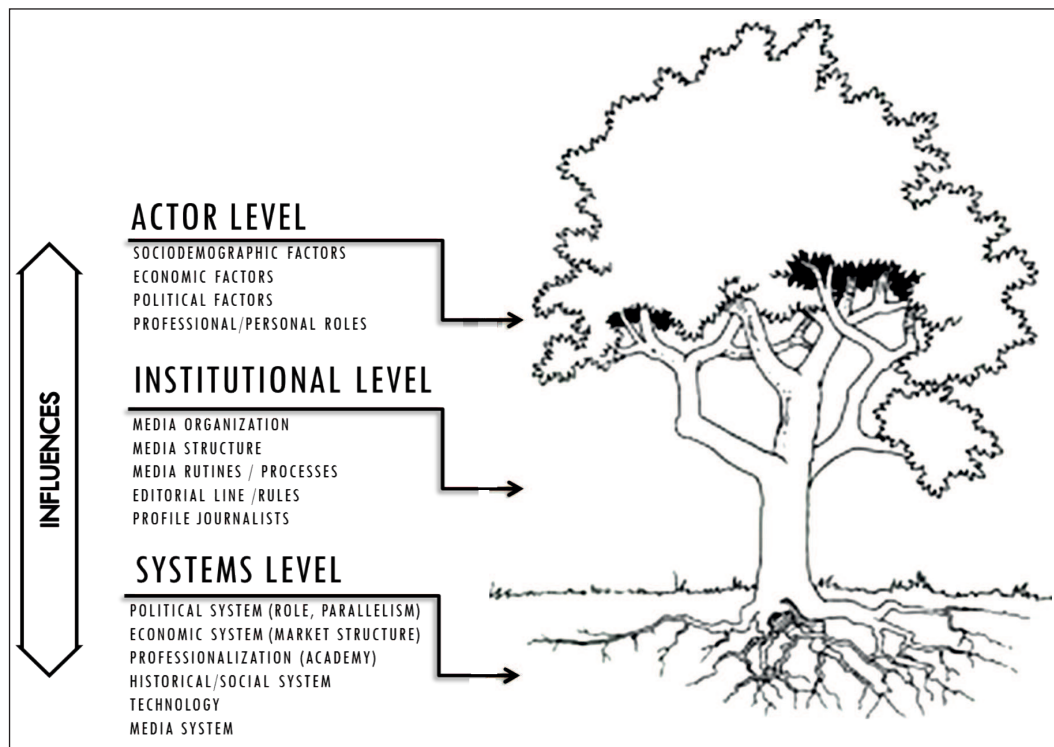


Figure 2. Organic multilevel model
Source: Prepared by the authors from Oller (2015).

Chapter VIII

The perception of the influence factors of Ecuadorian journalists

Abstract

This chapter presents the results on the perception of the factors influencing journalists in the journalistic culture of Ecuador. The influences are studied because these determine the ideologies and professional practices of journalists from the standpoint of their internal consistency and development in relation to the context. These come from both internal – actor and institution – and external – systems – levels. The results show that although the interviewed general-level journalists perceive there to be greater influence from their newsrooms and the immediate environment, the legislation of the media, the audience – or the public –, the news sources and the Government – or their representatives – determine likewise their daily work.

Introduction

The mass media in contemporary society maintain their leading role as generators, mediators and receivers of information within the journalistic culture of a country, as there is a reciprocal relationship of need with other – social, political, economic, cultural, etc. – structures and systems. This inter-structural link puts the journalist as a starting point of the analysis of media context and journalistic culture of a country or region due to the relationship between the internal coherence of their work as individuals and their interaction with the environment.

Throughout the 20th century and early 21st, research in journalism has provided empirical evidences of the influence exerted by the context in perceptions, ideas and actions of journalists. Flegel and Chafee (1971) concluded that the influence of readers or editors on journalists was a remarkable source, although these were mainly guided by their own opinions. Weischenberg, Löffelholz and Scholl (1994) reaffirmed that journalists were influenced by their peers and by their trust groups and that they were deeply influenced by the environment in newsrooms. Weaver and coll. (2007) found evidence that the newsroom has a more than proven influence on the ethical decisions of journalists. And, Hanitzsch (2009) noted that although the influences from the media are important, other sources of external influence, like competitors, other media or sources, should be taken into account.

However, a paradigm of analysis of the influences cannot be rigidly considered, but must be flexibly proposed so it can adapt to the environment (Blackburn, 1994). Therefore, the Journalistic Culture of Ecuador (JCE) project analyses the media of this country in its political, economic, ideological, historical, multicultural and intercultural reality based on the perceptions of journalists. The project involves the analysis of 6 dimensions. This chapter focuses on the study of the effect of contextual influences on journalists interviewed. “These influences perceived by journalists come from the different contextual levels and play a major role in their perception, actions and decisions within daily process of journalistic production” (Weischenberg, Löffelholz and Scholl, 1994; Oller and Meier: 2012).

This study analyses the contextual influences received by Ecuadorian journalists from various levels. For this, it is supported by some authors who, in the last decades, have made their own multilevel models to study the journalistic context: McQuail (1983, 2000), Chaffee and Berger (1987), Ettema and Whitney (1987), Shoemaker and Reese (1991), Weischenberg (1992; 1995), Shoemaker and Reese (1996), Esser (1998), Donsbach (2000), Whitney and coll. (2004), Grossberg and coll. (2006), Preston and Metykova (2009a), Hanitzsch (2009, 2010) and Oller and Meier (2012).

The main objectives of this chapter are: 1) To find out what influences interviewed journalists perceive in their profession within the journalistic culture of Ecuador and 2) To establish the origin and the grade of influence that interviewed journalists perceive within the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

1. The multilevel contextual analysis in the study of journalistic cultures

In this project, the main parts of the complex realities that comprise the Ecuadorian journalistic culture, where journalists are the centrepiece, are analysed. Thence it studies the representations, images, ideas, notions, attitudes and beliefs of individual journalists within journalistic culture of Ecuador, composed of overlapping levels of influence.

On these lines, a flexible and analytical paradigm is presented, sensitive to the environment surrounding journalists, even though Ecuadorian journalists are studied as individuals, their decisions, ideas and perceptions are analysed as the consequence of the different levels of influence. This is the central idea of this analysis because, according to McDevitt (2003), journalists think of themselves as autonomous actors within rules of context, routines and tradition involving both habits and introspection. Consequently, this research takes into account “the dialectical relationship between journalists and their institutions, and their ideas as cultural intermediaries” (Mellor, 2009: 309).

“Social Science research involves issues investigating the relationship between the individual and society [...]. This leads to an analysis of interaction between variables that characterise the individuals and the ones that characterise the groups; a type of research that is often defined as ‘multilevel research’” (Hox, 2002: 1). This contextual deconstruction in levels allows the creation of a hierarchy of influences that, according to Esser (1998: 21), “provides a systematic classification and interpretation of empirical material”.

The multilevel perspective borrows from Coleman (1990) the difference in four types of relationships: macro/macro, macro/micro, micro/micro and micro/macro. Pan and McLeod (1991) add two links, “intra” and “inter” – level showing other analytical strategies for cross-level empirical studies. These relationships include, as Deuze (2008b: 110) states, “the continuous negotiation between the individual and collective levels as formers of behaviours”.

Hox (2002) describes the multilevel research from variables that are defined within hierarchical levels. Each hierarchical level is composed of various types of variables: 1) “global”, related exclusively to the level in which they are; 2) “relational”, also within a single level, but describe the relationship between different units of the same level; 3) “analytical” and “structural”, measures with reference to sub-units of lower levels. The analytical types are built from variables at a lower level. The structural types are based on the distribution of relational variables at a lower level – building an analytical or structural variable from data of the lower units involves “aggregation”; and 4) “contextual”, referring to the super-units. All variables from lower levels are influenced by the units of the higher levels. This effect is the “disaggregation”, where the data of the upper units is broken down into a number of lower level units.

Pan and McLeod (1991) refer to the concept of “continuity” (continuum) of levels of analysis as a partial solution to the particular problems that mass media researchers face when studying specific unit analysis – e.g. the model “cell, atom, molecule” of hierarchies of nature (Paisley, 1984); the four different forms of communication (Chaffee and Berger, 1987) or the

three main types of social and behavioural theories: theories of social systems, micro-social theories and cognitive/physiological theories (McLeod and Blumler, 1987).

From what has been presented in this chapter, it is deduced that the disintegration of the context at multiple levels of analysis is essential “due to the fact that a large part of what we study in nature is multilevel, so we must use the theories and techniques of analysis that are also multilevel. If we do not do this, we can have serious problems” (Luke, 2004: 4).

1.1. The main multilevel models for analyzing the context in journalism

A large number of researches in journalism are based on multilevel models of contextual analysis, the analysis of hierarchies and the levels of influence [table I]. In the last two decades of the last century proposals such as that of McQuail (1983) stand out; this author develops five levels of analysis – the level of international organisations, the social level, the institution level, the organisational level and the individual level – in relation to the levels of influence from the society, the mass media, and the audiences or users of the media. Chaffee and Berger (1987) in their model of “levels of analysis”, raise three levels: a first basic level of analysis in which the worker is at an individually level or in small groups; a second and higher level, which includes the organisation and finally a larger group in which the legal and economic conditions and other institutions related to the information system are reflected. Shoemaker and Reese (1991), in their multilevel model, articulate the factors of influence on the media content into five layers or levels across a continuum that goes from the micro to the macro.

McQuail and Windahl (1993: 160-161) in their model refer to the factors that in the organisation of the media are related to the sources of influence of the journalistic work: the audience, the owners, the social and political institutions, the advertisers, the content providers and the agencies. Weischenberg (1992: 67-68) in his “journalistic paradigm” sets his key category in the idea of journalism as a system of social action. In his model “onion skin” (zwiebelschalen) he represents journalists as individual actors in

the centre of a circular formation. Firstly, the outer layer is formed by the rules governing the media; secondly, there is the structural context and institutions that interact with the media and the political, economic and social powers; thirdly, the functional context showing the effects of the media system on the other systems; and, finally, in the centre of this model, journalists are the main actors of the communication process. Reus (1998) added to the Weischenberg proposal the mutual influence between journalists and media systems.

Esser (1998) presents his “model of multilevel” (Mehrebenenmodell) to use it in comparative international studies, structuring it on four levels: 1) an external level formed by the social sphere and the historical and cultural conditions of society; 2) an intermediate level represented by the media structure and its rules; 3) a third level where the institutional sphere and the profile, the structure and the image of journalism and media are located; and 4) an internal level formed by the journalists, their values, ideas and professional roles.

The last decade, in the 21st century, has been characterised by the continuity in the implementation of multilevel models in the contextual studies, but increasingly applied to international comparative analysis. Donsbach (2000, 2008) establishes four levels of analysis - the level of subject or individual, the profession one, the institution, and the social sphere. Whitney, Sumpter and McQuail (2004) and Ettema and Whitney (2007) base their models on a structure of three levels - individual, institutional and organisational. Grossberg, Wartella, Whitney and Wise (2006) propose an analysis based on levels through the metaphor of the “ladder of abstraction”, where products from the media present a creation at an individual level of the organisation of the media and media industries, and the media together constitute an institution, and that, ultimately, these are influenced by the institutional systems and the culture of where they are. Preston and Metykova (2009b) present a model based on five areas of influence -the level of individual factors, the one that involves the organisational elements, the one referred to the media routine, and, finally, the last two that encompass larger systems that include the cultural / ideological and political / economic systems.

The “conceptual model” of Hanitzsch and coll. (2010), based on Shoemaker, Vos and Reese (2009), was recently established based on empirical evidences from the Worlds of Journalism project. This one divides the media system in theoretical structures ranging from micro to macro: 1) micro level, of the journalist as an individual; 2) the meso level, of the organisations such as the newsrooms of the media; and 3) the macro level, of the political, economic and social systems that interact with the media system.

Finally, Oller and Meier (2012) propose, in their project “Journalistic Culture of Spain and Switzerland”, the “integrated multilevel model” structured on three levels - actor, institutional and systems - in which they highlight the interplay between the actors and the different contextual levels.

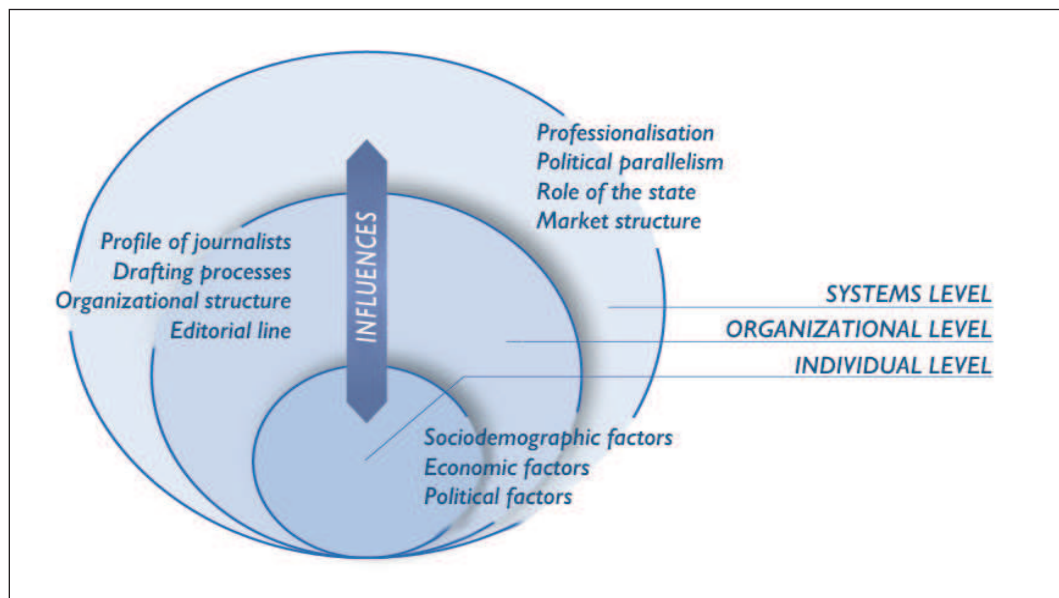


Figure 1. Model of the integrated perception of influences within the journalistic culture
Source: Prepared by the authors from Oller and Meier (2012).

In the outermost layer, termed systems level, there are the systems that structure the market, economy, politics, culture and society that, as claimed by authors like Weaver and coll. (1996), McQuail (2006) or Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), project influences such as censorship, bans, interference, intimidation, profit expectations or advertising considerations. Hallin and Mancini (2004) place in this market the development of the media, the relationship and the proximity to political power, the level of professionalization - from the autonomy of journalists, the professional standards and

the value given to the public interest - and the State's role concerning the professional freedom of journalists.

The intermediate layer, formed by the level of institution, analyses the “organisational structure and the areas of competence” (Esser, 1998: 27) of the newsrooms of media. They determine the factors of influence from profiles of the activities, the editorial workflow, the control of the editorial, the social mechanisms (Esser, 1998) and the editorial line of the medium (Marr and coll., 2001) that define the work of journalists. Therefore, as claimed by Reich and Hanitzsch (2013: 137), “the editorial environment is a strong conditioner of journalism”.

The inner layer, called actor level, carefully details the interests and working methods in the newsroom at an individual level, being determined by the training, work experience, age and sex of the journalist (Johnstone and coll., 1976). According to Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), the influences come from the reference groups that are professional - colleagues from other media, the audiences and the organisational processes - and personal - friends, acquaintances and family. At this level there are “factors with strong social-demographic character [...] very valuable when developing the empirical study of an investigation” (Oller and Meier, 2012: 147). The influencing factors from the individual level are critical because “journalists are constantly forced to make decisions” (Donsbach, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2009a: 157). This does not mean that influences of the level of organisations are not “highly relevant” (Löffelholz and Weaver, 2008: 285-286), since “contemporary journalism is characterised by its high organisational nature” (Altmepfen, 2008: 52- 53, Shoemaker and Reese, 1996: 140).

All theoretical models presented in this chapter show the influence of context on the decision making, on the actions of journalists, and on the journalistic routines that determine the production of information in a media, region or country (Weischenberg and coll., 1994). Hence, while the focus of study is the journalist, as in the case of the JCE project, the analysis of the subject is not done in isolation, being analysed within a circular whole (Berganza, Oller and Meier, 2010).

	Individual	Media routines	Media organisation	Media structure	Society (politics and economy)	Culture and ideology
McQuail (1983, 2000)	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	
Ettema and coll. (1987)	☑	☑		☑		
Chaffee and Berger (1987)	☑		☑		☑	
McQuail and Windahl (1993)			☑			
Weischenberg (1992,1995)	☑	☑	☑		☑	
Reus (1998)	☑	☑	☑		☑	
Shoemaker and Resse (1996)	☑	☑	☑		☑	☑
Esser (1998)	☑	☑		☑	☑	
Whitney and coll. (2004)	☑	☑		☑		
Grossberg and coll. (2006)	☑		☑	☑		☑
Donsbach (2000,2008)	☑	☑	☑		☑	
Preston and Metykova (2009a)	☑	☑	☑	☑		☑
Hanitzsch and coll. (2010)	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑
Oller and Meier (2012)	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑	☑

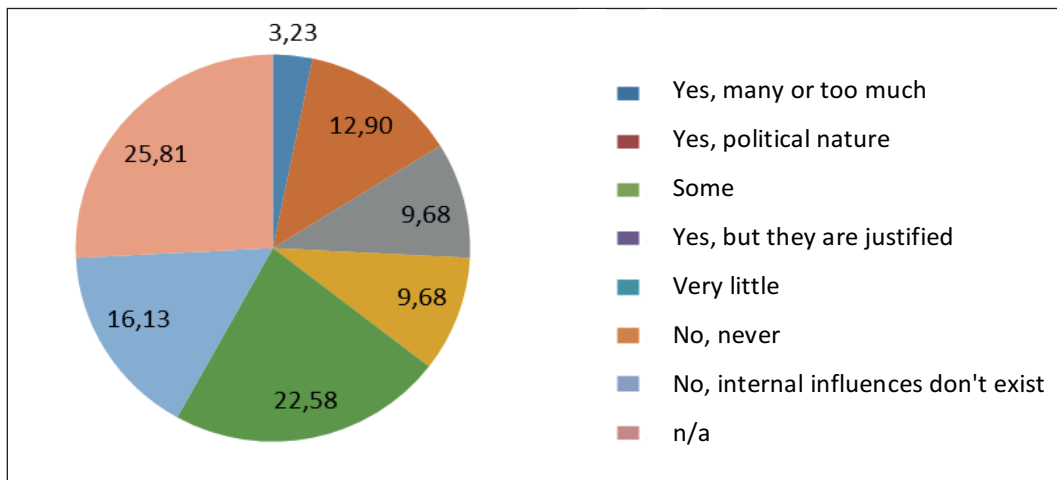
Table 1. Synopsis of multilevel models
Source: Prepared by the authors from Hanitzsch (2009: 156).

Results

The analysis of the influences that interviewed journalists perceive daily within their newsrooms allows the defining of the differences and common points existing within the journalistic culture of Ecuador. The results show that the interviewed journalists notice, in general, a greater influence from the media (newsroom) where they work and their immediate environment – of the ten most important influences considered there are six internal: the new technologies, ethical convictions, superiors or supervisors, news deadlines, and procedures or standards. However, four influences external to their newsrooms – the media legislation, the audience or the public, the news sources and the Government or its representatives – equally determine their professional actions.

2.1. The perception of the journalists interviewed of the internal influences in the journalistic culture of Ecuador

The responses to the open questions confirm that nearly half (48.2%) of respondents perceive, to some extent and without an exact knowledge of their origin, influences within their newsrooms; highlighting only the political and ideological influences - coming from their superiors, ethical codes or any editorial lines to follow.



Graphic I. The perception of the internal influences by the interviewed journalists in the journalistic culture of Ecuador (2014)
Source: Prepared by the authors.

When asked by certain influences in a specific way - through closed questions -, respondents emphasised that journalists perceive 1) new technologies, 2) their ethical convictions, 3) their superiors or supervisors, and 4) news deadlines as the main internal influences.

In the case of new technologies, almost three quarters (73.8%) of respondents say that these are somewhat or very influential, maintaining a certain consensus (2.9 SD). Regarding ethical convictions, 64.7% say that these are very influential, while just over a fifth (22.4%) affirm that these are nothing influential. This dissent is demonstrated by the high values of the standard deviation (3.4), confirming that although the majority of journalists share common ethical values that they try to reflect in their daily work, there is another group that is ruled by other professional standards.

Meanwhile, supervisors or chief editors exert a significant influence on the development of the work of journalists, as more than half (54.8%) of those interviewed responded. Furthermore, this result confirms, from the lowest standard deviation of all internal influences (2.7), the general consensus on the idea of hierarchy and verticality within the Ecuadorian media newsrooms; even, the existence of a possible editorial line to follow imposed by senior or chief editors. The news deadlines are considered to be the fourth largest factor of influence by respondents (54.7% think they have a great influence), strengthening, on the one hand, the idea of verticality within the organisation of the newsrooms and, on the other hand, the influence of the media market determined by the dynamism and the need for constant provision of information.

These results highlight the fact that influences like the search for audiences and the profit expectations occupy the lower positions. Regarding the search audiences, there is a strong dissent, because almost a third (31.4%) believes that their influence is large; almost a quarter (24.5%) states, however, it is minimal; and 38.5% prefer to maintain an intermediate point. However, almost half (45.4%) of respondents claimed that the expectations of benefit of the exercise do not have a big influence on them. These responses show that the interviewed journalists do not maintain a mercantilist vision of journalism and they are not ruled by the market. It also reflects a certain distance between the objectives of journalists and media, showing that they declare themselves to be some extent regardless of the economic outlook of the media, which in practice is not so clear. It seems, therefore, that journalists responded to the interview as individual professionals, not as journalists working for a specific purpose stipulated by a media.

The influence of the owners of media is also marked by irregularities (35.7% said they exert little influence, 28.9% somewhat or too much and 35.4% a lot).

Colleagues, according to more than half of respondents (51.5%), have some or too much influence. Therefore, although it is shown that within the newsrooms there is a clear hierarchy, there is similarly a horizontal organisation into sections or thematic areas that fosters fellowship among

journalists in the same media. Finally, almost half (48.4%) of interviewed journalists perceive scarcity of resources to be an issue in their work.

INFLUENCES RECEIVED	N	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	8 (%)	9 (%)	10 (%)	A	SD
New technologies	31*	9,6	3,2	0	3,2	16,1	0	12,9	16,1	12,9	15,8	7	2,9
Ethical convictions	31*	12,9	3,2	6,4	0	3,2	3,2	3,2	16,1	19,3	29,3	6,9	3,4
Superiors or supervisors	31	9,6	3,2	0	3,2	12,9	6,4	9,6	25,8	12,9	16,1	6,8	2,7
News deadlines (closure)	31	9,6	3,2	3,2	6,4	12,9	0	9,6	25,8	9,6	19,3	6,7	2,9
Procedures and standards	31	12,9	0	3,2	0	22,5	6,4	9,6	19,3	6,4	19,3	6,5	2,8
Scarcity of resources	31	12,9	6,4	3,2	12,9	19,3	6,4	12,9	12,9	6,4	6,4	5,8	2,8
Search of audience	31	9,7	6,4	6,4	6,4	22,5	6,4	9,6	12,9	6,4	12,1	5,7	3,1
Owners	31	29,3	3,2	3,2	3,2	12,9	3,2	9,6	16,1	6,4	12,9	5,3	3,3
Colleagues	31	16,3	3,2	9,6	3,2	32,2	3,2	12,9	3,2	9,6	6,4	5,1	2,7
Profit expectations	31*	29,3	12,9	3,2	3,2	9,6	3,2	12,9	6,4	3,2	6,4	3,8	3,2

Table 2. The perception of the interviewed journalists of the internal influences in the journalistic culture of Ecuador
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The table shows the percentage of respondents who responded as "little influential" (1-3), "somewhat or very influential" (4-7) and "very influential" (8-10) to these factors. Percentages are in rows.

N: number of the sample

%: average percentage

A: average

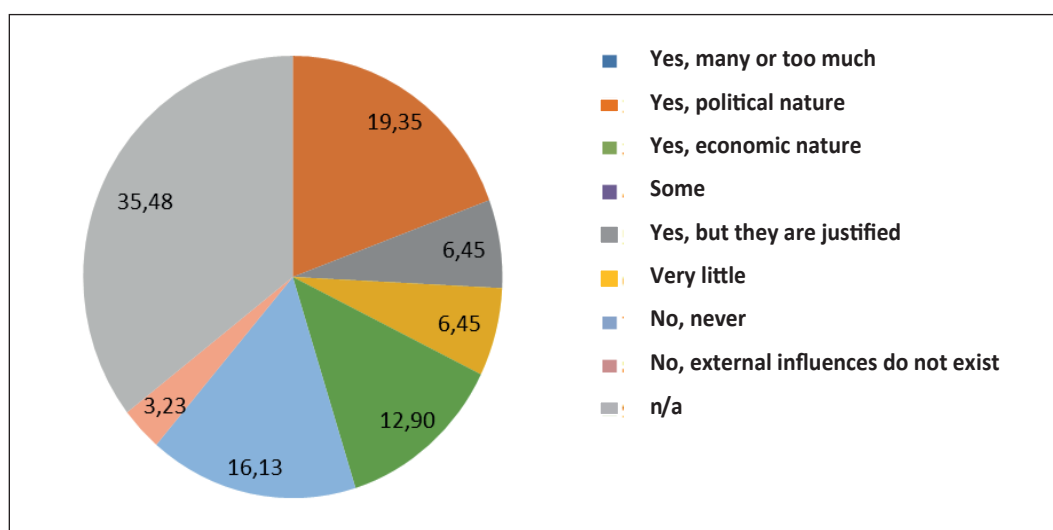
SD: standard deviation

*: Result where one or more journalists responded 00 (n/a)

Overall, the journalists interviewed believe that the organisational, professional and procedural influences from inside the newsrooms of the media act as major constraints in their work. Although, as will be shown below, there are some external influences that are perceived directly due to the current idiosyncrasy of journalism in Ecuador.

2.2. The perception of the interviewed journalists of the external influences in the journalistic culture of Ecuador

The responses to the open questions provide inconsistent results, so we could affirm that journalists are not aware or do not know the influences that external factors have on them. Only one third (32.2%) make reference to certain political and economic influences.



Graphic 2. The perception of the interviewed journalists of the external influences in the journalistic culture of Ecuador
Source: Prepared by the authors.

When they are asked specifically about the influence from certain sectors, interviewed journalists consider that the main external influences come from 1) media legislation, 2) the audience or the public, 3) news sources, 4) the Government and its representatives, and 5) the organisations of control and regulation of the media.

Nearly two thirds (58%) of respondents say the new legislation on communications is the main influence that they have externally from their media. They refer specifically to the Communications Law (LOC), responsible for regulating the media system and professional activity in Ecuador. In addition, the control and regulation agencies (CORDICOM and SUPERCOM) are very present within the professional reality for journalists due to the pressure exerted by the State. Although there is almost a quarter (24.7%) stating that they barely have influence, just over half (54.6%) confirmed that these agencies exercise enough or too much influence on them. Despite these influences from legislation and enforcement agencies, only a quarter (25.8%) of respondents says they have contact directly with them or that they are afraid of censorship.

The audience or the public is considered by almost half (48.8%) as one of the main influences because they always have in mind their needs and right to be informed. Similarly, information sources exert a strong influence

on the interviewed journalists. More than half (54.8%) consider it essential to base their information on tested and proven facts through information sources.

INFLUENCES RECEIVED	N	1 (%)	2 (%)	3 (%)	4 (%)	5 (%)	6 (%)	7 (%)	8 (%)	9 (%)	10 (%)	A	SD
Media legislation	31	12,9	3,2	0	6,4	9,6	6,4	3,2	16,1	0	41,9	7	3,2
Audience, public	31	12,9	6,4	0	3,2	9,6	9,6	9,6	6,4	12,9	29,3	6,7	3,2
News source	31	9,6	3,2	0	6,4	16,1	3,2	6,4	25,8	12,9	16,1	6,7	2,8
Government (or representative)	31	6,4	3,2	3,2	9,6	12,9	3,2	9,6	19,3	3,2	25,8	6,5	3,1
Control organisations	31	12,9	6,4	6,4	9,6	6,4	3,2	3,2	12,9	9,6	19,3	5,6	3,5
Competence	31	12,9	3,2	16,1	3,2	29	9,6	0	9,6	3,2	9,6	4,9	2,8
Censorship	31	16,1	3,2	19,3	3,2	9,6	6,4	6,4	12,9	0	12,9	4,6	3,3
Politicians	31	25,8	0	6,4	12,9	22,5	9,6	6,4	9,6	0	6,4	4,5	2,7
Unions	31	32,2	6,4	12,9	9,6	16,1	3,2	6,4	6,4	3,2	0	3,5	2,5
Other media colleagues	31	35,4	19,3	6,4	12,9	6,4	0	6,4	0	9,6	3,2	3,4	2,8
Companies	31	32,2	6,4	12,9	9,6	19,3	3,2	6,4	3,2	3,2	0	3,4	2,4
Advertising	31	35,4	6,4	12,9	12,9	6,4	3,2	3,2	6,4	3,2	0	2,9	2,5
Friends, acquaintances, family	31	41,9	19,3	0	9,6	19,3	0	6,4	0	3,2	0	2,9	2,2
Religious leaders	31	41,9	6,4	9,6	9,6	12,9	3,2	0	0	3,2	0	2,4	2,1

Table 3. The perception of the interviewed journalists of the external influences in the journalistic culture of Ecuador
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The table shows the percentage of respondents who responded as "little influential" (1-3), "somewhat or very influential" (4-7) and "very influential" (8-10) to these factors. Percentages are in rows.

N: number of the sample

%: average percentage

A: average

SD: standard deviation

At the other end, the influence from 1) unions or workers, 2) colleagues from other media, 3) companies, 4) advertisers, 5) friends, acquaintances or family, and 6) religious leaders are indirectly represented in almost all cases and with low intensity. Consequently, the interviewed journalists acknowledge that their influence is barely noticeable or does not represent a major disadvantage or advantage within their professional activity.

Almost three quarters of respondents (73.7%) believe that colleagues in other media are not influencing or barely influence them. These responses reflect the almost non-existent relationship between different media, which could be due to certain distrust or high competitiveness that does not allow them to have a close and fluid relationship. The low importance given to influence from the unions or worker groups (51.5% think it hardly has any influence and 25.7% say it does moderately) is not a result that may

surprise because there are no unions within the profession in Ecuador, having only few and weak groups of associations of journalists.

Low or no influence from companies and advertising is reported by more than half of respondents (51.5% and 54.7% respectively) confirming the indirect effect that these have on journalists. Although it highlights, in some cases, the scarcity of resources, a factor perceived closer to them and, therefore, capable of exerting a more visible and direct influence. Hence, it can be interpreted that both effects - positive and negative - of the media market are absorbed by the media that act as intermediaries and filters of the pressures and interests of the companies, advertisers and owners.

Finally, the way the influence of religious leaders is shrinking on the interviewed journalists is highlighted, since more than three-quarters (80.4%) confirm that they do not represent any authority beyond the moral.

Conclusions

The quanti/qualitative analysis of the influences received by the interviewed journalists within the journalistic culture of Ecuador confirms that, although most of these come from the inside the newsrooms, there are external influences that equally determine their work. The project launched by the Ecuadorian Government based on the professionalization of journalism and regulation of media system, since the adoption of the Communications Law in 2013 and the creation of new regulatory and control agencies as CORDICOM and SUPERCOM, directly influence the development of the professional occupation of respondents.

The main influences from the inside of the newsrooms are new technologies, the ethical convictions, superiors or supervisors and news deadlines. It might seem strange that those interviewed continue to consider new technologies as the main factor of influence within their newsrooms even though these have existed together for many years and form a fundamental part of most of the professional processes and structures. The answers demonstrate that, still today, they are not completely familiar with these tools and strategies and are in a period of transition from analogic to digital.

Consequently, it could be argued that there is, firstly, a lack of adaptability in the newsrooms of the Ecuadorian media to the digital environment and, secondly, due to the wide differences between professionals – young / old; provincial / city; empirical / graduates; and so on, a lack of training of journalists. These results agree with the report shown by UNESCO within the International Programme for the Development of Communication in the Analysis of Media Development in Ecuador (2011: 130): “Only 22.5% of the interviewed journalists had received any training in ICT”.

Moreover, even in 2014 / 2015, Ecuadorian society is in the process of transfer from analogy to digital and improving their access to – digital – information (Oller, 2014). Therefore it can be observed that one of the main external influences considered by responders is the audience, probably because they know the reality of the Ecuadorian population and its lack of adaptability to the digital environment. And thus, sometimes they are forced to continue to base their work strategies on a traditional journalistic model with which citizens are familiar. Although they should not forget that, as Aguirre (2006) states, in the first decade of this century, many of the digital technological innovations are rife and that the “electronic bubble” has exploded, affecting the field of social communication, the ways and processes of production and distribution, and the occupational profiles.

The other major influences confirm the implementation by the respondents of a type of traditional journalism. The verticality of the informative processes from a hierarchy clearly marked, causes superiors or supervisors to act as controlling agents of journalists, influencing the development of production of information – this vertical structure is most evident in the private media, not so much in the public ones. Also associated with the professional processes within media, another important factor of influence is the news deadlines.

The interviewees feel the maximum influences and pressure from 1) the need for adaptation to the digital environment; 2) the obligation to generate information as imposed by the market – in time and form; 3) the co-workers who are in a superior position and determine the methods of work of the media; and 4) the media ethical convictions or, which would be

the same, the deontological code that journalists must follow within their media, also for fear of possible sanctions.

To a lesser extent, coworkers and resource scarcity exert some kind of influence on respondents. By being aware of the control superiors exert over them, there are within the newsrooms some small levels of partnership between professionals; corroborating the lack of trust within newsrooms. According to findings of the study *How Latin American journalists work* published by Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (2005) more than half (52%) of the interviewed Ecuadorian journalists preferred not to share information with peers.

In addition, although responders affirm that the search for audiences and profit expectations are not important issues for them, they are aware of certain limitations in their work due to lack of financial and human resources. Hence they understand, to some extent, that the media pay a greater attention to the economic aspects and the market – especially the private media that depend on their income to survive.

The influences of political nature within the newsrooms are related to the ideology of the media. It acts as filter of external political influences, transmitting these to journalists from a particular internal political direction in which the editorial line of the media, requirements from the market, and, specifically, the political requirements from the Government are debated. This relationship between the State and the media causes that interviewed perceive directly these – especially for fear of possible sanctions – than changes and requirements of the current media market. These results show that the perception that Ecuadorian journalists have of lack of independence in the newsrooms of the media persists; as it already was pointed in the nineties by the study *Journalists in the Andes* by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication (1994) of the Florida International University.

Regarding the main external influences that determine, in a way, their decisions and their professional activity, the journalists interviewed emphasize media legislation; the audience or the public; news sources; the

Government and its representatives; and the organisations of control and regulation of the media.

The current Government, with President Rafael Correa in the lead, is conducting a very aggressive communication policy against the structure of the media system based on private ownership and deregulation. As stated, from 2009, the Assembly discussed the draft of a new Communications Law, finally passed in 2013, not without little criticism⁶⁹. It has a series of articles that some journalists believe undermine their freedom of expression⁷⁰, which led to the requalification of these and other items in the Regulations of the law. In addition, this new legislative regulation led to the creation of the CORDICOM, a regulatory organism responsible for monitoring the work of journalists and the media, which together with the SUPERCOM, a sanctioning organism, are responsible for ensuring the proper functioning and work of these, and that they respect the fundamental rights of citizens and their rights to access. This sanctioning function causes SUPERCOM to be considered as “an organ of censorship” by authors such as La Rue⁷¹ (in Almeida, 2014: 125).

The aggressive policy of the President against some massive private media and for the “democratization of communication”⁷²; the controversial sanctions implemented by SUPERCOM⁷³; and the constant proposal of new regulations to the Communications Law from CORDICOM, are leading the interviewed journalists to have these official organizations present at all times in their profession for fear of reprisals or sanctions. This result confirms, according to Rincón (2010b: 187), that “the Government only recog-

69 It has been nicknamed as a “gag law” by the major private media Ecuador and international organisations such as the Inter American Press Association (IAPA).

70 Communication Law (2013) in its articles referring to media lynching (Art. 10.4.j).

71 Frank La Rue, UN Special Rapporteur on the Promotion and Protection of Freedom of Opinion and Expression, in *Opinión sobre la Ley de Comunicación de Ecuador* (Opinion on the Communication Law of Ecuador), on YouTube. Recuperado 05/11/2015: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sWDG9bGOLEY>

72 There are several examples: firstly, the seizure in 2008 by the Agency for Deposit Guarantee (ADG) of three televisions (Gamatv, TC Televisión, CN3), two magazines (El Agro and La Onda) and two radio stations (Carrusel and Super K), which until now were managed by the State, and, secondly, the Government / private media confrontation originated from a series of reports in 2009 in the daily *Expreso* on the activities of the older brother of the President, Fabricio, supposedly privileged in contracts with companies controlled by the State (Checa-Godoy, 2011).

73 “Carlos Ochoa, superintendent of communication, waited until Wednesday April 8 [2014] for the presenter of Ecuavisa, Alfredo Pinoargote, to offer public apologies to the African people and the community of sexual minorities for, allegedly, having made an offensive remark in their against”. Recovered 3/03/15: http://www.ecuadorinmediato.com/index.php?module=Noticias&func=news_user_view&id=2818760085&umt=superintendente_ochoa_esperara_hasta_miercoles_por_disculpas_publicas_alfredo_pinoargote_audio

nises a media condition: corrupt; and media just one of the Government: dictatorship”.

Along the same lines, we see how information sources have great influence on the interviewed journalists. At first, one might think that they consider them as one of the main pillars in achieving an objective journalism based on the publication of verified and truthful information. Even so, if the Ecuadorian context is analysed, the interviewed journalists probably, through the information given by these sources, seek to legitimise their work and protect them against possible sanctions from, firstly, the regulatory organisms of Government or other political groups, and, secondly, the possible criticisms and retaliations from the President.

The Government of Ecuador, in recent years, has strengthened the idea that has been proposed from the nineteen eighties in favour of the democratization of communication, in which the media, both public and private, must have their social responsibility - common guidelines in countries with a law on communications such as Argentina, Venezuela, Uruguay and Bolivia; as well as countries such as Brazil or Mexico, that are debating the new regulations on communication. Accordingly, the proposal is to gradually abandon the commercial nature of media to be based on the truthful information and the access needs of Ecuadorian citizens. Even more in a country where a privatised media ecosystem persists, as León (2007: 55) predicted at the beginning of Correa’s Government:

In this scenario with prospects for change, everything would seem to indicate that the issue of the concentration of the media will be reactivated in Ecuador and, along the same lines, the dispositions intended to override the public good that the information has, to transform it into a mere commodity. And besides, the need for public media.

Although we should not forget that this democratisation of communication and information must be designed to provide critical tools to citizens. As Darius and Astudillo (2005: 40) remind, “the journalist who understands his task as a service tool must step into the shoes of his audience to give answers, from the simplest to the most complex”.

This proposal, according to the responses, marks the attitude and decisions of the interviewed journalists that, individually, pay little attention to the search for audiences or the improvement of the economic performance of the media to focus on the needs and desires of citizenship. It could be because, on the one hand, media act as filters of market influences and, on the other hand, the senior and chief editors serve as intermediaries between the owners and journalists.

These conclusions are more interesting when compared with the results obtained in the Analysis of Media Development in Ecuador in 2011. This study affirmed that the interviewed journalists perceived multiple pressures from advertisers, managers or owners of media and Government. However, results of JCE project show an evolution over recent years, from a mercantilist approach to a social position strongly influenced by the Government and the Communications Law; with the consequent loss of influence from advertisers and owners of the media.

Regarding other influences perceived by respondents, two trends are confirmed: Firstly, the low levels of professional associations, unions or journalists' organisations that maintain the same line of the nineties⁷⁴ and the beginning of the 21st century. As noted by the Analysis of Media Development in Ecuador (2011), 75% of the interviewed journalists testified that their media did not permit any membership of any journalist association and that 85% was not part of any union. And, secondly, although the influence of the Catholic Church is still strong, in some media it is becoming smaller. A trend to secularism confirmed among certain sectors of the media professionals. These results support the statement made by Checa-Godoy (2012b) who states that the Catholic Church has little presence today in the daily press of Ecuador, but remains on the radio.

74 The study Journalists in the Andes conducted in 1994 by the School of Journalism and Mass Communication Florida International University certified that in the nineties, in Ecuador, there was no type of union organisation of journalists and media.

Chapter IX

The self-perception⁷⁵ of professional roles of Ecuadorian journalists

Abstract

This chapter presents the results of analysing the self-perception of the professional role of the journalists interviewed based on their practices, values and professional attitudes. Based on the theoretical assumptions by Hanitzsch (2007) who proposes three-dimensional analysis (interventionism, power distance and market orientation) we study the idea of the professional role of journalists. The results show that respondents identify, firstly, with the professional role of diffuser, responsible for providing information to people so that they create their own value judgments. Secondly, they maintain a distant but cordial attitude with their sources, which leads them not to act in the role of adversary or watchdog but without losing their critical perspective - although both of these roles are marked by polarization of journalists and influences from the Government. And, thirdly, they see their audience as citizens, although interviewed journalists who work in the private media feel some more pressure from their superiors and the market.

⁷⁵ Hanitzsch and Maximilians (2013: 1) difference between 1) role orientations, 2) role enactment and 3) role performance. This study focuses on the analysis of the perception of professional roles as "subjective concept that journalists have of their role in professional practice".

Introduction

Mass media in Ecuador play a central role (such as generators, mediators, distributors and receivers of information) within the entire communication process. This positioning puts journalists as professionals in charge of searching for, selecting, reviewing and producing this information, being able to take different positions based on their values, orientations, practices, and attitudes.

The roles that journalists perceive their own directly influence their professional actions. For the analysis of these roles, the project is based on the theoretical proposal of Hanitzsch (2007) that suggests three dimensions of analysis (interventionism, power distance and market orientation) to study the idea of the professional role of journalists. Further, this study assumes influences coming from contextual levels, which are analysed through Organic Multilevel model (Oller, 2015).

The objectives of this chapter are: 1) To identify the self-perception of professional roles of journalists in Ecuador regarding the dimensions of interventionism, power distance and market orientation; 2) To find out what motives determine the perception of professional roles of journalists in Ecuador; and 3) To identify the contextual factors that influence the perception of professional roles of journalists in Ecuador.

1. Professional roles of journalists

The perception of journalists of themselves comes from their professional activities and their “self-concept, image and appearance” (Bueno, 1976: 1225). Since Weber (1904, 2009) proposed a research method based on their “ideal types”, many authors have based their research on the professional roles of journalists according to this method.

Lasswell (1927, 2007) was one of the first to analyse the role of the media in society. Sola and Shulman (1964), focused on the analysis of journalists and after conducting 33 interviews of journalists, concluded that some worked to be admired, others to satisfy readers and others to counteract the un-

desirable ones. Janowitz (1975) proposed the lawyer journalist and the gatekeeper as models of journalists. Cohen (1963), in his classification of types of journalistic roles, distinguished between the neutral and the participant journalist. On the same line, Johnstone, Slawski and Bowman (1976: 114-15) conducted one of the most influential studies of the last century, defining two types of professional identification, the neutral (nothing-but-the-truth-journalists) and the participant (whole-truth journalists).

In the eighties and nineties there was an implosion of these investigations at a global level and of the theoretical proposals focused on the study of the roles, practices and attitudes of professional journalists; in the US first and then at an international level, thanks to the work of Weaver and Wilhoit (1986, 1991, 1996, 1998, 2007). These researchers established a classification of three journalistic roles: 1) the adversary journalist (critic-lawyer), 2) the journalist interpreter (interpreter-explanatory), and 3) the disseminator journalist (neutral-diffuser). Then in 2002 they added a fourth type, 4) the mobilising journalist (populist-mobiliser).

In this century, Mazzoleni (2010), grounded in the above classifications, defines five models of journalists based on their relationship with politicians: adversarial, collateral, exchange, competition and market oriented. Hanitzsch (2007), as mentioned above, made a classification to analyse the professional role based on the dimensions of interventionism, power distance and market orientation. Meanwhile, Mellado (2013)⁷⁶ developed six models of journalistic role performance based on the relationship that journalism holds with de facto power, journalists' levels of implication in a news story, and the way they conceive of the audiences as citizens, clients or spectators.

Notably, during the 20th century, research into journalism and journalists focused on the US and Europe (the so-called Western journalistic cultures), paving the way forward for the studies that were started a few decades ago in other regions of the world, including Latin America. In this region, although important studies about communication and journalism were ca-

76 Website of Journalistic Role Performance Around the Globe. Recovered 05/11/15: <http://www.journalisticperformance.org/p/the-project.html>

ried out, as Mellado (2009: 10) states, “it is noted that in none of these investigations the figure of the journalist as an object of study has been highlighted”. This author emphasises studies such as the one developed by Menanteau (1967) on Chilean journalists; Day’s (1968) about the profile of the Latin American journalist based on journalists from Bolivia, Mexico and Argentina, or some studies of McLeod and Rush (1969).

The idiosyncrasy of the the Latin American region has caused the scientific production about the journalistic culture to be characterised by 1) low scientific production, 2) the uneven production with regard to certain issues and regions, 3) the late start of the scientific and research activities, 4) the decontextualisation of the studies and the strong influence from Western countries, 5) the production based on individual initiatives or little continuity, 6) the lack of consensus or training among researchers in the region, and 7) the conduct of investigations by foreign researchers.

Hence, one of the challenges of communication research in Latin America, according to León (2002), is:

Overcoming the decadent tendency to describe communication studies as a single discipline and to create a growing awareness of disciplinary nature, revolutionising the ways of analysis and approaches to the production, dissemination and reception of the message. These changes, precisely, are underlying the main theoretical and communication research in Latin America: cultural studies.

In Ecuador, the research in Communication Sciences has not maintained a tradition that allows it to have a solid basis in the field of journalism studies, let alone regarding the study of the roles and practices or attitudes of journalists. In the early 1990s of last century, the team organised by Charles H. Green, president of the LAJP (Latin America Journalism Program), conducted the study *Journalists in the Andes*, an assessment of Journalism and Journalism Education in Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Peru and Venezuela. Green, with his team, said that the watchdog role of the press in Ecuador was almost non-existent, that the average wages remained below \$400 a month, that there were 17 schools of journalism in Ecuador – because

collegiality was compulsory, that there were no unions of journalists and that the media owners were wealthy families or groups of banks (the Isaías family, Filanbanco or the brothers Roberto and William, etc.). Outstanding issues reported by the interviewed journalists in this project were: the lack of independence of the media newsrooms, low wages and poor training or professionalization.

Over the past two decades scientific production in this area has been limited and of little continuity, resulting in recent years in an increase due to new public policies and legislative actions. Examples such as the study published in 2013 by Punín and Martínez (2013: 516) into the journalistic professionalization in Ecuador conclude that currently “journalism in Ecuador is going through a difficult time [...], that there is a permanent confrontation between President Correa and the private media companies [...], the universities have opted for a formation of inter and trans disciplinary nature [...], radio is one of the largest sectors of the country [...] or - the more worryingly - there are still sectors that prefer to practice journalism as a trade in Ecuador”. In another study, Abad (2013: 13) confirmed that “there is not any sufficiently clear project in Ecuador about the journalism training that goes beyond the acquisition of technical skills and offers far-reaching conceptual tools. Critical thinking about media is not exercised by the citizenship but by the political power”.

1.1. Analysis dimensions of the professional roles in the JCE Project

The theoretical construction of the journalistic culture of Ecuador involves working at different levels of analysis of the professional role of the interviewed journalists. For this, the study uses three dimensions within the block of analysis of professional roles proposed by Hanitzsch (2007):

a) The interventionism dimension: This dimension describes how much the journalist is actively involved in the information developed through his ideas and value judgments. In this analysis, there are, on the one hand, passive journalists, committed to objectivity, impartiality and maintaining the distance from their sources. On the other side, interventionist or active journalists are situated, considered to be lawyer or those who emotionally take sides in their work.

b) The power distance dimension: This dimension comes from the concept of full loyalty of journalists to the centres of – political, economic and social – power or a confrontation with them. If journalists are at the opposite pole to the powers, they can play the role of adversary and can act as a fourth power. If, on the contrary, they are located near to the centres of power, they begin to play the role of loyal. In this dimension, Oller and Meier (2012), based on the results of their empirical research, certified that journalists assumed, similarly, a professional role based on proximity (close), understood as a relationship of friendship and camaraderie, or distance (distant), interpreted as a remote professional relationship of intimacy.

c) The market-oriented dimension: This dimension is reflected in the work of journalists when they subordinate their professional goals to the market logic against the public interest. Journalists are positioned at one side or the other depending on their understanding of their audience as consumers or citizens.

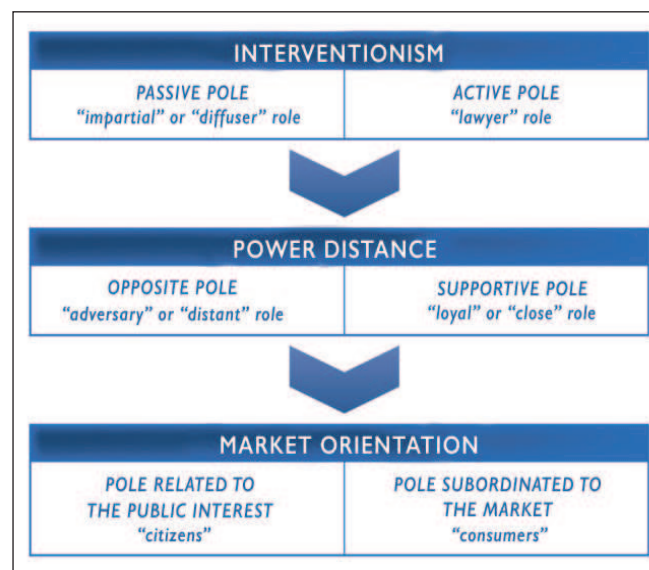


Figure 1. Analysis dimensions of the professional roles
Source: Prepared by the author from Hanitzsch (2007).

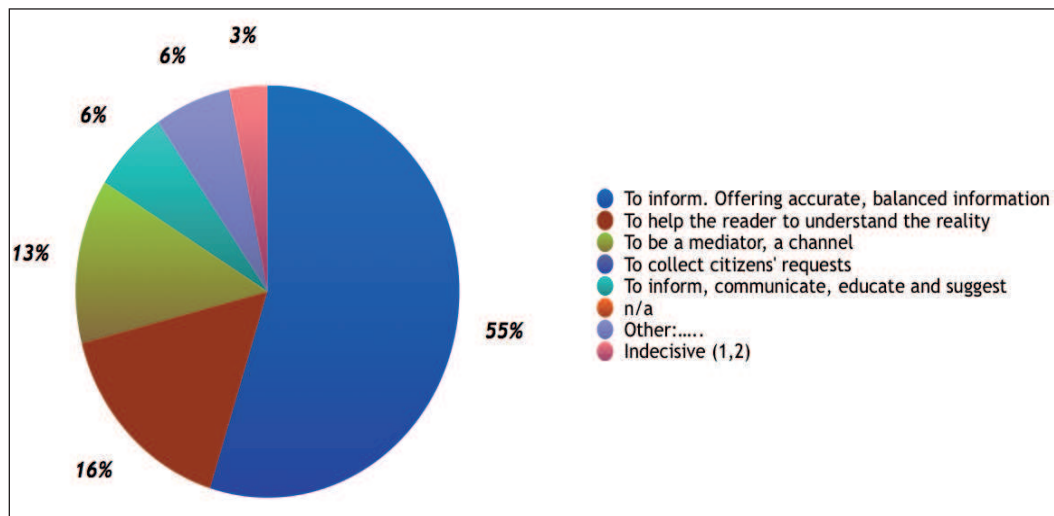
One of the main difficulties encountered by this study is to define the professional roles of journalists analysed binomially. For this reason, this analysis arises from the idea proposed by Donsbach and Patterson (2004: 298) of continuum, in which both sides are the ideal extremes; but that are unattainable, leaving journalists stationed at a point between the two poles.

2. Results

Firstly, one of the main findings obtained reveals that more than half of the interviewed journalists (55%) consider their main function to be to inform in a truthful and balanced way. Thereby, they play an impartial role in carrying out their professional activity with neutrality, veracity and approximation to reality: “The journalist is a storyteller, so when we create a story, it has to be given with the actual information [...] not to distort the truth” (5); “That is, the truth. To inform, always trying to tell the truth” (12).

2.1. Interventionism dimension

Regarding the first dimension, the interviewed journalists view themselves as active professionals although, as we have seen, more than half (55%) are at the passive pole of the interventionism dimension. This position confirms that, despite assuming that their ideas or opinions should not be reflected in their information, their degree of commitment is high or very high in their professional work; participating in the development of their reporting – although sometimes some of them confirm that they have this commitment only in issues of their interest – in an “active” way from an effective and diligent point of view: “Journalists have several roles: the most important, it is to inform. I think the role of journalists is to identify the information, but not just that which is on the agenda, but to identify information that is not so obvious” (18). Hence, respondents do not assume their active participation from the point of view of the exercise of the role of lawyer or interventionist, but with the commitment to their profession, the news events and the dissemination of these: “100% to first finish the assignment and 100% more commitment to bring the truth and try to publish the information as it should, without lies or decontextualised” (5); “Personally it is what moves me, for me journalism is not a profession, it is a lifestyle and whenever I work on an issue I am aware of what I want to achieve through it” (16).



Graphic I. What is the most important role of a journalist in Ecuador?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the position of the respondents with respect to the consulted sources, such as authorities or civilians, 45% confirms that is participates actively, and 42%, however, try to keep a distant and neutral attitude: “We try to keep ourselves apart from taking sides on either position but that is sometimes very difficult. One has his emotional burdens, his subjectivity” (4); “The intent in a report is to be neutral and to admit the least possible ideology burden. One must agree with what is being informed, but not to express an opinion” (8); “I get involved but I cannot comment nor customise the theme. I want to bring first-hand information to people, updated information at all times and I need to get involved and experience what these people are living” (17).

From the figures obtained, at first, it could be understood that almost half of respondents assume an interventionist role, and half an impartial role. However, by carefully analysing the responses, it is shown that respondents believe that journalists should move away from interventionist poles because, although they participate actively in seeking the maximum working efficiency, they are obliged to maintain at all times a neutral viewpoint.

Finally, the results indicate that 75% of respondents think journalists should participate actively in the development of information, in the proposal of news or in the process of covering these; confirming that three quarters

of respondents would be positioned at the active pole of the dimension of interventionism. Nevertheless, as has been developed in the preceding paragraphs, the answers show that “active” participation does not imply abandoning neutrality and, therefore, implies an approach to professional practice based on the impartial role: “It is essential because if a journalist participates actively in the news that he will transmit or communicate, he will have many more arguments to inform the audience in the most suitable way [...], always attached to the truth” (12). “Active understood from a journalistic dynamic of being permanently watching, of being permanently analysing, of being permanently investigating. But always keeping this concept of plurality” (1); “Of course we have to participate, [...] not to influence the news, but to understand it” (22).

1. Journalists should participate in the news	65%
2. Journalists should participate in the proposal of news and in the process	10%
3. Journalists can participate but not always	6%
4. Journalists should stay at the edge	13%
5. n/a	6%
6. Other	0%

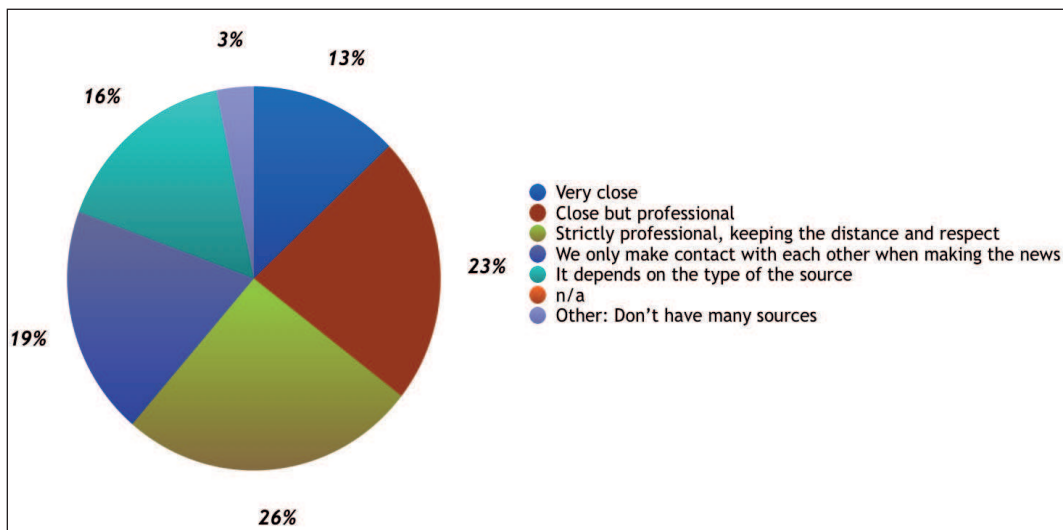
Table I. Importance of the active participation of the journalist
Source: Prepared by the authors.

2.2. Power distance dimension

In relation to this dimension, the interviewed journalists reveal that they exert a distant role regarding the centres of power and institutional sources. However, unclear results are obtained as to whether they act as watchdogs or if they consider the media to be the fourth power.

in regard to their relationship with their institutional sources - politicians or senior officials, respondents state that, even maintaining a close rela-

tionship (23%), they retain a professional distance; based on respect and distance (26%) and limiting the relationship or contact to the moment of obtaining information (19%): “Always very respectful of hierarchies, in order to maintain cordial relations might be, there is empathy with some other sources, but always keeping distance” (9); “We always say that we must cultivate the sources. That we must be close enough so that they can give their information and trust you to filter documents, and distant enough to keep a line of respect” (23).



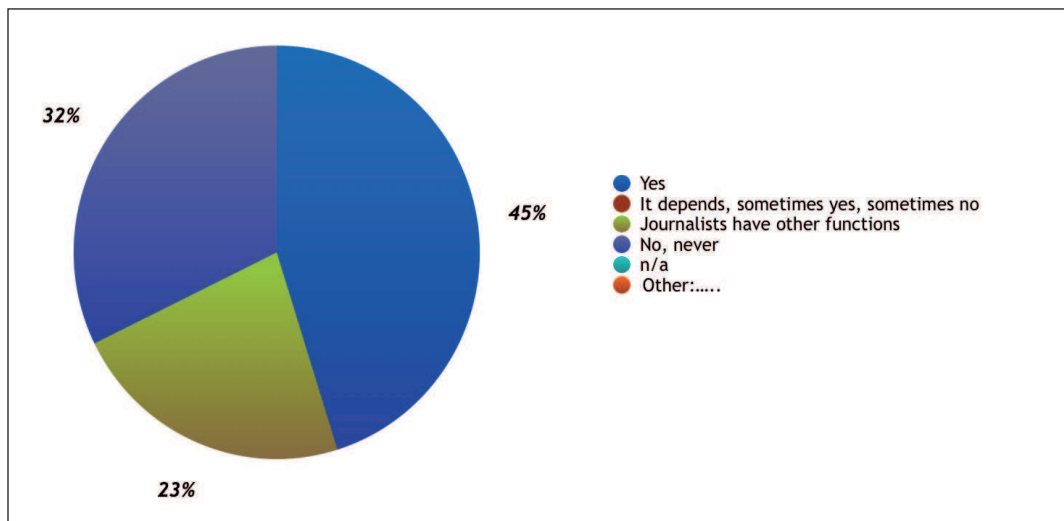
Graphic 2. What kind of relationship do you maintain with your institutional sources? (politicians or senior officials)
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Along the same lines, two thirds (68%) of the interviewed journalists maintains a cordial relationship, being kind and affective, but without intimacy. Thus, they exercise a loyal but distant role, according to Oller and Meier (2012). They consider this aspect essential in preserving neutrality: a distant cordiality. I learned that you have to be close enough to the source so they give you information, but far enough away to question them” (18); “A relationship of respect, not of trust. One thing is that you have a relationship with your source and another is to establish a personal relationship of friendship” (16); “I always treat them politely, it is a way of establishing limits, another is not to go out with them anywhere other than work-related events” (23).

Regarding the role of journalists as watchdogs of power, the results show that there is no consensus among respondents. In fact, divergent responses were obtained depending on the media where they perform their professional activity. Nearly half (45%) of respondents believe that acting as watchdogs of power is a really important role. By contrast, 32% believe that they should never act as watchdogs and 23% that they have different functions. If the latter two positions, which are similar, are analyzed together, we find that more than half of respondents (55%) believe that exercising the role of watchdog or “adversary” is not a function to be included in their professional practice. When the analysis of the results takes into account the ownership of media where the journalists interviewed work, more than half (56%) of those who work in private media believe that they should play the role of adversary; while only a quarter (25%) of the journalists that work in public media feel the same.

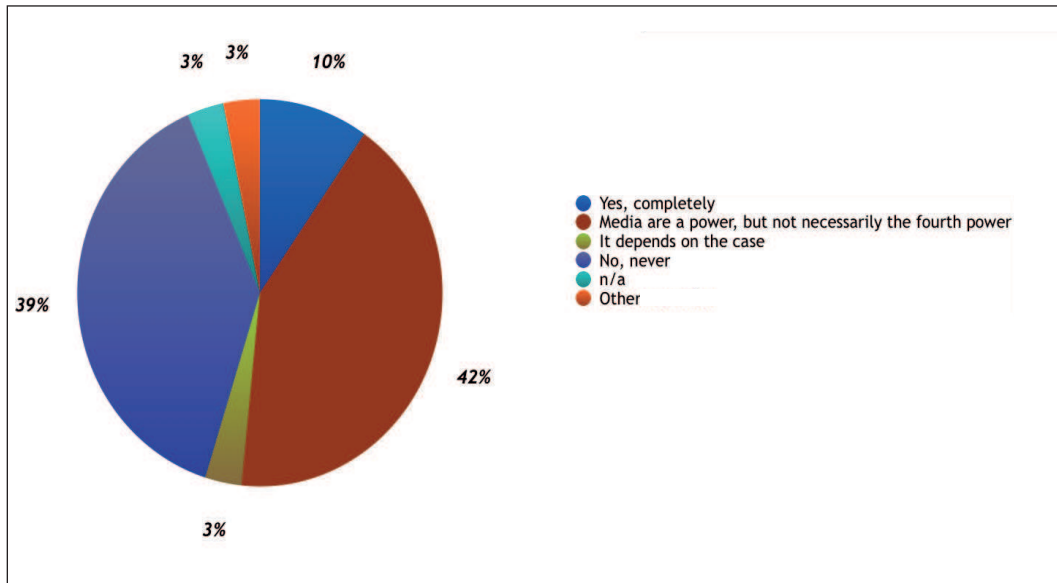
Clear in this analysis is that the role of watchdog is not necessarily assumed by the interviewees as a direct interference of opposition to the power, acting as a judge, but rather, as a privileged observer with the ability to get information to which the public does not have access: “A journalist is not a judge, a journalist is the one who has to tell stories and if these are stories of corruption and embezzlement or internal problems in power a Government must denounce it, but not to be the final judge” (10); “With facts, of course yes [...] without assuming a regulatory role [...] just as an observer, but of course, we are almost obliged to see what happened” (20).

Additionally, respondents feel a civic responsibility to convey this privileged information in a neutral and truthful way to the citizenship for it to be the one that values facts: “The general public should be a watchdog of power, because the only thing journalists give is true information about what is happening and they will discern and ensure their own interests” (19); “I think we should be servants of citizenship. Watchdogs of the power, the Government and the State” (30).



Graphic 3. From your point of view, what is the most important role of a journalist in Ecuador? Should journalists act as watchdogs of power?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results achieved on the paradigm of journalism as a “fourth power” is a reflection of the above responses, not being a broad consensus in that regard. Almost half of those interviewed (45%) acknowledge that the media have undeniable power, at least factual; 39% that journalism should not act as a fourth power, and only 10% decrees that they are. If the results are observed at a group level, based on the affinity between the responses, it is shown that the journalists interviewed, for the most part, although they are aware of the power of the media, address professional practice from a standpoint of responsibility towards the citizenship and not from a judgmental perspective: “It should not be called this [fourth power] because it is simply a work attached as closely as possible to reality. Not what is understood as the fourth power linked to manipulation” (14); “The media are a representation of a form of power. The media do not seek power, nor seek being against a Government [...]. I rather think it is a counterweight, that is, the media allow you to give the society a democratic balance to the extent they are watching, they are auditing, they are publishing things” (23).



Graphic 4. Do you think the media should act as the fourth power?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

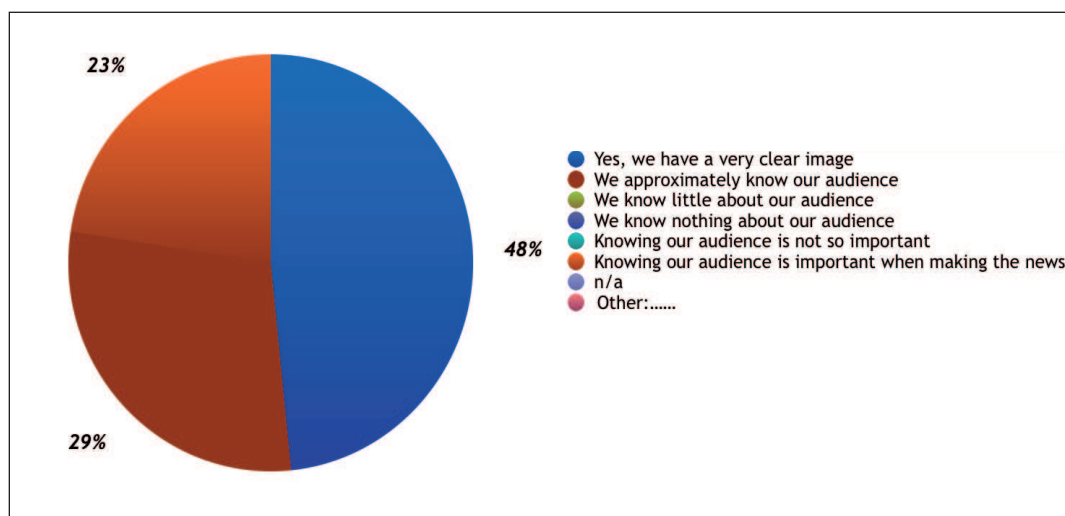
2.3. Market orientation dimension

Regarding this dimension, most of the interviewees have a high sense of social responsibility, because they perceive people more as citizens than as audience; common perception among respondents of public, community and private media - with the subtle nuance that the latter give greater value to market research and to the target audience.

More than three quarters (77%) of the interviewed journalists think that they know about or have a clear picture of their audience and another quarter (23%) admit that this knowledge is important when making their work. These results indicate that respondents would be subordinate to the needs of the market. However, from the contextual analysis of the journalistic culture of Ecuador, it was found that the tendency to identify their audience comes from their interest in them as “citizens” - at least to normative level.

Despite this, responses from journalists working in the public media indicate that, despite having in mind an image of their readers or viewers, journalists also maintain a generalist perspective: “Housewives, parents,

youth, etc., ordinary citizens” (11); “Citizenship is part of the information process; they are primarily involved in our work” (6); “I have a picture of my audience that always wants to be informed, that wants to know what is happening” (17). Meanwhile, journalists working in private media do have a concrete image of their audience based on the market needs: “We study our audience, we know for whom we write, we know what they are like, the average age, the purchasing power they have; we have socioeconomic and aspirational type studies [...]. So we do have a picture of for whom we write” (22).



Graphic 5. When you write or expose a story, do you have a specific image of your audience? What image?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

In addition to the perception of the image that interviewed journalists have of their audience, the importance they give to their needs and fears is analysed. The meaning of “fear” was a controversial point because respondents assume it to be the ability or propensity to create social alarm: “Journalists should not generate fear, they should be proactive, positive, hopeful” (9); “As for the fears, yes, I care too much about not generating sensationalism” (30).

However, regarding the recognition of the needs of their public, three quarters of respondents (77%) consider this as the most important aspect of their professional role, although without being fundamental and depending on the circumstances. On the other hand, almost one fifth (19%)

recognises not take account of this or does not consider it important. These results confirm the tendency of the majority of respondents to define their professional role based on their social responsibility: “One of our premises is the point of being responsible to society, to provide different contents” (10); “We are interested in the needs of our audiences. We try to ensure that audiences can make decisions, can be informed, be entertained and feel part of a community” (22).

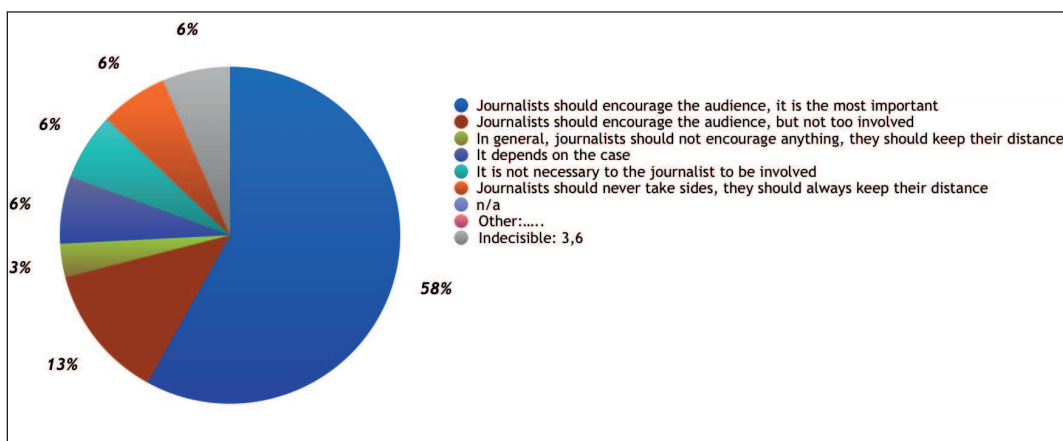
The importance of market research and target audience for the interviewed journalists fluctuates according to the ownership of media where they work; reflecting a tendency of journalists working in the private media to see their audience as consumers, showing the media as subsidiaries of economic performance: “In a private media this is essential, we measure the behaviour of the audience, schedules, ratings, certain frequencies also. So it is fundamental: we work for them and depend on them” (12); “We are in a globalised world, a world where consumption is handled; it definitely has a fundamental importance” (24); “I think it is important in order to know them [consumers], to know their profile and so to properly structure the information we need” (27).

In the public media, interviewed recognised certain importance of the market and the audience, although these do not determine the contents in the media. Moreover, this aspect is perceived as an advantage over private media colleagues: “In the private media I think that market researches are more determinants due to advertising. On public television, we understand that we are all equal and that in the end we all need to be well informed [...] I believe that information should be as democratic as possible” (9); “We do not sell, it would be wrong if we analyse the market. The target audience is the common citizen” (19).

A key aspect found in the results was the confirmation that some of the interviewed journalists assume a position radically different from their media: “In the newspaper they give it enough importance. Not me, I do not think we should give so much importance to what it is being sold” (21); “I do not think I give it a lot of importance. Sometimes here we do workshops what the market is like, what the readership is like, what the numbers of

clicks and rating are and so many things, but sometimes I do not give too much importance” (25).

Regarding the opportunity the journalist has to motivate the audiences to political discussion and civic activities, and the importance given to this aspect, the results show that it is seen as a major factor (71%), with 81% identifying it as having a lot of importance. So even if, at first, respondents claim that their main role is being a diffuser and impartial - maintaining at all times their neutral character, the answers in this section confirm that, in addition, they act as mobilisers - though avoiding the manipulation and ideologization - of their audience, considered as citizens by them: “In a reportage what should be done is to inform and, if it is possible, to propose alternatives. I do not know if the fact of motivating would be involved in the fact of taking part in a certain ideology or in getting into manipulation” (8); “The goal is to achieve involvement, to reach an active audience that communicates, that expresses their concerns [...] that feels more active and more informed” (18); “I think as a media we can and must encourage citizens to get involved in things of ecology, city, water [...]. We must not call on citizens to demonstrate against this or that politician or against this or that law” (26). The answers point, even, to a responsibility towards citizens: “We believe that all this monitoring, this involvement in public management is not something that concerns only the media but ensures that citizens also participate” (13).



Graphic 6. Do you think a journalist should encourage the audience to participate in civic activities and political discussion?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

In relation to the idea that the journalists interviewed have on the role of entertainment media in Ecuador, there is no consensus – proof of that is that it is the point of analysis that generated a greater diversity of responses. The opinions found from the respondents show:

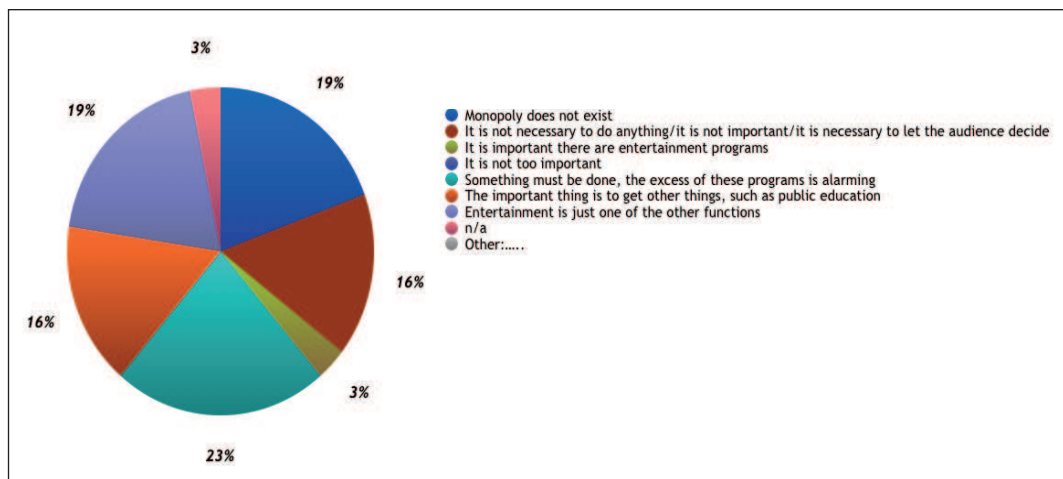
1) On the one hand, almost a quarter (23%) believe that it is a worrying phenomenon: “That is an indication of the poor quality of our journalism. To trivialise the information, playing down the contents. Entertainment is necessary and I think we should discuss what kind of entertainment we need to have in Ecuador and the world” (30); “The monopoly prevents us from knowing what the true reality of life in the country is. Of course we must pay attention to it” (19); “It is worrying that there is a monopoly in terms of what people are attracted to for entertainment. It should be something plural, something with which the media also try to inform the citizenship through entertainment” (8).

On the other hand, a fifth (19%) says there is no monopoly or that entertainment is just one of the functions of the journalistic profession: “What is the monopoly? There is entertainment and the entertainment management by certain media. It is very difficult to talk about monopoly, perhaps a certain concentration of entertainment” (13); “I think it [entertainment] is between the prejudices discussed [in Ecuador], when speaking of journalism it is the subject of monopoly. In Ecuador there is a wide variety of proposals” (18); “One of the roles of the media is to entertain. I do not think it is an entertainment monopoly” (15); “I do not know if the right word is monopoly. Entertainment should be recognised as a human need, it should entertain, the way the entertainment is made must be checked, it should be responsible and must not violate rights. Human beings need to be entertained, then, they cannot be all the time educating themselves” (23).

2) There are two different positions with the same percentage. On one side, there are those who believe that education should be prioritised instead of entertainment (16%): “We understand that entertainment is important but we have to look for quality and believe that products built from public television have to be entertaining but with quality” (4); “Television meet three conditions in order to function, that is: to inform, to entertain and

to educate. If that blends well within the program schedule or in printed areas, fine; the problem is when you start to give more interest to other areas” (10).

On the other hand, those who believe it should be the audience who decides (16%): “I do not think there is a monopoly, because the public has the option to change channels at least. I think we should not pay attention to this phenomenon” (29); “Yes, there should be a variety of quality programs for people to choose something better, not worse. Sometimes it goes for you to buy and sell more; it is just an economic matter of the media” (31).



Graphic 7. What do you think about the entertainment “monopoly” of the media?
Should we pay attention to this phenomenon or not?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Conclusions

Firstly, the results indicate that the interviewed Ecuadorian journalists perceive themselves as neutral and true professionals whose primary mission is to keep the public informed. This puts them in the passive pole of the intervention dimension; being identified with the role of diffuser or impartial. There would seem to be a contradiction when they then consider that they participate actively in the information they produce, but it is because respondents relate the idea of “active” with the commitment acquired in their work and not with their ideas or opinions being reflected

in it. This idea coincides with the diffuser-interventionist role that Mellado and van Dalen (2013) pose of the professional who attaches great importance to making distance between himself and the facts, but that his level of participation is relative: when the grade of participation is higher, the lower the level of the diffuser and the greater the interventionist role is, and so on.

According to this result, we can say that although the interviewed Ecuadorian journalists, at first, identified with the role of diffuser, they would come nearer to the role of adversary. The recognition of the interviewed journalists in playing a watchdog role coincides with the expansion of this model in recent decades, but it remains to be demonstrated whether, in Ecuador and in other countries, this positioning is in response to the journalists themselves to political pressures and, therefore, to the gradual approaching between the political and media worlds (Mazzoleni, 2010). In this sense, studies made in countries with a similar media system to Ecuador have shown that the media come to intervene in the political process, especially in the establishment of the themes of political agenda (Chavero and coll., 2013).

Secondly, the interviewed, about the relationship with their information sources, acknowledge that maintain a conscious but friendly distance. They justify this type of relationship based on their notion of neutrality, accuracy and objectivity, as they feel that if they cross the line of a professional relationship they would compromise their professional integrity. So within the power distance dimension, respondents would fall, at first, near the opposite pole. However, neither strongly-opposing viewpoints nor total loyalty to the “centres of power” was found in the responses. Although it is true that some of them confirmed that according to the media where they work, these sources hold unswervingly to the same point of view - even refusing to cooperate.

The feedback from respondents regarding the role of watchdogs of power differs from the function of judging or condemning, seeing themselves as providers of information to citizens so that they build their evidence and make their own decisions. This suggests that they do not see journalism

as the fourth power, although they clearly recognise the real power of the media and their influence on public opinion and on the political agenda. Therefore, this power implies a responsibility in regard to the citizenship.

There is a clear impact of the media when it comes to assuming the role of watchdogs of journalistic power, because the trend is higher among those working in private media than among those in the public and community media.

Regarding the market orientation dimension, the interviewed journalists – even in private media – see the readers as citizens and not as consumers, and attitude that confirms, according to the journalists, the low influence of the media market in Ecuador even though most of the media are in private hands⁷⁷. This situation means that journalists are more aware of the responsibility of the media with regard to citizens and obviate, to some extent, the economic performance factor.

At last, the lack of consensus regarding the concept of entertainment monopoly in the Ecuadorian media stands. While for some it is a worrying phenomenon, for others it is totally irrelevant, they even deny its existence, as the citizens are those who have the final say in the selection of contents they want to consume.

As a final conclusion the interviewed Ecuadorian journalists viewed themselves as neutral professionals in charge of information and encouragement to citizens to participate in political decisions. This result confirms the theoretical proposal by Deuze (2008a) when he affirms that journalism is changing, leading journalists to see equally the citizens who need to be deeply informed for their personal reasons on certain topics of general interest and the citizens who can make decisions.

For this reason, the interviewees affirm that they take on the role of diffuser, but with a mobilising and adversary emphasis. This result agrees with, firstly, what the Democratic Theory expects of journalists and media:

⁷⁷ According to data provided by CORDICOM (2014) there are 239 media, of which 10 are community, 6 public and the rest private (as the radio spectrum).

1) to inform citizens about power centres and their ideas; 2) to interpret the actions and decisions of politicians; and 3) to control these powers and mobilise citizens (from Esser, Strömbäck and Vreese, 2012); and, secondly, with the results from a survey⁷⁸ of Argentine journalists who define themselves as intermediaries between the facts and the people, who receive information and data to make decisions, but also [...] that describe themselves as “privileged witnesses, able to handle information that is not handled by the rest” (San Martín, 2008).

This profile of journalists is defined by the influence of the media where they work – public, private and community, their organisational structure and their editorial line. Similarly, they highlight the strong influence of the Communications Law and regulator and controller agencies of the State. In light of the results, there is some distrust, and even fears⁷⁹, of this new legislation, which shows the difficult relationship between journalism and power in Ecuador, since, according to Chamorro (2009), media control the power and the power tries to influence the media.

⁷⁸ Survey carried out to journalists from the Argentine daily La Nación, Clarín and Página/12, under the Incentive Programme for Research and Educational Contributions of the Institute of Social Communication of the Catholic University of Argentina (UCA).

⁷⁹ As has been found in the data obtained in the entire investigation, this fear is reflected in statements in which journalists refer to these institutions as “regulators”, avoiding naming them directly.

Chapter X

The idea of objectivity of Ecuadorian journalists

Abstract

This chapter presents the results based on the level of objectivity held by Ecuadorian journalists. The objective is ascertain the opinion held by those interviewed in regard to the concept of objectivity within Ecuadorian journalistic culture, since this opinion determines the type of journalism that is practiced in the country. In order to do this, objectivity is firstly analysed from a philosophical point of view and associated to terms such as reality, veracity, subjectivity and truth. Secondly, from a pragmatic perspective, observing the application of certain standardised methods based on the objectivity. The results show that respondents advocate a journalistic ideal based on objectivity as a way of justification of the journalism professionalization versus the regulatory organisms of the State and the media and the legislation in communication (LOC).

Introduction

Journalism based on objectivity was established as “an ideal practice in the late 19th century and the early 20th century” (Schudson, 2001: 156). “The emphasis on the facts fit the business needs of the Anglo-American press, as it allowed them to sell their products to different readers with different points of views and political attitudes” (Esser and Umbricht, 2013: 990). Even today, the idea of journalistic objectivity largely determines the work of journalists, being deeply rooted in the idea of “good” journalism - where every ideological or political position and ambiguous, partisan or unsubstantiated statements (rumours) are avoided.

Although this idea of objectivity endures, the investigations that are being carried out take increasingly into account the work of journalists in the newsrooms of the media, because these determine their values, ideas, behaviours and professional and personal interests created when developing and disseminating information. For these reasons, to fully understand the concept of objectivity in this country, we present this study based on the contextualised analysis of the journalist within the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

The contextualisation of the study was carried out through the analysis of the journalistic culture of Ecuador and the factors influencing journalists, since the contextual influences received by journalists play a fundamental role in the perception of objectivity. The disintegration of context facilitates its analysis, for this reason it has been divided into three levels: 1) systems level, 2) organisation level, and 3) actor level (Oller and Meier, 2012; Oller, 2015).

The objectives of this chapter are: 1) To understand what the interviewed journalists understand by objectivity as an ideal within the journalistic culture of Ecuador; 2) To find out what working methods are applied by the interviewed journalists to try to present their work as objectively as possible within the journalistic culture of Ecuador; and 3) To establish the influence that contextual factors exercise in the assessment that the interviewed journalists make of the concept of objectivity in the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

1. The concept of objectivity

“The concept of objectivity has been connected to the journalism since its inception” (Schudson, 2005: 214). Since the early 20th century, the important relationship had by journalism with concepts such as objectivity, truth and veracity is recognised, considering their inclusion as essential to achieve the ideal of professionalism of journalism (Lippman, 1920). This image of objectivity as an ideal in journalism, even today, continues to be held by authors such as Tuchman (1999: 200) who says that “journalists should be able to invoke some concept of objectivity when reporting on the facts of a social reality [...] because the proper use of the tools that tell the stories [...] protects journalists from risks - like the reviews - of their professional activity”.

It is true that journalistic objectivity has become the common code for a set of professional ideals which include, according Ognianova and Endersby (1996: 10), “accuracy, relevance, balance, fairness, no distortion, neutrality, testability, equity, depersonalisation and scepticism”. To these, Oller and Meier (2012: 83-90) add “the truth or verisimilitude, trust, transparency, subjectivity⁸⁰ and reality or realism”.

The current debate about objectivity in journalism remains within two planes:

a) Philosophically, considering this as an ideal of the profession and of the journalistic culture. This first position is proposed in positivism, realism and constructivism as “the real possibility of representing the world as it is” (Oller and Meier, 2012: 99). On the other hand, critics of these philosophical thoughts believe that “it is impossible, undesirable and not feasible to be objective” (Donsbach and Klett, 1993: 56; Lichtenberg, 1996: 225).

b) As a journalistic method, when objectivity becomes the tool that offers security and ability to work for journalists in their professional

⁸⁰ At present it is difficult to avoid using the terms “objectivity-subjectivity” faced in a positivist key (Muñoz-Torres, 2002). In this sense, “we would talk about subjectivity when presenting the information the active participation of the author of the information is reflected, abandoning the concept of impartiality” (Hsieh, 2008: 211).

activity. As Weischenberg (1995: 167) states, when raising the objectivity “as standard of work”, the philosophical idea of this and the formal process of the strategic method approach in the production of information. Tuchman (1978) identified five professional strategies as a “strategic ritual” in charge of justifying the professional work of journalists: 1) the exposure of different perspectives; 2) the presentation of verified facts; 3) the use of inverted commas in quotes; 4) the structuring of information in an appropriate sequence (inverted pyramid structure); and 5) the separation of information and opinion.

Objectivity is a controversial concept; while some authors deny the possibility that it could be achieved, others consider it a key part of the media system at the time of raising the standards of quality journalism. Proposing objectivity as an ideal, as a universal claim within journalism, creates certain doubts in countries where the concept of Anglo-Saxon journalism does not prevail (Hackett, 2008). Therefore, “how the concept of objectivity is understood and the importance given to this, depends on the cultural context of journalists and the journalistic culture of a country” (Donsbach and Klett, 1993: 57; Weischenberg, 1995: 158; Donsbach, 1990: 18; Donsbach and Patterson, 2004: 294; Oller and Meier, 2012: 81).

The investigation of the objectivity of journalists in the media and journalistic cultures should have to analyse the context and factors of influence. For this reason, a theoretical framework is established for the study of objectivity related to journalism and the “debate between universalism and particularism” by Laclau (2000: 56)⁸¹.

1.1. Dimensional analysis of the study: The objectivity as a philosophical ideal and the objectivity as method

One of the reasons why researchers in the field of journalism are increasingly more attracted to the notion of journalistic culture is due to “their ability to provide a more intuitive way to see diversity in the journalistic practice” (Oller Meier, 2012: 34), although it cannot be ignored that the theoretical construction of the journalistic culture of a country is highly complex (Hanitzsch, 2007).

⁸¹ Laclau (2000) states that the two concepts are not antagonistic, but they need each other.

For the analysis of objectivity as a philosophical ideal in journalism, the dimensional analysis of the journalistic culture proposed by Hanitzsch (2007) has been used. The author establishes three areas of study: 1) institutional roles (subdivided into three dimensions: interventionism, power distance and market orientation); 2) epistemology (divided into two dimensions: objectivity and empiricism); and 3) ethical ideology (subdivided into two dimensions: relativism and idealism).

The object of study of this chapter is based on the analysis area of epistemology in the profession; specifically in the realm of objectivity and its connection to the area of philosophy. In the field of epistemological philosophy, the journalist asks about truth in journalism and whether information can be based on this or not (Anderson and Baym, 2004). Thus, we distinguish between opinion, that is the reality dependent on the subjective idea and the individual truth of each professional, and information as the universal truth, recognised over a fact identical to reality.

For the analysis of objectivity as a method of journalistic work, as mentioned above, the five professional strategies proposed by Tuchman (1978: 196) have been followed:

- 1) The exposure of several perspectives: journalists should reflect in their reporting different point of views on an event to present all possibilities;
- 2) The presentation of verified acts: facts speak for themselves, they are always true regardless of what is mentioned by sources;
- 3) The use of inverted commas in quotes: proper use of quotations, from which journalists clearly separate their personal opinions from the content of the information;
- 4) The structuring of the information in an appropriate sequence (inverted pyramid structure): the construction of information in order of importance and presentation of the questions who, what, when, where and why; and

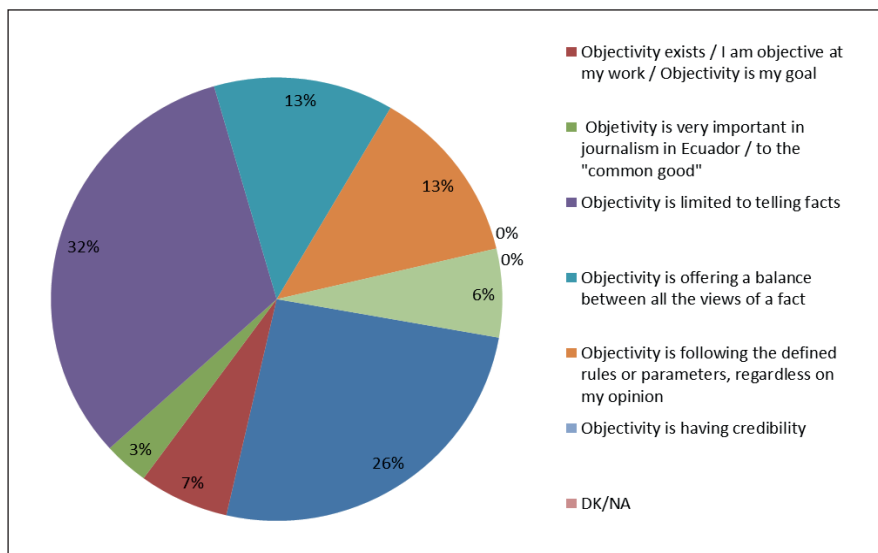
5) The separation of information and opinion: the “pure” news should be separated from news analysis and comments (Tuchman, 1972)⁸².

This study presents an analysis of the concept of objectivity of the interviewed Ecuadorian journalists as “a continuum in which the sides represent a divergent position” (Donsbach and Patterson, 2004: 298), but in both cases are estimated as unattainable situations by representing an “ideal” of one position or another, since “between pure objectivism and absolute subjectivism a range of possibilities fits” (Sánchez, 1994; Giménez and Berganza, 2009: 36).

2. Results

2.1. The objectivity as ideal

When responding about objectivity as an ideal in journalism [Graph I], only 3% of respondents believe that objectivity is very important in the journalism of Ecuador and 7% that objectivity is the goal to aim for in their work: “We actually rely on that objectivity. The daily news is based on that, in being objective, in the impartiality of the case” (6).



Graphic I. What does the objectivity mean in your profession?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

⁸² Some studies have shown that these techniques of apparent objectivity actually are a strategy to take sides and to cover negativism (Castromil and Chavero, 2012, González and Chavero, 2013).

Even though they are asked if they can be objective in their profession [Graph 2], 26% says that it is possible, although not completely, as journalists are people who are traversed by their own moral and ethical frameworks, principles and beliefs: "There is no as 100% objectivity, but we can inform or can be a responsible journalist. And in the responsibility is where the ethics and the morality are" (8); "I think you can play nice and be as ethical as possible. Not necessarily objective, not neutral, I think that is not possible at least in the perception that one has. Trying the product one intends to do, making it as objective as possible" (18); "Objectivity is not possible to achieve one hundred percent, because all activities are subjective" (22).

In addition, more than a quarter of the interviewed journalists said that objectivity does not exist, consisting merely in telling facts, although there is always a degree of subjectivity: "Well, I think that objectivity, as such, does not exist" (1); "For me, objectivity does not exist in this environment, the only thing we do is to try not to make value judgments, not to direct people's opinion one way or the other, to simply inform them and to say ok, there it is, I'm telling you that, this is what is happening and that obviously the viewers are the ones that cast their value judgment, their own opinion" (17); "I personally think my work is impartial, I try to ensure that my opinion never interferes with the report but to devote myself, which means trying not to put a subjective face in moments of comments" (16).

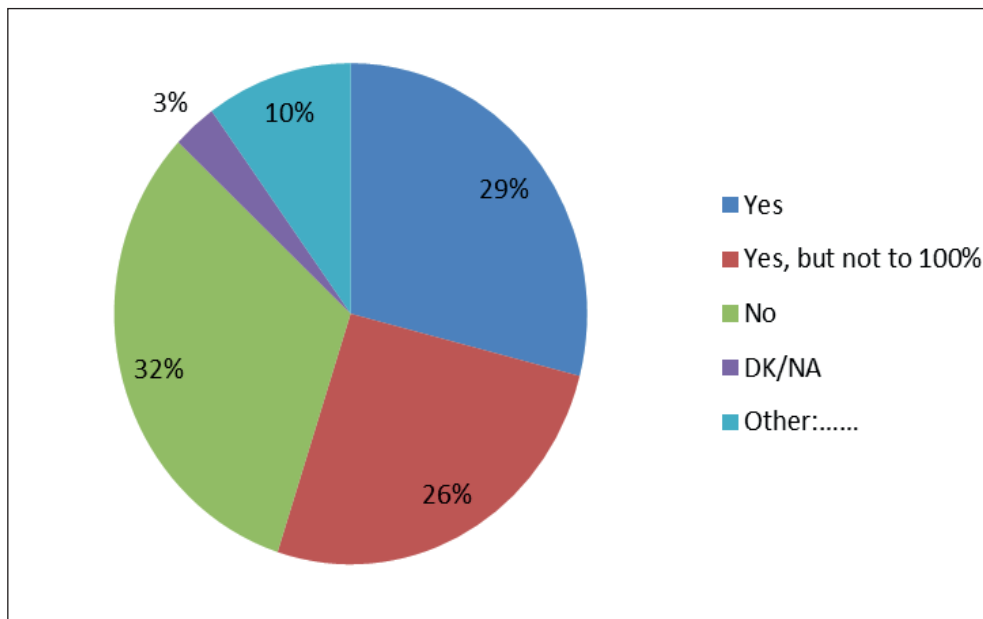
Half of the respondents do not know the philosophical concept of objectivity, focusing on methodology: "Objectivity is to move a step closer to reality" (1); "Yes, I think it is possible to be objective, telling things faithfully as to what happened". So they pose a pragmatic approach:

a) Objectivity consists of merely telling the news stories (32%): "Objectivity is to tell it as reflected, not to make value judgments, so that audiences are those that judge, accept, reject" (24); "To always tell the truth, not to lie, not to exaggerate" (12);

b) Objectivity is to follow rules or parameters defined regardless of the opinion of the journalist (13%): "Objectivity is something within the academic

standard of journalism, objectivity is something that I am really sure I make and I really want to do” (2); and

c) Objectivity is to balance all voices (13%): “To try to avoid value judgments on what we write, to know why of certain phenomena in order to have a much broader notion of what is happening around us” (7).



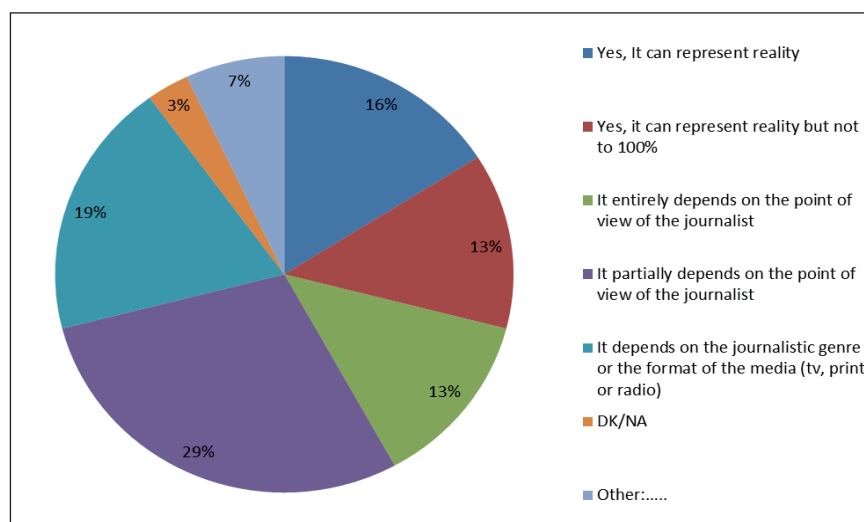
Graphic 2. It is possible to be objective in the profession?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the question about the possibility of faithfully representing reality [Graphic 3] most of those interviewed think that it depends entirely or in part on the point of view of the journalist (42%): “I think that it is mediated by the journalist’s point of view” (1); “There is a theory called Framing and the airing of the news depends on many frames. There is too much at stake finally since everyone will know, depending on the frame, how to take it” (9); On the other hand, there is a 28.9% who think that reality itself can be reliably represented in information: “You have to give one hundred percent reality. The view of the journalist must remain separate” (5).

It highlights the fact that almost one fifth of respondents (19%) raise the possibility of true representation of reality based on the type of media (television, radio and print) and not the type of ownership of this (private, public and community), “It depends on the point of view, the point of view

of the journalist and the point of view of the media. It depends on how a note is presented from the perspective not only of the journalist but of the medium” (10).

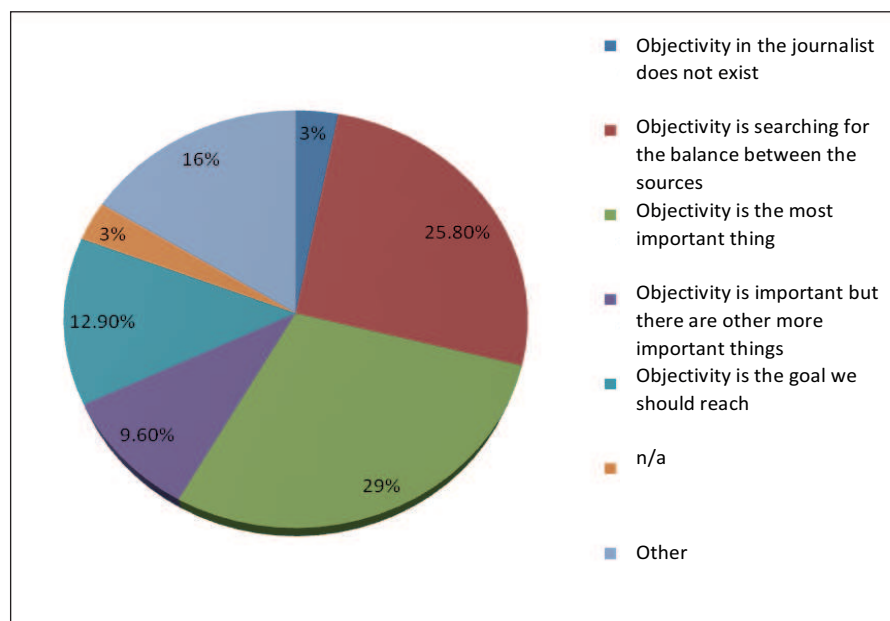
Whether it is because of the format or because of the ownership of the media, a significant proportion of the interviewed journalists acknowledge that there are factors that determine that point of view as a starting point of the journalistic work and make media in windows of the world (Lippmann, 2003 [1922]). These factors constitute the so-called “frames” (Goffman, 2006; Entman, 2004), frames of reference with which the citizens interpret the outside world. Journalism is therefore conditioned, among others, by framing, understood as “the process of selecting and highlighting some aspects of a perceived reality and enhancing the relevance of an interpretation and evaluation of that reality” (Entman, 2004: 26). In this selection process participate certain factors of newsworthiness, such as the subject, customisation, negativity, geographic area, surprise or spectacle (Schulz, quoted in Donsbach, 1995; Bouza, 2007; Chavero, 2015), that would be influencing the decrease of the objectivity, but other influences typical of the media professionals are involved, such as human beings and members of the media, passive subjects of the current legislation and actors in a particular journalistic culture, just as we have been seeing.



Graphic 3. Should news in a media represent (faithfully) the reality or does it depend on the point of view of the journalist?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Finally, although nearly half of those interviewed consider objectivity as something unattainable, when assessing its importance within journalism, 42% consider it very important or as a goal to aspire to: “The importance of the concept of objectivity is of much relevance. We have to rely on this objectivity to inform in the best possible way so that credibility of citizenship can exist” (6); “I think that is an aim that we have to follow, but I do not know if we will reach it” (30).

That is, although the respondents consider that objectivity cannot be achieved or can be reached only partially or from certain practices, by no means do they refer to it as a concept that should be rejected or departed from journalism, because, among other things, it helps to enhance the credibility of the professional in relation to his/her public: “Objectivity is causing the journalist to have a credibility and that is super basic [...] it is decisive in this profession” (20).



Graphic 4. Importance of the concept of objectivity
Source: Prepared by the authors.

2.2. The idea of objectivity as a method

When journalists are asked about the methods they use in their practice to present a story more objectively, more than half (57%) say that they pri-

marily build their information based on achieving a plurality of sources as the main strategy of crosscheck of information [Graphic 5]: “I try to put all the actors involved in the news [...] trying to show the public the different information angles and so that they could have their own conclusions” (13); “It is the fact of looking both sides. This is tried to be made in a participatory manner, where there is more than one source, and where you can contrast what a person says” (8); “First, I have the information there, I contrast, I go to the sources [...] and seek a second opinion and there the thing is to balance” (31).

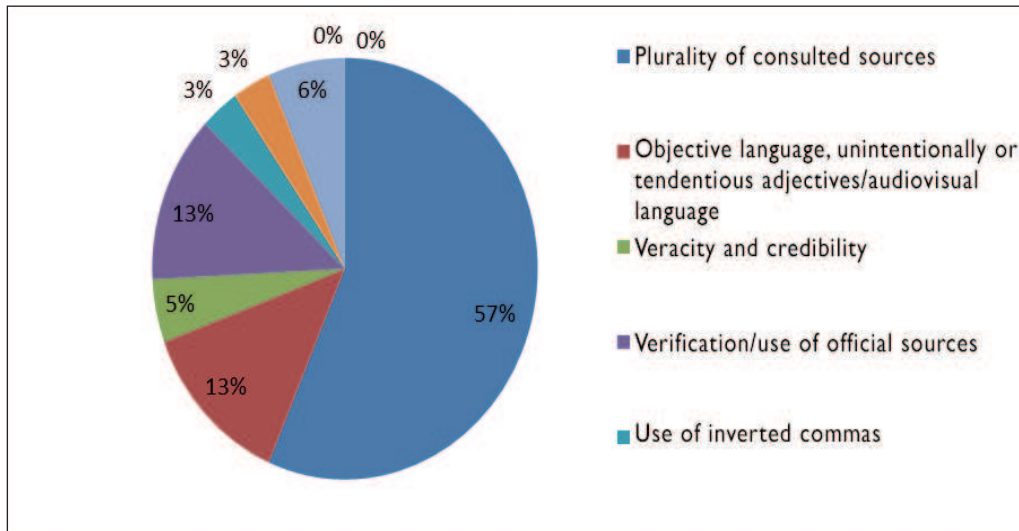
The journalists interviewed also use other strategies that they consider as objective methods: a) A use of objective language - written or audiovisual, without adjectives, without intention or inclination (13%): “I do not use adjectives, I try not to use any adverbs. I write what happened, how it happened and that is it” (25); “We have eliminated some audiovisual elements that are widely used by private television (musical effects, sound, video) that generate different sensations on citizenship” (4); and b) The verification of the authenticity of the sources (13%): “After having gone to the field, one has seen the reality, so he comes and writes the reality that he saw in the best way, in the clearest way, with the most accessible language to everyone” (24).

Other objective methods used, but to a lesser extent, by the interviewed journalists are:

- a) Going to official or institutional information sources: “I seek any documents to support me or not, official statements of some minister or some assemblyman; I contrast it with political analysts or assembly of the opposition, who have another view of the subject” (21); b) Using inverted comma in quotes: “I deal with the inverted comma [...], I try to quote exactly what people say [...]” (30); c) Developing reliable information⁸³: “The only method is simply the truth. It is the accuracy of the data, to compare the data” (3); To avoid rumours, untrusted sources or unverified information: “I, personally, try not to make a report if it is not supported” (16); and d) Conforming to the style manual of the media

83 There is a comparison between truth and objectivity.

in which we work: “In truth, most strategies that have been used here have always been based on ISO⁸⁴ and the editorial guidelines we have as journalists” (6).

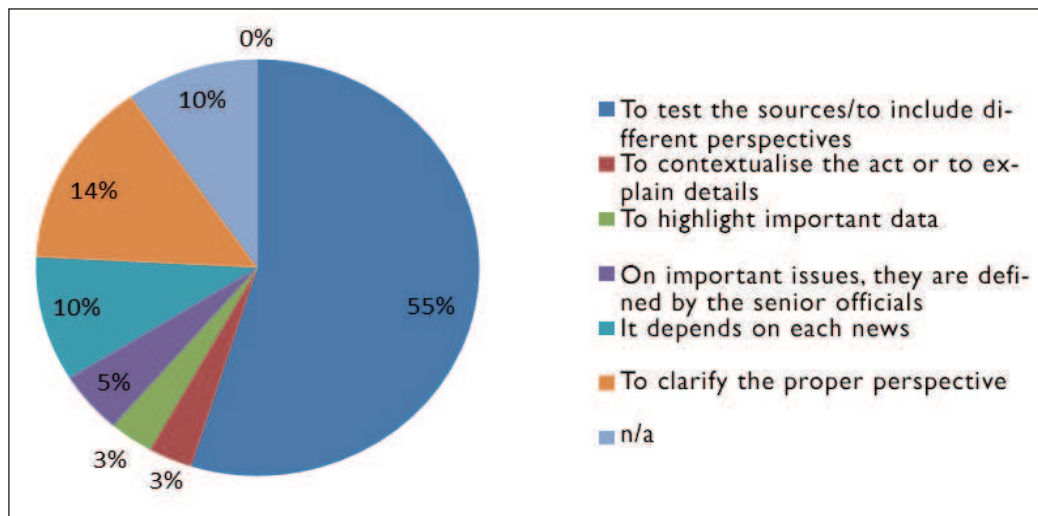


Graphic 5. Methods to present more objective news
Source: Prepared by the authors.

When respondents are asked whether they normally raise several perspectives within their information or, conversely, clarify the most appropriate [Graphic 6], over half (55%) opt for the plurality of voices: “Displaying multiple perspectives is crucial, trying to know all possible sides of information” (13); “In my reports I always try to find different sources that can support what I am saying [...]” (16). Although a quarter (24%) confirms that they clarify their own perspective or do it depending on the type of information⁸⁵: “I clarify the proper perspective from my point of view. [...] I think we should make mea culpa, we should try to open the spectrum much more, but I must say something: [...] today there is a high polarisation in terms of media and national life in Ecuador” (7); “I think I clarify the proper perspective, sometimes I get two, but I try to separate, that is one perspective and the most appropriate on an issue” (25).

⁸⁴ Rules for writing a journalistic article.

⁸⁵ Which is a way to recognise the journalist intervention.



Graphic 6. Displaying multiple perspectives or clarification of the most appropriate perspective in their terms
Source: Prepared by the authors.

When the interviewed journalists are asked whether their informations are based on proven facts or rumours, the vast majority (87%) confirmed that before publishing their information they review and confirm the facts: “[I rely on] verified facts. I think it can generate shock, social chaos if one throws a spear rumour or unverified information” (9); “We do not rely either on suspicions or rumours. To begin with, the Law would not allow that. When there is a suspicion or rumour we must begin to document it to find objective criteria” (22). Although sometimes they recognise that they can be the starting point for further research: “Always on facts established, what we do is that once there is any rumour or any suspicion, which gives us the standing to investigate and question. I do not publish any information until it has been proved by a source” (16).

Half of the respondents (52%) say they always quote their sources: “I have to indicate who my sources are because otherwise that could be understood as my point of view, with the Communications Law we are subject to subsequent liability” (9); “The person who does not use the sources is not simply a journalist. Sources are essential for a good grade and a backup” (24).

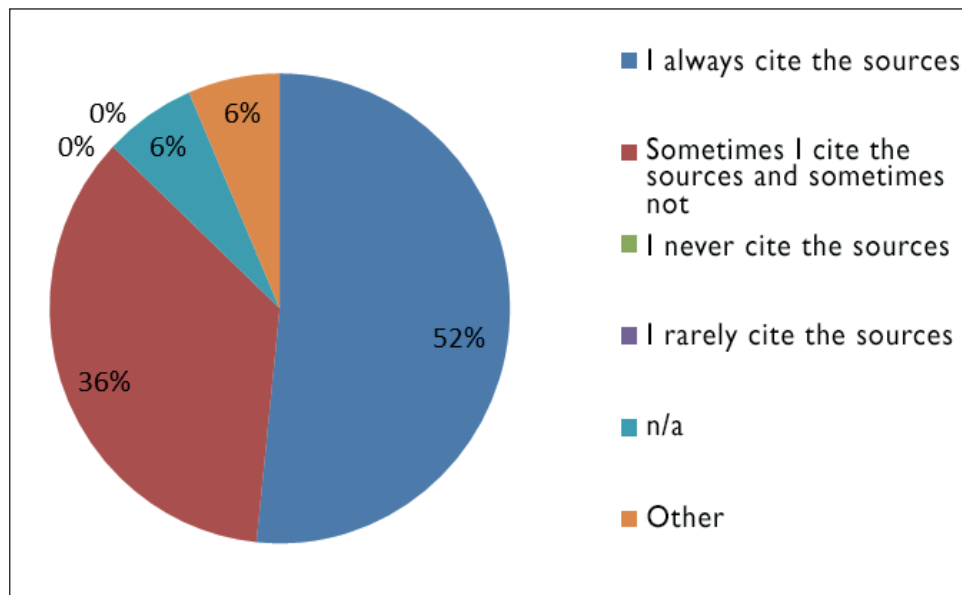
On the other hand, 36% of journalists says they do not quote their sources every time because of:

a) The right to anonymity of sources that some informants request: “Depending on the source approach. There is the issue of off the record that has to be respected, there are sources that do not want to be public. There is a clear procedure that states that a source that does not want to be public should not be used by us” (4); “With textual quotes, with interpretations or summaries of things, I always quote the source and also indicate an anonymous source who prefers to stay that way” (2); “We must indicate the sources and when using the right of the confidentiality of sources, replace that source for information, documents” (22);

b) The time limitation that exists in the audiovisual media: “When there are investigations with numbers or charting the source is cited immediately, but in television, time is so short that sometimes there is no time to quote the source [...]” (12);

c) The discretion of the source in the event that this provides information, but not when it issues an opinion: “It depends, well, if they are documentary sources, the report is indicated. We do keep our sources to ourselves the source if this one provides information; we do not protect the source in the case of the opinion. We reserve the source in the case of information, obviously, in the case that the source asks us for it and if not, we indicate it” (21);

d) On issues involving a crime, and until the fact is proven: “If there is an issue that may have a significance that involves a crime, a gross thing, there we could use it but as long as the fact is contrasted” (4).

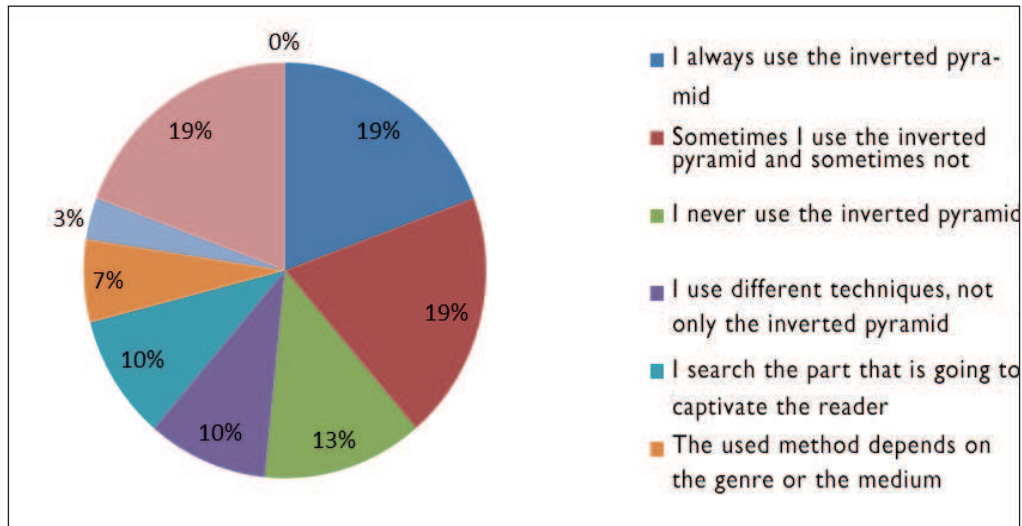


Graphic 7. Use of information sources
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The use of the inverted pyramid is considered the most controversial objective method according to the responses, although half (50%) affirm they always or sometimes use it: “Yes, here in the newspaper it is always the strongest one, first I get the story, then it is thoroughly analysed and I draw the conclusion from everything” (31); “Yes and no. That is, let’s say it has evolved a bit, that traditional concept. I do not think it should become a straitjacket” (7); “Semiologically, the inverted pyramid is still needed, but new theories of communication say it is not as necessary as it once was. What is true is that a good piece of news has to answer all these questions” (24); a quarter say that they never do it, they employ other methods or do not follow any particular: “No, I hate the inverted pyramid. Sometimes I use other techniques. I am not trying to make a pyramid, but rather something more structured, taking another figure” (4); “I try to hook people with something. At the beginning and at the end I put things; I start with something shocking and end with something that will leave them thinking” (9); “No, I always think what the most important thing about the note is. I think of what is going to make my reader stay and read the rest of the note” (21).

An important point about the use of the inverted pyramid as a working method is that 19% of respondents do not know it. This suggests the exis-

tence of a flaw in university education, since more than 90% of the sample studied Social Communication at university, while nearly one fifth admits to not knowing one of the classic methods.



Graphic 8. Information structure. Inverted pyramid
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Finally, more than three quarters of respondents confirmed that, on a personal level (77%) and within their media (81%), the separation of information and opinion occurs: “It is a main aspect, because one thing is information and another opinion. It is essential for the reader not to be deceived” (23); “Okay, totally agree. That is, considering that now it should be clearly specified when it is information and when it is opinion, because this mixture has been harmful, dangerous” (7); “Yes, here we keep these two boundaries very clear. The fact of information is very rigorous in here. Here in the channel there are also other spaces of opinion. Then, in these spaces of opinion, there are experts who can review, even the presenter, about certain subject” (8); “In the newspaper it is clearly separated. We have two pages of opinion with the editorial, that is the opinion of the newspaper, and the rest is information; on some pages there are columns of opinion, but nothing more” (21).

Conclusions

Objectivity as a journalistic ideal

Of the interviewed journalists, almost all believe that objectivity as an ideal is not a goal to strive for in their profession. This position shows how despite there being influences from Western journalistic models, professional activity is guided by its own statutes or style references, which gives those interviewed their own professional identity; invoking a model of journalistic culture supported in patterns different from the objectivist theoretical of the Anglo-Saxon positivist journalism.

It should not be forgotten that there are certain nuances that are essential in understanding Ecuadorian journalistic culture. The responses obtained, in many cases, are ambiguous according to the idea of objectivity as an ideal because, although they believe it is not a goal, a quarter believes that they can be objective even if not one hundred percent. Hence, although at first the interviewed journalists reject Western standards, this action can occur unconsciously, simply due to incompetence or other reasons.

Respondents disregard the philosophical concept associated with objectivity to lean on its practical nature. Accordingly, for them objectivity is: 1) to simply describe news events; 2) to avoid the burden of opinion from the journalist; 3) to get as near as possible to reality; 4) to refer to a story as closely as possible; 5) to conform to rules or parameters defined in journalism; 6) to avoid interfering in personal or professional opinion in their informative notes; and 7) to provide balanced information based on the plurality of voices. This ambiguity between the ideal and practice leads to a situation in which more than half of the interviewed acknowledge that it is not possible to achieve objectivity (fully or partially and they even acknowledge that the final outcome depends on the point of view of the journalist) and, yet, they do not reject it as a method, to the point of accepting some working methods based on objectivity that come from Western countries.

This praxiological interpretation of the concept of objectivity comes from some journalistic standards learned, probably at university, and from the strong normalising influence derived from the new legislation and regulators and controller organisms of the State. Although this concept runs the risk of becoming, as Restrepo (2001: 12) states, “a mechanical idea of objectivity, producer of simplistic information” associated with an empty idea of “responsible journalism”. Not surprisingly, it highlights the constant reference of respondents to the communication rules (and sanctions) as a tool to guide their journalistic work.

The results show that although almost half of the interviewed journalists affirm that reality cannot be faithfully represented, another third respond that although this cannot be done they can get close to it by using certain methods. This result is directly related to the above because it reflects the detachment of the interviewed journalists to philosophical concepts such as objectivity, truth or reality – which are presented as too theoretical and far from day-to-day work; adjusting it to a pragmatic journalistic model. More so when their responses allude to the relationship between the objectivity and the types of media (television, radio and press) and the different information formats to justify limitations in showing reality in a truthful way.

Finally, and despite the doubts expressed by respondents about it, interviewed journalists defend an ideal journalism based on the concept of objectivity as a way of justifying their professionalism. This final conclusion is consistent with what was suggested by Saad (2012) who states that the scheme of objectivity, long reigning in this discipline, has begun to crumble, while it is still enjoying great influence on reporters and media managers. So when claiming a good product, accuracy, depth and ethics in journalistic pieces, many still refer to ‘we must be objective’. Likewise, when one wants prosecute this product, it is said that ‘this journalism is not objective’. This situation, in the incongruous background, causes respondents never to refer explicitly to objectivity as an idea that should be rejected or omitted from journalism.

Objectivity as a journalistic method

The above results show that the journalists interviewed associate the concept of objectivity with an adequate professional practice. For them, the main objectivity strategies are: 1) Separation of information and opinion from both the journalist and the environment; 2) the basis of information on proven facts and not turning to rumours; 3) the construction of their information based on the plurality of sources; 4) the use of an objective language – written and audiovisual –, without adjectives, unintentional and without any inclination; and 5) the verification and authentication of the information sources consulted.

There are other methods that respondents consider objective and that they employ, to a lesser extent: 1) Going to official or institutional information sources; 2) the use of quotation marks in citations; 3) the development of true information; and 4) adhering to the stylebook of the media.

It can be seen how some of these strategies considered as objective, which show the influences exerted on journalists from their fear – institutional level – and the outer structures such as public institutions and policies – systems level –. There is also the possibility that these statements are used by the interviewed journalists to show acceptance of the existing legislation⁸⁶, the political discourse of the media and the Government.

Regarding the structuring of information, although half of the interviewed journalists said they still use the inverted pyramid (recognising it as an objective method), one-fifth said they did not know what this method is. It follows that, although almost one hundred percent of the sample studied in the Faculty of Communication at University, they did not received theoretical training in it. In addition, ten percent of the respondents said that they use different structures looking to attract their audience; showing the extreme commercial nature of the media market causes and the search

86 LOC. Art. 10.3. To respect the constitutional budgets of verification, timing, context and contrast in the dissemination of information of public importance or general interest; h. To exercise and to respect the rights to the reserve of source and professional secrecy; k. To respect copyright and rules of quotation; f. To unequivocally distinguish between news and opinions; g. To clearly distinguish between informative material, editorial material and marketing or publicity material.

for audiences, so that they implicitly recognise the partial renunciation of objectivity in favour of other criteria.

Although more than a half of respondents affirm they always quote their sources, they recognise that sometimes they cannot do so because: 1) the right to reserve the names of informants; 2) the time limitation that exists in the media; 3) the confidentiality of the source regarding certain personal information (off the record); and 4) the absence of a condemnatory sentence from a judge in an alleged crime.

Journalists consider this relationship with their sources from an official point of view, knowing exactly when they can and cannot make use of this information; providing evidence, again, that journalists clearly know the legislation that rests on the media and the risks of being punished in case of breaking the laws. This feature shows that journalists feel pressure from the mechanisms and control agencies of the State.

Finally, the results show that respondents consider an ideal journalism based on the concept of objectivity as a means of justification for the professionalization of journalism. This attitude is clearly influenced by the recent Communications Law of 2013 and the work of regulatory bodies of the State that are carrying out a process of professionalization of journalism and all professionals involved or related to the exercise of communication.

Similarly, based on the answers of respondents, Ecuador would remain within the countries that represent the intermediate journalistic cultures where there is a hybridisation between certain ideas and traditional indigenous professional practices and practices from outside. On the other hand, the direct influence of Government, legislation and regulatory organisms of the profession exert major influences on journalists and their ideas of objectivity.

Chapter XI

The ethical guidelines of Ecuadorian journalists

Abstract

This chapter presents the results related to the ethical values of Ecuadorian journalists. The main objective is to identify the common and traditional ethical guidelines and that the interviewed journalists share, since these principles define their responsibilities, decisions, autonomy, and professional practices. Professional ethics is one of the main factors that determine the level of professionalism of journalists and the professionalization of journalism; regulation of the media market - based on the economic and business model of the media; self regulation of the media - ethical codes; State interventionism; and the involvement of civil society in the communication process - participation and access to information for citizens. The results show that the journalists in Ecuador are classified within journalistic context based on ethical ideologies, according to the perspectives proposed by Plaisance (2007) and Hanitzsch (2007), with are termed eminently absolutist, tending to situationism and, to a lesser extent, to exceptionism.

Introduction

The journalistic cultures of Latin America, the Andean countries and, in particular Ecuador, have been poorly analysed, being necessary to establish the dimensions that define journalists in a changing context, that directly influence the work they develop and that complexify this profession. For these reasons, the analysis of the values and ethical ideologies of journalists presented in this chapter departs from the study of contextual influences.

Professional ethics plays a special role within the current media context due to the growing influence from operators and the different centres of power. This situation has led the media to generate various regulatory and self-regulatory pathways that allow them a degree of independence and autonomy. Therefore, journalists uphold part of their professional credibility in a defined journalistic ethic, according to Prado (1999), by a set of principles, values and ethical standards that judge the ethical behaviours that characterise a particular group of professionals.

The objectives of this chapter are: 1) To determine whether the interviewed journalists believe that there are some universal ethical principles that should be followed by all professionals or, on the contrary, if they must have their own ethical codes of individual behaviour; 2) To identify whether respondents believe journalists should reject ethically questionable journalistic methods or those that may harm others; and 3) To establish the main journalistic practices regarded as “reprehensible” or “unethical” by the interviewed journalists.

1. The journalistic professional ethics

Ethics is the analysis, evaluation and promotion of what constitutes proper conduct and virtuous character in the light of the best available principles. Ethics is not a simple question of how to live well. It is the question of how to live well ethically (Ward, 2009). Ethical orientations of journalists are important because they reflect and create the normative professional guidelines and discuss the basic practices of daily work (Plaisance, Skewes

and Hanitzsch, 2012), establishing how professionals interpret, balance and modify their principles based on the factors of newsworthiness (Schulz, cited by Donsbach in Muñoz-Alonso and Rospir, 1995; Bouza, 2007; González and Chavero, 2013), new technologies, and new social conditions (Ward, 2007; 2009). In this regards, “ethical behaviours have been legitimised as a necessary scientific field within Social Sciences” (Treviño, 1986: 601). In addition, “these ethical principles are not used only to suggest how journalists should behave, but also to define who they are” (Singer, 2014: 67), drawing a circle that protects “us” (journalists) and excludes “them”, all people who are not journalists (Schudson and Anderson, 2009; Singer, 2014).

Schudson (1996) speaks of three points to consider in the informative production and that must be kept in mind when analysing journalistic ethics: 1) the economic and political perspectives where market trends are reflected⁸⁷, as well as the point of view or control of the State⁸⁸; 2) the influence of social organisations in professional journalistic processes; and 3) personal and professional relationships from a cultural point of view based on symbolic aspects.

Regarding market regulation, the corporate structure of the media sometimes leads “journalists to engage in a dialogue between their professional ideas and the benefits produced by following the line of business and financial media organisations” (Berkowitz and Limor, 2003: 784). There are studies, such as the one carried out by Stavitsky and Dvorkin (2008) about journalism in the United States, which suggest that if ethical guidelines are similar and should be implemented based on solid values, why is there this relative difference between commercial and public media? We might respond from some of the major studies based on ethical guidelines of journalists where the distinction is made between private and public or State media. They claim that journalists that work in the commercial media are exposed to large commercial pressures that lead them to have a strong relativism and a low level of idealism (Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch, 2012). Hence, it is shown how media ownership plays a major role in the ideas and ethical behaviour of journalists.

⁸⁷ Bagdikian (2004) speaks of “media monopoly” as a conglomerate typical of channels of communication in the world.

⁸⁸ Herman and Chomsky (2002) define “propaganda model” as a media at the service of the interests of the State and the private sector.

Currently, Ecuador's media landscape is changing dramatically, and with it, its market model. According to Maciá-Barber (2014: 98), "the crisis of the business model of the media should be considered as an excellent opportunity to strengthen their self regulation". Although this self regulation, governed just on corporate or ideological parameters, has proven not to work efficiently for the profession, because citizens are relegated to the background (Chavero, 2015). These reasons have been assimilated by the Ecuadorian Government in its decision-making control over the regulation of the media. That determination carries risks because "the press is, from its origins, a refractory liberal activity to external regulations that often restrict the right to free expression. Then, the initiatives taken by journalists contribute to counteract the measures that seek to regulate a profession from the outside" (Amado, 2008: 212). Thence, according to White (2008), there are statutory proposals of regulation of the media by the Government - some better than others. However, as this author expresses, the best are organised by journalists with representation of civil society, including minority and especially vulnerable groups.

Notwithstanding the foregoing, State interventionism is sometimes justified because the regulation of ethical standards is connected with the development of public regulation of the media system (Price, Rozumilowicz and Verhulst, 2002; Ward, 2009). Although the status of the information must be taken into account, providing, as Amado Amadeo (2014: 271) states, "a clear distinction between information and propaganda". Thereupon, here the question of Ward (2009) could be posed: What public mechanisms can be used to improve the level of the media, knowing that traditional journalism wants a "self regulation" and yet including "public regulation"?

To try to answer this question, first and in relation to the idea of public regulation, it should be noted that today there are arguments about the role the State does - and should - play in this area since in the new information landscape the public responsibility of the media needs to be revised; even, further if possible since the development of new technologies. Currently, the demarcation line between traditional media has become more complex with the advent of online services, blogs and other alternative media. In addition, the integration of social networks into journalistic practice is

one of the contemporary challenges, especially in the direction in which citizens receive, interpret, judge and comment; that is, the modes in which citizens control quality of the product (Maciá-Barber, 2014). As MacBride (1980) exposed in *Many Voices, One World: Towards a New More Just and More Efficient World Information and Communication Order*, a book which frames the ethical ideas during the rapid globalisation of technologies in the media, over the past three decades where there has been an economic concentration of the media industry worldwide, increasing the chances of consolidation policy through the convergence of digital information systems and consolidation of free trade of products and communication services (Christians, 2014a).

Secondly, the ability of self regulation of the media comes from “the ethical guidelines of this self regulation that rests on shared budgets of public ethics, values and constitutional principles of a democratic society, as well as the criteria and requirements typical of communication and information in a framework of freedom and pluralism” (Aznar, 2011: 18). In addition, it is associated with their level of professionalization; being the professional ethical orientations indicators of the state of the professionalization of journalism (Beam, Weaver and Brownlee, 2009). So, as Aznar (2011: 136) confirms, “improving working conditions and increasing the autonomy and professional independence of those working in the media goes, first of all, to recognise that journalism is a profession”. He concludes that these minimum conditions are necessary for them so that a fully ethical social communication could be given, and everything that contributes to guarantee it can be considered as a form of self regulation (Aznar, 2011).

The participation of citizens and their access to information play a fundamental role in the communication process, the activity of journalists, and their behaviour and ethical decisions. The involvement of citizens in the communication process of the media currently maintains two divergent lines. Firstly, the increasing phenomenon of media concentration and convergence of newsrooms. As media owners, journalists are reluctant to admit a profound criticism, internal and external criticism, feeling uncomfortable, sceptical or terrified with the idea of public participation in the process of creating information (Bowman and Willis, 2003). Secondly,

the new phenomenon of narration called “transmedia” (Jenkins, 2008) is a narration that refers to an aesthetic revival in response to media convergence, which imposes a new consumer demand and depends on the active participation and knowledge of communities (Jenkins, 2008; Maciá-Barber, 2014).

Scolari (2013) states that transmedia storytelling is defined based on two variables: First, the story is told through several media or various platforms and, second, the audience can participate in the construction of the narrative world. Therefore, according Maciá-Barber (2014: 105), “these initiatives that provide the direct citizen participation are clearly pointing to a turnaround in the journalistic field and structural essence of democratic society”. Thus, the professionals and the media should be clear that in the field of communication they have to start from the fact that their decisions are of great importance in the development of consciousness of their audience (Rebeil, 2013).

In all countries, including Ecuador, the impact and the influence of globalisation are reflected, among other aspects, onto the attitudinal and ideological changes of media professionals. Specifically, journalistic ethics should become more “cosmopolitan” in theory and practice (Ward, 2009) because historically this has been “parochial”. This “parochial” ethic is being undermined by the globalisation of the media (Callahan, 2003). And “with global impact are global responsibilities [...], but how to do justice to the particular and the universal?” (Ward, 2009: 305). Answering this question is a difficult task, more so if we consider one of the risks caused by globalisation: the prevalence of the web of economic, political and media interests that converge in the information market (Serrano, 2009).

1.1. From risks of misconduct to the dialogic ethics

Journalistic ethics and the rights to freedom of expression⁸⁹ and information are threatened or limited by acts of authority; too rigid laws; the phenomenon of globalisation; the concentration of ownership of the me-

⁸⁹ On May 3, 1996 IFJ celebrated the International Day of Freedom of Expression (1996) highlighting, in Paris, the theme chosen to commemorate its LXX anniversary was: “There can be no press freedom if journalists work in poverty, corruption and fear” (in Aznar, 2011).

dia; and the influence of the information sources themselves and the real powers of various kinds (Taufic, 2005). Risks inherent to the communicative activity and the attempt to safeguard the freedom of expression and respect for human rights have caused, since the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948, the major international institutions to establish certain ethical standards of conduct of the profession⁹⁰. In this transnational sphere, the international code of journalistic ethics published by UNESCO on November 20, 1983 summarises in ten points the way forward for all journalists: 1) the people's right to truthful information; 2) the adhesion of the journalist to objective reality; 3) the social responsibility of the journalist; 4) the professional integrity of the journalist; 5) the access and participation of the people; 6) respect for privacy and human dignity; 7) respect for the public interest; 8) respect for universal values and diversity of cultures; 9) the elimination of war and other many ills which humanity faces; and 10) the promotion of a new world order of information and communication.

Along the same lines, Christians (2014th: 34) states that "some of the main ethical theories emphasise in their different pathways three fundamental principles: truth, human dignity and non-violence. These principles emerge from common rules to all major faiths found in religions, philosophies and cultures that make up the sacredness of life". Hence, journalists today must confront the changes by considering how these principles can be adapted to new situations - such as the communication innovations - preserving the core values (Singer, 2014).

According to Christians (2014a), we can speak about dialogic ethics from the relationship and responsible adjustment within community life, because the ethics of dialogue appear as community ethics where people of different identities, cultural backgrounds, social classes, and ethnicities can be found precisely at different levels; they reflect the ethics of dialogue that restore the public sphere as a space for hybridisation of cultures.

90 Some examples are: IFJ Declaration of Principles on the Conduct of Journalists (World Congress of the International Federation of journalists, 1954); Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media (UNESCO, 1978); International Principles of Professional Ethics in Journalism (International organisation of Professional Journalists, 1983); Annual Report the Inter-American Commission (Inter-American Commission, 1999); Declaration of Principles on the Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights (IACHR, 2011); the World Summit on the Information Society (United Nations, Geneva, 2003; Tunis, 2005); etc.

1.2. Intentions, behaviours and ethical and “unethical” choices of professionals

Kish-Gephart and coll. (2010) claim that the construction process of ethical and “unethical” decisions begins at the level of moral “intentions” and ends in “actions” or moral “behaviours”. “Unethical intentions” are defined as the will or commitment to follow unethical behaviour. Meanwhile, “unethical behaviours” are defined as organised actions that profoundly violate moral standards accepted by society. These are divided into two levels: 1) deviations in the workplace and 2) illegal behaviours. Thus, when the authors refer to “unethical intentions” and “unethical behaviours”, they construct what they call the “unethical choice”.

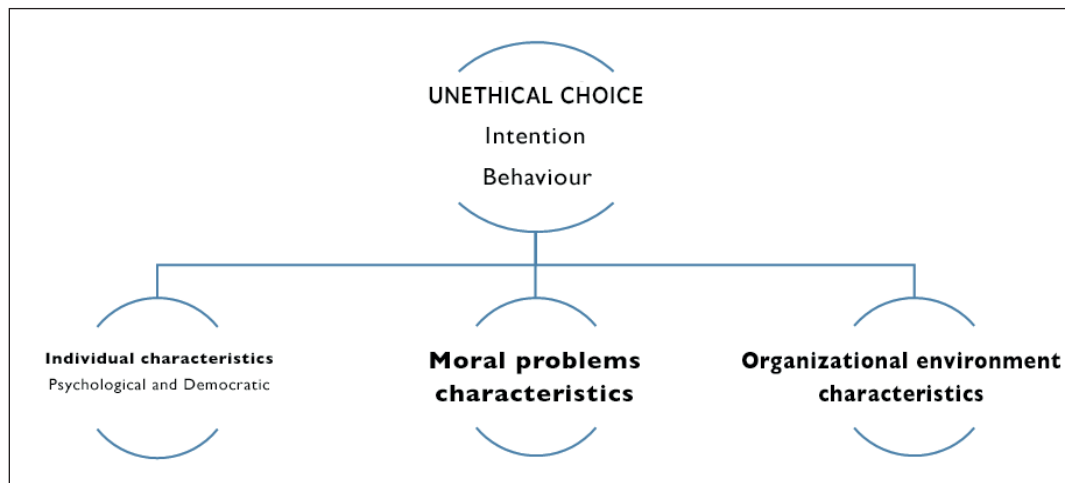


Figure 1. Analytical framework of the “unethical” choice in the workplace
Source: Prepared by the authors from Kish-Gephart and coll. (2010: 3).

Kish-Gephart and coll. (2010), in their researchs within the area of individual characteristics, are based on Kohlberg (1969) when referring to the Cognitive Moral Development (CMD) as the progression of the individual from childhood to adulthood in complexity and elaboration of his thoughts on what actions are morally right or wrong (Rest, 1979; 1986). Although CMD can continue advancing into adulthood with training and other opportunities to practice moral reasoning (Treviño, 1992).

There are different levels of CMD: the “principles” (level 5) is the highest development; the individual is able to cognitively process the most complex

ethical dilemmas using sophisticated reasoning. However, the “conventional” level is the one in which most adults operate. In this one, the individual value judgments about what is right are influenced by the expectations of others (level 3); or by political and legal rules (level 4). Finally, individuals with lower levels of CMD are those whose thoughts about what is right or wrong focus on concepts such as obedience or fear of being punished (level 1) or act in their own interest (level 2) (Kish-Gephart and coll., 2010).

In this group Kish-Gephart and coll. (2010) also place: 1) the moral philosophies of individuals from idealism and relativism proposed by Forsyth (1980)⁹¹; 2) machiavellianism (Gilbert, 1971), understood as amoral actions, hidden agendas and unethical excesses; tending to use interpersonal relationships opportunistically and deceiving others for personal gain (Christie and Geis, 1970); 3) the locus of control (Rotter, 1966) that represents a continuum showing what individuals think about whether the results of their actions are because of themselves or because of actions of external forces (internal forces attribute events that happen in life to skills or effort and external forces attribute events that happen in the life of the individual to external sources such as fate, luck or power of others); 4) satisfaction at work, first, because it is at least a partial situation (Staw, Bell and Clausen, 1986) and, secondly, because it is the positive or negative self-evaluation at work (Weiss and Cropanzano, 1996); and 5) the socio-demographic variables such as gender, age, education, etc., which have been widely studied in the ethical behaviours (O’Fallon and Butterfield, 2005).

Kish-Gephart and coll. (2010) within the group of the characteristics of moral problems continue the lead of Jones (1991) by saying that researchers need to know the aspects that define these moral problems to establish organisational characteristics of people. Regarding this, they talk about the “moral strength” of a particular ethical problem that includes six different elements: 1) the magnitude of the consequences, such as the total damage to the victim(s) that an “unethical” action or choice may; 2) the social consensus, such as the consensus that the action is a mistake; 3) the probability of the impact, such as the chances that the action is harmful; 4) the temporal immediacy, such as the length of time elapsed before the damages that the

91 These will be developed further in the next section.

acts are going to produce; 5) the social, psychological, cultural and physical proximity to the victims of the acts; and 6) the cumulation of the effects, such as the number of people affected by the actions taken.

Within the block of the characteristics of the organisational environment, these authors raise ethical behaviours based on: the “ethical climate” studied by authors such as Victor and Cullen (1988); the “ethical culture” analysed by authors such as Treviño (1986) and “codes of conduct” studied by authors such as Treviño and Weaver (2003).

First, the ethical climate can be conceptualised as “a group of prescriptive climates reflecting organisational processes, policies and practices with moral implications” (Martin and Cullen, 2006: 177). Victor and Cullen (1988) claim that their perception can be divided into two dimensions: 1) ethical criteria, including selfishness, kindness and principles and 2) the place of analysis, which includes the individual, local and cosmopolitan levels.

Second, the ethical culture is a dimension marked by external influences, behaviours of individuals are influenced and provided with a guide to follow proposed by the organisational ethical culture (Treviño, 1990). “The construction of the ethical culture is contextualised as a representation of the organisational system, processes and practices that guide and support the ethical conduct” (Kish-Gephart and coll., 2010: 7).

And third, codes of conduct are perhaps, following Treviño and Weaver (2001), the first component of the ethical culture. Even further if possible because these professional codes of ethics have been the standard format for setting the moral principles (White, 1989; Christians, 2014a: 295). Although few empirical studies have examined the impact of the application of these codes in making unethical decisions, it is expected that these codes of conduct reduce such options (Kish-Gephart and coll., 2010). However, the existence of professional codes of conduct in the media in Latin America still stands at a medium-low level. Specifically, from the study conducted by Rebeil (2013), in the Andean region only 25% of the media have. In the case of Ecuador, the Communications Law (2013) requires all media to have their own code of conduct (Art. 9 and 10).

2. Analysis dimensions of the ethical ideology: relativism and idealism

The focus of study of this chapter is the third group of the analysis of journalistic culture proposed by Hanitzsch (2007): ethical ideology. According to the ethical theory, this author examines how the interviewed journalists respond to certain professional practices considered ethical or unethical based on their ethical ideologies and moral values⁹²; being divided into four perspectives within journalistic ethics (Keeble, 2005; Hanitzsch, 2007): 1) the standard professional approach, when journalists identify with universal ethical codes and the editorial lines of the media; 2) the liberal professional approach, which is critical to the previous perspective exposing different views and arguments; 3) the cynical approach, which appears when journalists do not give importance to ethical dilemmas; and 4) the relativistic ethic, that appears when journalists promote solutions ad hoc (a specific solution to a specific problem is developed) to ethical dilemmas.

Hanitzsch (2007), based on the work of Schlenker and Forsyth (1977) and Forsyth (1980), divides into two analysis dimensions the block of ethical ideologies:

a) Relativism is focused on the degree to which individuals base their personal moral philosophies in universal ethical standards. At one extreme there are individuals who reject the ethical codes and universal moral rules (high), at the other extreme, those who believe in the use of moral absolutes (low). According to Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch (2012) the three situations that evaluate the relativism are: firstly, “ethics in journalism vary from one situation to another”; secondly, “the ethical dilemmas in news coverage are often so complex that journalists must follow or develop their own individual codes of conduct”, and thirdly, “there are ethical principles that are so important that they must be followed by all journalists, regardless of the situation or context” (this indicates a low level of relativism).

92 The moral philosophies are derived from philosophical normative theories (Forsyth, 1980).

b) The idealism underlines the importance of the answers to ethical dilemmas and moral judgments. At one extreme, the most idealistic individuals who assume that unintended consequences can, through the “right” actions, always be obtained (high) and, at the other extreme, the less who are more results-oriented, admitting that some damage is sometimes necessary for the greater good (low). According to Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch (2012), the three situations that evaluate idealism are: firstly, “journalists should avoid questionable methods of journalism in all cases, even if it means that the story cannot get published”; secondly, “to inform or to publish a story that can potentially harm others is always wrong, regardless of the benefits it produces”; and thirdly, “there are situations where the damage is justifiable if the results shown by information produce greater benefits” (this indicates a low level of idealism).

The intersection of these two dimensions results in four different perspectives proposed by Plaisance (2007), which likewise are inspired by Forsyth (1980: 175-176):

1) situationism, situationists maintain an ideology that advocates an ethical scepticism and a contextual analysis of the morally questionable actions – it proposes a rejection of universal ethical standards and moral rules, advocating an individual analysis of each case or situation;

2) subjectivism, subjectivists like the situationists are sceptical about the existence of a universal ethical ideology, claiming that there are many different forms of morality. However, they think that certain negative behaviours are sometimes required to produce a greater good⁹³;

3) absolutism, absolutists believe that the best results are achieved from the universal ethical rules; agreeing with the general approaches to moral philosophy of knowledge like the ethical standards; and

4) exceptionism, the exceptionists approach a teleological ethical philosophy that proposes that the morality of an action depends on the consequences

93 These two perspectives are within the group of relativists.

produced by the same. In this group are the journalists who are guided by universal ethical codes, but that also stay open to certain exceptions that will help them avoid negative consequences.

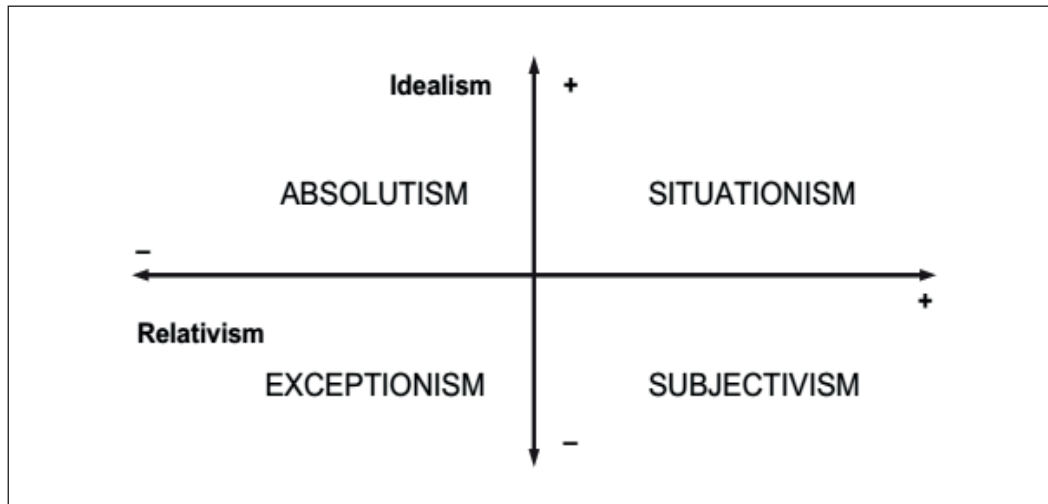


Figure 2. Classification of ethical ideologies
Source: Hanitzsch (2007: 279) based on Forsyth (1980: 176).

Thus, within the journalistic context it can be affirmed (Hanitzsch, 2007: 379):

1. The situationism approaches the ethical relativist perspective (Keeble, 2005) because the situationist journalists do not believe that ethical issues can be decided in the abstract and that decisions should be based on a specific situation⁹⁴.
2. The subjectivism is close to the cynical perspective of journalists (Keeble, 2005), tending to justify the subjectivist methods based on finding the best results.
3. The absolutism is reflected in the respect of some ethical rules, associating with the standard professional approach (Keeble, 2005). Therefore, at all times absolutists reject critical journalistic methods that fail to conform to optimal or appropriate ethical principles.

⁹⁴ Applied to justify unconventional and potentially harmful journalistic practices (e.g. harassment of news sources, payment information).

4. The exceptionism, although it would agree with that universal ethical principles in journalism are needed, is close to the liberal professional perspective (Keeble, 2005). The exceptionists are practical and accept that some unconventional practices are used in exceptional cases.

3. The factors of influence of the ethical guidelines of journalists

According to Berkowitz and Limor (2003: 784), “traditionally studies of journalistic ethics were focused on moral grounds in isolation from the social world [...] regardless of aspects such as market pressure on the media, the interests of news sources or the public interest. This [needed] contextualisation makes ethical decisions much more complex and relative”. Furthermore, moral values⁹⁵ are specific to the cultural context in which the professionals are, so this specificity must be analysed based on the contextual dimensions that structure the journalistic culture of a country. As Wyatt (2014) states, journalists are part of the culture in which they live and work, reflecting their own cultural perspective.

The description and definition of ethical guidelines for journalists is the main subject of analysis of this study, however, the interest lies in the mixed interpretation in which universal ethical principles are simultaneously analysed with social and individual ones. This is demonstrated by recent studies around the world that suggest a strong consensus between the theories of “cognitive processes”, “professional socialisation” and “cultural ideology” as key elements in universal journalistic behaviours (Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch, 2012).

Results found around the ethical ideas of those interviewed journalists are grounded in their individual ethical guidelines and influences from media organisations, in psychosocial norms and standards and in the various political, economic and social power structures. The influence on the processes of ethical decision-making from newsrooms and media organisational factors is a strong predictor of the views of journalists (Weaver and Wilhoit, 1986; Hanitzsch, 2005). Furthermore, “the national context where

⁹⁵ “Integrity” (simplicity, transparency), “avoiding harm”, “integrity”, “freedom, independence and self-esteem”, “fairness”, “honesty”, “justice”, “respect for private honour” and “trust” (Herrscher 2002: 280-281; Plaisance and Skewes, 2003: 839; Hanitzsch, 2007: 378).

journalists elaborate the information is one of the fundamental factors that structure their ethical decisions” (Hanitzsch, 2007: 378; Berkowitz and Limor, 2003: 783), as these “depend on the context of ethical situations and professional guidance of journalists” (Berkowitz and Limor, 2003: 798).

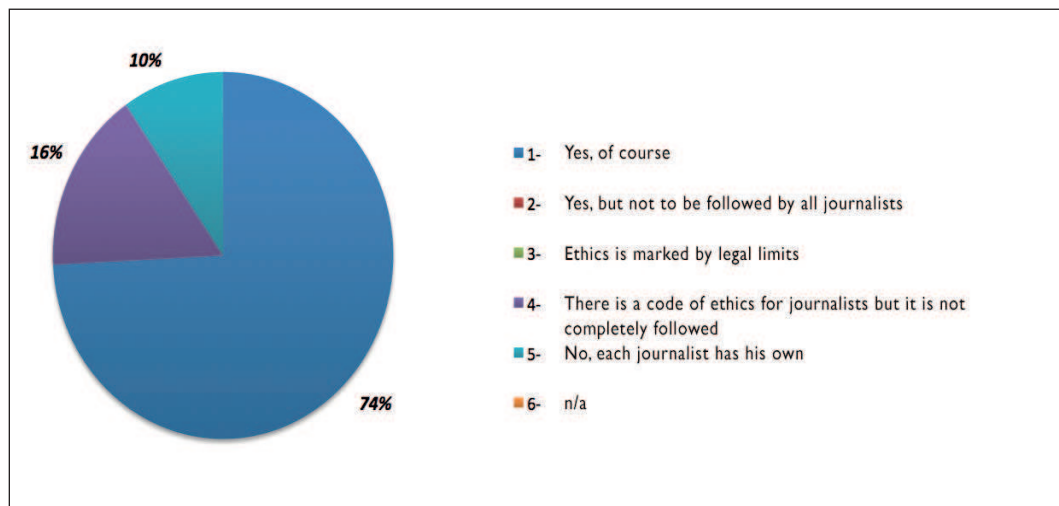
Social dimensions structure ethical decision-making from a social perspective that considers multiple levels of analysis (Voakes, 1997). This author suggests that journalists take some common decisions based on the professional context in which they are, so it can be said that the ethical values of journalists depend on the perceived influences in their daily work.

4. Results

Regarding ethical ideologies, it is analysed how journalists define their position with respect to moral and deontological dilemmas. Most of the interviewed journalists (74%) believe that there are some universal ethical principles that can be applied or followed in most situations, assimilating these general values individually to then define their own codes of intentions and ethical behaviours. This idea leads them away from the dimension of relativism and to approach the absolutist perspective, bearing in mind that their ethical views are based on their psychological, social and demographic characteristics and cognitive moral development (CMD): “I believe that ethics, as a superior value, should make us all move, before anything [...], all this should be based many times on the values we have gained since our childhood” (7); “Fortunately, most journalists have ethical training that does guide us daily in our work” (15).

Although respondents maintain a professional standard approach, as they are guided by the universal ethical codes and the editorial lines of the media, 16% of the total sample recognises that these principles are not completely fulfilled. Aspect that shows how a proportion of them are individually aware of the existence of some level of machiavellianism based on unethical attitudes and amoral actions, “Yes there are ethical principles that not everyone respects” (29).

10% of journalists approach a situationist perspective which advocates an ethical scepticism, a contextual analysis and individual analysis of each case from their own ethical codes: “Every journalist will have his principles, his values, his ethics and will work according to his mode. But I do know that every journalist should be clear about his limits concerning this” (8).



Graphic 1. Do you think that there are important ethical principles that should be followed by all journalists regardless of the situation and context?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Although almost two-thirds (61%) of respondents affirm that questionable journalistic methods should be rejected, there are different positions in this regard. 42% of them fully rejects them, confirming their absolutist perspective and their standard professional approach: “The end does not justify the means. I mean, it is not that because I have the information I slept with someone, or I have the information and I had to invite him to dinner; no, it cannot be” (23). Moreover, 16% of respondents, although sharing this view, believe that it should be clarified as to what those questionable methods are: “I do not know what I do not know what is meant in the question by ‘questionable’ or what elements may be questionable, but if there is an informative note that is unsubstantiated, and that the aim is to harm someone without having more elements to check that information, obviously it is completely questionable” (1). This result shows how this kind of questionable journalistic practices depends on the moral strength of the ethical problem of each individual to be called as such.

It is ratified by other results, since 29% of the sample believe that the use of these journalistic methods may or may not be rejected depending on the situation or the journalist, approaching a situationist perspective based on a relativistic ethics perspective: “By speaking of ‘questionable’ I think it should be rejected when the right of another person is at risk. If another person would be at risk or affected or violated, I think this is the limit” (8); “Yes, for example paying for interviews. I would not do it. Or someone paying me to say something [...]. I think this could be a rather broad universe, it also depends on the personal formation of each one” (28).

2- REJECT	
1- Yes, always	42%
2- Yes, but it is unclear what are questionable methods and which are not	16%
3- Yes, but not publicly	3%
4- Some yes, some not	13%
5- It depends on each journalist	16%
6- Probably not	3%
7- No	3%
8- n/a	3%

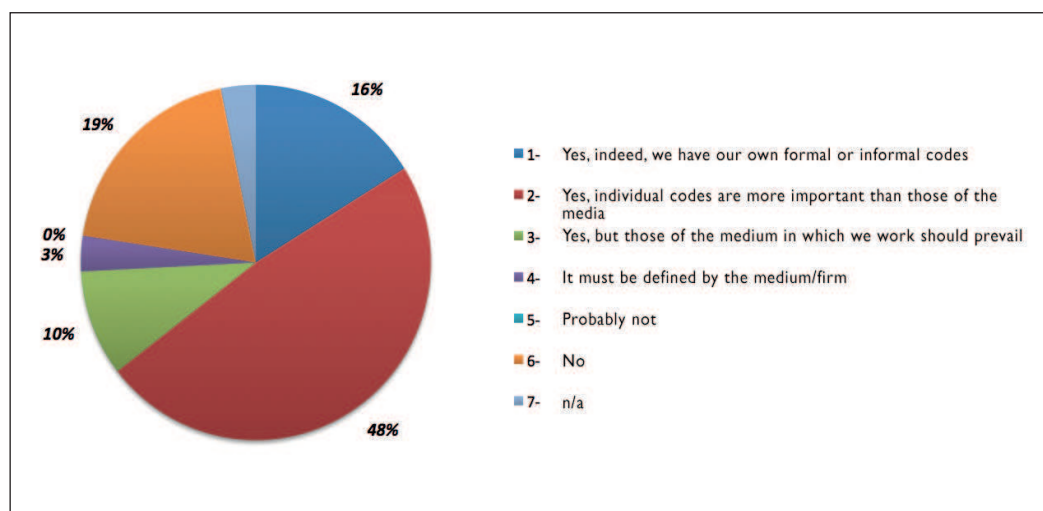
Table 1. Do you think you should reject questionable journalistic methods, regardless of the situation and the context?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results show, as previously seen, that absolutism is accepted as the principal professional perspective to follow. A fifth of interviewees (19%) categorically reject the possibility of individual ethical codes: “These codes should be universal. All journalists must have the same codes. Maybe they can help him at a specific time, but those codes must be universal” (7) and 10% think that the codes of the media should prevail over the personal: “No, we have a general code of the media and codes of ethics that must be accepted by all staff” (13). Despite this, there is a certain percentage of respondents who are close to relativistic ethics and situationist perspective motivated by complex moral and ethical dilemmas of journalism.

Nearly two thirds (64%) consider that, in addition to a general approach to moral philosophy and knowledge of ethical norms, the journalist must have his/her own codes of ethics of individual behaviour. First of all, the

most important aspect is that nearly half (48%) put their own ethical codes ahead of the ones of the environment in which they work: “I think we have our own individual ethical codes that are with which we form. And I think the media also give us elements. I say that the most important thing or the best thing for a journalist is to work where your ethical principles do not fall apart” (1). These results attest how respondents place their individual ethical criteria first, despite perceiving and being aware of the ethical climate as a key feature of the organisational environment and media policy.

Along the same lines, 16% say they have their own formal or informal codes that stem from an ethical culture marked primarily by outside influences: “We each have our own values and therefore have our own professional ethics. Logically, based on society” (6).



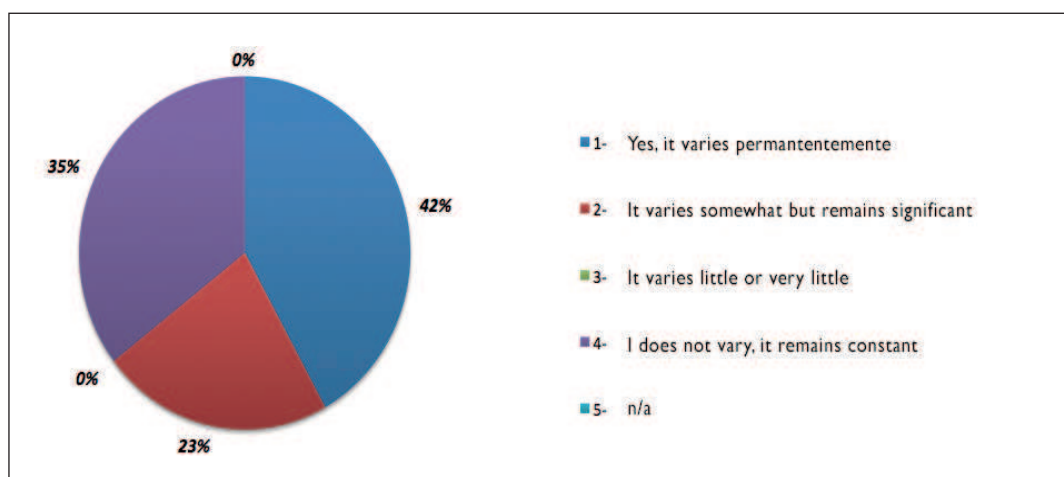
Graphic 2. Because of the complex ethical dilemmas in covering the news, do you think you should be able to make or have your own ethical codes of individual behaviour?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Analysing the ethical guidelines of journalists of Ecuador a joint interpretation has been carried out where universal moral and ethical principles are analysed simultaneously with contextual factors. So much so that these sociocultural standards determine the intentions, behaviours and different ethical choices for almost half (42%) of respondents who claim that there is a permanent change in the values and ethical ideals based on social consensus: “Ethics are mainly personal ethics that are socially constructed, and there are parameters that are accepted in certain societies and not in others, so I do think there is this distinction in a cultural construction” (15).

There is a group formed by almost a quarter of respondents (23%) that holds an intermediate position by accepting that there may be regional or in-between country variations about ethical perceptions, but that the significance is constant: “Ethics are ethics. There may be different cultural elements [...] I think we should also deepen and understand those processes that occur from other cultures” (1). From this group of journalists there arises the suggestion to deal with the changes in journalism and in their professional activity by adjusting the basic ethical principles to new media and journalistic realities.

65% of respondents, although basing their professional conduct on a standard view – identified with universal ethical codes and the editorial lines of the media, tends towards the liberal professional approach in which the journalist emphasises his critical sense supported in different views and arguments.

Finally, just over a third (35%) of the sample think that what is considered as ethical is independent of circumstances, supported by the absolutist perspective: “I think that the code of ethics of journalism is very clear and the journalistic exercise also is, its basic practices are very clear. Whoever wants to practice good journalism does so, and departs from the principles of honesty, responsibility, independence, balance, contrast of sources” (4).



Graphic 3. Do you think that what is considered as ethical journalism can vary between situations and cultures?

Source: Prepared by the authors.

Regarding the choice to develop a story that could harm a third party for the sake of a greater good, more than three quarters (80%) of respondents would publish the information after a thorough analysis of both it and the possible consequences. Evidenced by a first group (comprising 35%) that would publish the information provided whenever this is concrete and has relevance: “A case of corruption is obviously going to affect the people being corrupt, but what does it matter if the truth will benefit the state” (3l); “I think I would, it has to be argued, it has to be clearly argued” (l). And a second group forming 45% of the interviewed journalists said they would analyse each individual case before deciding: “You have to think about it a lot. Because when you are affecting a person you are misusing a medium. If the impact is very large, I think we must be balanced and try to give enough elements to enable citizens to understand that this position benefits many people, but affects others” (4); “I think we have to face that situation at that time to make a decision” (7).

A fifth (19%) of the interviewed journalists said they would never publish an informative note that could harm others, approaching the side of idealism: “The only thing we are dedicated to is to informing and nothing else, and not to seeking interests [...] I would not do it” (6).

5- HARM TO THIRD PARTIES		
1-	Yes, of course	19%
2-	Yes, if it was important or solid	16%
3-	Probably yes	0%
4-	It depends on the case, i would have to analyse it	45%
5-	Probably not	0%
6-	Certainly not	3%
7-	No, never	16%
8-	n/a	0%

Table 2: Would you report on a piece of news which could harm others if the results of doing so produced a greater good?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The results of the research on the assessment of the conduct considered as reprehensible reflect a tendency of the interviewed journalists to the dimension of idealism because of the high levels of disapproval of it: “Ever-

yone has their concept of ethics, but, for example, my concept is - it is not a cliché but it is to be honest - to let things be transparent, to say real things, by getting the news or exclusivity I am not selling my soul or going to use systems or processes or questionable methods or methods that later are going to question me” (5).

The most rejected methods by respondents are: 1) accepting money from news sources, 2) seeking personal benefits, 3) paying to obtain confidential information, 4) publishing unverified information, 5) using personal documents without permission, 6) using hidden cameras, 7) accessing to a place as a clerk for information, and 8) exerting pressure on sources of information.

On the other hand, reprehensible practices that enjoy a higher level of acceptance among the interviewed journalists are: 1) recreating or dramatizing certain information and 2) using unauthorised confidential documents from companies or Government.

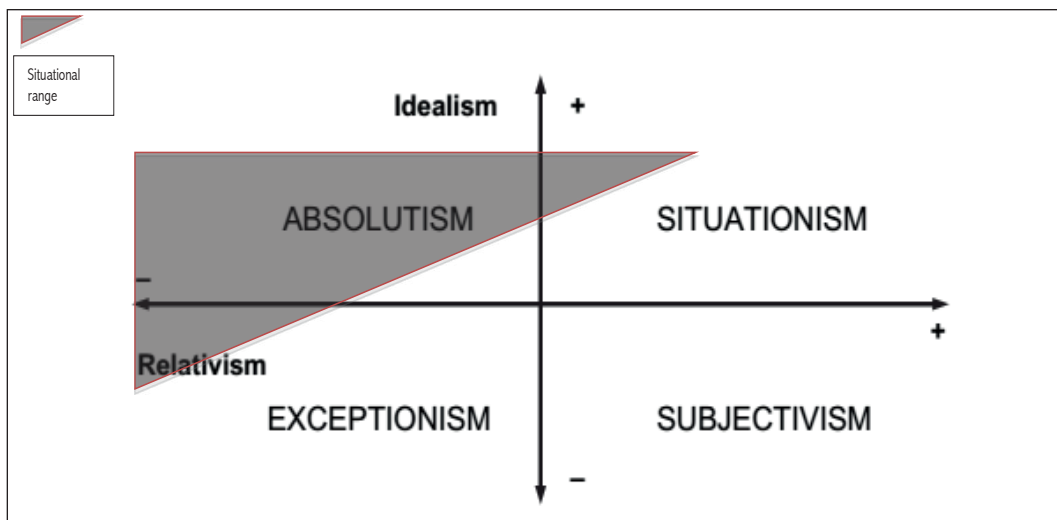
6.- BEHAVIOURS (REPREHENSIBLE - NON REPREHENSIBLE)	A	SD
To pay certain people to obtain confidential information	9,43	1,34
To use confidential documents of a company or the government without prior authorization	6,65	2,91
To try to gain obtain profit	10,00	0,00
To put pressure on informants who are not willing to provide prior information on a story	8,35	2,30
To make use without permission of personal documents, such as letters or photographs	8,87	1,85
To log in as employee to a company or organization to get inside information	8,48	2,25
To use hidden cameras or microphones	8,48	2,33
To use recreations or dramatizations of news by actors	5,04	3,93
To publish unverified contents in the stories	9,83	0,57
To accept money from sources	10,00	0,00

Table 3: Evaluate of 1-10 the following practices regarded as “reprehensible” in the journalistic practice (1 being equal to little or not reprehensible, and 10 to very or totally reprehensible)
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The interviewed journalists show themselves mainly influenced by the systems level and State intervention: “We have a great responsibility to the audience that is watching us. And besides that, there is a stronger legal framework that now is much stricter, that we must respect” (7); “If that is information that will encourage more people, but we are passing over privacy settings or affecting the honour of a person... also we even would go

against the law itself, beyond ethics” (13); “See, the Communications Law is clear [...] If justice has said nothing, one does not have to be putting names” (3). Also, several of those interviewed not only not only appreciated the disapproval of questionable methods, but often delimited that such practices are expressly prohibited in both deontological codes of its media and in the Communications Law of Ecuador.

Finally, based on the results obtained, the interviewed journalists, as their ethical ideologies, would be classified as eminently absolutist, tending to situationism and less to exceptionism:



Graphic 4. Ecuadorian journalist situation based on their ethical ideologies
Source: Prepared by authors based on the scheme of Hanitzsch (2007: 279).

Conclusions

The journalists we interviewed in Ecuador are classified in the journalistic context, according to the perspectives proposed by Plaisance (2007) and Hanitzsch (2007) based on ethical ideologies, as eminently absolutists, tending to situationism and, to a lesser extent, to exceptionism. Most of the respondents think that there are some universal principles and ethical and moral rules that should be and are assimilated by all professionals in most situations and journalistic practices. Thus, following the internalisation of these universal budgets, individual values and own ethical codes are formed.

These ideas lead respondents to tend towards the idealistic dimension, which emphasises the importance of ethical dilemmas and moral judgments, and distances them from the relativistic dimension based on personal morality of each professional. According to this position, their journalistic practices maintain a standard professional approach and are guided by the universal ethical codes and the editorial lines of the media. However, this situation is not so clear because the results show that: firstly, there is a tendency to situationist perspective which advocates an ethical scepticism, a contextual analysis, and individual analysis of each case; secondly, it is recognised that these general principles are not always met and a degree of machiavellianism manifests itself in their own interests; thirdly, although a large proportion of journalists considers questionable journalistic methods should be rejected, they recognise that the situation depends on the journalist and the moral strength of the ethical problem; and fourthly, because most of those interviewed would publish information, after a close analysis, that would harm someone whenever it is for the greater good.

These conclusions show that most of the journalists, despite guiding their professional activity from the absolutist and situationist perspectives - closer to the idealism dimension, are somewhat results-oriented and admit that damage sometimes is possible in order to achieve a greater good. This will align them with relativistic ethics that promotes concrete solutions to a specific problem and a professional perspective based on exceptionism which states that although universal ethical principles in journalism are needed, sometimes some unconventional practices are accepted. The result confirms, firstly, the tendency of transition from one professional standard perspective to a liberal one, and secondly, the relationship of professional journalistic processes and the context - specifically within systems level in the case of Ecuador - because, although respondents claim to follow universal ethical codes, they act in certain ways considered as unethical for social benefit or in favor of corrupt people and processes.

The high level of rejection of those interviewed of professional methods considered as reprehensible shows their distance from the subjectivist perspective that supports the idea that there are certain behaviours or

negative methods that are sometimes required and are justifiable based on the search for the best results. So the cynical approach is reduced to a minimum because the interviewed journalists attach great importance to ethical dilemmas.

It is clear that the respondents keep always in mind that their ethical ideas, despite the existence of universal professional standards, are based on their individual psychological and demographic characteristics, the cognitive moral development (CMD) and its environment. For this reason, Ecuador sociocultural standards cause their ethical ideals to require adaptation to the context and society. It also stresses that the respondents place their individual ethical criteria above the media - the results show that there are no major differences in ethical ideology of journalists working in public, private or community media - although they are aware of the fundamental nature of the organisational environment and media policy.

While journalists place their ethical ideals above their media, they keep always in mind the inflows from the new legislation and the State, confirming that there is a fear of being punished. This situation shows that the higher the level of Government intervention, the less cognitive moral development (CMD) of journalists there is. In the case of Ecuador, respondents would be placed in a conventional moral level by structuring their ethical and moral dilemmas based on political and legal rules and expectations of the other - citizens.

These conclusions lead to asking whether there is an ethical ideology characteristic defining journalism in Ecuador. Although Forsyth (1980) did not directly propose a link between the “moral philosophy” and the “unethical” choice, it could be established, based on the results, that the comparison of relativists and idealists would be like critically judging “unethical” actions. In this sense, idealism is negatively related to “unethical” choices by being more focused on the damage that can be caused to others. On the contrary, relativism is positively related to the “unethical” options because these are easily rationalised by relativists, by lacking strict moral guidelines. The results show that although respondents are defined as idealists, there is evidence that there is a tendency to relativism and, therefore, the need

for organisations to create an ethical culture around the journalist based on the selection, training and the implementation of practices that prevent behaviours based on misconduct.

Beyond the State or society setting minimum regulatory standards of journalism to ensure the common good - such as establishing the National Plan for Good Living (Plan nacional del Buen Vivir), the media must create their own framework, explicit and transparent in conduct that determines self-regulatory standards based on the style guide of the media, code of ethics and policy statements. This situation is fundamental considering that the current Government can change and society is not a static entity. Hence, the professionalization of journalism and the media must be based on solid foundations, properly established, that promote a responsible and plural journalism.

Along the same lines, Ward (2009) states that the future of journalistic ethics depends on the success of the union between two major projects: 1) the development of a rich basic theory of journalistic ethics - this requires proper epistemological development of journalism; and 2) the development of “mixed media ethics” associated with a set of principles and rules as a multiple platform - this is a project based more on practical aspects of the profession.

Therefore, if journalists from Ecuador intend to structure their own ethical standards, appropriated to the National Plan for Good Living, they should create “a morality rooted in nature” (Christians and Nordenstreng, 2004: 20) adapted to the idiosyncrasies of their own journalistic culture - beyond the idea of universal ethical standards. They must be based on the idea of “empowerment” shown by Brislin (2004: 130) and defined as “the degree in which journalism is designed to empower citizens from their own strengths rather than creating a passive audience of consumers”.

These final reflections coincide with the results obtained by Plaisance, Skewes and Hanitzsch (2012) in their studies. These authors suggest that there is a high consensus among journalists in considering that the pressures from the professionalization of journalism, cultural diversity and ideo-

logical context often address the ethical guidelines for journalists. Hence, we could say that the respondents focus their activity from the dialogic ethics (Christians, 2014b) that relates the professional life and the responsible life within their community. These community ethics in Ecuador are developing to a greater extent due to empowerment by the State - from the National Plan for Good Living, for example - of the respect and consideration of different identities - in Ecuador there are 18 people-groups (pueblos) and 14 nationalities (nacionalidades) - that are in a country characterised by hybridisation of their society and culture. Consequently, according to Christians (2014b), communitarianism is not an ethical system per se, but a social philosophy rooted in the “common good” and individual autonomy; so that, ethical community reflects the participation and the philosophy of culture and dialogue of communication.

Finally, the conclusions show distinctive ideologies and ethical traits of journalists that are part of the journalistic culture of Ecuador; even beyond fundamental ethical principles - truth, dignity and non-violence - (Christians, 2014b). This global and local relationship demonstrates the evolution towards a “non” Western and postcolonial perspective marked by its own characteristics that define it towards overcoming the “crisis of understanding” (Dirlik, 1994) produced by the ineffectiveness of the old ethical categorisation to define its peculiarities.

Chapter XII

The perception of professional autonomy of Ecuadorian journalists

Abstract

This chapter shows the results pertaining to the level of professional autonomy that Ecuadorian journalists feel they have in their daily work and the major constraints that are based on levels or factors of influence. Professional autonomy is one of the main values that determine the level of professionalization of journalism and the professionalism of journalists since it is directly linked to the concepts of self regulation, freedom of expression and independence. This situation causes the influences perceived by journalists to directly affect their freedom of professional action and, therefore, their rates of autonomy. The results show that most of the interviewed journalists consider themselves to have total freedom in the media and that the main constraints come from the systems level, specifically from the current legislation in communication (LOC).

Introduction

This chapter shows an approximate idea of the perception of professional autonomy that journalists have in Ecuador, analysing the limits that they find within the journalistic culture of the country. Professional autonomy is one of the main values that determine the level of professionalization of journalism and the professionalism of journalists since it is directly linked to the concepts of self regulation, freedom of expression and independence. This study, along the lines proposed by Mellado and Humanes (2012), tries to understand the concept of professional autonomy from a multidimensional perspective where journalists perceive their level of autonomy as an essential factor in professional practice in which individual, organisational and contextual factors have influence.

The study of journalistic autonomy has had a change of direction. This was traditionally analysed based on the values and priorities imposed on journalists in their organisational environment (e.g. Elliott, 1972; Schlesinger, 1978) and it is currently linked to the separation of the media and the State (Sjøvaag, 2013: 163) and to “the threat of possible political manipulation” (Aznar, 2011: 150) or the opposite effect of mediatization (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999; Chavero and coll., 2013). This situation has caused journalistic autonomy to arise as a key point in the development of journalism as a profession (Johnstone and coll., 1976).

The process of change in which Ecuador finds itself since the arrival to the presidency of Rafael Correa in 2007 is characterised by the rapid transformation that is occurring in the regulation and structure of the media system of the country. So much so that, as stated by Hervieu and Samson (2010: 2) in the report by Reporters Without Borders, in Ecuador there is a “volcanic media environment”.

The objectives of this chapter are: 1) To establish the level of professional autonomy that the interviewed journalists feel they have within the journalistic culture of Ecuador; 2) To ascertain the degree of decision that they have in the process of preparation, processing and publication of their works in the newsrooms of the media in Ecuador; and 3) To determine the

influences perceived by respondents from contextual factors that determine their level of autonomy within the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

1. Autonomy as a professional value of journalism

Autonomy is the right to self-governance, where “the status of self-government is characterised by the ability to exercise independence, sovereignty, jurisdictionality” (Sjøvaag, 2013: 155) and “self regulation” (Sjøvaag, 2013: 163). Along the same lines, authors such as Merrill (1974) and Beam (1990) define professional autonomy as the capacity for judgment or the ability to make personal decisions without being affected by external or internal influences; being associated, according to McQuail (1994), with pluralism and the defence of the social role of the profession against restrictions on freedom of expression and the public interests (Mellado and Humanes, 2012). Thus, for some authors, in journalism as a profession “some mechanisms are essential to protect and guarantee in the newsroom that independence and autonomy of the journalist” (Aznar, 2011: 174), because autonomy involves a self-management of professional techniques (McDevitt, 2003). This ability of journalists to curb the attempts by corporate pressures is, for some authors, the main power of journalism against the media (Ortega and Humanes, 2000b).

Therefore, it is understood that in a liberal democracy the media are “free to publish whatever they want and freely criticise, and even attack the Government in order to improve society” (Rettberg y Rincón, 2012: 21). “For this to happen in a democratic way, journalists and journalistic organisations must be autonomous in their decisions about news coverage and criticism of the Government” (Flor, 2013: 3).

The cohesive concepts of the idea of “state of liberal democracy” that politicians in any country should seek to establish are: 1) a high degree of personal freedom, which includes the guarantee of rights such as freedom of expression and the right of association; and 2) a system of Government defined by its competence, civic participation and responsiveness (O’Neil, 2010). Under these assumptions, the journalistic profession of a country is defined by the level of press freedom, “understood as the result of politi-

cal parallelism in the media and State intervention” (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013: 140).

Although the model of “social responsibility” is established in order to ensure more equitable coverage of information, private economic factors remain the dominant force when it comes to carrying out the news coverage (Punín, 2011). Taking into account that the private media have the need to survive through advertising revenues, countries whose legislation on communication media has been established by a model based on social responsibility - e.g. Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, Argentina, Uruguay, etc. - become the object of two types of censorship or control: 1) censorship imposed by the State, which seeks to ensure balance in coverage; and 2) censorship that comes from the private interests of media owners (Rettberg and Rincón, 2012). These threats to freedom of speech and press are situations that should concern everyone: Government, civil society, journalists, ordinary citizens, etc., so that they go straight to the heart of democracy (Ricaurte, 2010).

According to Reese (1999), late last century, the work of journalists in newsrooms was based on adherence to a code of conduct, media organisation and professional groups supporting the professional activity. At this point it differed from activities such as law, medicine or engineering, professions with a common basis and a shared experience in college. This issue raised by the author has been one of the most important and debated since the second half of the 20th century due to its relationship with the professionalization of journalism that always keeps in mind “the academic background and the type of education or training received” (Johnstone and coll., 1976: 123).

Hallin and Mancini, in their work *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* of 2004, determined that the media model of a country consists of a number of factors including the degree of autonomy and professionalism of the journalists - power of professional associations, regulating access to the profession (degree of intrusiveness) and level of formation. “Journalists traditionally defend autonomy as the principle that allows the media to fulfil their duty to inform citizens freeform partisan

bias and other corrupting influences. From this point of view, journalists serve the public by the search, not in a strictly epistemological sense, for balance, fairness and objectivity” (McDevitt, 2003: 156).

In Ecuador this professionalization of journalism is based on factors such as education or training and professional autonomy. Regarding professional training, the adoption and proliferation of new faculties and schools of Social Communication and Journalism and technical and technological degrees is highlighted (Oller and Chavero, 2015a).

Related to the autonomy in the profession, “a professional is the one who puts special emphasis on his service, his intellectual activity, his autonomy, his influence and that is in possession of specialised intellectual techniques that allow an effective service to the community” (Carr-Saunders and Wilson, 1933; Aldridge and Evetts, 2003, Oller and Meier, 2012; Oller and Chavero, 2015). This idea of autonomy in Ecuador is compromised by authors such as Waisbord (2013: 158), who speaks of “communicational presidentialism” because of the strong parallel drawn between the media and political actors; creating a sociopolitical context defined by a kind of populist Government that leads to a type of propaganda and controller journalism that generates obstacles to freedom of expression and access to information, for both media professionals and citizens. Flor (2013), in the analysis of the daily news paper *El Universo* about the levels of freedom of expression in Ecuador, confirms the idea previously presented by Waisbord (2013) in a study that shows how journalists, “in order to avoid problems” or “being called personally by the President of the country”, must “self-censor negative information published about the Government”.

For this reason, as Amado and Amadeo (2013: 266) point out, it can be understood that “the performance of the media in these contexts is facing new indirect constraints - official advertising, discretionary allocation of licenses, arbitrary administration of sanctions, denial of access to public information, lack of access to public servers as sources of information, and go on, more subtle than the dictatorial censorship but no less efficient”.

2. The decisive factors on the professional autonomy of journalists

Journalism is anchored to the structural bases which form the society of a country. This relationship establishes the degree of freedom and level of professional autonomy that define and establish the principles of the journalistic culture. In Ecuador, as in other countries, there are indicators of professional autonomy. Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) talk about 1) the objective limits of autonomy, and 2) the perception of independence of journalists based upon the contextual influences.

2.1. The objective levels of professional autonomy of journalists

Autonomy at an individual level, according to Sjøvaag (2013), is related to the freedom of each individual over the State, control of others, and immunity from the arbitrary exercise of authority. Or as Glasser and Gunther (2005: 385) would affirm, everything related to the “absence of conditions”. According to Sjøvaag (2013), individual autonomy is a form of self-management of freedom and moral independence - regarding others - that is the product of rationality that allows a person to legislate for himself on the moral laws that bind us all. This individual level of autonomy is indivisibly linked to the level of institutional autonomy and the sociopolitical and economic context in which the journalist is.

Regarding the autonomy at institutional level, “journalism is practiced within limits imposed by the institution and professional autonomy is negotiated within the institutional context” (Sjøvaag, 2013). According to Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), professional autonomy is not monolithic, but has two important aspects: the first is the one that shows the capacity to act that journalists have in their journalistic routines - the autonomy manifests itself in how journalists are free to decide their stories, editing and coverage, as well as the choice of information sources, the angles of analysis and perspectives, and the second relates to issues directly related to the relationship of journalists and implementation and decision structures within the editorial hierarchy - to what extent journalists can take part and influence the decisions that affect their work and reporting processes or

editions. Hence, from these authors, we can speak of three levels within the institutional autonomy: 1) a first structural level formed by a hierarchical structure, the physical structure of the media, and the ownership of this; 2) a second organisational level based on organisational factors, the processes, the ability of the journalist to interfere or intervene in their professional activity, and the final product; and 3) a third relational level focused on the institutional context, where autonomy is defined as “the level of independence of other socio-political institutions, primarily the State and the market” (Örnebring, 2013: 39; Sjøvaag, 2013: 156).

Finally, autonomy at a systems level – environment – is determined by the media system – resulting from political, economic and legal conditions in the area of communication – and the social context defined by the political and economic systems (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Hanitzsch, 2009a; Oller and Meier, 2012; Chavero and Oller, 2014). Thus, the factors that determine the outcome of the work of journalists range from “the macro level and the social and political structure to the micro level formed by the background and experience of the journalists themselves” (Sjøvaag, 2013: 158).

2.2. The perception of professional autonomy of journalists

The concept of autonomy is seen as the paradigmatic notion forged in formal schemes that structure the journalistic professionalization. From this exemplary idea of autonomy, associated with its epistemological character, this study is derived from the notion of “perception of professional autonomy” as the ability the journalists have to perceive, decode, understand and act on influences from the environment – context. The distinction between “perception of professional autonomy”, “influences”, and “the objective limits”, raised by authors such as Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), Mellado and Humanes (2012) and Sjøvaag (2013), carries forward the concept of “perception” under an eminently pragmatic approach, which takes into account the personal experience of each journalist through which he understands and perceives his professional environment, and that varies due to factors of space/time.

The perception of professional autonomy of journalists has been evaluated and analysed from the last decades of the 20th century. Several studies have been presented with the aim to draw and systematise certain predictors of professional autonomy. Johnstone and coll. (1976) found that journalists mainly come from dominant culture groups in society and in which younger American journalists, with university training, maintained a higher level of commitment to values associated with the professionalization of journalism and autonomy.

Along the same lines, Liebler (1994), Weaver and coll. (2007) and Sjøvaag (2013) affirm that the size and type of organisation and the media system, gender and race and pace of information, are significant predictors of the journalists' perceptions of autonomy. In addition, the hierarchical position within the newsrooms determines the autonomy (Cook, 1998: 75; Mellado and Humanes, 2012; Ryfe, 2009; Willnat and Weaver, 2003), where the most experienced journalists perceive greater independence in their work (Sigelman, 1973). Consequently, the ability of journalists to intervene and interfere in the decision-making processes within the media is directly connected to their perceived level of professional autonomy. According to Weaver and coll. (2007), journalists believe they can control their own work processes when the greater their sense of interaction with the organisational context is. Regarding this, Hanitzsch and coll. (2010) found that the organisational, professional and procedural influences were perceived as the most powerful limiters in the work of journalists. A higher level of bureaucratisation and specialisation, less control of the final product by journalists (Johnstone and coll., 1976).

Mellado and Humanes (2012) affirm research⁹⁶ that has kept the focus of study in the characteristics that structure the field of journalism based on the conflicting forces, professional autonomy is higher or lower depending on whether the symbolic capital of journalism dominates commercial forces. In this regard there are two positions. Firstly, Weaver and Wilhoit (1991; 1996; 2007) suggest that the main constraints on the autonomy of journalists in the US come from the pressures imposed by the market and that,

96 McChesney (2003), Benson and Neveu (2005), Duval (2005), etc.

according to Duval (2005), levels of autonomy are lower in private media organisations and those directly dependent on revenues from advertising. For example, the requirement to include advertising in the media determines the journalistic content and editorial freedom (McChesney (2003).

Secondly, recent studies show that, although the political and economic environments are the major forces shaping the journalistic cultures and media systems (Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011), economic and political influences no longer appear as external forces to journalists, but as natural aspects of work and, therefore, as an insignificant factor when explaining the perception of professional autonomy that journalists have (Hanitzsch and Mellado, 2011; Mellado and Humanes, 2012; Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013) being indirectly perceived pressures (McChesney, 2003).

Although levels of autonomy perceived by journalists around the world are in constant decline, autonomy is a fundamental aspect for researchers in journalism (Weaver and coll., 2007) and an indicator of professional satisfaction (Demers, 1994; Stamm and Underwood, 1993). “High levels of professional autonomy among journalists correspond with higher levels of press freedom and lower levels of State intervention in the media” (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013: 150). Thense “journalists working in Western countries or in ‘full democracies’ perceive more autonomy than their counterparts in authoritarian or hybrid regimes” (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013: 149).

2.3. The influence levels of professional autonomy of journalists

Strictly speaking, reflective judgment is an attribute of autonomy, but as professionals, journalists think of themselves as autonomous actors within rules of context, routines and tradition involving habits as well as introspection (McDevitt, 2003). Therefore investigations must take into account “the dialectical relationship between journalists and their institutions as well as the idea of the journalist as a cultural broker” (Mellor, 2009: 309), without losing sight of the studies that go beyond the idea of mediation (Mazzoleni and Schulz, 1999).

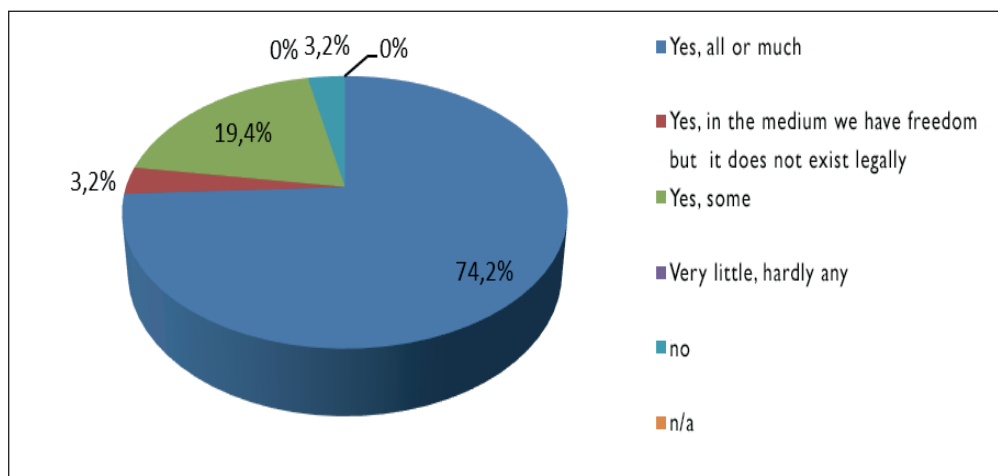
Therefore, although the object of study is journalists at an individual level or as actors, full understanding of their actions is determined by factors of influence that surrounds them in context (Oller and Chavero, 2015b). The perception that journalists have of autonomy depends on the influences that stem from professional routines, organising media and the context in which the journalist works (Shoemaker and Reese, 1991). Autonomy, like other social phenomena, is essentially a subjective construct that exists mainly in relative terms (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013). So the nature of that does not reside independently in the individual or in the isolated perception of this, but requires contextualisation and evaluation of all internal and external influences that affect journalism and ultimately determine the idea of autonomy to a conceptual and empirical level (Mellado and Humanes, 2012).

The multilevel nature of the perceived influences relating to autonomy reflects essentially an epistemological and structural distinction. The epistemological distinction is based on the distinction between the perception of that the journalist has of the influences on his journalistic independence and the objective limits of this. Although the objective limits of autonomy can be measured within a “real world”, the ultimate meaning of autonomy lies in the perception that the journalist has as an individual (Reich and Hanitzsch, 2013).

3. Results

Results show that three quarters (74.2%) of the interviewed journalists claims to have total freedom in the work developed in their editorial: “Yes, of course. Hundred percent” (6); “Yes, they are very open here on the channel [TV] for that kind of thing, if one believes that one will affect a person with the news or himself or affect the company we take a group decision. It is generally like that, if the directors come up with a subject, they take into account one, that from his experience as a reporter on the street says it is going to be difficult or complicated, that it is not true or that it is a rumour; there is freedom in that regard” (17).

Along the same lines, 22.6% consider that their freedom is conditioned by the editorial line of the media or their superiors, which involves recognising a degree of self-censorship marked by the editorial line to which he belongs: “Yes, I have had no limitation when one knows the editorial line in which roughly the media manage” (18). “Yes, I have the freedom of choosing the subjects that are important to me, and if not, I am otherwise open to the opinions and suggestions of bosses or colleagues” (14); “not all the freedom that I want” (7).



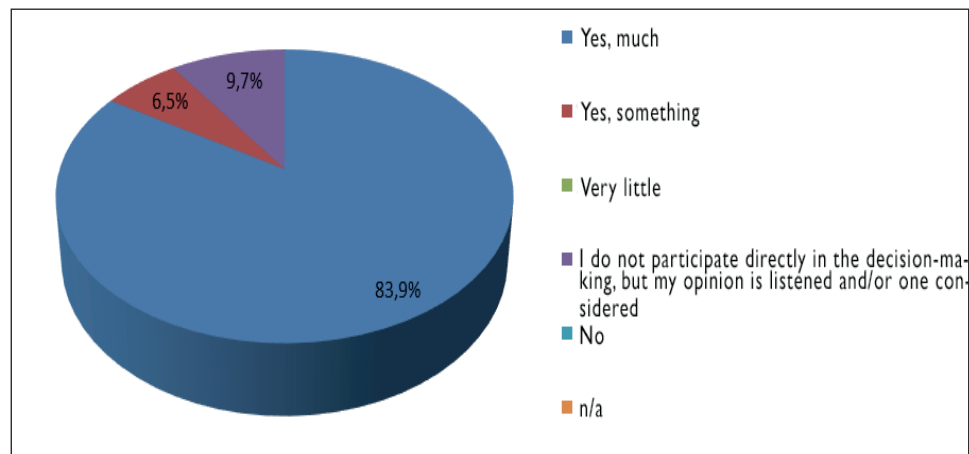
Graphic I. Do you think that you have a lot of freedom in the work you do in your media?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Hence 96.8% of respondents think that journalists enjoy freedom - total or partial - from their superiors and in the work they do in their media. Only one of the interviewed journalists said he did not have freedom in the work done.

Regarding the possibility of journalists taking part in decisions that affect their work, 83.9% state that they can: “Yes I can make decisions: to discuss with my boss or my direct partners” (14); “Yes, one hundred percent in all cases from the approach of journalistic proposals to the realisation” (15); “Yes, in the journalistic work” (25).

The rest of respondents, despite not having a direct participation in decision-making, confirm that they have some type of participation (6,5%): “Most times, yes” (1); “Sometimes yes, sometimes you can do that, of course one does it unconsciously, decisions affecting the work” (20). Almost 10% of

respondents argues that despite not participating in decision-making directly, their points of view are listened to and/or taken into account (9,7%): “I cannot take part in the decisions, but I can give my point of view, I think my boss does give value to what I think” (9).



Graphic 2. Can you take part in the decisions that affect your work?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The interviewed journalists consider that the most significant limits of their freedom of expression are based on the new media legislation. Just over a quarter (27.4%) highlights the influence of the Communications Law of 2013: “The laws that stop the activity of journalism (24); “[...] I would say is the Communications Law” (13). Some respondents defined this as a punitive law, capable of causing the effect of self-censorship among journalists: “I think that since the legislation that has been established here in the country, the new Communications Law [...], because we believe that now the journalists of this media do have some fear of sanctions, reprisals, then, what generates [...] is self-censorship” (12); “Limits on freedom of expression, yes, there is self-censorship because of the Communications Law, we care too much to speak out or get something published” (16); “I think there is a kind of criminalisation of journalism, that is the most important limitation, that is why the issues are hotter than they should be. In this moment there is a craze for judgments, everybody likes to make judgments” (18).

No.	Significant limits on their freedom of expression	Frequency	Percentage
1	Limits established by the law	8,5	27,4
2	Professional ethics, respect for people and their rights	5,5	17,7
3	Interests or pressures of the medium or company	5	16,1
4	There are no limits in my medium	4	12,9
5	The boundaries that each of the journalists mark	3	9,7
6	Access to information	3	9,7
7	Interests or pressures from the state, the government or the public administration	2	6,5
8	n/a	0	0,0

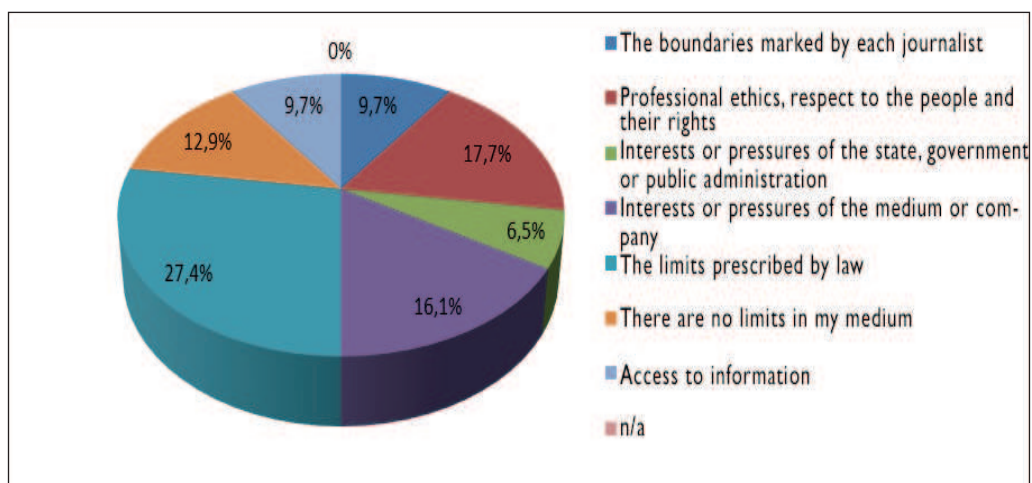
Table I. What do you think the most significant limits to your freedom of expression as a journalist are?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

The 17.7% of respondents think that professional ethics, respect for people, and their rights are the main limitors to freedom of expression: “The most significant limits to my freedom? The rights of another person” (4); “The values, these values are fundamental, that is an important criterion; yes, it is how we operate here, then we see how such a thing can affect someone, how it would affect the value of freedom, the respect” (25).

Another factor considered by respondents as very important regarding the limitation of their freedom of expression is within the level of institution – as was confirmed in the first question –, since 16.1% say that these limits come from interests or pressures from the medium or the company: “I think there are no limits for the journalist, as long as one is guided by the editorial line” (14); “I think the editorial line itself is really a limitation to freedom of expression in any media and that, really, because maybe the editorial line is based on the interests of the media” (31).

Moreover, almost a quarter of respondents (22.6%) believe that there are no limits to freedom of expression in their media or that the journalist is the one who sets his own limits: “I believe that within my political ideology, I would have no limits, because what I want is that the government’s work is seen, and if I present any report with that perspective, I will be fully open to do so” (19); “I think there is no limitation, the limitation is made by oneself [...]” (20); “I think it has to do with censorship, sometimes one constrains himself” (23).

Finally, 16.2% of journalists relates their freedom of expression to the interests and actions of the Government, the State or public administration and lack of access to information: “The limits that I have as a journalist, including freedom of expression, I think it is more about the access to information [...] because sometimes one wants to meet them and formulates and makes the orders, but we never have the answer; sometimes you do not have it [...]” (27); “Having a degree of direct or indirect dependency of those who make the public administration, because we receive state resources and that can be misinterpreted by certain institutions or those in certain positions in public institutions, to believe that we are underlings of them or we write what seems right to them” (7); “I do not know whether to call it persecution of the Superintendency since I think they are a bit authoritarian” (28).



Graphic 3. What do you think the most significant limits to your freedom of expression as a journalist are?
Source: Prepared by the authors.

Conclusions

One feature of the journalistic culture of Ecuador, according to the results, is the perception of a high level of autonomy by journalists, through which they exercise their professional activity with a lot or total freedom. To this aspect contributes the feeling that they part in the decisions that affect their work, or at least they are listened to by their superiors.

These results match with the ones obtained by Mellado and Humanes (2012)

and Skovsgaard (2013) in their studies about the perception of the professional autonomy of the journalists from Chile⁹⁷ and Denmark. However, it contradicts the trend of other international studies conducted in Spain by García de Cortázar and García de León (2000), and in the US by Weaver and coll. (2007), where journalists claim to have moderate levels of autonomy; and the one by Reich and Hanitzsch (2013), which states that journalists in countries with “full democracies” perceive a greater degree of autonomy than those working in countries with “hybrid” regimes.

These contradictory results challenge the idea of autonomy as a global and standardised concept within journalism; showing a dynamic, heterogeneous and hybrid idea adapted to different contexts and journalistic cultures. Although theoretically autonomy can be seen as an integral part of the regulatory model of Western journalism (Sjøvaag, 2013), which grew from the relative monopoly of the US market in the late 19th century and spread to the rest of the world (Nerone, 2013). In practical terms, as exposed by the results of this study and showed by Ryfe (2009), it is something that is negotiated at the local level through interaction between owners, editors and journalists.

Therefore, the idea of a heterogeneous global journalistic culture takes hold, where Latin America is presented as diverse and with its own idiosyncrasy and its characteristics that differ from Western journalistic standards. And, thus, they define the idea and the perception of the level of autonomy of the journalists who work in there. This was shown in the last decades of the 20th century by Ruótolo (1987), concluding that the differences found in the study in three Latin American countries - Brazil, Colombia and Costa Rica - clearly indicated that career guidance - where professional autonomy is one of the four dimensions of the analysis - of journalists in Latin America varies widely from country to country.

In this study the difference between how journalists perceive their autonomy and the objective levels of it is seen. Although they interviewed associates, along the same lines with the results obtained by Örnebring (2013),

97 The study carried out in Chile by Sapiezynska, Lagos and Cabalin (2013) refutes these results by stating that in the media in this country there are significant levels of restriction to press freedom.

the concept of autonomy to the professional legitimacy and authority, they accept that their work is directly related to implementation structures, organisation and positioning (editorial line) of media, and sociopolitical and economic configuration of the country.

Despite the high levels of autonomy perceived by respondents, when they were specifically asked about the existence of certain influences that in one way or another restrict their freedom of expression as a journalist, 87% of respondents answered positively. Among the main limitations encountered there are: 1) those established by law and current legislation in communication; 2) those stipulated by professional ethics, respect for people and their rights; and 3) those established by the pressures and interests of the media.

Firstly, more than a third of respondents (33.9%) present as the main limitation the current legislation, specifically the Organic Law of Communication (LOC), and the interests or pressures from the State, Government or public administration. The fear of being punished by regulators based on the LOC causes, on the one hand, self-censorship of journalists⁹⁸ and, on the other hand, the reduction of the emphasis on research and analysis, exposing the information that could be defined as “tepid” (tibia)⁹⁹.

This result shows influences from the “systems level” as determined by Oller and Meier (2012) and from “relational level” exposed by Örnebring (2013), Sjøvaag (2013) and Reich and Hanitzsch (2013). This interventionist role played by the Government in journalism as a regulator and financier of the media, places Ecuador among the countries that, as Reich and Hanitzsch (2013) determine, have a media system under strict regulation and in which journalists have limited professional autonomy. Aspect joined to the positioning that media have traditionally maintained and its parallelism with the politicians and the State. This troubled relationship between the media and the State was already shown in a study by Wilke (1998: 441) in which the option of “supporting the Government in developing

98 As Flor (2013) stated in his study on the perception of freedom of expression in the journalists of the newspaper *El Universo*.

99 As Amado and Amadeo (2013) stated by showing that the performance in these contexts journalism faces new indirect constraints.

its programs” had the lowest consensus among journalists interviewed. If the results obtained by Wilke in the nineties of the last century are compared with those in this study – in which the strong influence of the new legislation and the Government in the perception of freedom of expression is shown by the interviewed journalists – we can demonstrate the trend towards a journalistic culture that differs from the neoliberal concept that prevailed in the late 20th century and early 21st century and that is based on a sociodemocratic model in which journalists give priority to their role as civil servants and the Government control and influence is greater.

Secondly, the interviewed journalists estimated as major constraints on their freedom of expression the self-imposed barriers by ethical standards, values, and criteria set out in the codes of ethics of the media. The results above confirm the findings of Reese (1999), who states that the work of journalists in newsrooms was based on adherence to a code of conduct, and by Berkowitz and Limor (2003) who argue that ethical behaviours, despite being strongly determined by the different levels of influence – actor level, organisational level and systems level, act as determinants of autonomy as transmitted in the journalistic university training. These educational standards structured ideals and ideologies around professional ethical behaviours and journalistic independence – autonomy –. Hence, the university training of the interviewed journalists – almost the entire sample has studied Social Communication – influences their perception of autonomy and leads them to realise their professional practices in a certain way, confirming the above by Fröhlich and Holtz-Bacha (2003).

And, thirdly, respondents referred to the pressures and interests of the media. These limits to the freedom of expression of the interviewed journalists would be defined based on the influences from institution and actor levels (Oller and Meier, 2012), in particular the structure and organisation of the media that determine interests, skills, and working methods in the newsroom. This result would corroborate, at least partially, the arguments shown by authors such as McChesney (2003), Duval (2005) and Weaver and coll. (2007) on the influence of media concentration, ownership and marketing news, as well as the business expectations of the media in professional autonomy.

The results demonstrate the media reality that exists today in Ecuador where 90% of the media are privately owned – and therefore with a greater market orientation in search of economic benefits and better positioning – and that since the coming to power of President Rafael Correa (2007) they have been forging public policies in favour of a regulation of journalism in the country and a restructuring of the media system in favour of the “common good”. The effect of these governmental strategies is leading journalists to perceive this proposed external regulation to the profession as one of the main constraints to their professional autonomy.

Thus, despite the heterogeneity of the journalistic culture of Latin America, there are commonalities between their countries. In the case of Ecuador, journalists maintain a professional distance from the relationship between 1) the strong control of the media system, as Ruótolo (1987) affirmed; 2) the influence of the concentration of the media ownership, affirmed by Weaver and coll. (2007); and 3) the perception of professional independence and autonomy of journalists.

Finally, some journalists perceive a high level of professional autonomy and, therefore, are satisfied with their situation. However, most recognise pressures and influences from the context that limit or determine their freedom of expression. The reason that would explain these results could focus, first, on the relationship that journalists make between the concepts of ethics, independence, and professionalism and; secondly, on the absence of a mature Ecuadorian journalistic culture based on a solid professionalization of journalism.

Chapter XIII

The trust levels in institutions of Ecuadorian journalists

Abstract

Trust acts as a determining parameter of the democratic principles and the demands and interests of the citizens. The relationships of journalists with the different institutions and organisations that structure the Ecuadorian State directly affect the increase or decrease in the levels of trust in these. This chapter shows the results regarding the identification of the influences that determine the trust of journalists in (public and private) institutions in the country. The results show that the Government of Ecuador has the highest rates of trust between the interviewed journalists. However, there is a marked polarisation, reflecting the positions of confrontation that define the journalistic culture and current sociopolitical context of Ecuador.

Introduction

Researchers around the world show in their studies the steady decrease in trust levels that public institutions in Western countries are experiencing (Nye and coll., 1997; Norris, 1999; Pharr & Putnam, 2000; Mair, 2006; Torcal and Montero, 2006; Hanitzsch and Berganza, 2012). Latin America is no exception since, according to the results shown by the report of the United Nations (UNDP, 2004: 20), “the population that has been deprived of sharing power, feels widespread mistrust of political systems”; results supported by researchers such as Güemes (2014b).

Trust has its roots in philosophy, theology, sociopolitical thought, and ethics, and includes items such as the expectation, motivation, cooperation, collaboration, mutual obligation and reciprocity that converge within a complex social environment (Allahyarahmadi, 2013). Some authors have defined social trust as “a perception of others and the context, which is constructed within certain structures and social imaginaries as a byproduct of everyday experiences, informal learning, and information available” (Güemes, 2014a: 19). This “multivariable” character causes, according to Powell (2014), personal or impersonal trust to be seen as essential for informal interpersonal relationships, for the functioning of organisations and professionals. Fundamental aspect because, as Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) claim, sociologists and political scientists have devoted much attention to the origins of public trust, but we know very little about the factors that motivate the trust levels of the journalists. Although, according to Norris (1999), progress has been made in the relationship between social distrust and the media.

Traditionally, trust in media has been studied from the research into the effects (Norris, 1999; Robinson, 1976; Luengo, 2005) rather than from the trust of the journalists themselves. There is now a new trend in which this study is included, in which trust is studied based on the attention, practices, attitudes, perceptions, and relationships of journalists; and the connection of these factors with their final work (e.g. Brants, de Vreese, Möller and van Praag, 2009; van Dalen and de Vreese, 2011; Hanitzsch and Berganza, 2012; Berganza, van Dalen and Chaparro, 2010; Brants and coll., 2009).

The objectives of this chapter are: 1) To identify the institutions and organisations in Ecuador that enjoy a higher level of trust on the part of the interviewed journalists; 2) To determine the institutions and organisations in Ecuador with the lowest levels of confidence according to the interviewed journalists; and 3) to locate the possible causes of the contextual influences that determine the trust of journalists in the main institutions and organisations in Ecuador.

1. The concept of trust

The trust of a community legitimises its unity and cohesion (Parsons, 1951, 1991), since it is based on expectations that arise between members of a community, in the set of commonly shared norms and the belief that others act in a mutually supportive way and avoiding exploiting the vulnerability of others (Fukuyama, 1995). This feature puts trust in a position that occurs under “conditions of ignorance and uncertainty” (Sharepoor, 2003). The interpretation of trust of Fukuyama (1995), based on the moral notion of trust, is the expectation that is manifested in society and that revolves around the ability to be disciplined and truthful, as assumed in cooperative behaviour. This social relationship involves, according to Woolcock (1998), the relationship between individuals, organisations, and civil structures; including elements of confidence, expectation, motivation, cooperation, collaboration, mutual obligation, and joint work within a complex social environment.

There are different proposals as to its origin. Firstly, Uslaner (2003) proposes the concept of trust in another person from an essentially strategic viewpoint, since trust poses a risk. Thus, he defines “strategic trust” as the expectation of how people “should” behave. And “moral trust” as the state of how people “must” behave. This author, however, introduces a more emotional explanation.

Moreover, Coleman (1990: 90) proposes a more contextual line to speak of the “truster” and the “trustee”. The first is the one that proposes the action of exchange of trust with the other, and the second is the one that decides to reciprocate this trust, assuming the risk, or otherwise. Therefore, trust

is accepted when expectations determine the difference in a decision (Luhmann, 1979), a fact that emphasises the future-oriented character of trust (Hanitzsch and Berganza, 2012).

We are, consequently, faced with two interpretations of the origin of mistrust. The “first approach is associated with values (and experience and childhood learning), while the second one means distrust as a rational perception dependent on available information or context, among other factors” (Güemes, 2014a: 18).

1.1. The varieties of trust

Part of the literature that analyses trust holds a classification of the different examples or archetypes of this. Firstly, when talking about “social trust” and “political trust”, Social Sciences hold an open debate on the matter. Their relationship has arisen from multiple dimensions. Tao and coll. (2014) performed a classification by bringing together researchers in different groups: 1) that consider them as independent fields, differentiating between social or horizontal trust and political or vertical trust – e.g. people can have a high social or interpersonal trust and not trust their leaders or political institutions, and 2) that establish a causal relationship because of the social base of political trust.

Secondly, regarding institutional trust, Campbell (2004) exposes two types of theoretical explanations that explain the process of formation. The first one is derived from the field of “political culture” – which focuses on ‘civil society’, ‘civil community’ and ‘social capital’. The second comes from the “political economy”, focused on the structure of the relations of ‘social capitalism’ based on the principles of ‘rational choice’ and ‘social transactions’.

Finally, some authors suggest various ways or premises that establish the different types of trust. First Powell (2014) proposes several levels for the theorising of trust: 1) the level of interpersonal qualities of the individuals involved; 2) the community level that relates positive interpersonal trust levels and levels of “social capital”; 3) the level of trust and organisational context, challenge of “reliability” in organisations that have profound

effects on trust in the system; producing an increase in the demand for regulation, disclosure and transparency, that is, increasing demands of mistrust; and 4) the decreased level of trust in the social media of the State. And, second, Sztompka (1999) provides a model of “culture of trust” based on five conditions: 1) policy coherence, 2) stability of the social order; 3) transparency of social organisations; 4) familiarity with the social environment, and 5) responsibility of professionals and institutions.

1.2. Trusted sources

Over recent decades, some researchers in Political Sciences, Economics, Communication and Sociology have focused on the analysis of institutional trust. Mainly because there is some concern, and lack of knowledge, of the factors that define it. As Campbell (2004: 401) states, “there is still no consensus on the main factors behind the formation of institutional trust”.

According to Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) there are many reasons why people, and therefore journalists, trust or distrust public institutions. These authors identify four:

1) the type of performance of the institution: Although there are authors like Mishler and Rose (2001) who claim that trust can become endogenous, seen as a consequence rather than a cause, the institutional approach holds that trust in public institutions is mainly influenced by their political and economic performance, as well as the satisfaction of people with the same. Further, they suggest adding freedom of press in this section because the perception of journalists is also formed from the degree of autonomy that these institutions offer the media.

2) The interpersonal trust: Cultural theories suggest that institutional trust is exogenous and an extension of interpersonal trust, so that the greater the trust between individuals in a society, the greater the trust in public institutions. Furthermore, this culturalist perspective, according to Campbell (2004), proposes the link between interpersonal (micro-cultural and psychological perspective) and institutional (macro-cultural, sociological and political perspective) trust. Although Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012)

show other perspectives that raise serious questions about the cultural approach and the relationship between interpersonal and institutional trust.

3) The media ownership: Journalists work in a highly organised context (newsrooms and media). Ownership of the media is the factor that determines the informative production at organisational level.

4) The journalistic culture: The main force in this regard is the “distance with the power”, understood as the positioning of the journalist regarding the powers of society. Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) state that the distance with the power influences public trust of journalists. If journalists show a greater distance with the power they will tend to decrease their trust in public institutions. And if journalists have less trust in the institutions that make up the journalistic culture, they will be more critical.

1.3. The binomial “trust/credibility”

Trust and credibility are inseparably linked. Firstly, trust is a mechanism for reducing social complexity, becoming one of the most important social mechanisms (Luhmann, 2005) to act as a balm to the uncertainty that reduces or cancels the fear of failure or injury (Farias, Roses and Gómez, 2011). Secondly, credibility is held in the symbolic commitment that entails the obligation to respond to certain acts. Hence, a higher level of credibility of an individual or an institution carries a higher level of trust by the other actors.

Public authorities often are described as inefficient and clumsy, making mistakes but never recognising them, so one should not be surprised when one day the citizens lose trust in them, including the media (Donner, 2005).

These mistrust relationships are sometimes reciprocal, since “journalists hold negative information due to scepticism and distrust policies and political institutions” (Lengauer, Esser and Berganza, 2011: 180). Thus, other studies point to negativism as a strategy for the media with political interests (Castromil, 2012; González and Chavero, 2013). In any case, this situation

results in a spiral of cynicism with the public. Cynicism not only in terms of politics and politicians, but also vis-à-vis with the messengers themselves, the journalists as the reliable and trusted guardians of democracy (Brants and coll., 2009).

This situation directly affects the media that, in order to avoid it, should encourage trust and credibility in the development of their work, ethics and codes of conduct (White, 2008). Otherwise, the citizens will mistrust the journalists and media, and journalism, as a whole, will go through a crisis of credibility (Valentín, 2006; Farias, Roses and Gómez, 2011).

2. The levels of trust of the citizens in the institutions and organisations of Ecuador

The Government of Ecuador reaffirms the legitimacy of the President through 1) the self-proclamation of the leader as representative of the people and the country, and 2) the identification of a common enemy: the oligarchy, the particracy and the past (De la Torre, 2013). Although, as Sorj (2012a) states, these types of Governments maintain oligopolistic situations counter-party offering “controlled” journalism.

However, even assuming that Government has a situation of control in this country, the results of Latinobarómetro (2013) show that Ecuador, together with Venezuela, is one of the Latin American countries where the social support for democracy has increased the most – Ecuador increased its support for democracy from 52% to 62% between 1996 and 2013. Although, as subsequently exposed by this report, with low levels of education and information politicised by partisan media, citizens judge democracy by what they live and what they experienced [...]. Therefore, democracy tends to be judged by the results in this first generation of citizens exposed to it. Only those with higher education levels that may seek a more abstract concept of democracy and its functions (Latinobarómetro, 2013).

This support for democracy is sustained in the image of “progress of Ecuadorian” and “economic sentiment” (subjective income, current and future economic personal situation and the situation of the country at present

and long term), which is the highest in Latin America according to the Latinobarómetro (2013)¹⁰⁰.

Regarding citizens' perceptions of the main problems in Ecuador, the levels of crime and unemployment stand out, problems to which the Ecuadorian citizen attributes a far greater significance than the rest, such as corruption and education, which are at much lower levels (Latinobarómetro, 2013). This result shows corruption as one of the minor concerns although, according to Ramírez (2011: 231), “today we would see the expansion of the distance between procedural legitimacy and social trust in democratic institutions”.

Despite the low perception of corruption by citizens, there are quite heightened levels of distrust in the main institutions of the country. According to the report of the Latinobarómetro (2011), levels of distrust are particularly significant to trade unions (67%), the judiciary (66.7%) and political parties (65.7%). This distrust can be associated to the isolation and invisibility that has become the trusted networks in areas of discretion, based on personalistic ties (Ramos, 2013)¹⁰¹, but they are also associated with the level of satisfaction with the performance of services, especially education and health in the Ecuadorian case (Güemes, 2014b).

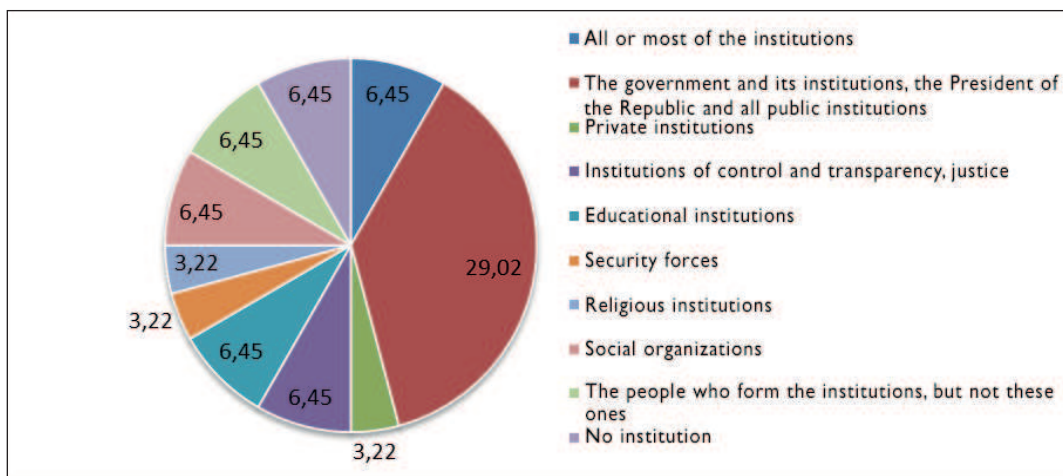
According to the Latinobarómetro study (2011), the media do not enjoy very high levels of citizen trust in Ecuador. In all cases – print, radio and television – more than half of respondents have little or no trust in them. This is a serious problem because, as Taufic (2005) states, rather than its earnings, technology or social capital, the most important asset of a media is its credibility, as the professionals recognise. These low rates of trust are associated with “the media discourse going through a credibility crisis affecting, in particular, their informative task” (Abad, 2013: 17).

¹⁰⁰ Moreover, it is the only country consistent to the idea of citizens about their “image of progress” and “life satisfaction” (Latinobarómetro, 2013).

¹⁰¹ Rosanvallon (2006) seeks with the notion of “counter-democracy” to account for the set of practices and expressions that organise social distrust to the constituted powers (in Ayala and Calvache, 2009).

3. Results

Institutions in Ecuador that have a higher degree of reliability for almost a third of the interviewed journalists (29.02%) are the Government, the presidency of the Republic and public institutions. As the respondents point out: “Exceptional or not? As institutions I would say, without being strictly so, the President of the Republic generates my trust, [...] the National Police today has improved very much, it also gains my trust” (7); “One as a journalist is sometimes cornered to mess things up when he does not seek a source of information such as on issues of the Government to the President, because he is the only one that is half clear in the picture or sometimes the presidency as a source of clear information for in general political, economic issues, I think it is good” (10); “In recent years they have worked hard on the credibility of all public institutions. It has also helped the journalist’s work to be fortified, right? The degree of trust, so far as to official sources or data such as the INEC, CEAACES, that is, it would become the SENESCYT. It may be, in a way, the assembly” (8); “The Presidency of the Republic. This presidency” (30).



Graphic 1. Of the institutions that exist in Ecuador, which ones generates more trust for you?

Source: Prepared by the authors (data expressed in %).

*22.58% of responders said DK/NA.

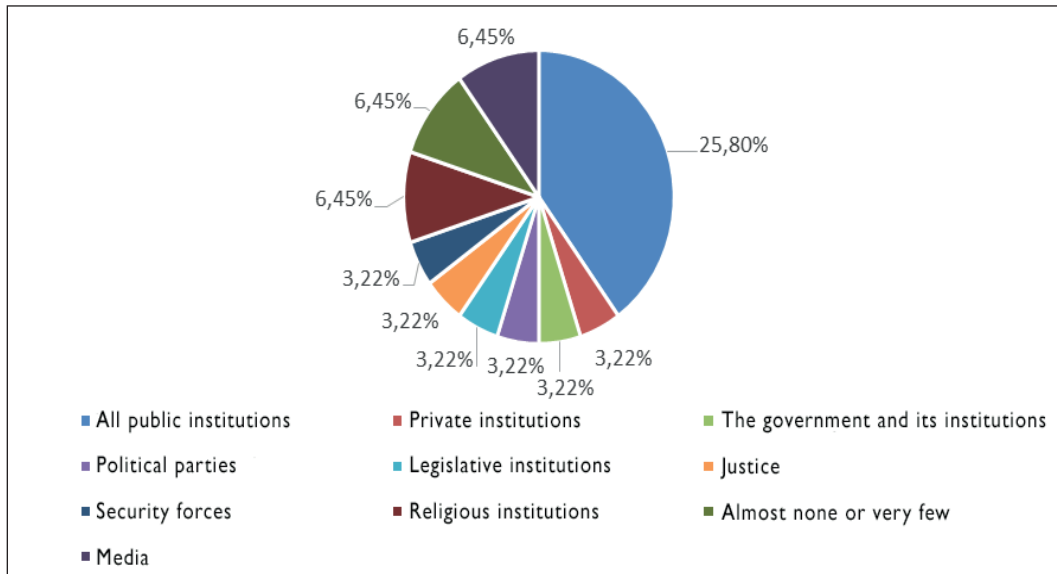
The other options are minority, primarily highlighting the lack of trust in institutions (“people who make up the institution but are not in itself” and “in any institution”) (12.90%): “I do not know if we can tell the people, because public institutions, the truth is there is no trust, is more like a relations-

hip that must be made with them, but is not that one has the certainty that they can count on them 100%" (27); "The true institution, is that the people makes the institution, I would not really trust anyone" (31).

Secondly, social organisations and educational institutions maintain a certain level of respondents trust: "I think, for example, of the international plan that works on the theme of children and adolescents, who else? Educational institutions, with whom we also work, especially those working in the field of intercultural education, we have greater reliability on them. Our institutions, our stations that work in popular and alternative communication, for example" (1); "Civil society organisations, organisations and foundations, NGOs or even when they are mixed: part of the state and also part of the civil society" (25).

Thirdly, the security forces and religious institutions; appearing associated in some answers: "At the level of institutions, if I am asked, I would say the armed forces, the Catholic Church generate trust me" (7); "The Church generates more trust me, maybe that is because I am very Catholic and, above all, it is an institution that is very basic among the society that is still family" (20).

Then, when journalists are asked about the institutions that are suggestive of less trust, more than one third expressed their distrust of public institutions, the Government, the legislature, the judiciary and security forces (38,66%): "The public institution in general" (20); "Here, as is understandable, the work of the Ministry of Health, sometimes. It is like you are between a rock and a hard place. That is one side. Also, in some ways there was a time in which the work of CFN, the Central Bank of Ecuador, was criticised. Another that creates distrust on us, it could be...that" (8); "The Ministry of Interior (topping the list, the Presidency, the Ministry of Finance, the Public Procurement System, SECOM, Ministry of Tourism, all those for whom Alvarado has passed, the Ministry of Justice (zero confidence)" (21) "It is painful to say, but the state institutions" (26); "The police... some institutions... I think so, right? Some local institutions" (1); "Justice" (2); "It could be the legislative function" (4); "Political parties" (7); "Justice, the Assembly" (22); "The military institution" (31).



Graphic 2. Of the institutions that exist in Ecuador, which ones generate less trust in you?

Source: Prepared by the authors (data expressed in %).

*35.5% of responders said DK/NA.

Finally it highlights the scepticism of some of the respondents to all types of institution – mainly public – and to certain media: “None, actually, none. What institutions, maybe private, yes, sometimes they close us the doors, but it has been gradually opened, as the channel has grown [TV]. They have been opened, especially for the fairness that we are giving in news; many doors have been opened to us, in fact, within several companies and institutions” (6).

The results exhibit the low levels of trust that all institutions have. Only four of them passed, enjoying a trust index greater than 5: media (5.80), the army (5.71), the Government (5.35) and international organisations (5.23).

Of the major powers (so-called functions in Ecuador), the interviewed journalists show their full trust in the executive, but not in the judiciary (4.87) and the legislature (assembly) (4.45). Associated with these low levels of trust in the constitutional powers is the fact that institutions that generate higher levels of distrust are politics (3.87), political parties (3.17) and politicians (3.42). The high level of distrust of the respondents in the political arena and the high level of consensus on the matter is underlined (standard deviation, 1.98, is the lowest of all the variables analysed).

The army enjoys the highest levels of trust along with the media and international organisations. However, in the case of the media, the high value of the standard deviation (2.72) reveals a marked polarisation between respondents.

Despite the relatively low levels of trust enjoyed by public organizations, in general the main sources of distrust come from private organisations – the companies (4.52), entrepreneurs (3.84) and NGOs (4.71), religious leaders (3.75) and trade unions (3.72).

INSTITUTIONS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	AVERAGE	STANDARD DEVIATION
Media	4	10	1	6	0	10	5	4	5	5	5	9	5	8	1	8	7	8	4	9	9	5	8	10	1	8	7	3	8	2	4	5,80	2,72
Army	4	5	10	6	7	10	8	8	7	5	7	10	6	7	2	6	8	7	5	2	9	3	3	5	4	6	2	5	4	5	1	5,71	2,35
Government	3	5	10	7	8	10	7	8	7	5	1	9	6	5	1	1	4	6	10	4	6	3	1	5	2	7	3	5	8	8	4	5,35	2,78
International organisations	5	5	1	5	8	5	7	3	0	5	6	10	5	8	2	8	1	7	3	2	9	7	8	5	8	7	5	5	2	3	2	5,23	2,45
Judiciary	3	5	10	8	7	10	5	6	5	4	1	10	6	6	1	1	1	4	10	2	3	2	4	1	3	3	3	6	9	8	4	4,87	2,91
NGOs	6	5	1	5	4	5	5	5	5	4	5	9	5	8	2	8	1	5	1	7	9	5	6	1	7	7	5	5	1	3	1	4,71	2,39
Big companies	4	5	1	3	1	8	5	6	3	5	7	9	6	7	1	5	8	7	3	3	8	4	6	1	1	5	3	4	3	7	1	4,52	2,39
Assembly	3	5	10	4	5	10	2	7	5	5	1	10	6	7	1	1	1	2	10	4	7	2	2	1	1	4	4	3	5	6	4	4,45	2,83
Politics	3	10	1	4	3	5	1	5	5	4	9	8	6	5	3	1	1	2	4	1	5	2	3	1	2	3	3	6	3	8	3	3,87	2,4
Entrepreneurs	3	5	1	3	1	5	3	6	3	5	8	8	5	5	1	5	5	5	1	3	7	3	5	1	1	7	3	4	3	3	1	3,84	2,08
Religious leaders	5	5	1	4	1	5	8	7	5	3	7	10	8	1	3	5	1	3	1	7	0	3	3	1	1	0	3	0	1	2	1	3,75	2,59
Trade unions	5	5	1	4	7	5	4	2	5	3	5	9	6	7	1	8	5	2	1	1	0	3	3	1	3	1	3	0	2	5	1	3,72	2,25
Politicians	3	5	1	4	6	5	1	3	5	4	2	7	7	5	3	4	4	1	3	1	8	3	1	1	1	2	2	5	2	5	2	3,42	1,98
Political parties	3	5	1	4	1	5	1	4	0	3	8	7	7	4	1	4	1	1	3	1	8	2	1	1	1	2	2	4	3	5	2	3,17	2,17

Table I. Trust level of the interviewed journalists in the institutions of Ecuador
Source: prepared by the authors.

Conclusions

The results show a breakdown in the relationship between the interviewed journalists that are in favour of the Government's management and those against it. That exposes the strong polarization and low levels of trust between these professionals, reflecting the confrontational stance that defines the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

This conclusion has come from three findings: 1) Open questions offer conflicting and inconsistent results (in both cases the Government, public bodies and the President of the Republic appear as institutions with higher and lower levels of trust). 2) Although in the closed questions the Government enjoys the highest levels of trust, and the judicial and legislative powers hold average values, they have the highest levels of standard deviation of all the institutions evaluated. This circumstance reflects the high dissent among the respondents. And 3) the equitable distribution of the sample explains this paradoxical situation based on ownership of the media where journalists work - public, private and community. Therefore, we can confirm, as McManus (1994) explained, that in media state-owned organisations, the Government has a greater influence on the editorial management. Thus, journalists have to be less critical and have greater trust in public institutions. Instead, journalists working in private media rely less on public administration and conduct, as confirmed by some of the interviewed journalists, producing news coverage aimed at the needs of the market.

These results contradict partially that identified by Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) who state that the level of trust of journalists in public institutions does not vary greatly between the different news organisations of a country.

In the case of Ecuador, despite the confrontation between the Government and the private media, journalists tend to rely more on public institutions than on private organisations. Thus, although there is in the country a context in which the idea that press freedom is in jeopardy because of actions of certain regulatory bodies gaining strength (CORDICOM and SUPERCOM), the Government and other public institutions are perceived as more reliable.

The explanation that can be offered, firstly, comes from the influences from the “systems level” (Oller and Meier, 2012), since until the arrival of the current Government, the economic and political situation of the country was defined by instability and traumatic and sudden changes. In addition, the media were owned by very few families who used them to

their advantage. This is coupled with the current socialist, anti-capitalist politics and the speech in favor of the “common good” proposed by Rafael Correa’s Government. To understand this phenomenon we must also take into account the specifications of media and political system of the country (Hallin and Mancini, 2004; Albuquerque, 2012, Chavero and Oller, 2015).

And, secondly, it is explained at the “institution level” because if the Government currently enjoys one of the highest levels of trust, it could be due to an optimal organisational performance in which the impact on the population has caused levels of trust and confidence that directly affect their subjective perception of welfare; just as Frey and Stutzer (2002) and Hudson (2006) showed.

Despite it, one cannot ignore that trust indexes are very low - in line with the social and institutional distrust of Ecuador and Latin America. The politicisation in part of journalism in the country causes journalists to have high levels of distrust despite the political (Rafael Correa has served eight years in office in 2015) and economic stability¹⁰². Aspect that corroborates in Ecuador the relationship described by Campbell (2004), where societies with very low levels of interpersonal trust cause a high degree of institutional distrust. This data confirms that obtained by Hanitzsch and Berganza (2012) by showing some general patterns in which journalists tend to be more trusting in Western countries than in the “non” Western contexts - as is the case of Ecuador. They also pose an Ecuadorian journalistic culture away from the democratic-corporatist model when comparing this research with the results obtained by Brants and coll. (2010) and van Dalen, Albæk and de Vreese (2011) in Holland. These authors note that their findings do not indicate a critical attitude towards politicians in democratic-corporatist countries carries cynicism and distrust. In Ecuador the results fully show the opposite, since politicians and political parties have the lowest levels of trust between the interviewed journalists.

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the institutions with lower levels of trust are political groups, politicians and unions, common results in

¹⁰² The image of progress of Ecuadorian and the economic sentiment in Ecuador is the highest in Latin America according to the Latinobarómetro (2013).

Latin America and Europe. This trend is illustrated by data from the Latinobarómetro (2011) concerning the citizens' trust in the main institutions of Ecuador. Hence, it is shown that public social perception of mistrust is reflected in the journalistic profession. Distrust that is associated with the lack of development of "institutional trust" or "impersonal" trust of journalists (Khodyakov, 2007) and, as Ramos (2013) affirms, the isolation and invisibility of institutions.

In Ecuador we can speak of a "hybridisation effect" between the high rates of credibility in democracy, the image of progress - that Ecuadorian citizens have under the Latinobarómetro (2013) - and the high degree of institutional distrust of respondents. The fruit of this mixture shows a democracy in a process of maturing that must be lodged based on institutional trust, cooperation, integration and stability. Thus, Ecuador should try, as Nannestad (2008), Rothstein and Eek (2009) and Tao and coll. (2014) established in their studies, to achieve high levels of social and institutional trust to enjoy a better Government and continuous and stable economic development, but the way to achieve this is still one of the great unknowns.

The perception that citizens in Ecuador have, according to Latinobarómetro (2011), of the media is quite different from that of journalists interviewed in this study, which is consistent, because they project themselves as media. While the citizens primarily consider the media unreliable, respondents place them as organisations with higher reliability, so that journalists in Ecuador are facing what Powell (2014) defines as the "challenge of reliability".

Finally, we conclude by emphasising the fact that the assessment of distrust at the individual level can only be analysed in an institutional, social and cultural micro/meso/macro context to understand the reason for the results. Contextualised studies examining peripheral countries, defined as intermediate journalistic cultures, help to understand the relationship between the notion of interpersonal, institutional, social and political trust globally. Even more so when investigations such as the one of Kolczynska (2012) show how trust in public institutions in some European countries clearly diverges from the typical relationship of the democratic countries

with market economies. Today it is required that the comparative empirical studies examining institutional trust focus on the non-Western countries with developing democracies and economic systems that differ from liberal parameters. Fundamentally because we still know very little about the factors that determine the levels of trust of journalists in regions such as Latin America and in countries such as Ecuador.

Conclusions

This book has exposed, firstly, a theoretical analysis of the journalistic culture of Latin America and Ecuador and, secondly, the results of the Journalistic Culture of Ecuador (JCE) project. Specifically, the JCE project has focused on the contextual study of the perception of journalists of the dimensions of objectivity, professional roles, ethical guidelines, professional autonomy, trust levels and influences. The results show a hybrid and heterogeneous professional culture in which the characteristics of Ecuador and the Latin American region and the common aspects to other world regions interrelate. Therefore, an open debate is delved into about 1) the existence of a global journalism that shares a common ideology based on the convergence of guidelines and journalistic practices and a common understanding of the profession, and 2) the idea of a “unique journalistic culture” with identifying features defined by the context.

The results lead the discussion to the point that proposes a journalistic culture in Latin America and Ecuador that differs from the Western standards, in which the journalist forms an inseparable part of the media, political, cultural, economic and social landscape. These professionals become managers and symbolic producers and creators of meanings that make sense of the different Ecuadorian structures.

Through the attempt to break the theory/practice gap and the launch of a contextualised research, the academic and professional discourses have been integrated. Not only from the identification and isolated classification of a particular group of dimensions that define a type of professional, but through the implementation of a system based on procedural richness and diversity of views that a mestizo Latin American and Ecuadorian journalistic culture has shown, emanating from the typical characteristics of a diverse region of peoples, nationalities, heritage, territories, and so on, and defined by its inter and multicultural character.

The current media landscape in Ecuador (2015) is presented as led by the private media, where most of the country's journalists work. Reality that contrasts with the political and communicational proposal of Rafael Correa, based on a market restructuring and the journalistic profession in which the current Government is increasingly present in the organisation and regulation of the media. A proposal that has caused, and causes, among media, journalists, political actors and Government a direct confrontation, tension and polarization.

In this ecosystem, characterized by a process of change that generates a media model that fails to be accepted by either party, there are accusations directed at: 1) the Government for techno-populist practices and radicalization of the discourse of confrontation, and 2) the media for imperialist and monopolistic attitudes. These emergencies make necessary the developing of a model agreed and supported by a strong, pluralistic democracy that prevents individuals and individual privileges of certain sectors. Therefore, public policies proposed by Rafael Correa, based on democratization of communication, must be balanced with State obligations in communicational matters and the rights of citizens and media professionals.

Since the adoption of the Communications Law (2013) in Ecuador some initiatives have been launched, not without controversy, based on greater transparency, citizen participation, redistribution of radio spectrum, creating control agencies and State regulation, etc., able to break the links between the economic and the media power. Organizations such as CORDI-

COM and SUPERCOM exercise functions of supervision, monitoring, regulation, control and sanction of the media. Functions that have led the latter to enter into a process of progressive loss of autonomy and self regulation.

One of these initiatives launched in 2014 by CORDICOM was the professionalization of journalism that identifies the areas and the variables that determine the profession. However, this process does not consider journalism as a diverse profession, in which biased and non-agreed classifications should avoid defining journalists, making a classification of journalists from global and standardized standards that does take into account neither the contextual reality of Ecuador today nor the prospective idea of the profession.

In this process of professionalization of journalism, the role given by the Government to universities as training, education and certification bodies of journalists has placed them as key players in the process. Again, these actions are causing a polarization effect on the profession because of the legal requirement to have a university degree - in the specialty of Social Communication or Journalism - to practice the profession; standing at one side the “empirical” journalists and on the other the “graduates”.

Although this process of professionalization of journalism launched in Ecuador by the Government, the historical lack of professional identity and minimum conditions - wage, autonomy, prestige, etc. - of journalists determine a career beset by political and economic power where pluralism, security and independence of the media are in question. One example of this is the proposal that has been debated since 2014 within the legislative body which intends to make communication a public service, becoming a fundamental strategic asset of the policy of the executive body.

Regarding the results of the empirical work of the JCE project, respondents consider technology as the main influence that determines their work. Hence, although new technologies are now an essential tool in the development of journalism in Ecuador, which have helped to improve efficiency, access to information and the optimization of processes, the digital gap still determines the profession.

Furthermore, the country is experiencing a shift in the main influences perceived by journalists from the factual powers, such as the economic or the media, to the constitutional powers – especially the executive. Primarily due to the presence of the new control and regulation bodies and new communication laws that affect, more and more directly, the work of journalists.

The perception of the journalists of the influence factors coming from the systems level denotes a greater State interventionism, completed at a practical within the institutional level that might be called “traditionalist” in which the processes in newsrooms are dependent on the clear vertical structure, the needs imposed by the market, the ethical codes and the fear of possible sanctions of the Government. Where low levels of trust, friendship and independence, politicisation and ideologization of the profession, and the marked polarization between public and private media test the Government’s proposal of democratization of communication in Ecuador. Thus, although theoretically communication is intended as a tool facilitating the creation of citizen critical thinking, on a practical level it is seen to be at the service of the interested organisms of control.

The interviewed journalists perceive themselves as neutral and true professionals responsible for exercising the role of diffuser. However, due to the politicisation of all systems in the country and the high level of political parallelism, nuances of the role of mobilising and opponents are reflected in their responses – especially among journalists of private media. Although at no time from a condemnatory point of view, but more like providers of information to citizens – this attitude could also be due to fear of being punished by the control agencies of the Government.

It is paradigmatic that despite more than 90% being private media, journalists polled see people as citizens and not as consumers. Results suggest that although journalists know the economic needs of the media, the largest intervention to communications exercised by the Government makes them more aware of the rights of citizens and the social responsibility of the media.

Regarding the dimension of objectivity, almost all respondents did not propose it as a goal to work towards; away from the positivist standards of Western journalism. However, it is still considered one of the pillars supporting journalism as a profession from a practical point of view; anchored to the facts, the sum of subjectivities, the faithful representation of reality, the acceptance of the rules and regulations, the separation of opinion and information, the information balance, the plurality and diversity of sources, etc.

The abandonment of their philosophical nature allows journalists to standardize and justify certain processes and practices concerning regulatory bodies, the citizenship, and academia. Hence, from a pragmatic point of view, objectivity is still a value associated with the professionalization of journalism. Consequently, despite the latent scepticism towards it, at no time was it rejected as part of the profession.

Proper practice linked with objectivity according to the respondents, in addition to those listed in the preceding paragraph, comes from strategies such as publishing only proven and accurate information, the proper use of language - written and audiovisual, the use of institutional sources, the implementation of in-text quotations, and sticking to the manual of style of the media. Some of these strategies give the impression of an attempt to show, by some media and journalists, a “Government speech” because journalists recognize that sometimes they waive certain objective parameters to attract public attention, because of time and staffing or the rights to protect sources.

The ethical guidelines and ideologies of respondents are eminently absolutist with a tendency to situationism and exceptionism. Therefore, they are based on the principles and universal ethical and moral rules on which afterwards the individual values and ethical codes arise. This idealistic vision of ethical dilemmas and moral judgments distance them from relativism, although the trend towards ethical scepticism and the necessary adaptation to the Ecuadorian journalistic context lead them to recognize that ethical decisions in certain cases depend on the situation and the individual.

Adherence to universal ethical standards and ethical codes of the media is associated with the standardized character of journalism as a global profession - influence that could come from university training and the current communications law. However, journalists acknowledge that concrete and precise solutions to problems related to the Ecuadorian context are daily required. Accordingly, we could speak of universal ethical standards tailored to the demographic characteristics of the context - institution and systems level - and the cognitive moral development of individuals - actor level; developing a joint ethics rooted in the nature of the country and in international moral standards.

High levels of autonomy and participation in the professional decisions of journalists in Ecuador contrast with what is stated in previous paragraphs referring to the strong Government intervention in communicational matters. These results show that the analysis of the perception of independence of journalists is associated with the perception of the current political regime in the country. Beyond that they are designated as full or hybrid democracies, the perception of autonomy depending on the situation of the democratic process in which the country is.

Ecuador, despite being considered a hybrid democracy by certain international organizations, is living a historic moment where the democratic and stability process is seen by the population as the main organism of personal and professional freedoms of citizens. Situation that causes journalists to perceive a high level of professional autonomy, negotiated with the media in which they work and the different systems that structure the country.

As was the case with the idea of objectivity, high levels of autonomy perceived by respondents are questioned when they are asked about the influences that limit their freedom of expression. They respond to this positively, referring specifically to the current communication legislation, professional ethics, the rights of citizens and interests and pressures of the media.

The lack of trust of journalists in institutions reflects the high volatility that has characterized the country and the strong individualism that defines

the journalistic culture of Ecuador. These aspects join the marked polarization between professionals and media that offer conflicting results, where the Government and public agencies have respectively the highest and lowest levels of trust. This contradiction determines the internal heterogeneity of the journalistic culture of Ecuador.

Despite the difficulty determining the institutions that enjoy higher levels of trust, the results support the above in regard to the high levels of subjective perception of welfare and democratic acceptance of the current regime of citizenship. Therefore, the credibility enjoyed by the current democracy in Ecuador contrasts with the widespread distrust of institutions - especially in politicians and political groups or parties.

This analysis of the journalistic culture of Ecuador has offered a contextualized view of the study of journalists and the media. Ecuador is presented as a diverse country that departs from the Western idea of journalism or the classifications based on typical correlations. Despite sharing features with the region where it is located, its journalistic culture is clearly defined by the historical process in which it is immersed and affects all its structures. As a consequence of this, Ecuador appears as a “unique journalistic culture” in space - physical, virtual, geographical, political, natural, etc. - and time - historical, political, cultural, economic, social, scientific, etc.; marking the change from the “mono-centric” and “centralized” journalistic model - in force until the beginning of the 21st century - to the “polycentric” and “intermediate” model.

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Annexes

Annex I

MODEL OF QUESTIONS IN THE INTERVIEWS IN THE QUALITATIVE STUDY:
“The journalistic culture of Ecuador”

Interview with journalists of the Ecuadorian media

The interview is part of the “Journalistic Culture of Ecuador (JCE)” project conducted by the research group coordinated by Dr. Martín Oller Alonso.

The main objective of the study is to establish the characteristics that define the journalistic culture of Ecuador. What it is especially interesting to know is: 1) the role played by professionals in the media (professional roles); 2) what concepts of objectivity do they have (philosophical angle) and what methods do they apply to carry out this objectivity; 3) what concept of journalistic ethics do they have; 4) the main influences they perceive in their work; 5) the degree of autonomy they have; and 6) the degree of trust in institutions.

Your anonymity will be respected when disseminating the results of the research.

Would it be possible to record the interview in order to facilitate the transcription work?

I General questions

1. How many years have you been working at _____?

- Where did you work before?, How long?

2. What journalistic training have you received?

- Have you studied at an academic institution? What degree?

- How have you entered the profession?

II Position you hold within the medium

3. What are your main professional tasks?

- Within what section your work is included?

- How do you call the position you hold?

-Do you combine your journalistic activity with a different occupation?

4. What path does an information made by you follow before being exposed in the medium?

If it is an information of opinion, how the editorial line of the medium on this topic is established? With whom is the provision of this information of opinion discussed?

How is the ideology of the medium assimilated by the new journalists?

What happens if your personal opinion contradicts the editorial line of the medium?

III Professional roles of the journalist

5. From your point of view, what is the most important role of a journalist in Ecuador?

- Interventionism

6. If you work on a topic, what degree of commitment do you acquire?

- Do you keep a distant and neutral attitude or on the contrary do you try to actively participate in the news?

- How important is for you the active participation of the journalist?

- Power distance

7. What kind of relationships do you maintain with your institutional (political and senior) sources?

- Are they cordial relations or do you maintain consciously distant?

8. From your point of view, should journalists act as watchdogs of power?

- Do you think the media should act as the fourth power?

- Market orientation

9. When you write or expose a story, do you have a specific image of your audience? What image?

- How important is for you the needs and fears of your audience?

10. How important is for you the study of markets and your target audience?

11. Do you think a journalist should encourage the audience to participate in civic activities and political discussion?

- How important is that for you?

12. What do you think about the “monopoly” of the entertainment of the media?

Should we pay attention to this phenomenon or not?

IV. Objectivity as a philosophical ideal

13. What does the objectivity mean in your profession? In general?

14. Do you think it is possible to be objective in your profession?

- May a piece of news in a medium (faithfully) represent the reality or it depends on the point of view of the journalist?

15. How important is for you the concept of objectivity?

V. Objectivity as a method

In your daily work, when you are conducting some news:

16. What strategies or methods do you use to present the news as objectively as possible?

- Do you exert yourself to present several perspectives on a topic or do you clarify what is the most appropriate perspective from your point of view?

- Do you base your news always on established facts or sometimes do you resort to suspicions or rumours?

- How do you use the sources in your texts? Do you always cite your sources or use their information in the news without indicating them?

- How do you structure your information? Do you keep the principle of the inverted pyramid?
- What do you think about the separation of information and opinion?
- Do you separate explicitly the opinion of the information in your medium?

17. How important are for you the strategies such as the separation of information and opinion or the presentation of different perspectives?

VI Concept of journalistic ethics

When confronting your news coverage:

18. Do you think that there are any important ethical principles that should be followed by all journalists regardless of the situation and context?

19. Do you think you should reject questionable journalistic methods, regardless of the situation and the context?

20. Because of the complex ethical dilemmas in covering the news, do you think you should be able to make or have your own ethical codes of individual behaviour?

21. Do you think that the considered as ethical journalism can vary from certain to another situations and cultures?

22. Would you carry out a piece of news which could harm others if the results of this one produce a greater good?

VII Perception of influences in your work

Some of the limitations in your work can come from the journalistic company or the outside:

23. What influences from your own journalistic company do you perceive mainly in your daily work?

-From the influences that you find in your own company, evaluate their influence of 1-10 (1 being equal to little or nothing, and 10 to a lot or total influence)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	00
Colleagues											
Superiors, chief editors or directors											
Business owners											
Profit expectations											
New technologies											
Ethical conventions of the media											
Scarcity of resources											
Procedures of the media											
Closure criteria (deadlines) of the news											
The market and the search of audience											
New technologies											

24. What other limitations or influences in your work come from outside your company?

-From the influences that come from the outside of your company, evaluate their influence of 1-10 (1 being equal to little or nothing, and 10 to a lot or total influence):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	00
Friends and family											
Other media colleagues											
Audiences											
Competence											
Censorship											
Government											
Politicians in general											
Private companies											
The laws of legislation											
Sources of information											
Trade unions											
Advertising											
Religious leaders											
Organisations of the media control											

VIII Degree of perception of autonomy that you have

25. In your medium, do you think that you have a lot of freedom in the work you do?

26. Can you take part in the decisions that affect your work?

27. What do you think the most significant limits to your freedom of expression as a journalist are?

IX Trust in institutions

From the main institutions that exist in Ecuador:

28. What institutions generate a greater degree of trust to you?

29. What institutions generate a lower degree of trust to you?

From the following institutions that we list, evaluate in 1-10 the trust level that they generate to you (1 being equal to little or nothing, and 10 a lot or total trust):

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	00
Parliament											
Government											
Judiciary branch											
Politics											
Politicians											
Political parties											
Army											
Trade unions											
Religious leaders											
Big companies											
Entrepreneurs											
NGOs											
International organisations											

X Sociodemographic data

Some personal data:

30. How old are you?

31. What is your degree of personal interest in politics?

- Do you hold or have held on some occasion a political position?
- In politics, we often speak of right, left and centre, where would you be placed?

XI To conclude...

32. Is there anything you wanted to mention or comment specifically? Is there anything that seems important to you and not yet been mentioned?

FIELD NOTES

QUESTIONNAIRE CODE	INTERVIEW END DATE	INTERVIEW END HOUR	WAS THERE ANY TYPE OF INTERRUPTION OR ALTERATION?

Annex II

Table I. Detailed description of the sample of the interviewed journalists in the JCE project
Source: Prepared by the authors.

N.	Country	Medium	Section	Functions	Age	Sex	Training	Years in the medium	Total years
1	Ecu	Ecuador TV	Reports	Research reporter	55	Man	Degree in Social Communication	6	17
2	Ecu	Ecuador TV	News	Director of the news bulletin	38	Man	Degree in Social Communication	7	14
3	Ecu	Ecuador TV	Research	Research journalism	37	Man	Degree in Social Communication	6	13
4	Ecu	Ecuador TV	News	Production assistant	23	Man	Social Communication student	6	12
5	Ecu	Ecuador TV	International news	Head of international news	42	Man	Degree in Social Communication	6	6
6	Ecu	Ecuador TV	News	News coordinator	25	Woman	Degree in Social Communication	3	3
7	Ecu	Ecuador TV	News	Editor	31	Woman	Social Communication student	5 and a half	4.5
8	Ecu	Ecuador TV	News	Production manager of news	28	Man	Degree in Social Communication	6	8
9	Ecu	El Comercio	News	Political news editor	25	Woman	Degree in Communication	1	3
10	Ecu	El Comercio	Management	General manager	55	Man	Degree in Sciences of Education	22	32
11	Ecu	El Comercio	Technology and Environment	Coordinator of information, technology and planet	30	Man	Degree in Social Communication	9	9
12	Ecu	El Comercio	Trends	Construction information editor	59	Man	Degree in Social Communication	34	34
13	Ecu	El Comercio	Information. Security	Editor	26	Woman	Communication Technology majoring in Written Communication	1 and a half	3
14	Ecu	El Comercio	All the sections	Graphic management	45	Man	Degree in Architecture and Master in Photography	18	18
15	Ecu	El Comercio	Information (Quito section)	Reporter	30	Woman	Degree in Social Communication	2	3
16	Ecu	El Comercio	Sports	Sports editor	45	Man	Social Communication student	18	20
17	Ecu	El Telégrafo	Several sections	Photography coordinator	33	Man	Secondary education in arts	4	9
18	Ecu	El Telégrafo	Management	Executive management	50	Man	Degree in Journalism	3	20
19	Ecu	El Telégrafo	Economic, culture information, etc.	Publisher	32	Woman	Degree in Journalism	5 months	10
20	Ecu	El Telégrafo	Information and research	Editor	23	Woman	Degree in Social Communication	9 months	9 months
21	Ecu	Ecuavisa	Community	Reporter	26	Woman	Degree in Journalism	2	2.5
22	Ecu	Ecuavisa	Sports	Producer and reporter	24	Man	Degree in Advertising and Journalism	1	17
23	Ecu	Ecuavisa	News	Mission Director	35	Man	Degree in Social Communication	5	14
24	Ecu	Ecuavisa	Entertainment, shows	Junior journalist	22	Man	Degree in Journalism	8 months	1
25	Ecu	Ecuavisa	Information. Security area	Reporter	39	Man	Degree in Social Communication	2	14
26	Ecu	Ecuavisa	News	Reporter	30	Woman	Degree in Social Communication	5	5.5
27	Ecu	Ecuavisa	News	Reporter	26	Man	Degree in Journalism	5	2
28	Ecu	Ecuavisa	News and research	Producer	33	Man	Master of Digital Communication	5 months	10
29	Ecu	El Ciudadano	News	Reporter and editor	29	Man	Degree in Social Communication	1 and a half	5
30	Ecu	CORAPE	All the sections	Reporter and editor	37	Man	Social Communication student	8	13
31	Ecu	CORAPE	All the sections	Reporter and editor	33	Woman	Degree in Social Communication	4	9

