

Chapter 12

Latin America

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The press contributes to democratic governance by monitoring and holding the powerful accountable (watchdog), covering issues of public significance that require the attention of citizens and policy-makers (agenda-setting), and facilitating the expression of a myriad of perspectives (gate-keeping). This study reviews the conditions that affect the performance of the press as watchdog, agenda-setter, and gatekeeper in Latin America, and discusses courses of action to strengthen the quality of press reporting on a wide range of issues and views.¹

By performing watchdog, agenda-setting and gate-keeping functions, the press promotes criticism, deliberation, and diversity of opinion. These are key principles of the democratic public sphere, the communicative space for the formation of public opinion and the promotion of civic interests. As analyzed by Jürgen Habermas, the notion of the public sphere remains useful to assess the state of the press in contemporary democracies.² Surely, as several authors have perceptively observed, Habermas' original analysis presents some limitations, namely an idealized reconstruction of the conditions for public discourse in European bourgeois democracies, and an excessively pessimistic view about the decline of the quality of democratic speech in late-modernity.³ Despite its shortcomings, the notion of the public sphere remains relevant both as a conceptual construct and a normative ideal to assess the performance of the press. It rightly points out problems for civic expression created by encroaching state and market power. It holds public deliberation and critical information as central to the democratic process through which citizens scrutinize governments and other powerful actors, identify public demands, and shape policy-making. It draws attention to the role of institutions, including the press, in fostering reflexive and critical publics. Although Habermas' theory of communication action turned to locating democratic speech in inter-subjective, unmediated situations (rather than institutions, as he did previously), his recognition of the need for formal fora to nurture deliberation and criticism still grounds the notion that the press is a preeminent institution in the public sphere.⁴

From this perspective, the press should offer platforms for public dialogue, stimulate conversations on a wide range of public issues, and turn the attention of policy-makers and citizens to matters of relevant public interest. Press theories have identified several conditions for the press to perform its democratic obligations. Liberal positions have stressed the need for constitutional prerogatives to shelter the press from government intrusion. Radical and communitarian arguments

have emphasized the need for dispersed ownership to avoid monopolistic information markets and ensure a diversity of perspectives. Social responsibility positions have raised the issue of fair access and public ethics as crucial for the democratic press.⁵ In contemporary democracies, all these conditions are necessary to facilitate the wide availability of information that monitors state actions and business practices, highlights issues of public interest, and brings out multiple perspectives.

Although the ideal of the public sphere still offer a compelling framework to assess the state of the media in democracy, it does not offer concrete guidelines about press policies and journalistic practices. Classic analyses of the public sphere, notably the work of Habermas and Hannah Arendt, focused on small-group settings and restricted polities. Thus, the ideals of deliberation and criticism need be rethought in the contexts of large-scale and mediated democracies.⁶ How can those ideals inform large media systems and journalistic practices in contemporary democracies? How can they be made effective in today's press, an institution vastly different and more complex than the print media in colonial America or in British and French bourgeois democracies? How do we reconcile Habermas' vision of unmediated discourse as "ideal speech" with the fact that journalism's defining task is to mediate the flow of information? These questions are central to understanding the conditions that strengthen the contribution of the press to democratic governance.

Here my interest is to foreground the idea of media diversity as the fundamental principle for the press to promote deliberation and criticism in Latin America. Although media diversity is a contested notion, it provides a blueprint for media democracy that is characterized by the heterogeneity of content and structures.⁷ For Denis McQuail, media diversity contributes to democracy by reflecting differences in society, giving equal access to various points of view, and offering wide choices.⁸ Here I focus on "structural" diversity, an institutional feature of press systems as a whole related to ownership and regulation, and "performance" diversity, which refers to the practices and content produced by news organizations. Both are important to promote media democracy; both continue to have severe problems in the region. The existence of news organizations anchored in different principles as well as the production of diverse content are both equally necessary to foster expand the range of perspectives in the media.

From a public sphere perspective, media diversity is crucial to preserve communicative spaces that limit the influence of governments and large business. In Latin America, it requires overcoming persistent obstacles that have historically undermined democratic journalism and opportunities for civic

expression in the press. Specifically, it demands regulating the influence of states and markets, promoting dispersed ownership, and leveling citizens' access to news-making.

Media pluralism offers a point of reference to assess whether press systems effectively expand the range of issues and perspectives in the public sphere. A plural media system offers a stronger basis for the press to represent a diversity of interests. It is anchored in institutional pluralism, that is, a hybrid and balanced order integrated by organizations that function according to a mix of civic, political, and commercial principles.⁹ Institutional pluralism is necessary to preserve and renew deliberation and criticism as core principles of the public sphere in contemporary democracies.

Despite recent advances in democratic expression, media pluralism remains weak in Latin American democracies. The succession of civilian administrations in the past twenty-five years has ushered in better conditions for the press and public expression.¹⁰ Only sporadically, however, the press offers a wide set of perspectives on issues of public interest, and scrutinizes official secrecy and wrongdoing. The persistent weakness of media diversity coupled with the primacy of official news undercut potential opportunities for the press to make a stronger contribution to democratic expression.

The end of military dictatorships improved the conditions for journalistic practice and civic participation. An extensive literature has documented significant actions towards participation and emancipation in the past decades.¹¹ The existence of robust and vibrant public spheres is a remarkable characteristic of contemporary Latin American democracies. The mobilization of human rights, indigenous, women's, youth, and environmental movements; the emergence of novel forms of citizens' participation and journalism; the rise and consolidation of various protest groups; experiments in participatory administration and budgeting; and the mushrooming of NGOs and civic advocacy organizations demonstrate the vitality of civic expression. These forms of civic participation, however, should not be considered uncritically. Public spheres brimming with mobilized groups are not inevitably synonymous with democratic deliberation and institutionalized governance. While some are expressions of critical debate and progressive participation, other groups contribute to political polarization. While some are authentic expressions of grassroots mobilization, other groups are closely linked to state interests and clientelistic networks.¹²

The consolidation of liberal democracies and the affirmation of a vibrant civil society have not been sufficient conditions to institutionalize media pluralism. A participative and lively public sphere, in principle, offers a rich reservoir for the affirmation of plural press systems and democratic journalism. It

does not necessarily improve the performance of the press, however. The tenuous institutional linkages between the press and the public sphere, I argue, undermine the potential of the press to strengthen democratic governance. This paper explores why the connective tissues between the press and the public sphere remain weak in Latin America, and it concludes offering actions to strengthen those ties.

The legacy of weak media pluralism

Contemporary Latin American democracies inherited a weak legacy of media pluralism. Although the region has a rich tradition of civic initiatives to democratize information and expression, the prospects for pluralistic media systems have been compromised by authoritarianism, turbulent politics, and the collusion between the state and business. Unregulated influence of governments and markets coupled with the close proximity between official and business interests have historically undermined media democracy.¹³

These dynamics took different shape in authoritarian and democratic periods. Authoritarian regimes bulldozed democratic expression through censorship and repression. While they persecuted oppositional media, they sought to ensure positive news through favoring owners with business deals. During democratic periods, governments did not engage in formal censorship and repression, but they were not inclined to change fundamental structures to promote civic interests. The result was the consolidation of press systems dominated by a mix of state and market interests. Although print and broadcast media largely followed a commercial logic, they assiduously courted governments to reap political and economic benefits. Under these conditions, truly “independent” journalism was exceptional. Keeping a healthy autonomy from the state was not sound business for news organizations that pursued commercial goals.

Throughout the region, the oldest and most influential newspapers were born as projects of partisan factions and powerful families during the post-independence period. Many of today’s leading newspapers (e.g. Peru’s *El Comercio*, Brazil’s *Estado de Sao Paulo*, Chile’s *El Mercurio*, Argentina’s *La Nación*) were founded during the oligarchic republics of the nineteenth century. In the context of restricted democracies, in which a small percentage of population held political rights, newspapers expressed the economic and political ambitions of elite factions and political parties. Likewise, the press was also partisan in countries under prolonged dictatorial regimes. They were conceived as political endeavors, often funded by personal funds, rather than market-driven enterprises to ensure means for public expression. Partisan journalism remained dominant during the gradual expansion of democracy in the first decades of the twentieth century. Partisanship was central to newspapers that expressed the

interests of urban middle classes and the working classes that fought for the expansion of political and social rights. Mass-market tabloids avoided being closely identified to political parties, but they still maintained close links to governments and political leaders.

Despite the long tradition of proximity between political parties and the press, a partisan press did not become dominant during the twentieth century. Continuous political instability undermined the continuity of political parties, and thus, the long-term survival of partisan newspapers. Colombia was the only exception; the stability of its bipartisan democracy survived allowed the traditional Liberal and Conservative parties to hold moderate influence over newspapers.¹⁴ In most countries, however, the continuous cycles of civil and military regimes and decade-long dictatorships undermined the lifespan of the partisan press as well as newspapers that expressed civic groups (e.g. trade unions, religious). The partisan press could not survive censorship and persecution, social upheaval, and economic turmoil. The weakness of the partisan press paved the way for the consolidation of a market-based press. National press systems typically featured elite newspapers that represented the interests of dominant economic and political groups, and broadsheets and tabloids that catered to middle classes and the working class. The “market” logic prevailed over the “partisan” logic.

The fact that the press has been largely organized around commercial principles, however, did not result in the complete separation of the press from the state. In fact, the mainstream press and the state have consistently been at a close distance. This relationship was based on economic and political linkages and mutual advantages. Government officials needed the news media to advance their political goals, and the business prospects of media companies were pinned to maintaining good relations with the state. Officials were able to influence newspapers through discretionary control of public finances such as government advertising, control over newsprint production and/or importation, and arbitrary control of “special” funds. In some cases, “coronelismo eletrônico” (“electronic clientelism”), as it is called in Brazil, was dominant, particularly in rural areas where vast numbers of media properties have been in the hands of government officials.¹⁵

So, the problem was not state ownership of the press, but rather, the excessive power of governments and private interests. Despite the overall growth of market-based media, government advertising continued to be a significant source of media revenue, particularly in countries and regions with small economies and advertising budgets.¹⁶ While officials found it beneficial to court newspapers to ensure favorable coverage, newspapers with close connections to governing powers reaped economic benefits, such as advertising, tax breaks, importation permits, and broadcasting licenses.

More than long-standing, organic mouthpieces for political parties, newspapers offered short-term support for specific administrations.

Although these dynamics have prevailed, at times, the relations between the press and national governments were conflictive. Whereas press dissent during military dictatorships was rare and mostly confined to alternative, left-wing publications, mainstream newspapers clashed with governments during democratic periods. Ideological reasons typically caused conflicts between governments and the press. For example, conservative dailies not only opposed populist governments such as Peron's in Argentina and Vargas' in Brazil between the 1930s and 1950s, and the socialist administration of Salvador Allende in Chile in the early 1970s. They also actively supported military interventions. Leftist and liberal newspapers opposed conservative governments and military dictatorships. Press-government tensions escalated during times of political polarization. Presidents and cabinet members admonished critical newspapers, and sought to punish them through ordering investigations into newspaper finances and temporary closures, and passing draconian legislation.¹⁷

Similar dynamics also affected broadcasting policies. Private interests dominated radio and television since their beginnings. Neither public broadcasting nor mixed systems were strong alternatives to the private model. Public stations have been chronically underfunded and remained controlled by governments. Private broadcasting, however, was not completely distant from the state. Like newspaper owners, radio and television proprietors were also interested in maintaining close linkages with governments to keep licenses and expand business. Governments controlled official advertising, which particularly for stations in small towns and economically depressed areas, remained a vital financial source. In some cases such as Brazil and Mexico, tight-knit linkages between state and private interests were crucial for the consolidation of behemoth broadcasting companies such as Globo and Televisa, respectively.¹⁸

In summary, the legacy of press and democracy has simultaneously been plagued by both "market capture" and "state capture." Both authoritarian and populist regimes used state resources to control media markets and suppress deliberation and criticism. Powerful business, in turn, influenced government policies to expand and consolidate power. The basis for media pluralism was weak by the time the region shifted from authoritarianism to democracy in the 1980s.

Media pluralism, a forgotten priority

The consolidation of democratic rule has not significantly altered the historical structural relations among media, state and markets. Unquestionably, today's conditions are significantly better

than during the military dictatorships. The absence of state-sponsored efforts to suppress freedom of expression and persecute dissidents, the abolition of formal censorship, and the moderate enforcement of constitutional rights have contributed to the improvement of the conditions for democratic expression in the region.

Overall conditions are troubling, however. Table 12.1 shows the consolidation of clear patterns during the past years.

[Table 12.1 about here]

Annual surveys conducted by Freedom House and Reporters without Borders have identified three groups of countries in terms of the conditions for press democracy and public expression. First, there is a small group of countries (Chile, Costa Rica, and Uruguay) where conditions have been consistently better than in the rest of the region. This is not surprising, considering that the overall quality of democracy in these countries has also been praised by scholars and international agencies.¹⁹ Second, there are two countries (Cuba and Venezuela) where conditions have been extremely difficult for the press for due to the political characteristics of the ruling governments. It would be shortsighted to equate conditions in both countries given the differences between Cuba's decade-old communist rule and Chavez's socialist-populist regime. Despite the latter's attempt to suppress criticism, forms of dissenting journalism in both print and broadcasting persist amidst political polarization in Venezuela. The situation in Colombia, a country that used to be included in this group until recently, seems to be changing. Against a historical context of prolonged internal conflict and extensive anti-press violence, the ongoing process of pacification has gained renewed force and has benefited media democracy, too. Third, the conditions in the majority of countries fits Freedom House's "partially free" category. After the initial process of liberalization during the transition to democratic rule in the 1980s and 1990s, media democratization has languished in most countries. Media pluralism hasn't showed significant improvements, but there hasn't been a major reversal towards authoritarian policies.

The main problem is that old structural obstacles remain in place. There have not been major policy initiatives to reform press systems in order to promote diversity and strengthen countervailing forces to state and market powers. The vast majority of elected administrations have been equivocally committed to democratic communication. Regardless of whether they embraced neoconservative or populist policies, governments have generally aimed to preserve the current status quo. At best, some administrations have tolerated dissent without persecuting critics. At worst, others have tried to cajole the media through various means. In neither case, has media pluralism been a main policy priority.²⁰

Press organizations have recorded numerous cases of local and national governments that have continued to run roughshod over the media. They have resorted to various means.

First, governments have continued to manipulate public resources to reward complacent news organizations and punish critical journalism. The allocation of official advertising, tax breaks, and favorable loans on state-owned banks to news companies is still plagued with secrecy and favoritism.²¹ Some governments have blatantly bribed publishers and poured astronomical funds into newspapers and broadcasting stations.²² “Public broadcasting” has been prone to cronyism and propaganda. Officials have arbitrarily granted and renewed television and station licenses, and in many countries, have personally benefitted from the privatization of radio and television stations.

Second, while governments have used legislation to advance short-term political goals and business interests, they have been reluctant to support legal changes to facilitate media diversity and public scrutiny. On the one hand, some administrations have relaxed cross-media ownership laws to further promote the ambitions of media corporations. Critics have dubbed new legislation the “Clarín law” and “Televisa law” in Argentina and Mexico respectively, as they were ostensibly intended to benefit the most powerful media corporations in each country.²³ In Peru, the 2004 broadcasting law lacks mechanisms to control executive decisions, promote civic participation, increase transparency of media operations, and defend audience interests. New laws and government inaction have facilitated concentration of media ownership.²⁴ A handful of large corporations control the leading newspapers in many countries, including Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Guatemala, and Venezuela.²⁵ Likewise, most television markets have become consolidated in “imperfect duopolies” such as in Brazil and Mexico, in which two corporations control the main over-the-air stations and cable systems.

On the other hand, civilian governments have been largely uninterested in promoting a legal environment that encourages critical journalism. Tellingly, many press laws passed during authoritarian regimes have not been overturned yet. Libel and slander laws provide officials with a range of legal weapons to browbeat the press. The majority of countries lack legal mechanisms to require recording all official communication and proceedings, and to facilitate public access to government information. Doubtless, the passing of freedom of information laws in recent years in Argentina, Peru and Mexico is auspicious. Mobilized coalitions of civic groups should be credited for raising awareness and conducting advocacy with legislators to pass adequate legislation. Unfortunately, various problems weaken the effective enforcement of the laws and, ultimately, their contributions to accountability and transparency.²⁶

Third, anti-press violence has continued. Human rights and press freedom organizations have recorded scores of cases of official coercion of the press. Methods include verbal attacks on news organizations, pressure on journalists and media owners to suppress critical stories or cancel news programs, and ordering tax inquiries and police raids of newsrooms. One issue of particular concern is that official tirades against the press legitimize anti-press violence in countries such as Colombia, where journalists are frequently the target of attacks by the police, the military, and extra-legal groups. Furthermore, government inaction perpetuates impunity and undermines press democracy. The failure of governments to conduct thorough investigations and prosecute offenders exacerbates the lack of accountability.

In summary, opacity and arbitrariness characterize government decisions affecting the press. Governments have been effective at passing legislation to benefit officials and business allies, and preserving laws that shelter officials from public scrutiny. Regrettably, they have showed little interest in supporting policies to promote media pluralism. This would have required reinforcing government accountability, rolling back legislation that discourages critical reporting, enforcing “sunshine” laws, diversifying patterns of media ownership, and soliciting and ensuring broad participation from civic society.

With a few exceptions, none of these steps were taken. There have been limited efforts to democratize access to public broadcasting.²⁷ Take the case of community radio. Although leading stations in metropolitan areas have increasingly been incorporated into cross-media corporations, a myriad of public, private, mixed, and community groups own and manage radio stations scattered in the region. Radio ownership is more dispersed than in other countries, largely due to the significant growing number of stations and lower barriers to entry. A more disaggregated market structure partially explains why radio, in principle, offers better opportunities for public expression than newspapers and television.²⁸ However, the majority of community radio stations are in legal limbo. Governments have been reluctant to pass legislation to provide a legal framework to support their operations.

Although the collusion between government and large media corporations has remained dominant, relations have not always been peaceful. The ascendancy of populism in the last decade has ushered in clashes between governments and right-wing proprietors. They have battled over communication policies and official criticism of the press. Frequently, presidents used a strong nationalistic and class-based rhetoric to castigate owners. In response, associations representing large

media owners have excoriated governments. These conflicts have taken place against a backdrop of increased political polarization in the region.

Doubtlessly, the lead case has been the conflictive relations between the Chavez administration and traditional media owners in Venezuela. Since coming to power in 1999, Chavez has passed laws that were fiercely opposed by media owners.²⁹ The government accused conservative proprietors of supporting the failed 2002 coup. The controversial decision not to renew the license of Radio Television Caracas, one of the oldest television stations in the country owned by an anti-Chavez business group, was the flashpoint in a decade of tense relations.

In other countries, populist administrations and large media groups also engaged in fierce, mostly rhetorical, battles. Although confrontations did not reach a showdown as they did in Chavez's Venezuela, there have been conflicts between government and media corporations in Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua.³⁰ Presidents have frequently criticized media owners for defending "anti-popular interests," and offering biased reporting of government policies. Despite high-profile, verbal sparring, populist governments have not faced undivided opposition from media proprietors. In fact, they have enjoyed amicable relations with owners who have not criticized government policies.

Besides the unregulated influence power of governments and business, "statelessness" is another major obstacle for democratic journalism, particularly in the interior of many countries.³¹ "Statelessness" refers to situation where states fail to meet key obligations such as the control over the legitimate means of violence and the guarantee of civic rights. In such situations, extra-legal actors (e.g. paramilitary and parapolice organizations, drug-traffickers, other mafia-like operations) exert absolute and autonomous power through violence. Governments are ineffective in controlling violence and enforcing laws. Certainly, such situations do not only negatively affect the press, but they erode political and economic stability that is essential for the public sphere. However, journalists and civic organizations, particularly those who reveal corruption and call for accountability, are the main targets of violence.

The lack of serious investigation and prosecution of perpetrators further deepens "statelessness." Colombia and Mexico, which global press organizations have considered some of the world's most dangerous place for journalists in the past decade, are examples of this situation. Areas such as Colombia's Magdalena Medio or Mexico's northern border with the United States are notorious no-state zones. Community radio stations and print journalists who have challenged paramilitary forces and drug-traffickers and have exposed complicity between government officials and illegal actors, have

suffered the blunt of the attacks. In these circumstances, any form of critical journalism is impossible. Peace and security, two minimal conditions for the existence of the press and the public sphere, are missing. Reasoned, moderate, and critical public discourse is anathema to the exercise of naked violence and absentee government.

The combination of *quid pro quo* practices between the state and media corporations, the persistent lack of media pluralism, and “statelessness” undermine the prospects for a democratic press in Latin America.

The tensions of watchdog journalism

The conditions analyzed in the previous section provide the backdrop to analyze the performance of the press as watchdog, agenda-setter, and gatekeeper. My argument is that although the mainstream press occasionally scrutinizes wrongdoing and brings out a plurality of civic voices, efforts to promote wide deliberation and criticism are often drowned out in press systems that prioritize the interests of governments and large corporations.

Several studies have analyzed the state of watchdog journalism in the past decades.³² Throughout the region, press exposes have had significant political repercussions including judicial and congressional investigations, and the resignation of public officials. The series of exposes and scandals in the region suggested auspicious innovations and the contributions of news organizations to social accountability.³³ Although these have been unprecedented developments in the region, they should not be mistaken for the consolidation of adversarial, public-minded journalism. The press has not radically changed from lapdog to watchdog journalism. Watchdog journalism has evolved along a seesaw path, as its fortunes changed according to political circumstances.

Some analysts have recently suggested that watchdog journalism has lost much of its vigor.³⁴ News organizations have sporadically revealed public and private wrongdoing. Hard-hitting, investigative reporting has remained marginal. Leading news organizations have dismantled investigative units. Numerous reporters and editors, who produced exposes and headed investigations in the 1990s, left daily journalism. Newspapers that symbolized watchdog journalism have seemingly abandoned critical reporting, changed ownership, or closed down due to economic difficulties (which were, in some cases, the result of advertising boycotts from advertisers and governments).

Structural arrangements and dynamics between the state and the market account for the uneven presence of watchdog journalism. Several country-wide surveys show that reporters blame

editorial timidity and government influence for limited opportunities for critical stories.³⁵ While it is hard to produce concrete evidence of behind-the-scene maneuvers and decisions, opinion columns and newsroom grapevines are filled with speculations about government and business pressures on news organizations to refrain from publishing critical reports. Practicing watchdog journalism has often brought negative consequences for news organizations such as tightened advertising revenues, restrictions to official events and press conferences, verbal threats, and physical attacks, assassinations and bombings.

Three issues should be considered to assess the contributions of watchdog journalism to deliberation and criticism: the thematic agenda of exposés, editorial bias, and the quality of coverage.

The portfolio of watchdog stories has focused on a range of crucial subjects. Revelations on human rights abuses and criminal activities by military and police officers have demonstrated persistent violations of civil rights and corruption. Investigations into drug-trafficking have laid bare complex linkages between government officials and illegal trade. Stories on kickbacks for government contracts and cash-for-votes schemes in Congresses revealed wrongdoing at the core of democratic institutions. Exposés of fraudulent practices by small business and crimes by low-level officials (mayors, council members, police officers) have shed light on widespread corruption. Revelations about cases of pedophilia in the Catholic Church shed light on an institution that has historically wielded significant power in the region. Stories scrutinizing corporate wrongdoing, however, have been few and far between. Even when stories have put the spotlight on cases of corruption showing complicity between governments and business, the coverage has disproportionately focused on the responsibility of public officials.

The scarcity of investigations about corporate malfeasance reflects political-institutional factors that shape news production, namely editorial politics combined with the power of official sources and journalistic values and practices.

The rise of watchdog journalism needs to be understood against the backdrop of new political communication dynamics. The press has moved centerstage as elites and mobilized publics have chosen to wage political battles on the media. Given their status as newsmakers and “legitimate” sources, political elites hold unmatched advantage to influence news. Scores of press investigations have originated in the efforts of elites to influence the press. For reporters, government infighting has often provided copious and sensitive information. Power battles among government officials have been the breeding ground for exposes. Cabinet members, congressional committees and judges, and disgruntled

military and police officers have often piqued newsroom attention and provided evidence of government wrongdoing.³⁶

While officials' leaks prod reporters and editors to pursue stories, the organizational culture of journalism and the political economy of the press have influenced the evolution of stories.

On the one hand, the centrality and prestige of official news skews journalism towards covering official wrongdoing. Just like presidential declarations and congressional hearings, exposés are another form of official news. Newsroom practices that prioritize official news also stimulate interest in official corruption. Official news are regularly lead stories, and receive prime space in newsholes. Cadres of reporters maintain regular contact with official sources. "Domestic politics" remains the most prestigious news beat in the professional culture of journalism.³⁷ Thus, explosive information from official sources is more likely to turn into "what-a-story" denunciations. On the other hand, ownership patterns in press economies limit the thematic agenda of watchdog journalism. It is hard to imagine that watchdog journalism would sniff out corporate corruption given that the largest news companies in countries such as Colombia, Ecuador and the Dominican Republic, just to mention some examples, are part of business groups with extensive holdings in key industries (e.g. banking, big agribusiness, tourism, mining, energy, food, and telecommunications). The lack of media diversity does not exclude watchdog journalism, but it narrows down the range of potential issues for investigation.

Press ownership is tied to a second important aspect of watchdog journalism: the role of editorial partisanism. Editorial sympathies have motivated news organizations to reveal different cases of wrongdoing. As mentioned earlier, although the majority of news organizations do not maintain organic linkages with political parties, they are identified with specific ideologies and political-economic interests. Most Latin American countries lack solid party systems to support partisan journalism. Instead, news organizations have supported administrations and officials due to various reasons including common ideology and business pragmatism.³⁸

Not surprisingly, then, editorial interest in different cases of wrongdoing has fallen along ideological and political divisions. Left-leaning and liberal news organizations have exposed human rights abuses and wrongdoing in conservative administrations. Conservative news media, instead, have scrutinized wrongdoing during leftist and populist administrations. News organizations with ideologically diffused editorial politics have covered a wide range of cases of corruption. Political polarization has sharpened such divisions. In times when conflicts between administrations and news organizations escalated, such as during the recent skirmishes between populist governments and right-wing

proprietors, watchdog journalism has been tainted by political and ideological rifts. The scrutiny of government power has been often motivated by political antagonism rather than some “post-political,” professional goal to serve the “public interest.” Current political conditions make it difficult to conceive any form of watchdog journalism that stays above the political fray. Political polarization drags the press to take sides, and in turn, the press sharpens political polarization.

Two reactions are possible vis-à-vis the chronic weakness of “professional” journalism in Latin America and its impact on the performance of watchdog journalism. From a position that embraces the ideals of “professional” journalism, one could lament this situation on the grounds that partisanism inevitably compromises quality and fairness. Instead, from a perspective that is skeptical about the prospects of “post-political” journalism in the region, one could suggest that competitive politics are the main reservoir for the press to foster democratic deliberation and criticism in the public sphere. The presence of competitive elites and organized publics, rather than journalistic commitment to “professional” values, sets the basis for press criticism.

These positions carry normative and empirical implications: What kind of watchdog journalism is better for the democratic public sphere? One that scrutinizes power animated by wanting to serve the “public interest”? Or watchdog journalism inspired by partisan ideology? What kind is feasible in Latin America given political polarization, lack of government transparency, and concentrated media markets? We lack persuasive answer to these questions. The prescriptive and pragmatic ramifications of possible answers need to be carefully considered, particularly to assess appropriate course of actions to strengthen watchdog journalism.

A third issue is the quality of press denunciations. Watchdog journalism has rarely been truly “investigative.” In the print media, it has often been absorbed by “news events” that are relatively easy and cheap to cover. On television news, it has typically resorted to hidden cameras and other ethically dubious news-gathering techniques to produce ratings-friendly stories. Consequently, exposés have been focused on individuals, “episodic” events, and “what-a-story” news rather than structural causes and dynamics of corruption. Events are rarely used to produce “thematic” coverage of wrongdoing.³⁹ For example, news about the devastating consequences of hurricanes and earthquakes are rarely used to report on policies to mitigate disasters, social patterns of residential distribution, and land property issues. Thematic coverage requires editors to remove reporters from the pressures of daily deadlines and provide financial support to conduct investigations. In addition to obstacles to access official information, inadequate working conditions makes reporters too dependent on official leaks and other

interested parties to gather information. Frequently, the result are stories with flimsy evidence, undocumented conclusions, and bird's-eye views of deep-seated problems and complex webs of corruption.

In summary, the tensions of watchdog journalism are found in the linkages between news organizations with markets and governments, newsroom routines, and professional criteria determining news. While structural connections between the press and the state reduce the chances for scrutinizing official actions, conflicts between governments and news organizations increase opportunities for adversarial journalism. While concentrated media ownership discourages journalism from investigating corporate wrongdoing, it does not exclude the possibility that news organizations may probe corruption in other areas. While professional criteria push reporters to cover "big stories" about official wrongdoing, organizational routines drive reporters to cover event-centered news about corruption. Structural and organizations constraints do not completely push out watchdog journalism, but they narrow the potential topics and undermine the quality of reporting that holds power accountable

The press as agenda-setter and gate-keeper

Structural dynamics and professional biases also constrain the agenda-setting and gate-keeping roles of the press. As agenda-setter, the press should report on a variety of significant public problems that need attention from citizens and policymakers. As gatekeepers, journalists should facilitate dialogue among multiple perspectives by bringing out a range of views from individuals and organized groups. The press in Latin America is ill-equipped to give adequate and balanced attention to issues and opinions. It is predisposed to report on issues that are important to official sources and other individuals and institutions with fluid media access. It is biased to cover issues that are primarily the concern of well-off media audiences. It is unwilling to focus on issues that may antagonize powerful officials and major advertisers.

The press focuses on issues that are relevant to powerful newsmakers, conventional news sources, and urban and wealthier audiences.⁴⁰ It tends to ignore issues affecting citizens without media and political clout. For example, it fails to pay attention to health issues that mainly affect the young, the old, the poor, ethnic minorities, and rural populations.⁴¹ Environmental issues that affect urban populations are likely to get more press attention than issues affecting rural areas.⁴² Crime in wealthier neighborhoods draws more coverage, and often feeds "media panics" and "crime waves" that do not match actual incidence or social distribution.⁴³

The press does not only present a narrow range of issues, but it also fails to give balanced space to different perspectives. Several studies have concluded that political elites remain “primary definers” of the news, and that the news media neglects to provide adequate coverage of issues affecting disempowered citizens. In Chile, poor citizens are less frequently present in news coverage. When they get media attention, they are often portrayed as hapless victims or crime perpetrators.⁴⁴ In Colombia, coverage of the prolonged internal armed conflict has been dominated by official sources, mainly politicians and military officers. Voices proposing peaceful solutions have received substantially less attention. Poor and rural citizens, who disproportionately make the swelling numbers of people displaced by the conflict, are rarely given opportunities to present their views.⁴⁵ Although Brazilian journalism has increasingly offered more coverage on environmental issues, it tends to focus on official opinions and concerns over civic voices and local actions to address problems.⁴⁶

The institutional conditions of news production account for bias in agenda-setting and gatekeeping. Prevalent journalistic values and work conditions favor reporting on specific kinds of issues and perspectives. Reporting practices and rules reinforce the “agenda-setting” status of official sources and other powerful newsmakers. The reluctance of news organizations to assign adequate resources puts pressures on reporters to produce fast and low-cost news, instead of time-consuming news-gathering. Rushed to deliver content under tight deadlines, reporters typically resort to conventional sources who, expectedly, prioritize specific issues and perspectives. Consequently, a combination of shoddy reporting and editorial constraints produces superficial, inchoate, and incomplete coverage.

Because they lack political influence and newsmaking prestige, civic voices are at a disadvantage to influence news and public agendas. Admittedly, the rise of “civic advocacy journalism” in recent years suggests promising changes to enrich the range of issues and perspectives that are presented.⁴⁷ A growing number of civic associations and non-government organizations in the region have engaged in news production. From Brazil-based network *Agencia Nacional de Direitos da Infancia* to Argentina’s *Red de Periodismo Social*, a range of civic groups has aimed to change news coverage of a myriad of social issues in the mainstream press. Hoping to improve the quality of news coverage on social issues, they have used a variety of “sourcing” strategies such as the establishment of specialized news services, cultivating relations with reporters, staging news events, and producing stories for mass distribution.

The limitations of the press as agenda-setter and gatekeeper raise questions about suitable interventions to improve coverage of issues that are central to democratic governance. It is not obvious whether civic actors can effectively influence institutional practices that influence news content. Civic

voices are not only notoriously underrepresented in media ownership, but they are also consistently sidelined by journalistic routines that privilege top-down, official news. In societies with appalling social disparities and governance problems, the press remains hamstrung by narrow political and private interests.

These problems reflect the thinness of the connective tissues between the press and civic society. As long as the press prioritizes relations with the state and the market, it is hard to envision how news organizations would consistently offer critical and balanced information on issues that affect substantial segments of the population, particularly those who are already socially marginalized.

Latin America offers an interesting case of uneven advances in civic expression. Conditions for freedom of expression are considerably more open than in any other previous period in the modern political history of the region. Deliberation and criticism are hardly absent in the public sphere. There is no shortage of mobilized publics around a diverse set of issues. The effervescence of multiple forms of civic expression suggests dynamic national public spheres. The press, however, has failed to tap into civic society in ways that it could better serve a diversity of public interests. It has often cautiously followed, reacted, and/or simply ignored emerging demands as well as new political and social movements. Opportunities to scrutinize power and cover a wider set of public issues and perspectives are subordinated to covering political elites and not offending major economic interests.

Obstacles and options

To enhance the quality of press performance is necessary to promote media pluralism, increase accountability of government decisions affecting the press, and strengthen coverage of civic issues and opinions. The goal should be to reinforce the connective tissues between the press and the public sphere. Such changes would not happen without a perspective that prioritizes institution-strengthening and has substantive political will. Although some reforms could be accommodated within prevalent structures, achieving media pluralism and accountability are unimaginable without wresting influence power from government and private interests. Interventions need to be guided by assessments of obstacles for democratic journalism and lessons from past experiences of media reform in the region.

An institutionalist perspective should take precedent over views that reduce media pluralism to the impact of globalization and new technologies. Recently, globalization and technological innovations have animated hopeful views about the prospects for press and democracy. Although global movements for civic expression and technology-based forms of citizens' journalism (e.g. blogs, cell phones and SMS, electronic social networks) provide new opportunities for civic expression, it would be mistaken to

automatically consider them the bellwether of press democracy. One should not exaggerate their ability to chip away at calcified structures and practices in the Latin American press. Although cross-border civic movements contribute to raising attention about press issues, governments maintain considerable discretion over the dissemination of information and media policies. The use of new technologies remains highly unequal across social strata. While the Internet offers information that is not available in the old media, television and radio still attract the largest audiences. Different forms of citizen journalism remain peripheral in press systems dominated by state and commercial interests. What needs to be asked is whether globalization and new technologies effectively redress major institutional obstacles at the core of press systems.

As a conclusion, this section discusses three approaches to advance the contributions of the press to democratic governance in Latin America. I propose a combination of interventions to transform media structures, government accountability, and journalistic practices.

One set of interventions need to support the *diversification of media ownership* and actions for media reform. Here I propose some illustrative ideas. Support advocacy among key actors (government, business, civic society) to spearhead changes in legislation to reduce the influence of large corporations in press systems. Raise the visibility of media pluralism in global and regional, and discuss alternatives for media reform with governments and other relevant parties. For example, Peru's Veeduría Ciudadana (Citizens' Watchdog) and AMARC's Uruguay program played key roles in advocating for policy changes and conducting consultative meetings. Although the specifics of the 2004 broadcasting law were far from what the Veeduría had proposed, the group successfully mobilized public and private sectors and generated widespread debate about media policies. In Uruguay, AMARC had a protagonist role during the public debates and congressional process that resulted in the passing of the community broadcasting law in 2007. Another way to contribute to the diversification of media ownership is through strengthening the financial viability of "small" print, broadcasting, and web-based media that are not affiliated with governments or corporations, particularly in areas with weak economies and government manipulation of public funds. The Swiss Foundation Avina, for example, gives grants to community radio stations to develop media management skills (among other goals) to increase the prospects for their future sustainability. Multilateral and bilateral donors can support programs that offer economic incentives (e.g. microloans, grants, subsidies) and opportunities for strengthening media management competencies.⁴⁸ These programs, especially if governments are the recipients of funds and co-implementers, require transparency and civic participation to avoid favoritism and corruption.

A second set of actions should aim to *reduce discretionary control of the executive on decisions that affect press performance*. More transparency and public participation in the use of public resources may help to redress centralized power and media patronage. Some areas of intervention include management of official advertising, structure and control of public broadcasting, and decision-making around issues such as taxation, importation permits, and newsprint production. Organizations such as Argentina's Asociación por los Derechos Civiles have done a pioneering monitoring and publicizing the preferential allocation of public advertising by governments, the use of freedom of information laws, and other vital issues for democratic governance. It is also important to foster the sense that government information is a public resource rather than a private good. Shifting such mindset is tantamount to a major revolution. It demands ensuring the collection and preservation of public records, strengthening the capacity of government offices to respond to requests from citizens and journalists, and informing the population about the existence of laws. By the same token, the revocation of punitive legislation against journalists and the passing and enforcement of "access to information" laws are critical, too. Here the work of Mexico's Group Oaxaca stands out for it led the process that resulted in the approval of the federal "Freedom of Information" law in 2001.

A third area of intervention is *journalistic practice*. Two complementary strategies are recommended. One is to work with news organizations and journalistic associations. Certainly, there are no shortage of training programs that aim to promote a democratic press in Latin America. An impressive number of associations, universities, and donors regularly offer workshops that cover a range of reporting skills. Standard training programs, however, are incomplete to institutionalize civic voices in the press. Curricula that focus on teaching tools and competencies often miss the fact that training alone does not change journalistic practices. Without the interest of news organizations to modify the current system of incentives and expectations, capacity strengthening programs are unlikely to achieve substantial changes. Although they might be of interest to reporters, new skills are unlikely to bring significant differences as long as routines and cultures that affect performance remain unchanged. To put it differently, capacity strengthening is not about simply transmitting and acquiring skills. It is about reinforcing democratic institutions and distributive competencies across the public sphere to promote the use of journalistic competencies that favor civic perspectives.

Continuous support for professional associations is also important. Many associations (Peru's Instituto de Prensa y Sociedad, Argentina's Foro de Periodismo Argentino, Brazil's Observatorio da Imprensa) have played a key role in advocating for freedom of information laws, raising concerns about

anti-press violence, and offering spaces for reporters to discuss issues of common interest. A second strategy should aim to facilitate communication between journalists and civic groups. In Latin America, growing numbers of civic groups regularly produce and collect information and have expertise on a wide range of issues. Linking them to newsrooms may help to raise the visibility of civic interests, and address newsroom obstacles to produce quality, in-depth reporting. Simultaneously, it is important to strengthen the capacity of civic organizations to produce and distribute news through their own media and mainstream newsrooms. The Agencia Nacional de Derechos da Infancia (National Agency for Children's Rights) and the organizations that are part of its regional network, and Mexico's Comunicación e Información de la Mujer (Women's Communication and Information), for example, have successfully promoted linkages between mainstream civic society and journalism through acting as regular sources of providing information, holding specialized training, conducting monitoring of coverage on specific issues, and advocating for socially responsible reporting.

The implementation of different interventions confronts varying levels of difficulty. Changing power relations in favor of media pluralism, in principle, is likely to face more severe obstacles than offering training workshops. Also, opportunities may be different across countries and regions. From the commitment of government officials to media reform to the structure of press markets, various factors affect the opportunities and impact of interventions. Just as current structures and dynamics shape conditions for public expression, they, too, affect the prospects for local and global actions to catalyze changes.

Certainly, many suggested actions have already been implemented in Latin America. For decades, international donors and civic associations have supported countless initiatives in support of the press and democracy. Most efforts, however, have often worked in isolation. They lacked a common vision of media reform that maximizes contributions from different institutions and programs. The challenge is to bring together dispersed initiatives and institutions around basic objectives and actions. Only then, it would be possible to nurture and consolidate local social movements for media reform at both country and regional levels. Profound and long-lasting changes in the press require sustainable civic actions.

Bringing the press closer to mobilized publics will contribute to transferring a wide spectrum of civic demands into the policy-making arena. Throughout the region, the public sphere has an impressive stock of citizens' initiatives and democratic practices that are insufficiently presented and represented in the press. For the press to enhance democratic governance, it should tap into those experiences and

widen opportunities for deliberation and criticism. A more democratic public sphere is unthinkable as long as sharp disparities in access to the press persist.

Table 12.1: Press Freedom in Latin America

Country	Year					
	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
Argentina	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Bolivia	F	F	PF	PF	PF	PF
Brazil	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Chile	F	F	F	F	F	F
Colombia	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF	PF
Costa Rica	F	F	F	F	F	F
Cuba	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF
Dominican Republic	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Ecuador	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
El Salvador	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Guatemala	PF	PF	NF	PF	PF	PF
Haiti	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Mexico	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Nicaragua	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Panama	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Paraguay	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Peru	F	PF	PF	PF	PF	PF
Uruguay	F	F	F	F	F	F
Venezuela	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF	NF

Notes: F=Free, PF=Partly free, NF=Not free.

Source: Freedom House. Freedom of the Press: A Global Survey of Media Independence.
www.freedomhouse.org

Table 12.2: Threats to media pluralism

Country	Violence against the press ¹	Private media concentration ²	Media legislation on community and public media ³	Preferential allocation of official advertising ⁴
Argentina		+		+
Bolivia		+	+	+
Brazil	+	+	+	+
Chile		+		+
Colombia	+	+	+	+
Costa Rica				+
Cuba				
Dominican Rep		+		
Ecuador		+		
El Salvador		+		
Guatemala		+		
Haiti		+		
Honduras		+		
Mexico	+	+	+	
Nicaragua		+		
Panama		+		
Paraguay		+		
Peru		+	+	
Uruguay		+	+	
Venezuela		+		

Notes: Types of threats to media pluralism are operationalized as follows:

1. Ten or more deaths of journalists between 1992 and 2008.
2. A handful of companies control substantial holdings in one media industry (newspaper, magazine, radio, over-the-air television, cable television, satellite television).
3. Press and broadcasting laws passed during authoritarian regimes are still in force.
4. Cases of preferential assignment of official advertising have been recorded between 2000 and 2008.

Source: Committee to Protect Journalists.

Endnotes

¹ See Pippa Norris. 2005. 'Global political communication: Good governance, human developments and mass communication,' in Frank Esser and Barbara Pfetsch Eds., *Comparing Political Communication: Theories, Cases, and Challenges*. New York; Cambridge University Press.

² Jurgen Habermas. 1989. *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

³ Craig J. Calhoun 1992. *Habermas and the Public Sphere*. Cambridge: MIT Press.

⁴ Habermas developed this point largely in response to his critics, particularly Nancy Fraser's argument about the need to distinguish between "weak" and "strong" publics in the public sphere. See her contribution in Calhoun, *Habermas and the Public Sphere*.

⁵ On the liberal model, the locus classicus is Fredrick S. Siebert, Theodore Peterson, and Wilbur Schramm. 1956. *Four Theories of the Press*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press. For a critique, see John Nerone. 1995. *Last Rights: Revisiting Four Theories of the Press*. Illinois: University of Illinois Press. A comprehensive discussion on press models is found in Dennis McQuail. 2000. *Mass Communication Theory*. London: Sage.

⁶ For discussions on media policies and journalistic practices along the lines of public sphere principles, see Peter Dahlgren and Colin Sparks Eds. 1991. *Communication and Citizenship: Journalism and the Public Sphere in the New Media Age*. London: Sage; James Curran and, Jean Seaton. 2003. *Power Without Responsibility: The Press, Broadcasting, and New Media in Britain*. London: Routledge; Tanni Haas and Linda Steiner. 2001. 'Public journalism as a journalism of publics: Implications of the Habermas-Fraser debate for public journalism,' *Journalism*, 2(2):123-147; Jim McGuigan and Stuart Allan. 2006. 'Mediating politics: Jurgen Habermas and the public sphere,' in David Berry and John Theobald Eds., *Radical Mass Media Criticism: A Cultural Genealogy*. Montreal: Black Rose Books; and Nico Carpentier. 2007. 'Coping with the agoraphobia media professional: A typology of journalistic practices reinforcing democracy and participation,' in Bart Cammaerts and Nico Carpentier Eds. *Reclaiming the Media*. Bristol, UK: Intellect.

⁷ Among others, see Kari Karpinnen. 2006. 'Media diversity and the politics of criteria,' *Nordicom Review* 2: 53-68; Jan van Cuilenberg. 1999. 'On competition, access, and diversity in media, old and new,' *New Media and Society* 1(2): 183-207.

⁸ Denis McQuail. 1992. *Media Performance: Mass Communication and the Public Interest*. London: SAGE.

⁹ See James Curran and Michael Gurevitch Eds. 2001. *Mass Media and Society*. 3rd edition. London: Arnold; and John Keane. 1991. *The Media and Democracy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

¹⁰ Among others, see, Chappell Lawson and Sallie Hughes. 2005. 'Latin America's postauthoritarian media,' in Rachel May and Andrew Milton Eds., *(Un)civil societies: Human Rights and Democratic Transitions in Eastern Europe and Latin America*. Lanham: Lexington Books; Chappell Lawson. 2002. *Building the Fourth Estate: Democratization and the Rise of a Free Press in Mexico*. Berkeley: University of California Press; and Sallie Hughes. 2006. *Newsrooms in Conflict: Journalism and the Democratization of Mexico*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press.

¹¹ For a thorough discussion of this subject, see Leonardo Avritzer. 2002. *Democracy and the Public Space in Latin America*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.

¹² See Richard Feinberg, Carlos H. Waisman, and León Zamosc Eds. 2006. *Civil Society and Democracy in Latin America*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

¹³ See Silvio Waisbord. 2000. 'Media in South America: Between the rock of the state and the hard place of the market,' in James Curran and M. Park Eds., *De-Westernizing Media Studies*. London: Arnold.

¹⁴ Maria Teresa Herran y Javier Restrepo. 1995. *Etica para Periodistas*. Bogota: Tercer Mundo.

¹⁵ A 2001 study estimated that almost a quarter of broadcasting companies in Brazil are owned by politicians. Politicians were granted almost 78 percent of new licenses granted between 1999 and 2001. This reinforces existing patterns by which political families have a stronghold on both print and broadcast in the majority of Brazilian states. See Rogerio Christofolletti. 2003. 'Dez impasses para uma efetiva critica de midia no Brasil', paper presented at the meeting of INTERCOM, Belo Horizonte, September.

¹⁶ A substantial literature in the region has analyzed this issue. On Brazil, see Alcira Abreu. 2002. *A Modernização da Imprensa, 1970-2000*. Rio de Janeiro: Jorge Zahar.

¹⁷ Elizabeth Fox Ed. 1988. *The Struggle for Democracy*. London: Sage.

¹⁸ John Sinclair, 'The aging dynasties,' in Elizabeth Fox and Silvio Waisbord. 2002. *Latin Politics, Global Media*. Austin: University of Texas Press.

¹⁹ United Nations Development Programme. 2004. *Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Citizens' Democracy*. Buenos Aires: Aguilar, Altea, Taurus, Alfaguara.

²⁰ See Fox and Waisbord, *Latin Politics, Global Media*; Guillermo Mastrini Ed. 2005. *Mucho Ruido y Pocas Leyes*. Buenos Aires: La Crujía.

²¹ For example, see Carlos Monsiváis and Julio Scherer. 2003. *Tiempo de Saber. Prensa y Poder en México*. Mexico: Editorial Nuevo Siglo; Kris Kodrich. 2008. 'The Role of State Advertising in Latin American Newspapers: Was the Demise of Nicaragua's Barricada Newspaper Political Sabotage?,' *Bulletin of Latin American Research*. 27(1): 61-82; Maria O'Donnell. 2007. *Propaganda K: Una Maquinaria de Promoción con Dinero del Estado*. Buenos Aires: Planeta.

²² In a region with plenty of examples of government manipulation of the press, the Fujimori administration in Peru stands out for its blatant use of public funds and blackmailing to build a propaganda arsenal. See Catherine Conaghan. 2005. *Fujimori's Peru: Deception in the Public Sphere*. Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press; and John McMillan, and Pablo Zoido. 2004. 'How to Subvert Democracy: Montesinos in Peru,' *Journal of Economic Perspectives* 18 (4): 69-92.

²³ See Raul Trejo Delabre, 2006. 'Después de la Ley Televisa,' <http://raultrejo.tripod.com/Mediosensayos/RTDLeyTelevisaZocaloabril06.htm>

²⁴ See Elizabeth Fox and Silvio Waisbord Eds., *Latin Politics, Global Media*; Guillermo Sunkel and Esteban Geoffroy Eds. 2001. *Concentración Económica de los Medios de Comunicación*. Santiago: Lom; and Guillermo Mastrini and Martín Becerra Eds. 2006. *Periodistas y Magnates: Estructura y Concentración de las Industrias Culturales en América Latina*. Buenos Aires: Prometeo Libros.

²⁵ Rosalind Bresnahan. 2003. 'The Media and the Neoliberal transition in Chile,' *Latin American Perspectives* 30 (6): 39-68

²⁶ Ernesto Villanueva. 2003. *Derecho de acceso a la información pública en Latinoamérica*. Mexico: UNAM; and Juliet Gill and Sallie Hughes. 2005. 'Bureaucratic compliance with Mexico's new access to information law,' *Critical Studies in Mass Communication* 22 (2): 121-137.

²⁷ Fuenzalida, Valerio. 2000. *La Televisión Pública en América Latina. Reforma o Privatización*. Santiago de Chile: FCE.

²⁸ Rosalía Winocur, 2003. 'Media and participative strategies: The inclusion of private necessities in the public sphere.' *Television & New Media*, 4(1): 25-42.

²⁹ Certainly, many civic groups have also opposed Chavez's changes in press and media laws. See Marcelino Bisbal. 2006. 'Redescubrir el valor del periodismo en la Venezuela del presente.' *Contratexto*; Andres Cañizales and C. Correa. 2003. *Venezuela: Situación del Derecho a la Libertad de*

Expresión e Información. Caracas. Espacio Público; Eleazar Diaz Rangel and others. 2003. *Chávez y los Medios de Comunicación Social*. Caracas. Alfadil editores.

³⁰ Ronald Grebe. 2007. 'Evo Morales y los medios.' *Chasqui*.

<http://chasqui.comunica.org/content/view/552/142/>

³¹ Silvio Waisbord. 2007. "Democratic journalism and 'statelessness'," *Political Communication* 24: 115-129.

³² See Rosental Alves. 2005. 'From lapdog to watchdog: The role of the press in Latin America's democratization,' in Hugo de Burgh Ed., *Making Journalists*, 181-204. London: Routledge; and Silvio Waisbord. 2000. *Watchdog Journalism in South America*. New York: Columbia University Press. The discussion below largely draws from my book.

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³⁴ Juliet Gill. 2006. 'Muzzling the Watchdog: Changing Media Performance in Democratic Argentina,' Ph.D. dissertation, University of Miami; J. Brito. 2003. 'El león fuera de su jaula: la "primavera fiscalizadora" del periodismo chileno,' *Información Pública*, ust.cl.

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³⁶ For examples, see Waisbord, *Watchdog Journalism in South America*.

³⁷ See Fundación Konrad Adenauer y el Instituto Prensa y Sociedad. 2005. *Hábitos de trabajo del periodista latinoamericano*. Lima: Fundación Konrad Adenauer y el Instituto Prensa y Sociedad.

³⁸ I discuss this issue in Silvio Waisbord. 2006. 'In journalism we trust?,' in Katrin Voltmer Ed., *Mass Media and New Democracies*. London: Routledge.

³⁹ These concepts follow Iyengar's well-known distinction. See Shanto Iyengar. 1991. *Is Anyone Responsible?* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

⁴⁰ An overview is offered in Santiago Pedraglio. 2005. 'Agendas distantes: Los medios de comunicación y los partidos políticos en la Región Andina,' IDEA, *Democracia en la Región Andina, los telones de fondo*.

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⁴⁴ Soledad Larrain y Andrea Valenzuela. 2004. *Televisión y ciudadanía*. Santiago: Fucatel.

⁴⁵ There is an extensive literature in Spanish on this subject. See Liliana Gutiérrez Coba et al. 2007. 'La prensa como creadora de estereotipos sobre los reinsertados y el proceso de paz en Colombia,' *Palabra Clave*, 10: 2. Wendy Arenas and others. 2003. *El conflicto armado en las páginas de El Tiempo*. Bogota: El Tiempo.

⁴⁶ Fabiola de Oliveira. 1996. *Democracia, Meio Ambiente e Jornalismo no Brasil*. Sao Paulo: Edusp; Shirley Luft. 2005. *Jornalismo, Medio Ambiente e Amazonia: Os Desmatamentos nos Jornais*. São Paulo: Annablume.

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⁴⁸ See CIMA and NED. 2007. 'Toward Economic sustainability of the media in developing countries, June. Washington: Center for International Media Assistance.