

Presentation

Latin American Democracy at the Crossroads, the role of media and communication: Brazil and Chile as Case Study

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From 2021 to 2023, Latin America experienced a critical juncture for democracy as several countries grappled with significant challenges that tested the strength and resilience of their democratic institutions. While each country's situation varied, some common trends and issues emerged during this period. Many Latin American countries faced political instability, characterized by frequent leadership changes, government crises, and social unrest. Public dissatisfaction with corruption, economic inequality, and ineffective governance often fueled these challenges. Countries such as Peru, Ecuador, Cuba, and Chile witnessed large-scale protests demanding political and social reforms.

Some Latin American countries saw the rise of leaders with authoritarian tendencies or attempts to consolidate power. These leaders often employed populist rhetoric, polarized societies, weakened checks and balances, and limited the independence of key democratic institutions, such as the judiciary or the press. Examples include Venezuela, Nicaragua, and Jair Bolsonaro in Brazil during 2019-2022.

The region faced economic hardships aggravated by the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic led to a severe economic contraction, increased poverty rates, and exacerbated existing inequalities. The economic crisis strained governments' capacity to deliver essential services, leading to public discontent and a loss of confidence in democratic systems.

Corruption remained a persistent challenge in Latin America, eroding public trust in democratic institutions. High-profile corruption scandals implicated politicians and public officials, further undermining the legitimacy of democratic governance. Anti-corruption movements and demands for greater transparency gained momentum across the region, highlighting the need for more robust accountability mechanisms.

Several countries faced controversies surrounding their electoral processes, leading to questions about the integrity and fairness of elections. Accusations of fraud, voter suppression, and irregularities marred elections in Bolivia, Honduras, and Mexico. These incidents raised concerns about democratic backsliding and the erosion of electoral integrity.

However, civil society, grassroots movements, and alternative press were crucial in shaping the democratic landscape during this period. Activists, indigenous groups, women's rights organizations, and other social movements mobilized to demand greater political participation, social justice, and inclusive policies. These movements sought to address deep-rooted inequalities and secure the rights and representation of marginalized communities.

Despite the challenges, Latin America also witnessed positive developments during this time. Some countries, like Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, experienced peaceful political transitions, demonstrating the strength of democratic institutions. Additionally, regional and civil society organizations worked to promote democratic values, monitor elections, and address human rights concerns. The years 2021 to 2023 marked a period of significant challenges for democracy in Latin America. The region faced political instability, authoritarian tendencies, economic crises, corruption, and concerns about electoral processes. However, citizen activism and social movements also emerged as powerful forces for change, advocating for democratic reforms, social justice, and greater accountability. The future of democracy in Latin America remains uncertain, with ongoing struggles and the need for continued efforts to strengthen democratic institutions and address the underlying issues that threaten democratic governance.

This edition of the *Journal of Latin American Communication Research* (JLACR) deals with the complex relationship between media and communication and democracy in Latin America, concretely Brazil, and Chile. Rose Vidal and María de Jesús Rufino analyze the role of communication in the materialization of the attacks on democracy on January 8 in Brasília, its consequences, and the initiatives to combat disinformation in the country. This is followed by Gisela Castro and Adriana Lima de Oliveira's cartographic tracing to identify expressive intensiveness and political and existential territories that shape the January 8 episode in Brazil, highlighting language and discourse, sociotechnical assemblages, and the displacements of the moral grounding in the techno-mediatized public sphere to understand Brazil's neofascism surge and its performative-discursive strategies.

Following Paul Virilio's studies on space construction, Castells' assumptions about the advent of networks, and Yann Moulier-Boutang's studies on capitalism, Daniela Garrossini, Fátima Aparecida dos Santos, João Victor Alves Tonhá and Pedro Henrique Elias Guimarães investigates how social networks have transformed themselves from the political power of popular expression to algorithmic bubbles and the fabrication of fascism in Brazil and in manufacturing what the authors call the terrorists acts in Brazil January 8. For his part, Richard Santos analyzes the racially related issues around the terrorists who vandalized the buildings of the powers of the Brazilian State on January 8, 2023, in the country's capital, Brasilia, the class and race relations in the performance of the means of repression of the State, and still encourage the hypothesis that people from the countryside, middle-aged, white and from the middle class had and still have different treatment by security agencies when compared to citizens from the Minorized Majority.

Finally, Camila Delgado Troncoso, Stefanie Pacheco Pailahual, Paloma Carvajal Ulloa, Natalia Espinoza Soto, José Brito Morales, and Pablo Reyes Baier analyze the electoral bands derived from the first post-rebellion constitutional electoral process in Chile, seeking to focus on the counter-hegemonic communication strategies of social movements that were developed on multi-digital platforms, highlighting among them social networks such as Instagram. and Facebook. Authors briefly contextualize the electoral bands in Chile, framed in a media system of limited plurality, centralized and concentrated in large economic monopolies.

We appreciate your interest and text submissions. We trust you appreciate their scholarly contributions.