

Article

Pluralism of News and Social Plurality in the Colombian Local Media

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Abstract: Information on the management of local administrations and the actions of the political leaders who govern them is essential for citizens to exercise their political rights. It is therefore necessary for these administrations to provide quality information that the media can use as sources for their news stories. At the same time, these media outlets have to compare and report while taking into account the plurality of their audiences. However, in local settings, collusion exists between political power and media owners that restricts the plurality of news, favoring the dominant political interests and hiding the demands, interests and protagonism of other social actors. We study this problem in the Caribbean Region of Colombia. We analyze the information that the town halls of the main cities in the region provide to the media and how the largest print newspapers and main regional television news broadcasters report on local politics. We compare these news stories to establish whether there is a plurality of news reports. In addition, we analyze the key elements of the news items disseminated by private media outlets to establish whether they report a limited vision of reality: the topics covered, the protagonists referred to in headlines and news stories, and the sources against which the news and images are compared. The results reveal shortcomings that result in similar information between public information and private media content, thus limiting the plurality of news reports and the social protagonism of other social agents. Ultimately, this hinders quality journalism that satisfies the interests of citizens.

Keywords: local communication; political communication; local administration; town halls; Colombia; press offices; press releases; television; press news; local politics; information sources; social plurality; news plurality; journalism



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1. Introduction

Public administration press offices are sources of information for the entire media system. They are therefore essential as they enable citizens to be informed about the actions of elected political leaders, evaluate these actions and thus be able to participate politically. Similarly, it is a duty of leaders to provide complete information for the purposes of social and economic accountability, showing the different collectives' interests [1], using public media as an instrument at the service of the collective democratic project.

In this regard, the information that administrations provide the public via their various media outlets is as important as the information they provide the media, which should describe and interpret reality for a plural audience, namely one made up of people with different interests, perspectives, possibilities, expectations and characteristics for reasons of origin, education, gender, social position, age, etc. [2], a key issue in Colombia due to its multiethnic national composition [3]. At the same time, technological, economic, and social changes impact consumer habits and the media industry [4].

However, the plurality of information released by municipal administrations can be limited through the use of various control mechanisms or strategies. Occupation of the local political scene provides a position from which it is possible to orient information

about that administration using public resources so that private media outlets disseminate news that is convenient to the interests of those who hold power at any given moment [5]. Studying these strategies requires knowledge of both the structure of the media in order to determine the collusion that may occur between political power and media ownership, and journalistic routines, since although digital technologies offer enormous possibilities for quality journalism, they also facilitate the worst practices, such as the complete copying of press releases provided by administrations—in other words, publishing without comparing socially and politically relevant information. Parcu [6] warns that pluralism and information quality currently face two threats: the concentration and the spread of disinformation, which require responses in the form of public policies. Other reports indicate that to protect pluralism in a context of political polarization and media hybridization, the participation of both public administrations and other agents, such as professional and user associations or the media industry, is required [7].

We begin this study from Edward Gibson's [8] concept of "Subnational Authoritarianism", understood as a set of strategies established and used by local political elites, even in democratic systems, in order to have control over political actors in subnational territorial demarcations and influence or even power at the national level. Gibson [8] himself pointed out that one of the indispensable strategies for these leaders is the control of information published in the local media in order to communicate a perspective of reality that is in line with their interests. The practices that Gibson describes in the United States until the 1950s, or Durazo [9] in Mexico, exemplify the mutual dependence that exists between the political center and the periphery; as a result, these entities are permanently allied and continually support each other. Regarding subnational authoritarianism in Latin America, Gibson [10] points out that in many countries, there is a "juxtaposition regime" between national and local governments, a battlefield between political actors operating in different layers of the administration. E.g., in the case of Mexico, León Vázquez [11] points out that currently, there is a contrast between national democratic processes and subnational authoritarianisms that even affect journalists' safety. A similar scenario is seen in Colombia, where Barrios and Miller [12] indicate that journalists practice self-censorship due to the harassment they suffer from the judiciary branch and editorial pressures. However, the latter authors reveal that professionals use counterstrategies such as sharing sensitive news with other colleagues, supporting themselves through international funding or creating new media.

Behrend [13] qualifies the concept of Subnational Authoritarianism by pointing out that political, economic, and media domination by a group of families in a given region does not imply authoritarian behavior, attributing it to what he calls closed games. Later, this same author would refer to "illiberal structures and practices" through which democracy is obstructed in certain territories, although in the case of media outlets, it is recognized that these organizations generate fake news and even create a threatening environment [14].

Thus, the media agenda, which determines the themes of public debate [15], is set by these interests. Moreover, since people find out about public issues fundamentally through the media, the "framing" [16,17], that these configure predetermines the field of possible interpretations for news reports. The importance of the agenda-setting theory has not waned. Recent studies show how the relevance that the media give to an issue determines the audience's attention [18] and its perception even in international affairs in the current multiplatform and multimedia media context. However, it is always necessary to consider the audience's awareness of media's power [19]. Likewise, media framing is seen in studies on cybermedia in Colombia [20].

The control of local information begins with a lack of transparency. This is followed by the hiding of information about government practices [21], the poor quality of information provided by local public administrations [22], and the control of public media [23], where journalists work in the service of the current government above the interests of the citizens [24,25], and continues with the ownership of private media.

Although digital and online technologies have facilitated the appearance of new independent media outlets that affect the mediatic order, difficulties in accessing the Internet experienced by part of the population in areas such as the one we study here—a concept established as “institutionally generated network disadvantage” [26]—together with the prestige that traditional media continue to enjoy provide the latter a key role in the dissemination of news about local politics.

Added to the lack of credible public primary sources and the local community service are the precarious working conditions of journalists [27], which facilitates self-serving intervention. This interference is fed by plagiarism, i.e., the complete or partial re-production of the information distributed by companies and institutions, a phenomenon that has been studied from Australia [28] to the Spanish case analyzed by Jesús Martínez, who stresses that the press release, “despite having gone through two newsrooms (the agency’s and the media outlet’s), barely undergoes any alteration” [29] (p. 20). In addition to job insecurity, this lack of quality information is also favored by the urgent need to update content, especially in the digital press [30]. The consequences are misinformation and lack of rigor [31–33].

This set of circumstances means that the contents presented in the local media are “suggested by government actors to justify previously announced policies or decisions and the media therefore does not fulfil the social function of forming public opinion in these cases for the real democratization of the social and political processes of our societies” [34] (p. 63).

We start from this background to determine whether the diffusion of local information in the media, directed by the political interests of the dominant elites, affects both the plurality of information and that of contemporary social representations—that is to say, to what extent is the presence in the media of the women and men that make up the social body restricted, as the presence of certain protagonists is magnified at the expense of others.

We address this problem by examining the Colombian Caribbean Region, home of Barranquilla, Santa Marta, and Cartagena, the most important cities in the country. In this geographical area, we examine the information disseminated about these districts (municipalities with a special regime), which are the most important local administrations pre-sided over by mayors (a position achieved through direct election), by private media outlets. For this, the media news reports are compared with the press releases the town halls provided. In addition, the information about local politics published by the four print newspapers with the largest circulation and readership in the Colombian Caribbean and broadcast by the three newscasts of the regional channel Telecaribe are analyzed. With this, we determine whether citizens are able to access a real plurality of information or whether, in contrast, the media system provides the same or a similar explanation and representation of local society.

In the case of Colombia, the history of journalism is rooted in the family nature of the media and its connection with the political parties for which the press has served as a platform [35]. Recent research continues to show the existence of “illegal or legal actors [who] use undemocratic practices to co-opt democratic institutions and impede or restrict the exercise of citizens’ civil and political rights” [36]. Thus, the country is included among the “authoritarian social orders” [37], the “totalitarian contexts” [38], or the so-called “authoritarian territories” [39]. Additionally, as Mejía [40] has pointed out, in this context of tension between democracy and authoritarianism, the political culture of the Colombian society largely depends on the role played by the media.

Regarding elites and structures, Duncan [41] notes institutional differences in each region that suit the interests of elites, while González [42] studied how they act with greater autonomy in those regions where there is no strong presence of the State. Guzman and Rojano [43] state that the problem worsened with the political reform of 1986, specifically with the Acto Legislativo 1/1986 of 9 January [44], which established the popular election of mayors:

which exacerbated regional factionalism, a product of de-ideologization and the crisis of traditional bipartisanship, and exposed the strong partisan atomization in Colombia, to give way to an ascendant regional political class. And, secondly, that the connection between voters and political parties is based mainly on personalistic and patronized ties, and not on ideological or programmatic affinities with the parties [43]. (p. 52)

Valencia [45] describes the considerable alliance of local politicians with paramilitaries to maintain power at local and regional levels. Rangel, Borrero, and Ramírez [46], cited by Pino [47], also allude to the use of violence as a strategy for local and regional control, and Romero [48] states that the democratization of the country generated a reaction from sectors such as regional elites, the army and drug trafficking groups. It is also worth considering the work of Tamayo, Bonilla, and Escobar [49] on the exercise of the journalistic profession in the regions most affected by the armed conflict. The researchers collected testimonies on the problems related to freedom of expression which are the result of the conflict, corruption, political patronage, and the regional elites' dynamics.

With regard to media ownership, in the Colombian case, links are established with local economic and political power in both traditional newspapers and television channels, which generally belong to families of regional elites, studied by authors such as Deas [50], Gutiérrez and Ramírez [51], Espinosa [52], García [53], Algarín and García [54], Ocampo [55], Barros [56] or Ruiz [57], specifying that in the Caribbean Region, the most important media outlets belong to families linked in many cases to local politics [58].

2. Objectives and Methodology

The general objective was to determine whether the local and regional media (press and TV) of the Caribbean Region of Colombia produce information on local politics autonomously and independently or whether, in contrast, their news reports provide a restricted—in accordance with the interests of local administrations—uniform vision of the local sociopolitical reality, which also limits the social representation of citizens.

Previous research, such as that carried out by Muñoz [58], established the relationships that exist between media owners and those who occupy positions of power in local administrations. Therefore, we started from this knowledge to study to what extent this fact restricts the plurality of information in the region and to determine what strategies are used by interested agents to achieve this limitation.

As operational aims to achieve the general objective, we determined the following:

- Similarities and differences between the information provided by the media and the press releases issued by the town halls;
- What information the local print press provides about local politics in the Colombian Caribbean Region and the characteristics of this information;
- What information is broadcasted by regional television news programs relating to local politics in the Colombian Caribbean Region and the characteristics of this information.

To achieve these objectives, we carried out a content analysis of the press releases, the local news published on three local newspapers and local news broadcasted on three television newscasts. Then, we carried out a comparative analysis between the press releases issued by the town halls and news reports provided by newspapers and television newscasts included in our sample.

To create the analysis sheets, we used the method proposed by Amparo Moreno Sardà [59]—based in turn on the work of Jaques Kayser [60], since this model proposes observing whether the “news perspective” includes various social groups or whether it is only concerned with showing those who occupy the centers of power and the settings in which they carry out their activities. With this method, we can answer five fundamental questions: who focuses, on whom, on what actions, in which scenarios, and using which sources. The answers to these questions allow us to determine which protagonists feature in the news and therefore who is excluded.

Therefore, four analysis sheets were created. The first analyzed the press releases issued by the town halls on their web pages or via email. The second analyzed the information in the local news section of three local newspapers. The third analyzed the information broadcasted by three local television newscasts. The fourth compared the press releases issued by the town halls with the information published on the three local newspapers, and the information broadcasted by the three local television newscasts.

The first three analysis sheets had the following categories: headline protagonist; content protagonist, considered as text, photo, and video; informative subjects; and the presence or absence of sources.

The first two categories, headline protagonist and content protagonist, had the following variables:

- Mayors: corresponding to the first authorities of the district;
- Secretaries: corresponding to one or more of the secretaries that make up the municipal cabinet;
- Officials: corresponding to public officials of the administration other than the cabinet secretaries or public officials that do not belong to the local administration;
- Other government bodies: corresponding to other government agencies different from the town hall;
- District: corresponding to the town hall;
- Citizens: corresponding to any member or members of the citizenry;
- Non-human: corresponding to an object or institution as protagonist, such as buildings, construction work, or any other inanimate subject;
- No protagonist: corresponding to the absence of a protagonist;

The informative subjects had the following variables:

- Announcement of district actions: referring to information related to measures taken by the local administration;
- Financing of works: referring to the funding of public works;
- Inauguration and/or handing over of works: referring to information related to the delivery of a work executed by the local administration;
- City propaganda: referring to information that speaks of the improvements within the city product of the local administration's management;
- Political socialization: referring to information that comes from the administration, with the goal to publicize a policy;
- Calls on citizens: referring to information that summons the citizenry to participate in some service or benefit;
- Citizen participation: referring to information in which citizenry participation is made visible one way or another;
- Accountability: referring to information in which the mayor's office presents to its citizenry how the management is going in a certain area;
- Investigation into the district: referring to information about oversight on the local administration's management;
- No subject: referring to information without a clear subject.

The fourth analysis sheet was used to identify similarities between the town halls' press releases and the information published by the three newspapers and broadcasted by the three television newscasts. This template had three categories:

- Similarities between the headlines;
- Similarities between the sources;
- Similarities between the content (text, photo and video).

Within each of these categories, three degrees of similitude were established:

- Identic: corresponding to when the information between the press releases and the newspaper or newscasts was identic;

- Similar: corresponding to when parts of the information published by the newspapers or broadcasted by the television newscasts were similar or identical to the information in the press releases;
- Different: corresponding to when there were no similarities between the press releases and the information published by the newspapers or broadcasted by the newscasts.

Two 15-day analysis periods from the same year were selected: 1–15 February 2018 and 1–15 August 2018.

As a result, two hundred and fifteen press releases from the town halls of Barranquilla, Santa Marta, and Cartagena were analyzed (Table 1). Only the press releases of Barranquilla's town hall appeared on its website. As the websites of Santa Marta and Cartagena did not publish them within the analyzed period, it was necessary to apply to the journalists' database for the press releases to be sent by email.

Table 1. Number of press releases per town hall (Source: Authors).

Town Halls	Number of Press Releases
Barranquilla	38
Cartagena	97
Santa Marta	80
Total	215

The newspapers analyzed were El Heraldo, La Libertad, Hoy Magdalena, and El Universal (Table 2), which are the most widely circulating newspapers in the Caribbean Region. In total, 238 news stories that reported on local administrations in the cities of Barranquilla, Santa Marta, and Cartagena were reviewed. In general, these reports were published in the Local and Politics sections, although they also appeared to a lesser extent in other sections such as the Economy and General sections. Cartagena's El Universal newspaper published the greatest number of news reports on local government, while El Heraldo published the fewest.

Table 2. Number of news items per newspaper (Source: Authors).

Newspaper	Number of News Items Analyzed
El Heraldo	46
La Libertad	58
El Universal	74
Hoy Magdalena	60
Total	238

Regarding television newscasts, the three broadcasted by the regional channel Telecaribe were analyzed: Televista, Las Noticias, and CV Noticias. As can be seen in Table 3, each newscast is produced by a different production company. Ninety news items referring to the local administrations of the three cities studied were analyzed. CV Noticias broadcasted the greatest number of news items, while Las Noticias broadcasted the fewest, with a very considerable difference between them. It should also be noted that 81% of the news items in the TV newscasts referred to Barranquilla's town hall, while 10% referred to Cartagena's town hall and 9% to Santa Marta's town hall.

Table 3. Number of news items per newscast (Source: Authors).

Newscast	Number of News Items Analyzed
CV Noticias	57
Televista	23
Las Noticias	10
Total	90

3. Results

3.1. Similarities and Differences between the Information Provided by the Media and the Press Releases Issued by the Town Halls

We compared the content of the town halls' press releases and the media news items in the headlines and text and also compared the sources cited. For this, we established three variables:

- Identical (I), when the information reported by the media outlet exactly reproduces the town hall's press release, including those cases in which extra text is included to fill the space dedicated to that news item;
- Similar (S), when the information is that included in the press release but has not been copied in its entirety or some modification has been made;
- Different (D), when the information is based on the information in the press release but has been completely reworked by the media outlet.

Recall that 215 press releases were issued by the three municipalities during the period studied. These press releases were used by the media to compile 88 news items in total, more frequently in the press than in the news. El Universal used them the most, employing 25 releases for a total of 74 published news items (33.8%); however, Televista used them at a greater frequency as a source for its information, since it made use of these 9 times out of a total of 23 news items, representing 39.1%.

Therefore, the press releases issued by the town halls are not the only sources for media outlets to report on local politics, nor do they represent an extraordinarily high percentage. However, as can be seen in Table 4, when the media outlets do use them, the headlines and especially the texts used in these releases are replicated exactly or are very similar, and only in a low percentage of occasions do they compare the sources of information, which on 51 occasions were identical (58%).

Table 4. Comparison of town hall press releases and press and TV news items (Source: Authors).

Media Outlet and no. of News Items	Headline			Text			Sources		
	I	S	D	I	S	D	I	S	D
El Heraldo (46)	1	3	7	0	9	2	9	0	2
La Libertad (58)	8	3	4	14	0	1	14	1	0
El Universal (74)	1	11	13	4	13	8	9	10	6
Hoy Magdalena (60)	4	5	6	8	5	2	7	7	1
CV Noticias (57)	2	1	8	0	6	5	7	0	4
Televista (23)	0	5	4	0	6	3	3	4	2
Las Noticias (10)	0	1	1	0	0	2	2	0	0
Total (A/V)	16	29	43	26	39	23	51	22	15

3.2. Analysis of the News Items Reported by the Media

The news reports appeared with a headline and lead on the front pages of the newspapers analyzed 52.5% of the time (125 news items out of a total of 238), and of the 90 TV newscasts studied, 44% appeared in the headlines. These percentages indicate that these media outlets attach great importance to news about local administrations, giving them preferential visibility in many cases.

Regarding the topics addressed in the press headlines (Table 5), on 64% of occasions, they related to the management of the local administration, including references to the good management of the local government. The percentage of news items related to "Participation" and "Calls on citizens" (17.3%) or "Accountability" (9.2%) is very low, showing little intention to call on citizens so that they can play a politically participatory role. It is significant that 22 news items (9.2%) were observed with headlines referring to ongoing investigations into the districts.

Table 5. Headline subject (Source: Authors).

	Press		TV	
	Total A/V	Total %	Total A/V	Total %
Announcement of district actions	63	26.5	52	57.8
Financing of works	12	5.0	1	1.1
Inauguration and/or handing over of works	29	12.2	12	13.3
City propaganda	19	8.0	7	7.8
Political socialization	29	12.3	6	6.7
Calls on citizens	5	2.1	0	0
Citizen participation	36	15.1	2	2.2
Accountability	22	9.2	5	5.6
Investigation into the district	22	9.2	5	5.6
No subject	1	0.4	0	0
Total	238	100	90	100%

On the other hand, 86.7% of TV newscast headlines (Table 5) were related to local administration management. Very few headlines related to “Calls” and “Citizen Participation”, “Accountability” or “Investigation into the district”, representing, therefore, a very low percentage.

The second aspect analyzed were the protagonists of the headlines and the main bodies of the news stories (Table 6). In the press, the most frequent headline protagonist was “Non-human” (42%), i.e., spaces, buildings, and other inanimate objects. The subject matter “District” appeared on another 15.6% of occasions, while “Mayors”, “Secretaries” (heads of the municipal areas), “Functionaries”, and “Other levels of government” appeared on 24.3% of occasions and “Citizens” only on 17.2%. However, in the body of the news items, the main protagonists were elected officials or functionaries (69.3%), while “Non-human” topics accounted for 8.8% of the news items, “District” 9.7%, and “Citizens” 12.2%, an even lower percentage than in the headlines.

Table 6. Protagonists of the headlines and news items (Source: Authors).

	Press				TV			
	Headline Protagonist		News Protagonist		Headline Protagonist		News Protagonist	
	Total A/V	%	Total A/V	%	Total A/V	%	Total A/V	%
Mayors	25	10.5	61	25.6	2	2.2	11	12.3
Secretaries	6	2.5	50	21.0	10	11.1	29	32.2
Officials	6	2.5	25	10.5	3	3.3	14	15.6
Other Government bodies	21	8.8	29	12.2	6	6.7	3	3.3
District	37	15.6	23	9.7	11	12.3	3	3.3
Citizens	41	17.2	29	12.2	6	6.7	10	11.1
Non-human	100	42.0	21	8.8	52	57.7	20	22.2
No protagonist	2	0.85	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	238	100	238	100	90	100	90	100

Regarding TV newscasts, while the percentages are somewhat different compared to the press, the order according to the percentage weight of protagonists is the same: on 57.7% of occasions, “Non-human” was the headline protagonist (plus 12.3% “District”, taking the total to 70%), while on 23.3% of occasions, it was a local administration functionary, the town hall itself or some entity of the national government. “Citizens” accounted for just 6.7%, a very low percentage when compared to the other variables. With regard to the content of the news stories, the order was also the same as in the press: the protagonists with the greatest presence were town hall representatives, which amounted to 63.4%, while “Non-human” accounted for 22.2% (25.5% when including the variable “District”)

compared to the variable “Citizens”, which accounted for 11.1%, a comparatively low percentage.

Regarding the presence of sources (Table 7) in the press, 10.1% of the news items made no reference to any source. With regard to the primary source, in 73.1% of cases, it was a politician, official or figure of an official shade, while citizens’ voices were the main sources in only 16.8% of cases. In total, 50.8% of the contents failed to cite a second source, while in 32.8% of news items, the second source was the mayor, a cabinet secretary or another politician or official, compared to only 16% of news items in which citizens were the second source.

Table 7. Sources 1 and 2 (Source: Authors).

	Press				TV			
	Source 1		Source 2		Source 1		Source 2	
	Total A/V	%	Total A/V	%	Total A/V	%	Total A/V	%
Mayor	54	22.7	16	6.7	11	12.2	7	7.8
Secretaries	58	24.4	18	7.6	31	34.4	28	31.1
Officials	62	26.0	44	18.5	25	27.8	22	24.4
Citizens	40	16.8	38	16.0	11	12.2	6	6.7
District or other entity	0	0	1	0	0	0	4	4.4
No source	24	10.1	121	50.8	12	13.3	23	25.6
Total	238	100	238	100	90	100%	90	100%

Similar observations were made in TV news bulletins; the observation that 13.3% of news items failed to refer to a source indicates that journalists continue to produce and disseminate without citing sources, a key factor in journalistic practice. Added to this is the fact that 74.4% of primary sources were local administration officials, while only 12.2% were citizens. A total of 25.6% of the news stories analyzed failed to cite a second source, while in 63.3%, the second source consulted was a local administration official, and only 6.7% corresponded to citizens.

Regarding images in the press (Table 8), the protagonist with the greatest presence in the first image was “Non-human” (28.6%), and the various categories of politicians and officials added together reached 34.4%, while citizens appeared in 27.3% of the images. Regarding the second image, 65.5% of news stories did not have one, while in the remaining stories, 7.1% featured “Non-human” protagonists, 17.1% featured politicians or officials, and only 10.5% featured citizens.

Table 8. Images 1 and 2 in the press (Source: Authors).

	Image 1		Image 2	
	Total A/V	%	Total A/V	%
Mayors	32	13.4	16	6.7
Secretaries	11	4.6	9	3.8
Officials	39	16.4	15	6.3
Citizens	65	27.3	25	10.5
Non-human	68	28.6	17	7.1
No image	23	9.7	156	65.5
Total	238	100	238	100

Regarding the protagonists of the TV news bulletins (Table 9), 57.8% of the bulletins featured mainly members of the administration, compared to 15.6% that featured “Non-human” protagonists and 26.7% that featured citizens.

Table 9. Protagonist of TV images (Source: Authors).

	Total A/V	%
Mayors	10	11.1
Secretaries	24	26.7
Officials	18	20.0
Citizens	24	26.7
Non-human	14	15.6
Total	90	100%

4. Conclusions

The full or partial copying of press releases issued by town halls is always a bad practice, as it limits the plurality of information to that of the perspective outlined by the government press offices. Local media outlets must monitor the actions of local governments so that citizens have at their disposal evaluation tools that allow them to make politically responsible decisions within the framework of democracy. In the case we studied here, we see how this malpractice conditions the headlines that are published; texts in particular are reproduced as well as the sources cited, revealing that information is not compared and that the official version is accepted as reliable, a version that reaches citizens through formally independent means but which in the end provides a uniform picture of the political reality. There is no journalism if journalists fail to create their own version based on dialogue between official sources and other voices that balance the news stories consumed by the audience.

However, it is necessary to highlight that news about town halls featured frequently among the news items, indicating that they are stories considered relevant events of the day and significant for the audience, and which the media outlet editor wants to bring to the attention of the public. For this reason, they must be treated with the utmost care and professionalism, a fact that, as we have observed, does not always occur.

We also observed that most of the information disseminated by the media does not stem from press releases issued by town halls. The analysis we carried out allows us to determine whether, considering this fact, the media really provide a plural vision of social reality or whether, in contrast, this vision is limited to the interests of local governments.

We verified that the headlines of the analyzed newspapers make significant reference to the governance and management of local administrations, which is even higher in the case of television news. At the same time, we observed a very notable lack of diverse sources in the news stories analyzed. Most of them were based on a single institutional source, and more than half of the news items did not cite a second source or if they did, for the most part, it corresponded to the same field of actors. This indicates that there is a lack of a multiplicity of voices that would allow audiences to compare local administrations' explanation of reality with other social, political, or economic actors that may express other points of view, different interests, or express criticism. The absence of a multiplicity of voices in journalistic reports means that citizens cannot put together a broader picture of what is happening in terms of local problems that affect them. Rather than presenting a plurality of information, the media act as a sounding board for the governments' intentions, forgetting the role they must play as tools of control or supervision of leaders, forming a framework that, as Castells [61] states, is generated as a multilevel process that begins with negotiations between politicians and the media before the information reaches audiences.

With regard to the protagonists of news stories, we see that non-human protagonists clearly predominate in the headlines. This dehumanization of the news is not new, since it was formulated by Amparo Moreno [59]. However, it is still entrenched in journalistic practices. In second place are institutional protagonists, who wholly predominate in news story texts, indicating a very notable absence of the plurality of people who make up local society. Journalism must report on the reality that people experience, rather than being at the service of politicians or leaders [62]. This lack of news stories that focus on citizens,

together with the scarcity of multiple sources, impoverishes news reports and distances them from their social function.

The last elements analyzed were the images. Once again, we observed a very significant presence of non-human protagonists and a very low presence of citizens in contrast to political and official actors.

Therefore, we have verified that the main media outlets for the citizens of the Caribbean Region, considering the press and television, provided limited information on reality that is more in line with the interests of institutional leaders than those of citizens, and that they are far from providing a plural social representation, as they neither provide a panorama of multiple visions found in the territory nor even represent them through the images they disseminate. While in some respects, there are certain differences between the results obtained in the analyses of the press and television, or between certain media outlets, none are important enough to alter these conclusions.

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