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**COMUNICAR JOURNAL**

**Thematic Issue  
CALL FOR PAPERS**

# **The Media Sphere Controversies in Public Life**

**La esfera mediática. Controversias en la vida pública**

## **Editors of the Thematic issue**

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## **Scope**

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Modern democracies require a public sphere, always mediated: through media the different groups build their identities and promote their interests and points of view around public affairs. Public opinion, as a "thematic structure", is formed by those issues that become relevant as "public problems" that affect something common and seek solutions. It is essential to understand how certain issues become relevant in the public sphere; What processes allow them to acquire a relevant form of communication in that field, to achieve media visibility and to access various audiences; How they manage to create or participate in a controversy that affects political decision-makers. Without public issues and controversies that translate the conflicting positions, there is no public sphere (there is no open space to a plurality of perspectives, indispensable for democracy, argues Arendt).

Media and journalists used to function as gatekeepers, giving access to certain issues and denying them to others in the public sphere. But the emergence of the Internet opens the possibility of disputing the dominant position to traditional media, and a new public sphere emerges, more open to a diversity of voices and issues. The extended sphere, diversified and shifted by current uses of digital media, appears as a discursive-polemical space in which actors, sub-spheres and perspectives

are often involved in a conflict whose ability to create spaces for discussion between different visions and search for points of agreement is criticized

In a moment of transition in the media ecosystem and in journalism, we are interested in investigating how the actors, from the most powerful to the weakest, use various resources and technologies to promote their interests and visions; How the media and digital environments intervene in the public definition of issues, and in the selection and characterization of perspectives relevant to their discussion; How ideas, representations, projects between different spaces and media evolve and circulate; How they influence the translation between different visions, the formation and development of controversies and the search for solutions and agreements.

## Descriptors

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- Classical public sphere and new public sphere. Concepts of diversity, conflict and participation of stakeholders in public problems.
- Communicative and discursive conditions and practices that make common problems reach the status of "public problems" and prevent them.
- Relations between the official public sphere and other communicative spaces (digital, face-to-face). The formation of collective actors and interested publics as key factors in the emergence and evolution of issues.
- Incidence of spaces, media, discursive genres and communicative practices in the development of disputes in the mediated sphere.
- Journalism and public controversies: bias, partiality, and tensions in journalistic values.
- Semiotic perspectives in the follow-up and analysis of issues and controversies.
- Dynamics of power, hegemony and contestation in public affairs discourses. Dominant / marginalized / ignored / emerging representations and perspectives.
- Ethnographic perspectives on the public sphere. The ethnography of conflict.
- The ethnography of journalism at a time of transformation and the follow-up of issues and controversies.
- Analysis of public controversies: Actors, objects, frames of meaning, communication practices, proposals for approximation, confrontation and conclusion.

## Questions

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- The current public sphere requires a pragmatic perspective that observes the processes of public communication in its making, and which considers as central the issues of mediation and mediatization, which imply the impossibility of transparency and "non-distortion" of public communication processes. How a space of communication between publics and representatives that accommodates the conflict, disagreement and controversy between different interests and perspectives on public affairs is constructed or is prevented?
- Taking the issue as an object of observation allows us to address the problem of the public sphere based on certain practices central to its configuration. How what matters to the citizens arouse and becomes, or not, as a public issue? What conditions, practices and transformations allow a given problem to acquire public problem status?
- Issues are occasions for the meeting of different interests in the form of disagreements and controversies. What problems does encounter and communication between different interests and perspectives entail? How are the various visions of common problems translated and discussed? How are they formed and evolved and how disputes are blocked or blocked? Do these controversies affect the definition of the common and political decisions? If so, how do they do it?

- Interactive digital media are part of everyday life for many people. They are not "outside" social life, exerting an influence on it, but within it, in an environment saturated by media in which the dynamics of broadcasting and reception have changed. How technologies are used by the actors interested in an issue? What practices and uses of these resources allow them to acquire information, to disseminate it, to carry out activities of convocation, coordination, organization, search for agreements, negotiation, etc.?
- However, in the current media landscape, the most widespread, conventional and digital journalistic media, and in particular television, continue to be fundamental because it constitutes the "foreground" of the public sphere. How do they contribute to the public definition of issues? What resources and practices allow them to associate issues with particular repertoires of ideas, images and affections? In what way do they participate in political conflict and debate for the definition of reality and common interest?
- In the communicative mediation between the interests of the citizens and the public sphere, discourses, versions and (almost) narratives on the issues that the media and the interested parties elaborate are fundamental. How do these resources identify objects of value, assign and figurativize roles, distribute positive and negative affects among the actors? Do they present to the audience the cognitive, aesthetic, affective-evaluative dimensions of their view of the issue? Do you propose to identify yourself with a project for the future?

## About the Thematic Editors

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