Bridging the Divide between the Press and Civic Society

Civic Media Advocacy as "Media Movement" in Latin America

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Abstract

The gap between the press and civic society has been a paramount concern for media research on Latin America. Press systems in the region have been historically dominated by states and markets. During the past decades, two "media movements" have emerged to strengthen the linkages between the press and civic society: one set of efforts have promoted reforms in media policies, and the other one developed alternative media independently from governments and markets. This chapter examines the rise of "civic media advocacy" as a third "media movement" in the region. Civic media advocacy aims to change news coverage of civic and social problems in the mainstream press. The analysis examines its strategies and political underpinnings and discusses its achievements and limitations. The experience of civic media advocacy in contemporary Latin America offers insights into whether and how civic society can effectively transform journalism.

Keywords: civic society, media advocacy, journalism, Latin America, press, democracy

Introduction

The press maintains linkages with three external fields: states, markets and civic society. "Strong" and "weak" linkages are shaped by structural relations as well as newsmaking practices. Structural factors such as ownership, financing, and legislation determine the connections between news organizations with states, business, and civic actors. The processes of news production and consumption involving newsrooms, sources, and audiences also affect the intensity of the relations between the press and external fields.

A central concern of critical studies in media and journalism is that democracy suffers when the linkages between the press and civic society are weak (Curran 2002; Dahlgren 2008). For the press effectively functions as platform for the expression of citizens' interests, it needs to cultivate and maintain strong ties to civic society. This is a fundamental condition for the press to nurture citizenship, cover multiple perspectives, report issues that affect a wide diversity of publics, and facilitate civic dialogue and citizens' participation. In contemporary democracies, however, those goals are compromised as states and markets exert stronger influence than civic society on the press.

Strong structural and institutional linkages with states and markets negatively influence the press. Those relations vary across countries and political regimes. At a structural level, states influence the press through ownership, arbitrary policies that reward loyal coverage, punitive laws, and discretionary allocation of public resources. Markets wield influence through the power of media owners, corporate expectations about profitability of the press, the weight of private advertising in press economies, and the socio-economic biases of news audiences. Also, *quid pro quo* relations between states and market forces further consolidate the power of official and business over the press. At an institutional level, states and large business typically overshadow civic actors in the production and distribution of information. Official news management ensures that government newsmakers and sources are dominant. The public relations machinery of large corporations exerts significant power in newsmaking. Routine practices and the professional norms of journalism reinforce the power of official sources and newsmakers.

Thus, the encroachment of states and markets poses major obstacles for the existence of plural and diversified press. Strengthening the presence of civic issues and voices in the news is a crucial challenge for democracy.

The Divide between the Press and Civic Society in Latin America

The gap between the press and civic society has been a paramount concern for media research on Latin America. Press systems in the region have been historically under constant and uncontrolled influence from states and markets (Waisbord 2000). For the print press, the state has historically been a major economic and political actor. State advertising has remained a major financial source for the press at large. This situation remains unchanged until today as governments retain substantial power over press economies and control key decisions affecting media business. Collusion between governments and the media has been a dominant characteristic of press systems in the region (Hughes and Lawson 2005). Likewise, the market has wielded substantial influence on the news media. While commercial success, measured in advertising revenues and audience ratings, has been an overriding concern for broadcasting systems, public broadcasting has been historically weak. Likewise, market goals have been the main driver of the mainstream print media.

Given structural relations with states and markets, the press in the region has been is ill-equipped to give adequate and balanced attention to a wide range of issues and perspectives. 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 interesting for well-off, urban audiences and give minimal, sporadic attention to issues that primarily affect resource-poor populations. Matters related to social development such as poverty, hunger, malnutrition, health, and education receive little attention (Alfaro 2008). The press focuses on issues that are relevant to powerful newsmakers, conventional news sources, and urban and wealthier audiences. It has been extremely cautious to report on issues that may antagonize officials and major advertisers (Pedraglio 2005; Gonzaga Matta 2008).

This situation has historically prompted two set of responses from civic society that were crystallized in "media movements". Like any social movement (Diani and Bison 2004), media movements are networks of citizens and associations waging political

conflict to achieve social transformations, particularly in relation to the press and the media in general. They aim to promote changes in the media through a variety of collective actions, including advocacy, education, mobilization, protest, campaigns and other actions.

One "media movement" has tried to bridge the press-civic society gap through promoting policy reforms in media systems. The goal has been to strengthen the presence of civic voices and curb the influence of governments and large business. "Policy reform" movements have undergone a stop-and-go evolution, largely determined by the region's long history of authoritarianism (Fox and Waisbord 2002). The consolidation of democracy since the 1980s has opened up new possibilities for policy and legal reforms. There have been various efforts at the national level to make the press, and media systems in general, more responsive to civic voices. Just to mention a few examples from the past decade: Initiatives to pass laws promoting access to public information and derogate draconian legislation in Argentina, Peru and Mexico (Gill and Hughes 2005), and civic-led debates on media reform during congressional debates of media policies in Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Uruguay (Alfaro 2005) are evidence of ongoing efforts to strengthen civic interests. Such impulses are particularly commendable considering the political sensitivities around media reform. Driven by the fear of alienating large media owners, civilian administrations have typically tiptoed around the issue of media reform or endorsed proposals that benefitted large media owners. After more than two decades of uninterrupted democracy across the region, media democratization is still pending.

A second "media movement" has aimed to develop citizens' media as an alternative to channels influenced by governments and business. Latin America has a long and rich tradition of "alternative" media that repudiated the influence of both states and markets. Rather than pushing for policy changes, "alternative media" movements have focused on developing and sustaining citizens' means of expression. Alternative media have often been integral to civic mobilization around a wide range of issues (e.g. miners' rights, environmental issues, women's rights) that used technological innovations (from early radio to hand-held video to the Internet) and exploited legal loopholes to set up community-based forms of expression (Huesca and Dervin 2006; Rodriguez 2001).

In this chapter my interest is to discuss civic media advocacy (CMA) as a third "media movement" to strengthen the connections between the press and civic society in Latin America. CMA refers to actions of civic groups to influence news coverage of social issues in the mainstream press. Since the consolidation of liberal democracy in the region in the past decades, numerous civic associations have been engaged in issue advocacy by promoting increased quality of the coverage of civic issues throughout the region. Examples include associations that promote reporting of children's issues (e.g. Brazil-based *Agência Notícias de Direitos da Infância*), women's issues (e.g. Argentina's PAR network, Mexico's *Comunicación e Información de la Mujer*), HIV/AIDS (e.g. Brazil's Agencia AIDS), environment (e.g. *Red de Comunicación Ambiental de América Latina y el Caribe*) and social issues in general (Argentina's *Red de Periodismo Social*, Ecuador's *Agencia Latinoamericana de Información*). A new form of civic mobilization in the history of media politics in the region, the work of these organizations has important implications for media democracy.

The emergence of CMA in Latin America offers an opportunity to examine key questions in media and journalism studies: Can civic society change the press? What are the

merits of CMA to make journalism more responsive to civic interests and demands? In this article, I review the strategies and political underpinnings of CMA based on interviews with reporters and members of advocacy groups, and discuss its achievements and limitations. The first section focuses on the reasons for the invisibility and misrepresentation of social issues in the mainstream press. The second section examines the strategies of civic groups to improve news coverage of social problems. The last section considers the implications of civic media advocacy for media democratization. My argument is that CMA has made significant progress to expand the range of issues and perspectives. Its contributions, however, are limited not only by press systems that remain firmly oriented towards states and markets. They are also constrained by journalistic cultures and newsmaking dynamics that continue to tilt the press in favor of official sources and "hard" stories.

The Problems of News Coverage of Civic Issues

The rise of CMA needs to be situated in the context of the mobilization of civic society in post-authoritarian contexts in Latin America. Since the fall of authoritarian regimes during the 1980s, the activation of civic society has been a distinctive feature of contemporary democracies in the region. The mobilization of a wide range of human rights, indigenous, women's, youth, and environmental groups, and the emergence of novel forms of citizens' participation in municipal administration suggest the vitality of civic society (Brysk 2000; Eckstein 1989; Escobar and Alvarez 1992; Yashar 2005). The press, however, has largely lagged behind the actions of civic groups in terms of identifying problems and actions. It has not adequately reflected the richness of participative experiences and demands.

CMA aims to address this gap by bringing civic issues and voices into the mainstream press. It is premised on the realization that the mainstream media play a central role in the "politics of recognition" (Fraser 1997) and the construction of public problems (Hilgartner & Bosk, 1988) in an age of "mediated" politics. Just as political parties and politicians have realized the centrality of mediated politics in the past decades in Latin America (Skidmore 1993), civic groups have also realized the need to be strategic about news coverage. News coverage affects the prospects for social and political change. Invisibility and misrepresentation in the media undermine overall efforts to promote public awareness and policies.

Studies have documented that the press rarely covers civic issues and offers narrow perspectives, particularly on matters affecting socially excluded populations. First, social problems that affect the poor are typically absent in the news. The press is negatively biased to cover health issues that mainly affect poor groups, including indigenous groups and rural populations (Alcalay and Mendoza 2000; da Rocha 1995) Environmental issues that affect urban populations are more likely to get substantially more attention than issues affecting poverty-stricken rural and peri-urban areas (Jukosfky 2000). Crime affecting poor people is less likely to get attention than crime affects wealthier groups (Bonilla Velez and Gomez 2006). The lives of poor children and youth, including violence and exploitation, are rarely news (ANDI 2003).

Second, the press typically fails to bring out different perspectives, particularly the views of populations that are directly affected by social problems, to promote dialogue

about problems and solutions. News coverage of crime affecting poor citizens often portrays them as hapless victims or perpetrators (Larrain and Valenzuela 2004). In Colombia, coverage of the prolonged internal armed conflict, which has severely affected poor rural populations, has been dominated by official sources, namely politicians and military officers. Voices proposing peaceful solutions receive 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 (Arenas et al 2003; Coba et al 2007). 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 (de Oliviera 1996; Guedes 2000; Luft 2005).

The deficient quality of news coverage of social problems puts in evidence key failures of the press in supporting democratic goals. First, the press doesn't expand the boundaries of public debate about social problems. By turning away from covering a wide variety of problems, the press excludes citizens and issues from the process of critical reflexivity. In doing so, the press perpetuates a process of social exclusion by relegating the concerns of the majority. Second, the absence of coverage of social inequalities reflects the disinterest of the press to foster empathy and solidarity in democratic life. Press critics have underscored the need for the press to nurture social linkages across citizens from diverse backgrounds. Bringing out issues that affect others is necessary to promote sensitivity to others whose life conditions and perspectives are different.

The starting point of CMA is that problems essentially lay at the institutional level, namely, newsroom practices and conditions. Working conditions in newsrooms discourage the production of in-depth reporting of civic problems. It is not unusual for reporters to hold more than one job, and be expected to file several stories daily. Additionally, and particularly in provincial media, reporters moonlight as ad jobbers. Also, news companies rarely free up reporters, or assign sufficient human and financial resources, to cover stories. These conditions push journalists to cover issues that demand a minimal amount of time and expenses. The consequence is reactive coverage focused on events (devoid of context in long-term processes) and dependent on official information and wire news.

Certainly, resource-poor newsrooms negatively affect the quality of news in general. Sections that cover "hot news" (e.g. political, economic, police, foreign news), however, have more reporters and consistently draw from source-generated information. The massive dependence of Latin American newsrooms on official "gacetillas" for political news (Hallin 2000) and police reports for crime/public safety stories is well documented (Ramos and Paiva 2007). Instead, few news organizations have specific beats covering civic issues. The lack of sections discourages news organizations from constantly seeking fresh news. Typically, civic issues fall in "society" sections which serve as umbrella terms to cover a myriad of issues. In recent years, the creation of sections such as "health", "education", "community", and "women's issues" (which offer neo-feminist perspectives instead of the traditional fashion/lifestyle issues) in newspapers, newsweeklies and newscasts has opened new opportunities for advocacy groups. Reporters covering those beats may be more receptive as they regularly need to file stories on those subjects.

Approach and Strategies

CMA embraces an "institutionalist" interpretation of the mainstream press. Here "institutionalism" refers to the view according to which organizational routines and practices and professional norms determine news content. News-gathering routines and journalistic conventions determine preference for official, dramatic, conflict-driven, sensationalist, event-centered, and celebrity news. Such norms do not only constrain journalists, but they also limit the opportunities for civic interests to get news coverage.

CMA is a keen observant of established norms and practices to determine news. It believes that those norms and practices can be used to advance social agendas. It adheres to standard reporting practices rather than trying to revolutionize journalism. It doesn't propose a breakthrough in news-making, but rather, it offers a creative approach to news management that capitalizes on the biases of contemporary journalism to further social justice. It assumes that journalistic rules do not necessarily reflect dominant interests, but rather, they can be twisted in favor of social causes. It is cognizant of typical newsrooms' working conditions and needs to find opportunities. It views newsrooms as dynamic environments and subject to contradictory demands. It assumes that newsrooms are typically dependent on content generated by external actors rather than reported-initiated stories.

CMA is premised on the idea that opportunities for shaping news content are unpredictable. A variety of circumstances may open or shut off possibilities. Conflicts between individual news organizations and governments may bring out opportunities to criticize social policies. Official commitment to specific social policies may be advantageous for civic groups to get media attention. Individual reporters may be particularly interested in specific issues.

From this perspective, CMA aims to achieve three goals: To increase the amount and quality of coverage of specific issues; strengthen the presence of civic voices in the mainstream press; and approach the press as a tactical ally to help advance political and social causes. To achieve these goals, civic organizations use three strategies: sourcing, training, and press criticism.

"Sourcing" strategies aim to facilitate reporters' access to information and to strengthen the position of civic organizations as credible and regular news sources. These strategies include a wide range of tactics. Some organizations, such as Brazil's ANDI and Mexico's CIMAC, act as unconventional news agencies that produce and distribute content, and frequently discuss story ideas with reporters. Some organizations have agreements with major news organizations to publish specific content. For example, Argentina's Red de Periodismo Social has an agreement with influential newspapers in the country to publish a series of stories on social issues. Stories have put the spotlight on issues such as the conditions in public hospitals and the systems of garbage collection and disposal. Similarly, Argentina's CIPPEC has agreements with *La Nación* and *Clarín*, the country's leading dailies, to publish articles on a host of social issues such as education, and justice, several times per year. CIPPEC is fully responsible for content production which is given "in exclusivity" to the newspapers. Newspapers are guaranteed a "scoop" in exchange for space for content.

"Sourcing" strategies also include developing and strengthening relations with individual reporters. Relations provide a sense of newsrooms' needs in order to find opportunities for news coverage. "Slow news days" may offer opportunities for getting

wide coverage or front-page attention. Interest in reporting the "human side" of certain stories (e.g. scientific breakthroughs, judicial decisions) may open the possibility of identifying citizens as both subjects and sources.

Civic organizations also take advantage of conventional news events to gain coverage. They piggyback on news attention on high-profile speeches, newsmakers' public events, Congressional debates, and "international" and "national" days commemorating specific issues (e.g. International Women's Day, World's AIDS Day, Earth Day) to get coverage. Tactics range from conventional news management (e.g. issuing press releases, staging press conferences) to news-grabbing actions (e.g. publicity stunts, rallies, protest) typically associated with grassroots groups. Likewise, advocacy groups are sensitive to the specific needs and biases of different media to get coverage. Print organizations may be more interested in scoops. Television news is driven by images and entertainment, and afternoon talk-shows in issues that relevant to their female audiences. Radio programs are typically interested in interviews with experts and newsmakers.

A second strategy is to increase the level of professionalism of news coverage. The challenge is twofold. First, rarely do reporters have in-depth knowledge of specific issues (e.g. laws against domestic violence, children's rights, basic information on disease transmission and prevention). Although increasing numbers of reporters in the region graduate from journalism and communication schools, few had opportunities to specialize in certain areas. Second, civic associations are largely unaware about journalistic practices and lack strategic approaches to work with press organizations.

To overcome these problems, advocacy organizations work with both reporters and civic organizations. On the one hand, they offer journalism training to familiarize reporters with essential technical aspects and bring them in contact with experts/sources. Many organizations also give awards to recognize quality reporting on specific subjects (e.g. children's issues, women's rights). They also have elaborated set of principles to guide reporting. On the other hand, media training of civic organizations intends to strengthen their ability to become regular and credible news sources. Generally, organizations are either unaware of conventional journalistic practices or distrust the news media. Relations between reporters and civic associations are often non-existent or filled with misunderstandings and animosities. Expectations are remarkably different: While reporters seek newsworthy stories that fit editors' expectations and resonate with audiences, organizations are interested in disseminating information that doesn't always have intrinsic journalistic value. Training, then, is also viewed as opportunities to facilitate communication between reporters and organizations to discuss issues and possibilities for collaboration.

A third strategy is press criticism of news coverage of civic and social issues. Many organizations regularly monitor and analyze the volume and quality of news, produce data and documents, and share results with reporters and editors to show gaps and achievements. The purpose is to provide constructive criticism to news organizations and use the data to identify problems and actions for improvement.

The Ideological Underpinning of Civic Media Advocacy

The analysis of the strategies of CMA reflects the adoption of a pragmatic approach that views the mainstream press as a potential strategic ally in representational struggles over the visibility of social issues.

Such approach suggests three important differences between CMA and other media movements.

First, CMA is not premised on a radical critique of the dominant media. Although it is critical of conventional coverage of social and civic issues, it does not demonize the media. It is not agonistic, but rather, it seeks to collaborate with news media and individual reporters who are receptive to social issues. It is not imbued by a philosophical pessimism that negates the possibility that the mainstream press media may circumstantially give adequate attention to social causes. Instead, it espouses a moderately optimistic perspective about the prospects of transforming press coverage. It doesn't view the mainstream press as inevitably biased against social/civic interests, but it seeks to find opportunities within news organizations. It recognizes that not all subjects may receive adequate coverage due to editorial interests and the professional biases of journalists. It pragmatically assumes that because the large (as well as other) media will always pursue special interests, it is strategically necessary to find opportunities to shape content. It approaches the media as a commercial and political institution that, depending on a variety of circumstances, may put the spotlight on social issues. It sees the news media as a set of open arenas for disputing content and frames, and newsrooms as subject to temporary and contradictory demands that create or close down opportunities for introducing social issues. Although CMA increases the gravitational pull of civic society on the press, it does not substantially reconfigure the structural linkages between the press, states and markets. This is not a causal omission, but rather, a conscious decision of strategies aimed to change news content rather than the basic practices of the mainstream media.

Second, CMA chooses to integrate a variety of media actions to promote their causes rather than focusing on building and maintaining separate platforms from the dominant media system. Such approach is based on the recognition that the mainstream press have unmatched reach and influence. So, advocacy groups work with large-scale media while preserving alternative, autonomous platforms for producing and disseminating information. CMA, then, doesn't aim to overturn prevalent structures. In fact, media policy issues are relative absent or are minor concerns for advocacy groups. CMA expresses disaggregated efforts for changing media content without introducing major transformations in political and economic structures.

Third, CMA is premised on the notion of technical, issue-specific rather than partisan advocacy. CMA represents a post-partisan sentiment that abstains from party politics. Advocacy groups aim to politicize specific issues, that is, to turn them into matters of public debate and policy. Yet they carefully push for issues that are not closely identified with partisan agendas. In fact, they frequently work with various political parties to gain visibility and interest from policymakers, and stay above the fray. Interviewees often refer to civic advocacy in terms of "non-militant" or "non-combative" journalism.

The prospects for nonpartisan advocacy vary according to the kind of issues. Not all issues lend themselves to become political news. Specific local and national politics as well as editorial positions of news organizations offer different opportunities. Advocacy for attention and policies to address domestic violence or the murder of poor children living in streets typically confronts a different set of political challenges than promoting abortion rights or free access to healthcare for people living with HIV/AIDS. Each issue differently affects a myriad of political interests. Putting the spotlight on trigger-happy

police may be troublesome for news organizations interested in maintaining friendly relations with police departments. Covering abortion may not be equally important for conservative and left-wing newspapers. News organizations may be more receptive to stories about the negative consequences of smoking when the Minister of Health vocally condemns the tobacco industry.

Achievements and Limitations

The experience of CMA suggests that the press is not inevitably biased against civic interests. As a result of CMA, many news organizations have contributed to raising the profile and frequency of civic stories, particularly on issues dealing with poor and socially excluded populations and human rights (ANDI 2006). Also, some advocacy organizations have successfully carved out space for civic news through building alliances with news organizations and became regular sources.

If we conceive the press as a heterogeneous field permeable to the influence of external fields, the experience of CMA suggests that civic actors can influence newsmaking. Media-conscious and journalistic-savvy civic groups have been building paths to reconnect civic society and the press. The achievements of CMA are significant. News coverage of domestic violence in Argentina and children's issues in Brazil and Colombia, hardly insignificant problems in each country, are different from what they were years ago (Alfaro 2008). CMA shows that organized publics are able to dispute media representations and exert influence in newsrooms.

How should we interpret the success of CMA? Does it represent the strengthening of the connective tissue between the press and civic society? If so, does it entail a major power reallocation away from states and markets?

By conforming to the rules and practices of professional journalism, CMA confirms the prevalence of the "media logic." The news media have the upper hand in shaping the relationship with civic groups. Civic issues are covered as long as they meet journalistic criteria of newsworthiness and storytelling formats. Journalists decide whether any form of information is news, when it is published or aired, what sections fit the content, and so on. "Media logic" also determines when and where civic demands get covered.

It would be incorrect, however, to conclude that pure journalistic concerns determine what issues and groups get coverage. Considerations about state and market interests play a significant role in shaping newsroom decisions. Even when journalists share common professional values, they are sensitive to how relations between news organizations and a range of external actors may affect news content. Political considerations such as editorial positions vis-à-vis administration and specific officials, as well as personal relations between editors and politicians affect news decisions. Likewise, economic issues are also considered in the selection of stories. Economic arrangements between news organizations with governments and advertisers, financial interests of editorial board members, and/or the characteristics of specific audiences also affect news decisions.

In cases when news organizations have different relations with both political and economic actors, "media logic" is neither fixed nor identical across newsrooms. When some news organizations openly oppose governments or maintain different ties with business, there is no unified "media logic" that uniformly determines news content.

Content can change depending on fluctuations in the relations between news organizations and external actors.

Media logic affects the choice of issues. Not all civic issues and groups have similar chances of making news. It is hard to generalize what issues may encounter acceptance or rejection from newsrooms. As a rule of thumb, civic issues that directly confront powerful political and economic interests are more likely to be ignored or sidelined. Given the power of the Catholic Church in the region, journalists are typically more cautious about covering reproductive rights than other women's health issues such as maternal mortality or cancer prevention. Likewise, reporters are more likely to cover the fate of orphaned children displaced by civil war in Colombia or the use of children in drug trafficking in Brazil than the employment of child labor by powerful business. Covering violence against women by their partners as a general problem may meet less resistance than denunciations of domestic violence against specific powerful officials.

Likewise, considerations about audiences also influence news. Social issues that directly affect audiences are more likely to get regular attention. Because media audiences, particularly for print media, are generally skewed towards well-off, white populations, news about the many dimensions of racism, class inequalities, or the exclusion of indigenous groups may occasionally get attention, but they are not matters of regular coverage. Diseases and health conditions that disproportionately affect poor people (e.g. malnutrition, tuberculosis) are less likely to get as much as attention as cardiovascular diseases and obesity that affect broad segments of the population.

Also, media logic determines news frames. Solidarity frames that present issues in terms of empathy with socially excluded populations are more common than frames that present issues as a question of empowerment and human rights. Here the difference is whether civic issues are presented as political or non-political issues. Many news organizations feature sections devoted to issues affecting poor and working-class citizens in terms of charity and social responsibility. Such sections regularly feature a variety of issues, such as programs for disable people and food banks, from a non-political perspective. Non-political frame means constructing story in terms of struggles of citizens to wrestle power away from powerful political and economic interests. Conversely, the prospects for framing social issues as political, because they are presented as antagonizing public officials or clashing against powerful business, are different. They are not necessarily absent, but they are rare as they require a political commitment from reporters and news organizations. Argentina's *Pagina/12*, for example, regularly covers reproductive health and domestic violence in its "women's section" through frames that prioritize empowerment and rights.

Conclusions

The experience of CMA raises the question whether we can discuss the strengthening of the relations between "civic society" and "the press" in general terms. Neither civic society nor the press are unified, homogeneous fields. Civic society comprises dissimilar groups and interests that fit differently the "media logic" of news organizations. Because the interests of the mainstream press in specific stories vary, the effectiveness of civic groups to affect coverage depends on their demands. Opportunities for engaging the press in quality and responsible coverage of civic issues are not identical for all publics and issues.

CMA also brings up new questions about the prospects and strategies for bridging the gaps between civic society and the press. On this issue, academic debates are rooted in environments of media scarcity that are substantially different from today's media abundance. This situation is the premise of "zero-sum" views about the relations between the press vis-à-vis states, markets and civic society. If markets gain terrain is at the expense of states and civic society; if states become more influential is by drawing power away from civic society and markets. Such perspective may be limited to capture the relations between the press and other actors in an expanding news landscape. The launching of new sections and segments in print and audiovisual media coupled with the proliferation of Internet websites, radio stations and cable channels has led to the explosion of news outlets. A multi-leveled, diversified media environment, with a constant demand for content, expands opportunities for making news. In principle, this brings out opportunities for content diversification, including the coverage of a range of civic voices and issues. At a time of media abundance, contemporary media systems make room for the entrance of civic groups in ways that it was more difficult in the past.

The gains of civic groups, however, may not automatically result in states and markets become less relevant. CMA suggests that civic voices may gain presence without prompting a major reshuffling of power relations. The impact of CMA cannot be assessed mainly or only in terms of quantity of stories. Somewhere in an emerging vast media landscape, a wide range of civic interests are likely to be expressed. The question, instead, is what issues are properly and extensively covered by the mainstream media that command attention from key decision-makers and large audiences. It not simply about whether there are opportunities for civic expression, but rather, the presence of civic voices in mainstream news.

The challenge remains to determine how issues that disproportionately affect populations who are not central to the market logic of media organizations gain press coverage. As long as mainstream organizations prioritize ties to political elites and large market interests, media advocacy for issues that directly threaten those interests are difficult. Thus, the achievements of CMA in reconnecting civic interests and the press vary given that not all publics and interests are similarly positioned vis-à-vis the mainstream press to be equally successful. CMA provides valuable lessons to understand how mobilized publics can effectively connect with the mainstream media, gain visibility, and transform news coverage within the limits of press systems still under strong influence from states and markets.

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