



THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDIA AND THE PUBLIC SPHERE IN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT. This article reviews the development of the Mexican media, both broadcast and print, through an analysis of their current legal framework, culture, ownership structure and common practices. It is based on archival research, interviews and a review of the available literature. Its analytical framework is based on concepts of the theory of deliberative democracy developed by contemporary philosophers such as Jürgen Habermas, James Bohman, Jane Mansbridge and Joshua Cohen. Within this framework, it argues that the major obstacles to democracy in Mexico, which include social and economic inequalities, patronage and a weak rule of law, also constitute obstacles to the deliberative development of the Mexican media.

KEY WORDS: Mexican media, deliberative democracy, public sphere, democracy in Mexico.

RESUMEN. El presente artículo es un estudio del desarrollo deliberativo de los medios de comunicación mexicanos, tanto electrónicos como impresos, a través del análisis de su marco jurídico vigente, cultura profesional y su estructura de propiedad. Esta investigación se basa en la recopilación y análisis de archivos, la realización de entrevistas y la revisión del estado de la cuestión sobre el objeto de estudio. Su marco analítico se basa en conceptos específicos de la teoría de la democracia deliberativa desarrollada por los filósofos políticos Jürgen Habermas, James Bohman, Jane Mansbridge y Joshua Cohen. Dentro de este marco, su argumento es que los obstáculos mayores para la democracia en México, que incluyen las desigualdades sociales y económicas, la cultura clientelar y la debilidad del estado de derecho, constituyen también obstáculos para el desarrollo deliberativo de los medios de comunicación mexicanos.

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PALABRAS CLAVE: *Medios de comunicación mexicanos, democracia deliberativa, esfera pública, democracia en México.*

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I. INTRODUCTION

This article evaluates the actual and potential contribution of the Mexican media to the development of a public sphere based on core concepts and definitions of deliberation provided by Habermas, Bohman, Mansbridge and Cohen. It explores the extent to which the three elements of the “ideal deliberative procedure” (ideal speech situation, discourse ethics and fair preference aggregation) are fulfilled in the Mexican public sphere and assesses the quality of “civic dialogue.” The element of “fair preference aggregation” will be considered indirectly, according to the degree in which the Mexican media order the electoral institutional system toward this fairness. The article ends by judging the extent to which structural deficiencies in Mexico have deterred the deliberative development of its media by encouraging a culture of patronage, allowing the persistence of bias in favor of politically and economically powerful interests, and hindering the rule of law.

Ideally, the media should encourage diversity, access for civil society, a more public service approach to content, civic journalism, a balanced coverage of the perspectives of civil society and the promotion of reasoned debates within and between civil society and public authorities. This would encourage civic dialogue, support the elements of the “ideal deliberative procedure” (the ideal speech situation and discourse ethics) in the Mexican public sphere and contribute indirectly to fair preference aggregation in the Mexican electoral system. Through a review of literature, the analysis of the legal framework, a case study of the debate on the reform to this framework, interviews and archival research, this article examines the current structure and culture of

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