

## Can NGOs Change the News?

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This article analyzes the newsmaking experiences of selected NGOs in Latin America. It argues that the newsmaking experiences of NGOs reflect the ascendancy of a pragmatic approach characterized by organizations engaging with the press and state actors to gain visibility and construct social problems as public issues. The wide-ranging interests and goals among NGOs, coupled with the heterogeneous interests of news organizations and state officials, make it impossible to produce generalizations about the impact of NGOs in strengthening linkages with the press. Not all civic demands have similar chances of finding sympathetic and receptive actors. The fact that NGOs pursue separate newsmaking strategies with different results evidences the fragmented and conflictive character of civil society. The analysis has implications for understanding both the effectiveness of NGOs in making the press permeable to citizens' interests, and the articulation between civic society and the media.

### Introduction

Although the concept of nongovernment organizations (NGOs) remains ambiguous (De Mars, 2005; Jad, 2007, Martens, 2002, Willetts, 2001), the term is commonly used to refer to civil, nonprofit associations staffed by paid and voluntary personnel. NGOs perform a range of tasks, such as conducting local and transnational advocacy, delivering social services, implementing foreign aid programs, developing technical knowledge, and channeling local participation.

Whereas NGOs have been the subject of much attention in the international relations and political science literature (Keck & Sikkink, 1998), they remain relatively underexplored in the field of media and journalism studies. This gap is surprising, considering not only the remarkable growth in numbers of NGOs in the past decades worldwide (Salamon, Haddock, Sokolowski, & Tice, 2007), but also the long-standing interest among media scholars in the intersection between the media, civil society, and social movements. NGOs perform a range of communication and information tasks. They produce and mobilize information to affect policy agendas, they are embedded in political networks that aim to persuade public opinion and policy makers, and they communicate with various publics through various media platforms.

Why should media scholars study NGOs? First, the remarkable global expansion of NGOs (Florini, 2001) raises the possibility that news organizations may widen the range of news sources. Because they

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Date submitted: 2010-03-27

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produce and distribute a wealth of information, NGOs may contribute to the expansion of the type and number of sources. Second, the study of NGOs as communication/media organizations sheds light onto the professionalization of social activism. Scholars (Alvarez, 2009; Lebon, 1996) have critically assessed the "NGO-ization" of social movements and civil society in reference to the rise of professional activism as a paid occupation within nonprofit institutions working on social change issues. The study of NGOs and news gives us insights into the causes and characteristics of the professionalization of civic participation. Third, the analysis of NGOs brings attention to whether the press is permeable to efforts by civil society to influence content. Just as they try to test the receptiveness of political elites and state policies to citizens' demands, NGOs conduct media advocacy to influence news and newsroom decisions. Media advocacy by civil society organizations, in principle, raises the possibility that nonstate, nonmarket actors affect the output of mainstream news.

These issues are both normatively and analytically relevant, given the well-known problems for civic actors in asserting a steady presence in the mainstream news. Studies have concluded that the weakness of civil society and the disproportionate influence of markets and governments are troubling for media democracy (Curran, 2002; Dahlgren, 2009; Norris, 2010). One could surmise that NGOs contribute to the rectification of these problems as information "counterpowers" (Castells, 2007) to established interests in contemporary media politics. If NGOs are "agents of change," as political scientists and international relations experts have argued (Risse, Ropp, & Sikkink, 1999), it is pertinent to analyze whether they also contribute to the transformation of news content. Can NGOs effectively change news content? This is the central question of this article.

Much of the debate about this question has focused on the experiences of large, Northern NGOs. Studies have found that NGOs have developed media publicity-seeking strategies, and that they have become more sensitive to the role of the media in contemporary politics. Gamson's (2004) argument about why social movements search for media attention applies to NGOs. Seeking news coverage is central to claim-making and advancing organizational goals in contemporary societies. First, as part of political networks and social movements, NGOs strive for media publicity to frame public debates, issues, and adversaries, both in order to advance their causes in the public sphere, and to gain validation vis-à-vis various audiences. Just like any form of civil association and participation, they are dependent on the news media to gain visibility, influence public opinion, and advance policy issues (Cottle & Nolan, 2007; Koopmans, 2004). Media tactics are instrumental in defining social problems, reaching allies and adversaries, and setting the terms of public debate. Second, NGOs pursue media publicity to achieve organizational goals—namely, their own development and growth in an environment which is competitive for resources (Bob, 2006; Vliegthart, Oegema, & Klandermans, 2005). News coverage increases the likelihood that organizations may achieve recognition among members, funders, and other key publics. Media appearances build "brand name," maintain internal morale, increase membership, remind supporters about their work, and demonstrate achievements to funders.

Studies have concluded that success at newsmaking varies widely. Greenpeace's stunts (Dale, 1996), ActionAid's street theater, Amnesty International's global campaigns (Ramos, Ron, & Thorns, 2007), and PETA's celebrity-focused strategies demonstrate that some NGOs have purposefully played into the professional biases of the news media. They have tailored their strategies to the interest of

mainstream journalism in terms of conflict, spectacle, and news events (Gaber & Wilson, 2005). Research has also documented how NGOs working on humanitarian crises take advantage of "crisis coverage" during natural disasters, famines, and other critical situations to be in the media spotlight (Moeller, 1999; Olsen, Carstensen, & Høyen, 2003). Critics charge that NGOs are not immune to the interest in celebrity and spectacle that dominates contemporary media politics (Bob, 2006). As they have uncritically adopted the conventions of journalism, NGOs tacitly endorse the politics of manufactured publicity and political marketing that dominate contemporary mediated politics.

Yet not all NGOs seem equally effective at making news. Deacon (2003) argues that NGOs are more likely to receive coverage when they deal with noncontroversial issues, produce "good deeds," and intervene as commentators. Organizations working on "solidarity" and other causes framed as "nonpolitical" issues are more likely to get regular and fair media attention. Along similar lines, Fenton (2010) has questioned whether NGOs can influence "predetermined" news agendas set by powerful political and economic actors. The fact that they need to adjust their tactics to the expectations of the news media reveals the weakness of NGOs in setting news agendas.

### **The Newsmaking Politics of NGOs in Latin America**

This article analyzes the experiences of selected NGOs in Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico in trying to make the mainstream news media permeable to their concerns and demands. Given that academic analysis has mostly focused on the experiences of Western NGOs, a study of NGOs in Latin America offers an opportunity to assess the applicability of previous conclusions in different political-media settings. The goal is neither to offer a comprehensive analysis of experiences in the region, nor to simply add another set of cases to the literature. Instead, the goal is to contribute to further theory-building in order to produce stronger conclusions about the relations between NGOs and the news media that are grounded on cases from various media-political systems.

The characteristics of the media and the growing presence of NGOs make Latin America an interesting case to explore this subject. Neither the media systems nor the relationships between media and political actors fit the models of mediated politics in the U.S. and European democracies. Media systems, arguably, share some similarities with the "polarized pluralist" model (Hallin and Mancini, 2004) in the European context. They have been characterized by unrestricted commercialism, weak public broadcasting, and high political parallelism. Yet presidential media patrimonialism, the overwhelming power of governments in media finances, and historical shifts between authoritarian and democratic regimes have all shaped unique media-political conditions in the region (Waisbord, 2000b).

In this context, the number of NGOs has grown significantly since the 1980s (Balbis, 2001; Foweraker, 2001). Three factors have contributed to this development. First, dozens of organizations emerged during the process of civil mobilization against military dictatorships and the early years of post-authoritarian politics in the 1980s and 1990s. Second, just as has happened in the rest of the global South, the rise of NGOs has resulted from the combination of programmatic priorities of international donors, coupled with the increased levels of foreign aid seen in the past decades (Edwards & Hulme, 2004). Public and private donors have channeled considerable resources through NGOs on the premise

that strengthening civil society is vital to promote development goals. Third, the rise of corporate social responsibility, particularly in larger countries such as Brazil and Mexico, has also fueled the growth and consolidation of NGOs (Gutiérrez & Jones, 2004; Haslam, 2004).

The analysis draws from information gathered through 32 semi-structured interviews with journalists and NGO officers, as well as from the analysis of documents produced by NGOs. Three criteria were considered in the selection of NGOs.<sup>1</sup> First, the aim was to focus on national NGOs, rather than on chapters of Western organizations. The goal was to study organizations whose communication strategies do not aim primarily to raise awareness about development issues and drum up support for aid policies among Western governments and citizens, such as Oxfam, Amnesty International, Medicines sans Frontiers, and Greenpeace (Bob, 2006). Instead, the organizations analyzed have a local/national focus, even though some of them have links with regional and global counterparts. They lack the far-flung structures, massive funding, and global memberships that characterize large Western NGOs. Second, the study included NGOs working on a range of topics, including children's and women's rights, environment, justice, governance, public safety, health, violence, indigenous peoples, human rights, and media/journalism. Third, the study considered NGOs from three countries (Argentina, Brazil, and Mexico) to determine whether particular domestic politics and the structure of national media systems affect newsmaking strategies.

The argument is as follows: Evidence suggests that NGOs have been successful when their newsmaking strategies both conform to the dominant journalistic logic, and find interest among political newsmakers and news organizations. The relative "chaos" (McNair, 2006) of newswork and moderate diversity in the news landscape in Latin American countries offer dissimilar chances to make news. Journalistic interest in dramatic, conflict-driven, sensationalist, event-centered, and celebrity news strongly condition the newsmaking prospects of NGOs. NGOs have adopted a pragmatic approach to their engagement with the press and state officials to gain media visibility. Although they are critical of the news media for ignoring a host of civil problems and social demands, NGOs do not adopt an oppositional approach. Instead, they aim to build alliances and develop collaborative relations with sympathetic journalists and political elites to make news. Such relations are dynamic, as they depend on specific issues and unpredictable political circumstances.

The wide-ranging interests and goals among NGOs, coupled with the heterogeneous interests of news organizations and government officials, make it impossible to produce parsimonious generalizations about the impact of NGOs. Not all demands have similar chances of finding sympathetic actors. The fact that NGOs pursue separate newsmaking strategies with different results puts in evidence the

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<sup>1</sup> The author conducted interviews with NGO staff and journalists during 2009 and early 2010. Staff from the following NGOs was interviewed: ADC, ALIAR, Artemisa, CIPPEC, Comunia, Patagonia Natural, Periodismo Social, Poder Ciudadano, and ProCostas (Argentina); CENCOS, CIMAC, FUNDAR, and Sonora Ciudadana (Mexico); and ANDI, CESEC, and Patricia Galvao (Brazil). Journalists included reporters and editors from Clarin, Crítica, La Nación, Newsweek, Noticias, Perfil, and Radio Continental (Argentina); as well as El Universal, Proceso, and Reforma (Mexico).

fragmentation of civil society in multiple "issue publics" trying to engage with the press to make news and advocate for various causes.

### **The Professionalization of Newsmaking**

Just as has happened in other regions around the world, media systems in Latin America have recently become more fragmented amidst the proliferation of media platforms. The consolidation of cable and satellite television, the multiplication of radio stations, and the gradual expansion of Internet access have contributed to this process. Even as ownership concentration has moved apace, with fewer companies controlling leading newspapers and television and radio stations (Waisbord, 2010), and with governments continuing to use different tactics to control media outlets, the expansion of new technologies has produced multilayered media landscapes.

Such transformations neither diminished the centrality of the mainstream press in mediated politics nor altered the "asymmetrical dependence" (Gamson & Wolfsfeld, 1993) of NGOs vis-à-vis the mainstream press. Despite more opportunities to make media appearances, leading dailies and broadcasting stations with high audiences are still considered the linchpins of political communication. Web sites, local radio stations, and cable programs with small audiences offer opportunities to gain attention, yet they are not seen as influential as old media. The latter remain at the center of intersection among media, public opinion, and policy making.

This is why "making news," as several interviewees (Jusidman, 2009; Fantin, 2008) observe, isn't complicated or difficult in media landscapes with multiple entry points. All NGOs considered in this study have Web sites. Most use social media and YouTube, try to appear regularly on cable and radio stations, and feed information to Web sites that bring together information about social and political issues. Making "mainstream news," however, is quite different. The terms of engagement between NGOs and the mainstream press are grounded in the dominant routines and norms of newswork. News organizations typically prioritize information generated from or about other sectors, namely the government, large business, entertainment, and sports. For example, the statist orientation of the press is expressed in both the amount of coverage of political elites and the prestige of political news. Reporters are assigned to key government offices to ensure a predictable and regular flow of information. Also, press offices in state offices generate a wealth of information daily about official events and statements, maintaining regular relations with reporters, editors, and columnists.

Consequently, the organization of newswork is lopsided against NGOs. Newsrooms have neither correspondents assigned to cover NGOs nor sections specifically designed to cover civil issues. Some news organizations feature "social" sections (e.g., health, education, community, women's affairs) devoted to issues that fall within the scope of most NGOs. Those beats, however, do not rank highly in either daily editorial priorities, or in the professional hierarchy of journalism (Lagunes, 2009). Reporters and NGO officials observe that those sections are underfunded and understaffed, particularly compared to the more prestigious beats, such as national politics and finance/economics (Calvo, 2009; Camps, 2008; Napoli, 2010; Penido, 2008; Young 2009). Without a significant number of journalists tasked with reporting "social" stories on a daily basis, and without established beats dedicated to civic issues, making news is

extremely difficult. There are few reporters constantly in search of relevant stories to meet editorial requests. In other words, the prevalent system relegates NGOs to a minor role in the daily process of news gathering.

To overcome these difficulties, some NGOs have adopted a professionalized approach in order to become "news shapers" (Manheim, 2008). Certainly, professionalism is a contested term in the literature on news and politics (Lilleker & Negrine, 2002). Here, professionalism refers to the development and application of specialized knowledge and expertise in news management. Such development is part of the overall process of "source professionalization" (Blumler, 1990), and the sophistication of news management techniques among political actors. Several NGOs have hired "news professionals" to staff press/communications offices (Blanco, 2008; de Melo, 2008; Molina, 2008; Selwood, 2008). These offices are in charge of news management tasks, such as maintaining Web sites and social media, producing news releases and newsletters, holding press conferences, and reaching out to reporters. Such units are staffed by experienced journalists, as well as by full-time and part-time stringers. The organizations that do so tend to be those that, by regional standards, are better resourced and have larger numbers of staff (15–30 people), or to be organizations focused on media issues.

A professional approach is expressed in the development of bifurcated strategies to communicate with two types of audiences: members/supporters and external actors (e.g., policy makers, the press, public opinion). Like traditional social movements, NGOs maintain their own media for communication and mobilization of members and supporters. Besides radio programs and print publications, the NGOs use Web-based platforms to keep them informed, to receive feedback and suggestions, and to facilitate internal discussions.<sup>2</sup> To reach external publics, though, they have developed advocacy strategies, including newsmaking tactics, with the intention of raising the visibility of their causes and promoting policy and social changes. Newsmaking, as well as general advocacy, requires engaging with publics who are unaware or opposed to their demands.

An example of professionalization is the deployment of sourcing strategies aimed at shaping news content through providing "information subsidies" (Gandy, 1982) to newsrooms. This is done through tactics borrowed from traditional public relations and government communication. Press conferences are often used to attract attention and shape the news agenda. In some cases, NGOs have successfully directed media attention to certain issues through press announcements. For example, several Mexican NGOs working on children's rights held a press conference to denounce a child-trafficking ring operated by a religious group with strong links to powerful officials (the so-called "Casitas del Sur" episode in 2009, which became a major story and scandal) (Cruz Villegas, 2009). Some NGOs have developed news services to produce and disseminate information. Underpinning this decision is the belief that the mainstream media does not regularly cover their issues because they don't want to spend resources. They are not necessarily predisposed against them, but rather, they are unwilling to commit human and monetary resources.

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<sup>2</sup> Some organizations have tried to maintain a presence in traditional media by renting time slots in local radio and cable television stations. Because of limited receptivity and production expenses, however, most initiatives ended after short time.

To make content easily accessible, NGOs also produce and distribute free content among news organizations and through several Web-based platforms. Content tends to be specialized according to the mission of each organization. Whereas some NGOs focus on news about governance, justice, and human rights (such as Argentina's Poder Ciudadano and Centro de Estudios Legales y Sociales), others are focused on subjects such children's rights (e.g., Brazil's ANDI), women's rights (e.g., Mexico's CIMAC), and environmental issues. Some NGOs have agreements with major newspapers by which they produce content for publication. Argentina's Periodismo Social (Molina, 2008) has agreements with over a dozen of leading regional newspapers to publish feature stories on social issues. Between 2005 and 2008, Mexico's Sonora Ciudadana had a similar agreement with *El Imparcial*, although that ended after the newspaper went through editorial changes (Noriega, 2009).

Also, NGOs maintain regular relations with reporters. Just as reporters cultivate sources, NGOs actively engage with reporters to maintain relations through informal networks and joint activities (e.g., workshops, investigations). They also search for columnists, as well as television and radio show hosts, who are particularly interested in specific social and civil issues. Maintaining good relations is critical to understanding journalists' needs and identifying opportunities for newsmaking. NGO press officers bring a nuanced understanding of newsroom dynamics and priorities. As news management professionals, they view their job as articulating the interests of their organizations with the needs of newsrooms. They generally see the news landscape as a dynamic environment filled with newsmaking opportunities.

For example, sometimes, editors ask "social" beats for "feel-good" stories to balance out "bad news" (Palacios, 2008). This opens up opportunities for NGOs working on community assistance, scientific breakthroughs, and poverty-reduction efforts, issues whose upbeat narratives serve as counterpoints to grim headlines. Also, "slow" news days may offer opportunities to get coverage, even making lead stories. "Planned" and "unplanned" news events also offer newsmaking opportunities. Planned news events, such as presidential announcements, international summits, visits from foreign dignitaries, and "world days" dedicated to certain issues (e.g., HIV, tuberculosis, safe water, women's issues, human rights), offer predictable news pegs. Because they are conventionally defined as news, reporters are likely to be receptive to information (Castañeda, 2010). Likewise, unplanned news events also offer opportunities. Interviewees speak about the need to be always prepared, and to seize opportunities in news cycles. "News events" that lead headlines and command news cycles may offer such opportunities. They typically involve statements and actions by quintessential newsmakers, such as top government officials, opposition leaders, and entertainment and sports celebrities. Specific coverage can be about a range of issues, such as parliamentary debates, natural disasters, health emergencies, corruption scandals, and human rights abuses.

Several examples illustrate how NGOs have taken advantage of unplanned news events. In Argentina, after the press denounced the mayor of a provincial capital for domestic violence, women's groups were suddenly being actively sought out by reporters (Caher, 2009). When a major Argentine pop celebrity died from complications from emphysema, tobacco control groups found opportunities to put the negative consequences of smoking in the news (Roman, 2009). In Mexico, the scandal about child abuse in state-funded social centers offered children's rights groups an unusual opportunity to make news

(Romero León, 2009). Also, press revelations about military abuses against indigenous women offered unusual opportunities for women's and indigenous peoples' rights groups to make news.

### **Newsmaking and the "Journalism Logic"**

The professionalization of NGO newsmaking does not intend to revolutionize journalism, but rather, to accommodate to the prevalent "journalistic logic" in the mainstream media. Here, I use the idea of "journalistic logic," rather than the notion of "media logic" (Mazzoleni, 1987) to refer to the conditions and rules that characterize journalism as a community of professional practice. "Media logic" has been defined as a way of seeing and interpreting social affairs embedded in various media channels and formats (Altheide & Snow, 1979). Media producers conform to dominant forms and conventions of representing reality. In his well-known distinction between "media logic" from "party logic," Mazzoleni (1987) understands the "media logic" as grounded on technical requirements coupled with journalistic norms and commercial expectations. The notion of "media logic" is too imprecise and general to recall what is particularly salient in Mazzoleni's approach: the observance of journalistic norms and practices rooted in the political-economy structure of the media and technological formats. Put differently, the so-called "media logic" basically refers to the "journalistic logic," rather than to the requirements of fiction, talk shows, entertainment, and other types of media content.

The journalistic logic includes four components: news values, media formats, labor conditions, and editorial positions.

First, news values refer to the criteria journalists use to define news. Conceptually, they are related to factors such as timeliness, cultural/geographical proximity, position, and other factors examined in classic studies (Galtung & Ruge, 1965). Such issues are reflected in the questions that journalists inevitably ask: Where's the news? What happened? Who is news? Who cares about it? Would our audiences be interested?

Second, media formats refer to the links between specific technological environments and reporting styles. In the context of commercial broadcasting, television newscasts generally prize rich visuals, sensational elements, powerful storytelling, and camera-savvy spokespeople. As the print media has embraced tabloid principles and "dumbed down" content, newspapers and newsweeklies have become interested in reader-friendly graphics, statistics, celebrity news, and human testimonies.

Third, labor conditions refer to work environments and organizational cultures. Reporters mention the constant pressures to report stories with limited resources and planning, as well as widespread stress among the overworked and underpaid workforce in newsrooms. Such conditions underlie the predominance of "reactive reporting" in Latin American newsrooms, which basically focuses on the "news events" of the day and rarely produces enterprising and investigative stories.

Fourth, editorial positions are linked to media ownership, business interests, and the power of individual members of editorial boards and upper management. They outline the boundaries of issues, sources, and frames. Because editorial positions vary across news media, the "journalistic logic" is not

identical across newsrooms. Even though reporters hold similar news values and face comparable work conditions across news organizations, the diversity of editorial positions deeply colors the journalistic logic.

If the journalistic logic is broken down into four components, then, the news media appear as a more heterogeneous institution than what conventional labels (e.g., "the media") suggest. One could reasonably suggest that a more diverse journalistic logic, premised on the principles of pluralism and inclusion, may offer NGOs better opportunities to make news. Conversely, when the journalistic logic is captured by narrow definitions of newsworthiness, entertainment codes, commercial pressures, and limited variation across editorial positions, the prospects are dimmer.

The combination of structural and organizational factors underpins the journalistic logic. The receptiveness of news organizations toward NGOs as both news sources and subjects varies. On the hand, the combination of statist orientation of journalism, commercial principles, concentrated ownership, under-resourced newsrooms, orientation toward urban and better-off publics, and government-media collusion restricts the thematic scope and perspectives in the news. Furthermore, in a region where public broadcasting and community media have been historically weak, NGOs confront a host of difficulties to make news. On the other hand, the proliferation of news platforms on radio, cable television, and the Internet, coupled with moderate editorial heterogeneity, offers opportunities for NGOs to make news. Leading dailies and newsweeklies, as well as hundreds of radio programs, often hold views which contrast those of governmental administrations due to political and economic factors. Such diversity, though, is rarely found in the main television newscasts (Waisbord, 2010). Cable television and radio stations feature dozens of programs that are not bound by the same entertainment values and ratings-obsessed mindset as prime time television news. Whereas in-depth stories about social issues are rare given the scarcity of resources invested in reporting across news organizations, "spot" coverage is possible as long as journalists find elements that fit the particular logic of their news organizations.

In summary, the "journalistic logic" is determined by structural and organizational factors. Yet it remains important to underscore that journalistic logic is not uniform across the mainstream media. In Latin America, where the editorial positions of news organizations are heterogeneous and dynamic, one would be mistaken to characterize the "journalistic logic" either as seamlessly unified, or in single terms. Due to editorial interests, as well as circumstantial factors (e.g., relations with ruling administrations, news trends, "news events"), the interest of news organizations on issues championed by specific NGOs largely vary, and they are not completely predictable. Such a scenario presents NGOs with limitations and opportunities to make news.

### **Where NGOs and the Journalistic Logic Meet**

Two different professional logics and organizational missions come in contact in the interaction between NGOs and news organizations (Calvo, 2009; Jacquelin, 2009; Jusidman, 2009; Napoli, 2010). They follow different set of principles. NGOs basically view themselves as social activists working in established associations. They champion specific issues and policies, whether those might be better conditions for people living in prisons, tougher legislation on domestic violence, environmental policies, or poverty reduction programs. They are certainly concerned with organizational survival, yet they view the

world essentially through the prism of the advocate. The world is filled with wrongs that need to be righted through citizens' participation and policies.

News organizations, on the other hand, are bound by different goals. As market-oriented institutions, commercial goals are central to the functioning of leading news media. Such concerns draw the attention from board members and selected upper management units (e.g., sales, marketing). Reporters prioritize the logic of professional journalism. Even those who personally sympathize with certain causes (and NGOs) need to be mindful of the "journalistic logic." Professional concerns generally trump personal politics within the context of large commercial press organizations. Such concerns are not generally attached to the ideal of neutrality and evenhanded reporting, though, as they are in other countries. The rules of objectivity in Latin American newsrooms are randomly observed (Waisbord, 2000a)—as reporters say, it all depends on the story, news organization, personalities, and unpredictable factors. Professionalism, instead, refers to the logic discussed in the previous section, which is reflected in the questions that journalists generally consider. Is there a story? Is there anything new? Does it fit today's newshole? Will it offend any higher-ups? Is it doable, given limited time and resources?

As different professional logics meet, it is impossible to characterize the relations between NGOs and journalists in terms of complete collaboration or opposition. Whereas some circumstantially develop good relationships, tensions are common. The world of NGOs is remarkably diverse in terms of issues and demands, approaches to newsmaking, and perception of legitimacy as sources of information. Likewise, the moderate diversity of the "journalistic logic" underlies different interests among news organizations and journalists about a range of social and civil issues.

Collaborative relations run the gamut from close partnerships to brief exchanges. Several experiences suggest that NGOs and news organizations have come together to raise the visibility of certain issues. It has not been unusual for news organizations to openly embrace certain causes. For example, Argentina's *La Nación*, in partnership with NGO Poder Ciudadano and media anchor Luis Majul, openly crusaded for the termination of "golden" pensions for members of Congress and other causes.

Editorial support greatly increases the chances of making news. In Argentina, *Página/12*'s long-standing interest and support for reproductive rights and human rights has opened opportunities for NGOs that espouse a rights-based approach to social and political issues. *La Nación*'s editorial interest in social solidarity and faith-based assistentialism has facilitated the work of NGOs, particularly those founded on Catholic and charity principles. Also, open support for strict tobacco control legislation (including the endorsement of the global framework) from Argentina's leading dailies has facilitated the newsmaking tactics of the tobacco-control coalition. In Mexico, newspaper *El Universal* and newsweekly *Proceso* regularly cover civil issues, openly advocating for a range of issues (e.g., government transparency) that are at the center of the demands of several NGOs. Likewise, well-known journalist Lydia Cacho and CNN's television host Carmen Aristegui frequently advocate for issues brought up by various NGOs.

Yet not everything is contingent on editorial support. Both NGOs and reporters speak about the impact of personal efforts on news coverage. NGOs continually try to find receptive reporters willing to cover stories. Reporters say that the definition of newsworthy issues is not predetermined. Boundaries

about a range of issues are always shifting, and they vary across news organizations and sections (Camps, 2008; Lagunes, 2009; Loewy, 2008; O'Donnell, 2008).

This dynamic situation is reflected in numerous cases of collaboration between NGOs and reporters, in which NGOs have pitched story ideas, conducted information-gathering and analysis, and packaged the information in "newsy" formats. In some cases, they have supported reporters through filling requests for government information and dealing with other time-consuming matters. In turn, reporters identify newsworthy elements, assess editorial interests, fight for stories, and identify possible openings.

What is the appeal of using NGOs as sources of information? For journalists, effective NGOs provide valuable help by solving concrete problems. Amidst the hectic pace of routine newswork, reporters need trusted sources and easily available information. Certainly, such demands are common—and not only among Latin American reporters. Yet the specific conditions of news labor in the region exacerbate the need for quick, reliable, and pertinent information. It is not unusual that reporters juggle jobs in various news organizations. Long-term planning of assignments and stories is a luxury. Time and resources for in-depth and extensive investigations are extremely rare. Amidst these conditions, reporters generally chase "the story of the day" without extensive time for fact-gathering and checking, and editors, as the director of a Mexican NGO (Romero Leon, 2009) puts it, mainly act as "traffic cops" of events who single-mindedly follow "*la coyuntura*" (literally, the "junction"), the information that dominates daily news cycles. NGOs that help to resolve time and money constraints are appealing when it the time come to meet deadlines and file stories.

For journalists, NGOs have different strengths, according to their area of expertise and position vis-à-vis key political players in each country. Whereas "grassroots" NGOs active in neighborhoods and communities offer firsthand information about issues and communities, "technical" NGOs typically have expertise and data on specific topics. The former provide views and testimonies from ordinary citizens; the latter have credible and updated data on a range of issues. Because different stories need different types of information, both may be equally necessary.

Journalists' views about NGOs are not separated from their views about the state as both the dominant source of information and the central arena for political competition over power. Generally, they view information from technical NGOs as more dependable than data from official agencies (Calvo, 2009). Throughout Latin America, it is not unusual for government information to be tinted by partisan battles and personal conflicts. State bureaucracies are hardly technocratic powerhouses or some reservoir of cadres of experts protected from partisan intrusion. Nor can democracies in the region fit the model of experts-run polities that dominate news and public debates. Instead, the politicization of government agencies and the weakness of civil service systems have prevailed and, therefore, facilitated the manipulation of official information for personal and partisan purposes.

Journalists do not necessarily view NGO information as free from ideologies or personal interests, yet they discriminate according to how NGOs are positioned vis-à-vis administrations, political parties, and influential politicians. The linkages between NGOs and the political sphere run the whole gamut. Some

organizations hold disparaging views about "the political class." Others are identified with certain political figures and ideologies. Others collaborate strategically with politicians, while still maintaining prudent distance. Depending on changing circumstances and political dynamics, linkages may be severed or strengthened (March, 2008).

Despite these differences, journalists I interviewed recognize that NGOs are generally more reliable and efficient sources of information than state agencies (Calvo, 2009; Jacquelin, 2009). The lack of effective processes to receive official information, coupled with the labyrinthine structure and slow-moving performance of state bureaucracies, makes it extremely difficult for journalists to obtain information in a short period of time. NGOs, instead, are more accessible and efficient. Because they are more nimble, they generally provide information in a timely manner. Furthermore, NGOs generally keep more comprehensive and current data, and they are often able to line up spokespeople more expeditiously than government offices.

### **The Clash of Professional Logics**

Relations are not always collaborative. NGO officials raise several critiques aimed at core elements of the journalistic logic. They criticize news values that prioritize dramatic, controversial, and sensational dimensions. NGOs working on women's rights charge that domestic violence is generally covered either as a series of isolated crimes, rather than as a public problem (Lagunes, 2009), or when it involves high-profile politicians and entertainment celebrities, rather than ordinary women. Environmental NGOs lament that coastal erosion only becomes news after natural disasters (Green Gonzalez, 2010). NGOs focused on rural poverty complain that the dramatic state of rural schools becomes news only at the beginning of the school year (Dutton, 2010).

NGO officials also complain that the socioeconomic biases of the urban media slant the news. Issues that primarily affect socially marginalized populations, particularly in rural areas and districts populated by indigenous groups, are rarely news. Diseases (e.g., tuberculosis, dengue, Chagas) and health risks (e.g., child and maternal mortality) that disproportionately affect rural and poor populations seldom receive attention from the news media (Loewy, 2009; Roman, 2009). Instead, health risks that generally affect core media audiences are more likely to become news. Whereas education access among poor populations and the quality of rural schools are rarely news, teachers' strikes affecting urban school systems get wide coverage. Likewise, public safety is more likely to get press attention around crimes affecting urban, well-to-do citizens. NGO officials point out that editorial positions sometimes put up obstacles (Jusidman, 2009; Romero Leon, 2009). Making news about issues linked to the economic interests of news companies, board members, and prominent columnists is extremely difficult. For Argentine activists, the sporadic coverage of environmental degradation caused by the expansion of soybean exploitation and the "mining boom" throughout the country reflects intertwined interests of leading news organizations, particularly those based in provinces with extensive agricultural production, and agribusiness groups (Napoli, 2010).

Whereas some journalists recognize that many criticisms are valid, others brush them off. They point out various elements of the journalistic logic to justify decisions. Swamped with suggestions,

information, and tips, the journalists say that determining their newsworthiness is paramount. Because poverty, pollution, and human rights abuses are everywhere, stories need to bring novel elements (Camps, 2008). Documenting the harsh lives of millions of citizens suffering social exclusion and repression may be important, but finding “what is news” is critical. Amidst constant competition for space inside and across beats, information that lacks newsworthy elements is unlikely to become news.

Also, journalists acknowledge that some issues are more likely to hit editorial snags, especially if they don't fit editorial positions, or if they clash with internal interests. Assessing whether stories are of interest to core audiences of their news organizations is a prevalent concern, as is determining if the information fits the requirements of their medium. Reporters can push for certain stories, they say, but they need to be sensitive to newsroom expectations—namely, the fact that NGO information and social and civil stories are generally considered “information fillers” (Moralejo, 2009). They are not perceived as “hot” news that can make headlines, bring readers and audiences, command professional recognition, and feed the central topics of discussions in editorial decisions about assignments and front page news.

Such differences are not unusual in the relations between sources and reporters. They reflect disparate interests and organizational missions across NGOs and the mainstream media. NGO officials accuse reporters of being bound to the logic of professional journalism instead of covering issues they are relevant to public life. Their frustration is essentially with the warped view of the world offered by journalism. Journalists defend their decisions on the grounds that, even if they push for certain stories against editorial disinterest or opposition, they need to follow organizational norms and practices.

### **NGOs, News and Political Elites**

To understand the relations between NGOs and news organizations, it is important to consider the dominant status of prominent politicians as newsmakers, as well as the prestige of political news in the culture of professional journalism. The positions of key political officials vis-à-vis specific issues affect the newsmaking prospects of NGOs. Simply put, the chances of making news are stronger when NGOs finds sympathetic allies among political elites, particularly among those officials with newsmaking power. Instead, prospects are dimmer when the NGOs don't find strong interest among political elites, or when they find support from public officials without newsmaking power. Just as interacting with political elites and the state is critical for achieving policy impact in Latin America (Forewaker, 2001), it is fundamental to making news, too.

Neither media studies nor recent research on NGOs have sufficiently analyzed these relations. Much of this literature, as some authors have rightly observed (Bebbington, Hickey, & Mitlin, 2008; Edwards, 2009), has set up an irreconcilable opposition between civil society associations and the state. Civil associations are deemed necessarily “good” as the space for citizens' participation and the bedrock of democracy, and the state is viewed negatively because it distorts the efficient functioning of markets (for free market perspectives), or acts as the instrument of economic-political domination (for Marxist-structuralist views). Such a dichotomous view is not only normatively untenable, given both the many forms of intolerance and anti-progressivism in civil society and the potential of state policies to contribute

to positive change. It is also analytically flawed, for it fails to recognize either differences between political regimes or the range of policies.

To state the obvious, the relations between civil society organizations and the state are not identical in democratic and authoritarian regimes. Democratic regimes offer political fissures and ideological diversity in constitutional powers that are absent during military dictatorships. Since the 1980s, political parties representing a wide arc of ideologies have competed and held government positions in Latin American democracies. At the national level, power has swung from liberals to free-market conservatives to populists, with considerable variations across countries. From nationalists to socialists, from champions of indigenous peoples' rights to middle-of-the-road liberals, from law-and-order crusaders to social progressives—an ideologically diverse range of political parties and individuals have governed. To ignore such political heterogeneity would lead to skipping significant differences among the political elites and power-holders that affect the newsmaking goals of NGOs.

The point is not to wax poetic about the ideological diversity or the competitive pluralism of Latin American democracies. Rather, it is to indicate the need for an analytical approach sensitive to ideological differences and conflict among political elites to explain the formation of newsmaking coalitions between public officials and NGOs. Just as NGOs build alliances with journalists, many seek support from specific political elites. The reason is simple: Presidents, powerful cabinet members, and congressional leaders have the newsmaking power that NGOs lack.

Consider two examples from Argentina. Environmental NGOs have worked closely with legislators who supported laws to protect natural resources, and they have denounced the collusion of governors and large agricultural and mining businesses (Brukman, 2009; Girolami, 2009). In 2007, representative Miguel Bonasso (chair of the Commission of Natural Resources) introduced a bill (known as "the Law of Forests") that proposed to assign funding for forest protection, and to ban indiscriminate timber harvesting. The bill reflected long-standing demands from environmental NGOs mobilized against the unprecedented expansion of large agribusiness in forest areas, particularly in the north of the country. As expected, representatives from northern provinces, including members of the majority Peronist bloc, rejected the bill. They dismissed it on the grounds that it expressed the interests of "tramps," referring to environmental NGOs (*Clarín*, 2007).<sup>3</sup> Bonasso also played a leading role during early debates about the so-called "law of glaciers." The law was aimed at ensuring the protection of glaciers by defining them as "strategic water resources," banning "risk" industrial activities, ordering the assessment of environmental impact of mining activities, and imposing penalties for violations. The proposed bill was submitted amidst the "mining" boom in provinces situated along the Andes mountain range, bilateral agreements between Argentina and Chile to promote mining exploitation, and civil protest against national and state governments and mining corporations.

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<sup>3</sup> Greenpeace originally launched a virtual campaign that collected over one million signatures in support of the bill. Later, other NGOs (Fundación Ambiente y Recursos Naturales, Fundación Vida Silvestre, and the Foro Ecologista) joined in. A government report estimated that 70% of forests have been lost in Argentina since the 1940s. The law was approved in October 2007.

In both cases, NGOs participated in the drafting of the bills and filing a legal protection (*"recurso de amparo"*) against President Cristina Fernandez de Kirchner, who vetoed the "glaciers" law that had been passed unanimously in Congress in October 2008. Pro-environmental legislators' favorable views about NGOs were in contrast to other top officials, such as Secretary of Environmental Affairs Homero Bibiloni, who, during his inaugural address, strongly questioned whether NGOs effectively represented citizens (Ves Losada, 2008). Officials from environmental NGOs agree that Bonasso and other sympathetic legislators played key roles in terms of advancing the legislative agenda and attracting media attention. Bonasso's newsmaking power stemmed from several factors: in addition to being chair of the commission, he had been an influential columnist and founder of the leftist *Página/12*, and he embraced positions directly opposed by his fellow party member and former ally President Fernandez de Kirchner.

Also, NGOs and political elites collaborated in making news about tobacco control. The *Alianza Libre de Humo de Tabaco* (ALIAR), a coalition of more than seventy NGOs fighting for strict tobacco-control policies, was formed in 2007. Many of its members, including ALIAR's director, had worked with former Health Secretary Ginés González García (Schoj, 2009). Even though previous health ministers also supported strong anti-tobacco legislation, González García's tenure was a watershed in the history of tobacco control in Argentina. He shrewdly used his "bully pulpit" to call for strict tobacco-control policies and accuse legislators from tobacco-growing provinces who opposed tough restrictions, and he worked closely with President Nestor Kirchner during the preparation of the bill that was sent to Congress.

The newsmaking power of key government officials and favorable legislative decisions helped ALIAR's efforts to keep tobacco control in the news. González García kept raising the public profile of tobacco-related issues through frequent media appearances (Schoj, 2008). Also, ALIAR tried to maintain tobacco control in the news through press conferences and other events. Legislative Ves Losada, decisions at both state and municipal levels—seven provinces and more than a dozen cities passed strict tobacco laws between 2006 and 2008—were used as news pegs. After states and cities passed legislation, ALIAR monitored the enforcement of the laws, using the findings to generate newsworthy material.<sup>4</sup>

These two cases do not offer evidence to draw sweeping conclusions about the relations between NGOs, news, and political elites, but they suggest that newsmaking coalitions between civil organizations and political elites are possible.

### **Beyond Contention**

The experiences discussed here reflect two important developments: the professionalization of NGOs' approaches to newsmaking, as well as the consolidation of "issue" media politics. These

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<sup>4</sup> At the time of this writing, the Argentine Congress has yet to ratify the Global Framework Convention on Tobacco Control signed by President Nestor Kirchner in 2003. The Global Framework supports increases in cigarette prices, bans deceptive advertising and restricts tobacco advertising, and places limits on smoking in public spaces. Argentina still lacks national tobacco control legislation, which has been staunchly opposed by legislators from the seven tobacco-growing provinces.

developments are critical to understanding NGOs and the news in Latin America, and more broadly, to analyzing the articulation between civil society and the media in contemporary democracies.

By adopting a professional approach to newsmaking, NGOs depart from the tradition of civil newsmaking in the region. Historically, social movements and activists' groups mainly resorted to "dissent events" and alternative media to communicate demands and nurture spaces for public expression. Such channels were deemed necessary, particularly given the long tradition of political authoritarianism in the region. For decades, the collusion between media and military dictatorships, coupled with widespread persecution of dissidents, closed off the public sphere to alternative voices. Civil interests had little choice but to cultivate forms of communication outside the mainstream media. This history has contributed to the region's rich legacy of street theater and alternative communication as forms for citizens to both push the boundaries of public expression, and pressure governments for political and social change. This tradition has survived during the past three decades, even as democratic rule has become consolidated in countries historically subjected to a permanent cycle of civilian and military governments. Originally linked to anti-authoritarian movements, the tradition of resistance has morphed into a variety of contemporary forms of street theater and dissent events used to make news.

For NGOs, "dissent events" are, at best, insufficient to make news and participate in the public sphere to promote progressive changes. "Acts of civil disobedience" and "alternative media" may be appropriate in certain situations, but they do not represent an adequate strategy to promote broad and sustainable changes in news coverage and public policies. They are basically communication opportunities to "talk to ourselves" and "preach to the converted," rather than platforms to engage other publics, raise the public visibility of issues, and turn concerns into public problems. In their mind, reaching out to audiences who are not interested or attuned, let alone sympathetic to their causes and demands, is critical amidst the mediatization of contemporary politics.

This approach makes NGOs cautious about the use of public displays and "dissent events" to make news. NGOs don't flatly reject what Tilly (1999) called "contentious politics," the kind of strategies associated with classic social movements. Instead, they approach these events cautiously and selectively, as just one newsmaking tactic that may be effective in specific circumstances. They don't see illegal acts of disruption as the only available choice for citizens to gain news attention. In their mind, events such as roadblocks, strikes, occupations, and other forms of civil disobedience are unlikely to generate in-depth, evenhanded, and sustained news coverage. They may produce ephemeral, spasmodic, event-driven news stories that are insufficient to sustain attention from the public and policy makers. Even attention-grabbing events, commonly associated with Greenpeace's communication playbook, do not always maintain newsmaking power. The novelty and shock value wear off after a few times. Also, they require extensive mobilization of funds and people with unknown and unpredictable results.

In the view of NGOs, employing contentious politics presents two risks for newsmaking. One risk is that, as a former NGO official observes, journalists may dismiss street theater ostensibly designed to bring news as "just a bunch of gimmicks to get media attention" (March, 2009). Although reporters may dutifully cover government propaganda efforts, they may not approach media events staged by civil

groups in the same way. The other risk is that news attention is likely to increase when dissent events result in violent, disruptive actions. "Controlling the message" is more difficult in these situations.

Such considerations suggest the diversification of newsmaking among civil organizations. NGOs prioritize political pragmatism, even as they hold over negative views about key institutions in political communication. In fact, many officials I interviewed think of them as responsible for the invisibility of a range of social problems in public debates. Yet still, the NGOs see them as indispensable to make news and make policies. Despite the proliferation of communication opportunities in today's multilayered information ecology, the dominant "journalistic logic" remains the main gatekeeper of the mediated public sphere. NGOs build newsmaking coalitions with the mainstream media and political elites out the conviction that change inevitably requires reaching out to different publics and influencing legislative mechanisms.

Political pragmatism requires tapping into the logic of professional journalism through developing news strategies, as well as engaging with news media traditionally disinterested or opposed to civil causes. The Latin American cases confirm that Southern NGOs, like their Northern counterparts, have increasingly professionalized their approach to newsmaking, and have assimilated their strategies to the journalistic logic in the mainstream media (Cottle & Nolan, 2007). The consequences of this process, just like the overall professionalization of NGOs and social movements (Markowitz & Tice, 2002), are ambiguous. It is wrong to conclude that media/news advocacy pushes civil society organizations "away from the public and toward policy elites" (Gibson, 2010). Such conclusions offer an "either/or" option that hardly corresponds with the actual work of NGOs, which typically reach out to several different publics, including ordinary citizens, journalists, and political elites. They cultivate different and overlapping spaces for news and information.

Nor do the newsmaking experiences of NGOs warrant clear-cut distinctions between the newsmaking tactics of NGOs and social movements. Making social movements synonymous with disruptive tactics, and NGOs synonymous with moderate tactics, is not accurate. Nor should we identify social movements with truly grassroots forms of communication and NGOs with professionalized news activism (Demirovic, 2000, Edelman, 2008). Besides the unnecessary romanticization of social movements, such dichotomous views ignore both the different goals and tactics held and employed by NGOs, as well as their positions vis-à-vis social movements. Whereas some NGOs participate in social movements that present "sustained challenges to power holders in the name of a population living under the jurisdiction of those power holders" (Tilly, 1999, p. 257), others don't. Whereas some are integral parts of movements that test the permeability of the state to citizens' demands, others don't. Whereas some are identified with people who have long trajectories in social activism and party politics, others are technical organizations. These relations are contingent on the specific contexts of NGOs, movements, and media-political environments.

### **Conclusions**

The diversity of experiences across organizations makes it impossible to provide a simple answer to the original question, "Can NGOs change news?" The Latin American cases analyzed here suggest that

the prospects for NGOs to change news are contingent on too many unpredictable factors to produce categorical conclusions. The worlds of NGOs and newsmaking are too heterogeneous, and their relations are multiple and changing.

What, though, are the research and theoretical implications for the study of civil mobilization and the news? The experiences discussed in this article suggest that civil society is hardly a common project of news and media reform. Instead, it appears as a cacophonous, fragmented space of issue-driven politics and media advocacy efforts. There is no broad civic movement to “change the news,” but rather, dispersed and piecemeal efforts to get news attention about specific issues and organizations. Likewise, the mainstream press encompasses news organizations with distinct editorial preferences, divergent positions vis-à-vis political actors, and different interests in NGOs and their demands. Certainly, the news media could be more structurally diverse in terms of ownership and sources of funding, and mainstream journalism could be more oriented toward civic actors. The combination of commercialism and the statist orientation of professional journalism limits opportunities for NGOs to make news.

The dispersion of civil mobilization, coupled with the growing diversification of the news media, provides conditions for the consolidation of “issue media politics.” Different issues (as well as the organizations identified with them) face dissimilar chances of getting news attention. At times, some NGOs have built effective newsmaking alliances with sympathetic reporters and officials. Other NGOs, though, have faced more difficult conditions, as news organizations and political elites have been less interested in their demands.

The fragmented nature of “issue media politics” reflects the richness of demands and experiences in civil mobilization, as well as the chaotic and ever-changing articulation between NGOs, media, and political elites. In turn, the scattered nature of NGO newsmaking efforts perpetuates such characteristics. Certain causes (and organizations) are moved (at least sporadically) into the media/political mainstream, while others face consistently tougher conditions. As Cottle (2008) observes in the British context, civil voices aren’t absent from the media, yet not all issues and organizations have similar chances of making news. The media/political order is not equally recalcitrant to all demands. Second, this process reinforces divisions and hierarchies among organizations (the few “newsy,” and the many that are “invisible” in the media). Only the largest and best-funded NGOs can develop strategic communication plans and implement a range of media strategies to reach various actors.

In conclusion, the study confirms findings about the professionalization of newsmaking and the impact of NGOs on both civil participation and global and national policies. NGOs are “no magic bullet” (Edwards & Hulme, 2004) to address many entrenched problems—in this case, the structural and organizational factors that tilt mainstream news away from civil society. The relative success of many organizations in making news, however, indicates that not all doors are shut. Often in coalition with news organizations and political actors, some NGOs have successfully made news. Such achievements should not be dismissed in the contexts of media democracies with deep inequalities in media access. Nor, though, should we exaggerate their significance. Rather, these cases suggest that we should not approach the mainstream media as an undifferentiated field uniformly open or opposed to civic society.

Three implications for further analysis can be drawn from this study. First, the chaos of media environments, coupled with the heterogeneity of civil society and political elites in contemporary democracies in Latin America, opens up possibilities for bringing up multiple issues and perspectives into the mediated public sphere. Therefore, the analysis needs to remain sensitive to cross-regional differences in media systems, as well as to the articulation between media and political actors to assess the success of NGOs in influencing newsmaking and diversifying news content.

Second, the predominance of journalistic norms and routines forces NGOs to mimic the conventions of mainstream news. NGOs don't challenge the professional ideologies of newsroom or aim to reinvent news. Instead, they adjust to news conventions by meeting the needs and expectations of newsrooms. Strategies range from partnering with newsmaking political elites to get attention, all the way to finding individual editors and reporters who are sympathetic to their causes. In journalistic cultures where the rules of objectivity and fairness are loosely enforced, NGOs in Latin America have different opportunities (and challenges) to make news.

Third, the analysis suggests the need for nuanced further analysis about the relations among civil society, news media, and political elites. Setting up clear-cut divisions and irreconcilable oppositions falls into flat-footed reductionism. The interests of civil society organizations, news media, and political elites are hardly unified or static. In light of NGOs' pragmatic approaches to newsmaking and the changing positions of the news media and officials in relation to a wide range of citizens' demands, we should not approach civil society as a collective, unified project against the state and the mainstream media. Instead, it is necessary to refine the analysis to explore fissures, alliances, and conflicts among civil society organizations, news media, and government officials. The newsmaking field is certainly not leveled. In fact, NGOs' professionalizing efforts reflect the continued power of the mainstream media and political elites in the process of newsmaking. NGOs don't question dominant structures of publicity power, but rather, they adjust their strategies to the journalistic logic dominant in media systems tilted in favor of commerce and governments.

Future studies need to assess whether these conclusions apply only to Latin America, or instead, if they reflect emerging patterns of newsmaking and strategic actions by NGOs across countries and regions.

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