DEMOCRACY AT WORK: PRESSURE AND PROPAGANDA IN PORTUGAL AND BRAZIL

addresses democracy both as an institutional value system and as a practice. How are the media exerting their mediation role? How are the media re-(a)representing the political world to society? Are different media voices offering diversified and complementary perspectives on politics? How is propaganda perceived within different democratic and economic contexts? Is political trust and mistrust shaping the strategy of propaganda? These questions are addressed in theoretical and empirical chapters in a book that addresses problems which are in need of urgent discussion, as their impact and consequences are deeply transforming politics and the way politics is communicated, lived and understood by its main actors.

Within this framework, Political Communication Studies has a major role in identifying and urging new diagnosis of, and insights into, the political and the media systems, and, above all, how both the people and political institutions can both survive crisis and improve democracy in the Lusophone world. This book aims at making a contribution to that acknowledgment.

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CHAPTER 2
NEWS COVERAGE, POLITICAL COMMUNICATION, CRISIS AND CORRUPTION IN PORTUGAL

Isabel Ferin Cunha

Preamble

The coverage of political communication in Western democracies has undergone great mutations in recent decades due both to technological factors and changes in media, economic, political and social systems. One of the most decisive factors has been the increasing centrality of the Media and the consequent need of the political system to adapt to this reality. Among the strategies adopted is the delivery of political communication management to political advisers, and other professionals like spin doctors who tend to administer the relationship between politicians (and governments) and citizens through a logic of “attracting and persuading audiences.” This phenomenon determines the mobilization of all resources in order to weaken the opponents; these include: rumors, allegations or suspicions of corruption. On the other hand, the pressure on Media companies to make profits and increase their audiences tends towards the scheduling of certain political issues, such as charges of corruption; given their potential to shock this then leads them to increased audiences (Allern and Pollack 2012: 9-28). If we add to this a crisis scenario, not only economic, but also include democratic values, then the importance of reflecting upon all these factors together can be understood.

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Within this context, we will characterize the coverage in Western democracies and relate that coverage to changes in political communication as well as develop the coverage of political corruption within a crisis scenario.

**Contexts of news and political communication**

The representation of political corruption by the Media in Western democracies is intrinsically related to the characteristics of news coverage of political communication. Political communication has a horizontal dimension that consists of the relationships between politicians and the Media, and a vertical dimension involving political institutions as a whole, and also politicians and their relationships with citizens (Blumler and Gurevitch 1995). This Media triangle involves political players, businesses and Media professionals and citizens, the latter regarded as audiences.

McNair (1999) outlines the flow of political communication and begins by listing the political organizations and political interests involved, such as parties, public organizations, governments and pressure groups. Following on from this he refers to the area of the Media, stressing that they act on the basis of economic affiliations and advertising agencies, depending upon technological and human resources, as well production routines and audience targets. The final part in the chain of political communication flow is the public, who are not only the recipients but also the weakest link, voting at elections as a means of response. Meanwhile, the progressive replacing of the principle of mediation in political communication by the principle of mediatisation, has resulted in the penetration of values inherent in the Media sphere in political life (Mazzoleni and Schulz 1999, Meyer 2002).

This process began in Europe in the eighties, as a result of the development of new technologies and market liberalisation policies which gradually led to the commoditisation of journalistic information. This evolution has had consequences on the news coverage of political phenomena, as well as on political communication strategies, resulting in the