

Communication and crisis in the public space: Dissolution and uncertainty

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Recommended citation:

Palau-Sampio, Dolors; López-García, Guillermo (2022). "Communication and crisis in the public space: Dissolution and uncertainty". *Profesional de la información*, v. 31, n. 3, e310316.

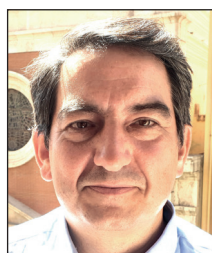
<https://doi.org/10.3145/epi.2022.may.16> **Access to the full text**

Invited article received on May 28th 2022



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Abstract

The evolution from a public space such as the one defined throughout the twentieth century –characterised by unidirectionality and political and media intermediation– towards a digital scenario –with multiple actors and multi-directional messages– has not resolved the problems that existed beforehand, and has also generated others. This public space crisis has been aggravated by the fragmentation of audiences, often absorbed into their own echo chamber, and by the dispersion and jumble of voices that are an impediment to any possibility of unravelling the terms of public debate. Faced with enormous challenges such as disinformation, the conventional media, who have traditionally held the responsibility of providing quality information, address these issues from a position of extreme vulnerability, due to the disintegration of the former economic model and social credibility. In a context of uncertainty, crisis, and fragmented public spheres, and there being no alternatives that can guarantee distinct dialogue, the initiation of a social debate that prioritises quality of information is essential.

Keywords

Public space; Public sphere; Polarization; Crisis; Digital communication; Conventional media; Demediatization; Quality of the information; Disinformation; Sustainability; Profession; Professionals; Credibility.

Funding

This article is part of the R&D project "Flujos de desinformación, polarización y crisis de la intermediación mediática" (reference PID2020-113574RB-I00), funded by the Spanish *Ministry of Science and Innovation* (2021-2024).

The article was developed following the participation of its authors in the "Fragile democracies: polarisation, populism and misinformation in a hybrid media context" conference funded by the *Conselleria d'Innovació, Universitat, Ciència i Societat Digital* of the *Generalitat Valenciana* (reference: AORG/2020/054).

1. Introduction

The title we have chosen for this single-issue edition of the journal *Profesional de la información*, "Communication and crisis in the public space", defines the complex situation faced by the communicative ecosystem, which has grown in intensity over the last decade. Indeed, using the term 'crisis' to define the functioning of the public space is no exaggeration, as it is now characterised by a multiplicity of sources, the speed of transmission of messages, difficulty in discerning their origin, fragmentation of the public and audiences and, finally, a loss of centrality of traditional intermediaries, that is, political parties and the media (Sánchez-Cuenca, 2022). It would, however, serve us well if we paused to analyse what kind of a crisis it is, and especially what type of a public space we refer to.