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| *Confronting the challenges of digital journalism for a democratic public sphere*

The bottom line for this chapter is to question the soundness of a democratic public sphere under the current framework of news production. Its backdrop is the assumption that the former is a necessary condition for a sustainable society. Largely supported by the focus on digital media and on market-driven logics, the new media economy seems to be systematically governed by metrics and the pursuit of profitable business models, combining the news agenda with branded content, and potentiating precarious work. The chapter concentrates on the Portuguese scenario, examining the conditions of media management and news production as well as the professional profiles that seem to be increasingly imposed. This topic is relevant because of the repercussions on the role of the media in society and its effective possibilities to contribute to the discussion of matters of public interest. It also concurs to the discussion of the concept of sustainability, while trying to assess the extent to which the foundations of a democratic public sphere and of participatory journalism may be counteracted by the imperatives of the new media economy.

This chapter builds on five case studies that have focused on media companies in which digital journalism plays a relevant role, either exclusively (*Observador*) or in complementarity to print (*Expresso*), on digital platforms that configure circumscribed editorial projects and/or are based on participatory journalism (*Artecapital* and *Blasting News*), and on a recruitment website that discloses the journalist profiles that different media and communications companies look for (*Carga de Trabalhos*). The research mobilized a mixed-methods approach, which included in-depth interviews, document and website analysis. Therefore, this chapter problematizes a set of transformations in the field of communication that accompany a strong technological and economic turn, with implications for the exercise of journalism as a practice that could foster participatory and democratic processes.