Revisiting *Tangentopoli* 30 Years Later: Why Have the Media Shifted from Party Collateralism to Adversarial Reporting?

Roberto Mincigrucci[a]   Matteo Gerli[*][b]   Marco Mazzoni[a]

[a]   Department of Political Science, University of Perugia (Italy)
[b]   Department of International Human and Social Science, University for Foreigners of Perugia (Italy)

Abstract

17th February, 2022 marked the 30th anniversary of *Tangentopoli*, the most important corruption scandal in Italian history. In this study we will attempt to reconstruct the controversial role of the media in the scandal in order to provide insights that help to understand the existing link between journalism and corruption. Based on a Bourdieusian perspective, we will try to see how various factors, exogenous and endogenous, have produced pressures both in terms of autonomy and heteronomy to the journalistic field. The proposed analysis will be both theoretical and empirical, with data retrieved from journalistic coverage of the time. Unlike media- and political-centric approaches, which tend to produce monocausal explanations, the article sheds light on the interplay of different factors (political, economic, judicial and media-related) that made the scandal of *Tangentopoli* possible.

Keywords: Tangentopoli; Corruption; Mediated Scandal; Journalistic Field; Adversarial Reporting.

Acknowledgements

*   ✉ matteo.gerli@unistrapg.it

1   Introduction

The 17th of February 2022 marked the 30th anniversary of the beginning of *Tangentopoli*, an event that triggered a radical change in Italian politics (Colarizzi, 2022; Almagisti et al., 2014). *Tangentopoli* has been described by some scholars and observers as a "judicial revolution" (Belligni, 2000). This is because, as a result of the efforts of a pool of magistrates, the political scandal that emerged effectively marked the transition from the First to Second Italian Republic, causing, in a short period of time, the collapse of the main parties that had animated the Italian political scene since the post-war period (Gentiloni Silveri, 2019). Certainly, the judges played a decisive role in bringing the case to light and punishing the corrupt politicians (Pizzorno, 1998; Nelken, 1996). However, it is quite clear that without the media, the action of the judges themselves would not have been as effective (Pujas & Rhodes, 1999; Giglioli et al., 1997). The media played a key role in creating the "myth" of *Tangentopoli*, that is, they criminalized corruption, raised public awareness of it (Diamanti, 2012) and stimulated public outrage. As many judges of the time acknowledged, and as some scholarly researches on the subject confirm, the work of the judiciary would not have been as impactful without a supportive public opinion (Pizzorno, 1998). In Italy, political corruption was a latent problem, i.e. everyone knew about it but no one raised the issue (Pujas & Rhodes, 1999). The media dramatization of the event broke the "spiral of silence", leading public opinion to condemn the phenomenon and lash out at corrupt politicians (Marletti, 2010).

30 years later, the role of the media in *Tangentopoli* is relatively under-investigated and still controversial. When thinking about the relationship between newspapers and corruption, it is quite common to idealize their role as "social guardians" capable of investigating wrongdoing and raising public awareness of the phenomenon. Alessandro Pizzorno (1998) argued that during *Tangentopoli*, the media, through their coverage, encouraged a sort of moral accountability (he used the term "*controllo di virtù*") over those in power. According to others, the role that the media played in those events was due to a push towards the commercialization and spectacularization of news (Giglioli, 1996; Giglioli & Mazzoleni, 1991), opening the door to judicial populism which would characterize the political news for several years to come. In this study, we will argue that both views can be considered right, because the two visions are neither incompatible nor exhaustive. According to our interpretation, one doesn't exclude the other, rather it is precisely in the mixture and even opposition between different journalistic practices and interests that we can empirically observe the process of symbolic delegitimization of the Italian parties and politicians who had ruled the country since the 1950s. Essentially, we argue that news media, acting both as actors and as symbolic arenas for the intermediation of discourses in the public space, played a crucial role in raising the salience of the issue in the public debate thus enhancing delegitimization among political class. In particular, through this study we will try to outline the socio-political and economic conditions, both internal and external to the media system, that made the mediated scandal of *Tangentopoli* possible.

In general terms, the ability of the media to independently construct a scandal is limited by the capacity of public actors, particularly political actors, to employ publicity strategies to control the media itself (Marini, 2017; Entman, 1989). According to Entman (1989, 2012), this is the main reason that leads to and determines a differentiated and intermittent treatment of scandals, in the sense that events with similar characteristics are not always treated by the media as scandals. In other words, the process that eventually leads to the construction of a scandal is the result of an interaction between the media and other actors, including political ones, in which no party has an advantage. In light of this, we want to argue that in the case of

Tangentopoli, the media had a clear advantage over politics as a result of a series of medium-to-long-term transformations that affected the media field and related fields (such as politics and the judiciary). Specifically, a series of factors, both external and internal to the media system, made it possible to frame the *Tangentopoli* events in a scandalous manner, generating scandal and outrage among public opinion. This does not mean that *Tangentopoli* was solely born thanks to the media. Various actors and factors played a decisive role in the emergence of the scandal. What we want to highlight is that the particular framing of the scandal, which was likely unique in the history of Italian journalism, was made possible by this series of factors.

To this purpose, we will use and "match" some conceptual tools that were elaborated by political communication scholars with a meso-level approach rooted in Bourdieu's field theory. In particular, we will refer to his conceptualization of the journalistic field as a *strategic terrain* in (and through) which several types of actors struggle to gain public visibility (i.e., symbolic capital) and to publicly define and impose the legitimate principles of representation of political issues (Bourdieu, 1995, 1996), that is also referred as *symbolic violence* (Boschetti, 2003; Swartz, 1997). This goes so far that the symbolic resources produced by journalists can have an active role in constituting, maintaining and changing power structures with the complicity of the involved actors.

By adopting the heuristics of field theory (e.g., Bourdieu, 1992, 1994; Bourdieu & Wacquant, 1992), we will conceive the key relation between journalism and politics as something that is strongly rooted in socio-historical circumstances, and, most importantly, that cannot be reduced to a mere ideological function of the media, such as in Marxist tradition. Indeed, what is relevant in a Bourdieusian informed perspective is the complex system of mutual influences and interdependences among *different* (partially autonomous) social fields that can vary over time (Schmitz et al., 2017; Gorsky, 2013). As Thompson (2005) pointed out:

> The media can be conceptualized as a field of interaction with its own distinctive set of interests, positions and career trajectories, a field that has arisen separately from, but is interwoven in many ways with, the political field. In differing ways, media organizations are all concerned with exercising symbolic power through the use of communication media of various kinds. While some of these organizations bear directly on the political field, they do not coincide with it, since they are generally governed by different principles and oriented towards different ends (p. 41).

In the following paragraphs, we will show how, during the period under investigation, Italian news outlets underwent a deep metamorphosis affecting their inner interests and principles — as a partially autonomous field of practices —, as well as their relations with the political field, the judiciary field and the organized civil society.

The article is organized as follows: the next two paragraphs will be theoretical in nature. We will reflect first on the concept of scandal and on its relations with news media, then on the concept of the journalistic field and the factors that determine its autonomy and heteronomy. After this, we will proceed with an empirical analysis of the case, presenting data on journalistic coverage of corruption during those years and contextualizing them by paying close attention to the factors (exogenous and endogenous) that made the aforementioned metamorphosis possible. Finally, we will discuss the main contributions of our research and major theoretical implications.

2   The Scandals as "Mediated Event"

In this section, we will reflect on the concept of scandal as mediated event and on the reasons why the media are fundamental in eliciting public expression of disapproval and public outrage related to *Tangentopoli*. Often, when approaching the phenomenon of scandals, there is a tendency to equate the latter with the crime that provoked it, justifying the relevance it obtains in the public debate by the seriousness of the events. As many scholars of the topic argue (Ares et al., 2019; Entman, 2012; Thompson, 2000), the offense and the scandal are two contiguous entities, partially interpenetrated, but presenting some distinctions. A scandal is not an ontological reality, like an objective and real event such as a crime, but it is a process of social construction (intended as framed by Berger and Luckmann, 1966), generated in a specific social context. It could be argued that a scandal is a sort of "qualification", a label that public opinion attributes only to some transgressions which violate the dominant morality. The advent breaking of a scandal implies a process of attribution of meaning within public opinion. It is no coincidence that Lang and Lang (1983) described a scandal as a "battle for public opinion", i.e. a competition between different actors trying to attribute different frames to an event.

A key role in this process of "labeling" a scandal is played by the mass media (Tumber & Waisbord, 2019). We do not mean to imply that the scandal originated solely from the work of the media. The process of "scandalization" of a particular event requires a series of determining conditions (Thompson, 2000), including a violation of laws, values, or social codes, and above all a public that feels offended by these transgressions and disapproves of them. These conditions are generally generated by a series of social, political, and sometimes economic factors. However, Thompson acknowledges that in a society centered around the media, modern scandals are inherently "mediated scandals", meaning that they do not exist outside the realm of media communication. Scandals as we know them today can be considered mediated, as we have seen, because mass media are the primary channels through which they are communicated and disseminated, and citizens' perception of reality is heavily influenced by the representation provided by the mass media. Mass media are not simply a transmission network for information that leaves social relations unchanged.

> Mediated visibility was not a retrospective commentary on a scandalous event: rather, it was partly constitutive of the event as a scandal (Thompson, 2005, p. 43).

Indeed, the media, on one hand, make the wrongdoing public, creating the conditions for public outrage, and on the other hand, they imbue events with attributes and frames that somewhat shape this outrage. By exposing wrongdoing, the media not only make certain behaviors public but also implicitly contribute to reestablishing what is considered "right" or "wrong" within a particular social context. They stimulate and guide public outrage. Indignation is indeed an essential requirement for a certain behavior to generate a "scandal", and not all wrongdoings are capable of doing so. Through a process of "thematization" (Marletti, 1985), the media manage to direct the narrative flow towards certain frames, organizing a complex phenomenon like a case of corruption into a coherent and simplified story with a clearly identifiable villainous character. For this reason, the media have played a crucial role in the process of delegitimization, which refers to the denial, by principle, of a political subject's right to govern (and sometimes even to exist), based on an alleged incompatibility with one or more values upon which a particular society is founded (Gervasoni & Orsina, 2017; Giglioli et al., 1997).

Tangentopoli offers several examples of this assumption: until the arrest of Mario Chiesa, political corruption was a phenomenon known to the general public but largely tolerated, without generating much attention. When the newspapers began to take an interest in the investigation and give it prominence, and especially when they framed the events in a certain way, publicly exposing the political actors, the audience started to take an interest in the phenomenon and feel offended. This is not meant to minimize the role of the judiciary, which initiated the investigations and contributed to criminalizing corruption. However, without the prominence offered by the media, it would have been difficult for the investigations to generate the same levels of public outrage and delegitimize the political actors involved.

3 The Journalistic Field between Autonomy and Commercialization

The ways and forms of the scandalization of corruption, and its effectiveness, depend on the structure of the journalistic field, that is, on the distribution of the various newspapers and journalists according to their autonomy from external forces of the field, primarily the market of readers and of advertisers. These forces can function in different ways: commercial pressures can free journalism from political patronage and influences, while different types of publics can bend the professional journalistic logic towards a more intellectual or, conversely, sensationalistic and moralistic style (Duval, 2019; Benson, 2013; Sapiro, 2003; Champagne, 1995).

In an "ideal speech situation", people can meet freely, holding equal rights of speech, to argue and address problems of collective interest by submitting to inter-subjective scrutiny their ideas-opinions expressed through argumentative forms. News media are a fundamental component of the public discussion. They introduce issues into the public sphere (Luhmann, 1971) which become objects of debate. However, today it is very difficult to speak of a *single* public sphere (Crossley & Roberts, 2004).[1] The idea of the bourgeois public sphere elaborated by Habermas is too limited to the historical period considered to be applicable to the complexity of contemporary societies. In addition, the arenas the journalist addresses can be very differentiated. In Italy, in particular, the literature on the argument (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Mancini, 2002; Marletti & Roncarolo, 2000) constantly repeats how journalism is not historically directed towards the masses but is a tool for the elite, economic but above all political. Before the "commercial deluge" (Blumler, 1992) of the 1980s, the information market in Italy was not particularly developed and newspapers represented, more than anything else, an instrument of communication of (and for) the elite, with strongly self-referential connotations, while "extra-elite" communication, directed at the public opinion, was very limited (Marletti,

---

1. As Crossley (2004), we consider the existence of a "common denominator" between the concepts of the social field and public sphere, which essentially lies in the idea of public debate as the primary milieu to generate a rational and critical discourse on public issues, and to promote a mutual understanding among citizens. Furthermore, both concepts involve a critique of the different processes that can undermine the social conditions under which public debate can take the form of rational and critical discourse. However, what really sets Bourdieu's perspective apart from Habermas' one, among other things, is the emphasis that the French sociologist puts on the plurality of competitive and interdependent sites of discursive production, which, taken together, define a large set of constraints and opportunities for discursive action. In Bourdieu's framework, linguistic-communicative exchanges are to be intended as a means to actualize (or challenge) power relations between the members of a field (or between different fields) and to publicly define orders of importance between possible alternatives, that is to give legitimacy to what is to be considered worth of value for a given social group (Bourdieu, 1991; Croce, 2019). However, this does not prevent us from considering even the more "optimistic" idea of a communicative exchange to be understood as the possibility of achieving a "reasoned consensus" on the public good and interests (English, 2011, p. 64; Crossley, 2004).

2010). Even television, which represented the principal mass medium of political communication, has for long reinforced the cultural division between elites and the masses. In this regard, Marletti and Roncarolo (2000) highlighted how the opening of television to political issues and debates in the 1960s and 1970s — with the introduction of generalist formats of political communication such as *Tribuna politica* and *Tribuna elettorale* — has only partially overcome the dualism between elite and mass political cultures. Among other things,

> this was the result of the party leaders' tendency to speak to each other in these televised encounters using the jargon and abstract concepts of political elites, rather than communicating with ordinary citizens using language and ideas that they could more readily understand (p. 202).

This has meant that journalists did not find legitimacy in the masses, but in the elites who exploited their product, orienting their work towards this type of audience (Forcella, 1959).

Around the 1980s, things began to change (Sorrentino, 2006; Mancini, 2002). The technological innovation of those years allowed for a strong development of the entire mass communication system, which meant an increase in media outlets (new radio channels, new television channels, but also new newspapers), and consequently a much larger number of news items than before. In the same period, a process of modernization and secularization of the society had undermined the partisan subcultures within which Italian media had functioned. For the media, therefore, competition became harsher (Marletti & Roncarolo, 2000), and journalists were forced to adapt themselves to the reality of a competitive market trying to broaden their audience. This opened up new possibilities for the media market, giving journalists the ability to target their audiences. In other words, journalists no longer worked only for (or on behalf of) politicians and elites in general, but could offer more market-oriented products, adapting both the formats and the contents of the news stories (Mazzoleni & Sfardini, 2009).

Previous studies on *Tangentopoli* (Giglioli et al., 1997; Giglioli, 1996) highlighted how the period in which the scandal arose represented a sort of "testbed" for a media system which, thanks to the then-ongoing process of commercialization (Mancini, 2000; Mazzoleni, 1995; Giglioli & Mazzoleni, 1991), began to be more *accountable* towards the public. According to this interpretation, if media outlets devoted great attention to the sequence of political-judicial events that occurred during the first half of the 1990s, it was not a consequence of the historical habit of political partisanship, rather it depended on a market-driven demand for sensationalism, which in the end freed journalists from previous political constraints and commitments. Emphasizing a political scandal, in this perspective, produces two main advantages for media outlets: 1) one advantage of commercial nature, which corresponds to an increase in revenues driven by the public's demand for news providing details about people involved in the alleged illicit conducts; 2) another advantage of symbolic nature, in terms of recognition and legitimacy, since by showing itself on the same side of the citizens, namely of the "victims", it is equivalent to presenting itself as an independent voice. Depoliticization, under this point of view, represented the necessary condition that guaranteed that Italian news outlets acted morally and in favor of magistrates and citizens.

While this argument is very convincing, it is nonetheless too reductive in considering commercialization as the main driving force for the changes which involved the Italian media system, and in particular the journalism's role with regard to political parties and leaders. Depending on the position in the field — that is the degree of autonomy in which a specific news outlet operates and its orientation towards a more intellectual or popular audience (Duval, 2019;

Benson, 2013; Sapiro, 2003) —, journalists produce different types of discourses on corruption scandals. In some cases, for example, a civil society orientation combined with the logic of a free market in the press can increase journalistic autonomy, freeing journalists from the constraints of political influences on their work (Marini, 2021; Benson, 2013; Brants, 1998). In other situations, on the other hand, excessive commercialization can condition the work of journalists, who are obliged for economic reasons to seek an excessive spectacularization and dramatization of the news (McNair, 2007; Postman, 2005), which can weaken the quality of the public debate. At the same time journalism can be more or less autonomous even when it is oriented towards (and legitimized by) a more educated public. There are numerous examples of advocacy journalism, i.e., political journalism which is free to intervene in the debate and express a point of view. However, there are many examples of journalism closely tied to the contingent and vested interests of the ruling class, and this, consequently, generates partisan and sometimes instrumentalized coverage.

As it was observed by Lamont and Thévenot (2000), each field of cultural production can be understood as a repertoire of different and competing logics, some of which are more rooted and widespread than others. Similarly, Hallin and Mancini (2004) highlighted how "media systems of individual countries are not homogeneous. [...] It is also important to remember that not every element of a given media system operates according to the same logic, with the same kinds of relationships with the political world" (pp. 71–72). Thompson (2005), on his side, affirmed that

> [t]he relation between politicians and journalists may on occasion be close and harmonious, as they may be bound together in forms of reciprocal dependency [...]. But the relation is also fraught with potential conflict and it can easily become a source of tension, as journalists may pursue agendas or take positions opposed to those that politicians or their spokespersons would like them to take (p. 41).

We want to argue that the *logic* of journalism is not fixed and is strictly dependent on a balance of factors both exogenous and endogenous to the media system.

To support this hypothesis, we assume that journalism has to be conceived as a professional space of mediation of the meanings of different political and societal issues, where the value of the news is at stake (Michailidou & Trenz, 2021). Theoretically, we draw upon both agenda building theory (Marini, 2006; Rochefort & Cobb, 1994; Cobb & Elder, 1972) and field theory (e.g., Duval, 2019; Sapiro, 2019; Marchetti, 2009; Benson & Neveu, 2005; Champagne, 1995; Bourdieu, 1994, 1995, 1996). While the first theoretical strand highlights the centrality of an issue in terms of a controversial problem that produces discursive conflict and polarization among groups in the public space — and thus tends to stress the variability and plurality of actors who have a stance *in* and *through* the media arena —, the second strand emphasizes the *relative autonomy* of the journalistic field. This concept points at the meso-level dynamics and interactions in the production of news, admitting the possibility that social influence among fields can occur beyond direct discursive interactions.

Benson (2013) highlighted how news production must be analyzed taking into consideration the dominant *logic* of a field, together with the structure of the field, and therefore the position that each media outlet occupies *in relation to* the positions of others. We can therefore recognize two distinct (ideal) types of fields: highly heteronomous ones, where the hierarchy of values in journalistic practices is heavily influenced by external pressures, namely the needs and objectives of various actors who have a primarily instrumental relationship with journalism; and more autonomous ones, where journalists can freely exercise their role and express

their opinions on political matters with the authority and prestige conferred upon them by the autonomy of their field and adherence to professional ethics. Similarly, within each field one can recognize positions with different levels of autonomy based on how the field has been organized and structured over time in terms of the composition of audiences, financing mechanisms, distribution of economic and symbolic resources, etc.

This allows us to overcome that dichotomist representation, which is still very common in the field of journalism studies, between a kind of journalism that is totally impartial and objective and a kind of journalism that is totally subjected to external influences and interests. Instead, the autonomy of journalism has to be considered as a socio-historical product, and as a *stake*, which might vary over time depending on the specific ways journalism, as a social field with relative autonomy, relates to external fields and interests. Moreover, this way of thinking allows us to avoid the problem of impartiality, at least in its idealistic and absolute conception, by focusing on how different media outlets in the field produce and try to impose different principles of representation of a given social reality (Bourdieu, 1995, 1996). In accordance with Krause's proposal to distinguish "variation in autonomy" from "variation of autonomy" (Krause, 2017), we do not consider autonomy of the journalistic field as a property of the field that can take only one form. Instead, we consider the possibility that a field can be autonomous in different ways and by linking itself with different other fields:

> If we abandon both the notion that there is one (good) way for a field to fulfill a particular function, and the idea that the differentiation of spheres is inherently harmful, we can ask open questions about how field autonomy is practiced under particular conditions, but also how we can group particular forms of field autonomy using field-theoretical categories of analysis. In these terms, we can distinguish different forms of autonomy based on different positions a field as a whole might have in the overall architecture of fields that it is embedded in (pp. 7–8; see also Benson, 2013).

In short, Krause suggests reflecting on the possibility that the journalistic field might not only be more or less autonomous from politics, the market and other external forces, but even differently autonomous in the way it is historically called to necessarily negotiate with external sources of influence (Schudson, 2005).

In the following paragraphs we will see how a series of changes, both exogenous and endogenous, challenged the very structure of the journalistic field during the period of *Tangentopoli*, which, between drives for autonomy and heteronomy, increased the salience of the event and drove delegitimization of political class.

4 How the Newspapers Reported on *Tangentopoli*

Before understanding the factors that made *Tangentopoli* scandal possible, it seems useful to reconstruct how the case was covered and the process through which this controversial issue became salient in the public debate. The data that will be presented below are the result of a quantitative analysis of the total number of articles containing the keyword "corruption" published per month between January 1992 and December 1994 by three of the major newspapers of the time: *La Stampa*, *La Repubblica* and *Corriere della Sera*.[2]

---

2.   Specifically, we used the available online digital archives of *La Stampa* and *la Repubblica*. For *Corriere della Sera*, we used the paid archive. We used a single keyword because some of the archives we accessed permit-
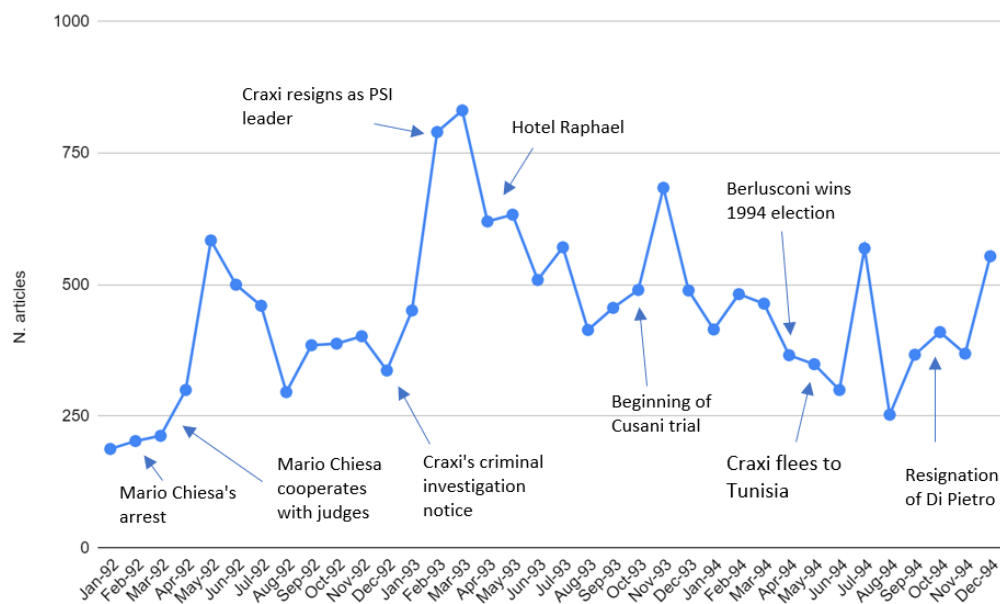
Figure 1: Time trend newspaper coverage of *Tangentopoli* (1992–1994)

Obviously, we are aware of the limitations that such an analysis, which is based on a sample of three newspapers, may entail, and this paragraph has no ambitions of completeness: we cannot say with certainty how much was said about corruption and scandal in those years (especially because, as explained in the related footnote, there is a lack of data on television, which was one of the key players in the process of media commercialization). However, these data provide us with an effective representation of the different stages of coverage of the scandal, and the different levels of media attention the case has received.

The symbolic date that marks the beginning of *Tangentopoli* in the collective imagination is the 17th of February 1992, when Mario Chiesa was caught in the act of pocketing a bribe and arrested. Mario Chiesa was a member of the Italian Socialist Party, collaborator of Bettino Craxi and president of the Pio Albergo Trivulzio, a public nursing home and hospital in Milan. However, as the graph shows, media attention to the event does not start on that day. The newspapers we analyzed had published in March 1992 far fewer articles containing the word "corruption" than the average for the period analyzed. The coverage of the phenomenon increased dramatically in April, when Mario Chiesa decided to cooperate with the judges and start bearing witness. Since then, several businessmen and politicians started to be investigated and arrested, and in turn began to denounce other actors, triggering a cascade. It was the names, particularly those of politicians, that aroused the interest of the media and actually led to the

---

ted only one keyword to be used. We are aware that using a single keyword represents a limitation and may not capture the exact coverage of *Tangentopoli*. However, based on previous research, we know that using the broad term "corruzione" (corruption) allows us to gather the highest number of articles related to the investigated phenomenon (Mancini et al., 2017; Mazzoni et al., 2023). The choice of these three newspapers was due to practical reasons: the three newspapers were the only ones that allowed one to trace back the articles published per month from 1991 to 1994. Instead, for a partial analysis of the time devoted by television news programs to key events of *Tangentopoli*, one can refer to Giglioli (1996, p. 385). Furthermore, we will also present examples of front pages from the weekly magazine *L'Espresso*, in order to provide evidence of the adversarial style of reporting adopted by leading magazines and newspapers in those years.

birth of the scandal. The involvement of politicians resulted in what is referred to in the literature as a media storm (Boydstun et al., 2014), i.e., a quick escalation in the coverage of a news story or issue that produces a high level of attention for a prolonged period, effectively increasing its salience in the public debate.

This certainly has to do with the commercialization process referred to earlier. Personalization has always been considered one of the main news values that can make a story appealing (Sorrentino, 2007). A corruption case containing recognizable characters is easier to report, because it is easier to describe an event as the consequence of an individual action instead of describing it as a product of indefinite special forces. Characters, with their stories, produce emotions and encourage indignation and this keeps readers focused on corruption cases. The most successful stories have recognizable protagonists, heroes, or, in our case, prosecutors, who fight malfeasance, and villains, i.e. politicians who are greedy and corrupt (Giglioli et al., 1997).

Nevertheless, this also had to do with the weakening influence of parties on the media system. Thanks to their broader degree of autonomy, the media was able to voice citizens' disaffection with the political class, supporting the work of judges and exposing the corrupt. Journalists played an active role in the debate, taking sides in the conflict. This led to the salience of the case, as there was a highly conflictual struggle within the Italian political arena: on the one hand there were the politicians, who tried to impose their own defensive frame of mind in the debate (Giglioli et al., 1997), and on the other hand there were differentiated publics, mobilized by the work of the judges but above all by news media, who created a hostile climate against the corrupted politicians and parties (Fieschi & Heywood, 2004; Pujas & Rhodes, 1999). These publics constituted a "public opinion" not in the abstract sense imposed by pollsters and other "doxosophes" (Lemieux, 2001; Champagne, 1988; Bourdieu 1973), but as an "inchoate field" (Boutyline, 2022), that is not institutionalized enough, in which actors and instances from different social fields might coalesce, experiencing field-based effects. This is particularly true in political crisis, when the role played by news outlets can become crucial, not only because they expose politicians to public condemnation, but mostly because they can favor the harmonization of the agendas among different sites of symbolic-discursive production towards a common issue (about this, see also Sapiro, 2022).

It is no coincidence that the climax of the scandal came when the investigations ended up involving Bettino Craxi, Secretary of the Socialist Party, former Prime Minister, and the most important figure in Italian politics in those years. In fact, the period of greatest coverage of the scandal took place between February and April 1993, i.e. the period between Bettino Craxi's first warrant of arrest and the iconic evening in front of the Hotel Raphael in Rome, when an angry crowd harshly contested the former Prime Minister. That was one of the most dramatized moments of the event, where the conflict was most acute, and the newspapers gave it wide coverage.

Another peak that deserves attention is the one starting in October 1993, i.e. the beginning of the Cusani trial. Sergio Cusani was, at the time, a prominent Italian business executive who was also accused and arrested for corruption. In the trial against him, many prominent politicians were called to testify. Precisely in light of the commercialization logic referred to above, the trial was broadcast live on TV, and in light of the personalities involved it had a very significant media echo. This was also a highly conflictual moment of the scandal, where several politicians (including Craxi) tried to defend themselves, and the media and public opinion harshly contested them. A few months later, having lost his legal battle, but above all his "battle for public opinion", Craxi fled to Tunisia to avoid the consequences of the scandal.

Figure 2 shows some cover pages of the weekly magazine *L'Espresso*, and offers some insights

Figure 2: Sample of cover pages of *L'Espresso* between 1992–1994. The cover pages refer to the following dates, in order from left to right: 17/10/1992; 14/06/1992; 28/06/1992; 12/07/1992; 26/07/1992; 06/09/1992; 13/09/1992; 18/10/1992; 06/12/1992; 20/12/1992; 27/12/1992; 17/01/1993; 21/03/1993; 09/10/1993; 23/10/1993; 01/08/1993; 14/10/1994; 16/12/1994. These cover pages are not presented for statistical purposes but rather as an example of the dramatization that was taking place during those days by a well-known Italian publication.

into the abovementioned process of delegitimization provided by a new form of adversarial reporting. Such delegitimization is strictly connected to the dramatization of the case, as reflected in the very strong headlines and in the caricatured images. It represents the condemnation of the corrupt political class by journalists, who act as social watchdogs. Certainly, this delegitimization was enabled by commercialization: attracting audiences, even pushing the spectacularization of the event, meant loosening the ties between journalists and politics, and finding greater autonomy in journalistic activities. However, this practice should not be read solely from the perspective of spectacularization understood as tabloidization of news (Sparks, 2000), as *L'Espresso* was and still is a "cultured" weekly aimed at the educated and affluent classes.[3] It serves as an illustration of a new form of adversarial logic, which was beginning to emerge in Italy during those years as a result of increased journalistic autonomy brought about by commercialization (Cappellini, 2006).

5 Exogenous Factors

To properly understand the role performed by journalists during the *Tangentopoli* period, we have to consider some broad transformations which involved the political field, the juridical

---

3. According to *Audipress* data for 1992, *L'Espresso* was read by about 25% upper class, 35% upper middle class, 24% lower middle class, and 10% lower class. It also had a much higher than average share among "intellectual" readers (such as professors, teachers and students).

field and also the civil society.[4] Indeed, even if a social field is always characterized by a multiplicity of logics and practices (depending on the specific kind of activities performed), some of them end up being stronger than others and therefore prevail on the "alternatives", thus exercising a sort of priority over the symbolic and material profits made available by the field in question (financial resources, symbolic prestige, political influence, etc.). In other words, the coexistence of several competing logics creates the premises for a transformation of the field (in the case under discussion, it could be the tension between newspapers devoted to political partisanship and newspapers devoted to a "new" logic of political accountability or spectacularization). On the other hand, this competition can be exacerbated by an "external crisis", which occurs in the surrounding environment or in structurally adjacent fields (Berman, 2014; Fligstein & McAdam, 2012), such as the political field, in relation to the journalistic field (Marchetti, 2009), that ends up giving rise to a metamorphosis of the journalistic field itself. Indeed, the crisis can be perceived by some actors in the journalistic field as an opportunity to promote a different normative and institutional framework with regard to the other members of the field, but also to external fields, with major consequences on the professional routines and public debate.

We want to claim that two major events co-occurred between the late 1980s and early 1990s, determining the crisis of the Italian political field and thus contributing to change the role performed by journalists with regards to political scandal: (a) the fall of the Berlin Wall; (b) the ratification of the Maastricht Treaty and the consequent explosion of public debt. Furthermore, we take into consideration two additional long-term factors: (c) the reformation of the juridical system and the rise of a new generation of magistrates who experienced a greater capacity to act against politicians; (d) the growing "active" role of civil society, who demanded a modernization of the State administration in conjunction with the question of honesty and morality (Saresella, 2016).

a) The fall of the Berlin Wall (on 9th November, 1989) symbolizes the crisis of the ideologies of the Twentieth century, but also the end of the long tension between two homogeneous political blocks, which characterized political relations for about four decades. The end of the Cold War opened a season of new possibilities for political and economic action, releasing material and symbolic resources that had been suffocated by the conflict. Nonetheless, for those political parties which had grown on the ideological climate of the Cold War, it represented the beginning of a period of crisis for what concerned their abilities to mobilize the support of traditional voters, historically linked to parties through strong ideological beliefs, more than programmatic choices and expectations. In Italy, the clear sign of the crisis was represented by the rapid rise of the Lega Nord since the early beginning of the 1990s, a political party with a strong anti-political and populist stance, other than a radical program of regional autonomy in contrast with the traditional centralism of the Italian public administration.

b) The ratification of the Maastricht Treaty (on 7th February, 1992) introduced three substantial innovations: a new allocation of competencies between the EU and the Member States; a strengthening of the powers of the EU Parliament; the definition of the so-called "financial

---

4.   We do not consider civil society in its idealized conceptualization, that is as a "separate" societal sphere from the economy and politics, with "solidarity" and "basic egalitarianism" (Müller, 2006, p. 313; cited in Koch, 2022, p. 2). Instead, we contend that civil society, while organizing in a relatively autonomous way its network of voluntary associations and organizations, is strictly interconnected with the developments inside the State apparatus and the political field. Nevertheless, this does not exclude in principle that social groups, who are not professional politicians, might explicitly position themselves in opposition to the State, requiring (and in some circumstances obtaining) a different institutional configuration and a consequent reallocation of the political power and material resources (see also Sapiro, 2022).

convergence criteria" which preceded and accompanied the subsequent introduction of the Euro. In short, from Maastricht a new stage in the process of integration began, characterized by a growing prominence in the national affairs by the EU as a political decision-making arena. For Italy, this implied a huge effort towards modernization and an improvement in the efficiency of its administrative bodies, with the aim of cutting the public debt and improving service effectiveness. For political parties, instead, this represented a clear limitation for what concerned the use (and misuse) of public resources for the construction of political consensus. Scholars refer to this broad transformation also in terms of a weakening of the consociational elements of Italian politics, which, especially from the 1970s onwards, had legitimized a political practice based on reciprocal accommodations and compromises between majority and opposition parties (Marletti & Roncarolo, 2000).

In the same period, the issue of fiscal sustainability had risen as a central political problem in the public debate. Indeed, for the working class and the middle class the process of fiscal consolidation promoted by the central executives in the early stage of the 1990s determined unavoidable consequences regarding their material conditions, also fostering a negative mood and skepticism against political institutions among citizens. Political parties relied heavily on their ability to influence this consociational system, as they engaged in a power-sharing practice to address social and economic issues (Graziano, 1979; Farneti, 1976). The decline of this system has deprived parties of an essential tool for maintaining consensus (Fabbrini, 1995).

c) Media exposure of a political scandal, from *Tangentopoli* onwards, would not have been possible without a transformation of the Italian judicial system. We refer to a long process of institutional reform that was implemented in the 1960s and 1970s, firstly with the establishment of the "Consiglio Superiore della Magistratura" (1959) — the self-governing body of the magistrates — and, secondly, with the introduction of new criteria for professional promotion (a seniority-based promotion mechanism), which made career advancement less dependent on the higher ranks of the judiciary, traditionally more conservative and more inclined to align themselves with government positions (Guarnieri, 1992). This allowed the entry into the judiciary of a cohort of magistrates, belonging to the middle class and socialized in the climate of the student uprising period (late 1960s), who experienced a greater capacity for action against politicians and political institutions. Something very similar occurred in France in the same period (Marchetti, 2009).

d) The emergence of new "collective subjects" — mainly from civil society — who demanded access to the public debate in order to promote and foster their (post-material) values and principles (Marini, 2021; Sorrentino, 2006; della Porta & Diani, 2005) was not less relevant. As well as the various "militant" associations that were born in Italy from the 1970s onwards — some of them with a clear antisystem connotation —, the decade preceding the period of *Tangentopoli* saw also the appearance of several associative and intellectual initiatives, in towns such as Palermo, Torino and Milano, with a clear post-ideological character (Saresella, 2016). Taken together, these initiatives placed at the center of their activity the struggle against the power of Italian political parties, which had "colonized" all the State apparatus and controlled all the connected resources. But even more important was their role in fueling a public debate on political-related issues that were transversal to the main lines of ideological-cultural division, such as honesty, justice, solidarity, legality and so on.

Together, these structural transformations made possible and upheld a clear shift in the way political conflict was organized and practiced in terms of political values, discourses and actors who were allowed to take part in it. Historically, the process of political delegitimization has mainly been articulated within the political sphere, on the basis of values (ideologies) and

stances rooted in divisions within the political domain itself (Orsina, 2017). Italian media outlets have long reflected, upheld and symbolically rearticulated the main ideological frames produced by political actors (Hallin & Mancini, 2004; Mancini, 2000, 2012). However, thanks to the transformations mentioned above, political delegitimization practices and discourses have found a new source of inspiration in values and cleavages that have emerged "externally" to the political sphere, in conjunction with a deep crisis of the traditional subcultures (Farneti, 1976) that had guaranteed a long period of electoral loyalty (Caciagli, 2017). Basically, we moved from a condition mainly characterized by conflicts *in* the political sphere to a partially new situation in which conflict tends to manifest *over* the political sphere and its symbolic autonomy over other social spheres, such as the judiciary system and civil society. In particular, we refer to some core values — such as *public morality/dignity* and *legality* (Orsina, 2017) — which become prominent in public debates and in the way conflicts are articulated through the participation of a plurality of actors.

In this situation, processes of delegitimization become centred upon some discursive and symbolic means of ethical, juridical and also pre-political nature, being rooted in the sphere of symbolic production "external" to the political domain *stricto sensu*. At the same time, these public arguments become means for the political battle in so far as, in specific socio-historical circumstances, they are activated in a de-legitimatizing way by different actors in the public sphere.

In light of this, we consider media outlets as structurally and strategically involved in this political and symbolic conflict. In particular, we are interested in the *Tangentopoli* period being a sort of turning point for what concerns the relationship between political actors and media outlets, at least as far as these were able to benefit from greater autonomy from political actors and give rise to "new" forms of political struggle. Indeed, the growing personalization of political conflicts and the consequent emergence of what has been called the "politics of trust" — to emphasize a specific way of functioning of modern democracies according to which scandals might become a sort of "credibility test" for people who hold privileged or power positions (Mancini & Gerli, 2018; Thompson, 2000, 2005) — is a direct consequence of this season.

6   Endogenous Factors

If the exogenous factors just described played a decisive role in the redefinition of the journalistic field, causing shocks to autonomy-related drives as much as to heteronomy, endogenous changes affecting journalism in those years were also influential. These endogenous factors, which we will describe in this section, are: a) changes in programming; audience and people's TV consumption; b) the advent of commercialisation logic on TV; c) increasing mixing of information and entertainment; d) the emergence of new television formats (from the 1980s onwards) involving the public.

The first major factor of change in the media field concerns changes within the public, and the way they consume television products. In those years television experienced a period of considerable expansion. From 14 million viewers in 1974, it increased to 20 million in 1984 and 25 million in 1995, an increase of 78.6% (Gozzini, 2011). The distribution between Rai (Italian public broadcaster) and various private channels (Fininvest but also others) describes a situation of substantial balance, that remains relatively stable from 1987 to the early 1990s. If the audience share of Rai remains stable, it is mainly the Fininvest networks that gain ground compared to smaller private competitors (Marletti & Roncarolo, 2000, p. 206). Viewers of prime-time programs were growing exponentially, as well as the average time people spent in

front of the television. In 1988, the average time spent by Italian citizens in front of the TV was 173 minutes. In 1995, the average number of minutes had become 214 (Gozzini, 2011). This considerable increase in TV consumption has also brought profound benefits to advertising revenue. According to an investigation by *La Repubblica* in 1989, advertising investments in the media system dropped from 881.5 billion lire in 1979 to 7,852 billion lire in 1990.

It is in fact the "commercial deluge" (Blumler, 1992) of the Italian media system. Until then, the media was not a particularly lucrative market, especially the market related to information (Marletti, 2010). It was precisely in the years of *Tangentopoli* that things started to change. For news channels, the competition became fiercer: in order to survive in a market with such a vast offer of news as the one created after the "commercial deluge", the elitist audience they were used to was no longer enough (Mancini, 2000), but they felt the need to broaden their target audience, directing their offer towards less intellectual and more mass audiences. This implied an increase in the use of those news "popularization" techniques such as sensationalism, story-telling and scandalization. Some authors speak of tabloidization of information (Sparks, 2000), referring to the shift away from serious news to so-called soft news. Even the coverage of hard news such as corruption may be affected by this commercialization, with journalists who, in order to please the audience, tend to create a scandalistic coverage of the phenomenon, that becomes spectacularized and trivialized (Mincigrucci, 2020). A scandal is a type of content that lends itself perfectly to the logic of media commercialization. A scandal sells newspapers, because it is as close as there is to a story, made up of good characters and bad characters, and with new developments every day that stimulate the curiosity of the audience (Bird, 1997). *Tangentopoli* offered all this, a new judicial investigation with constantly changing characters involved. *Tangentopoli* had something more than most scandalous news cases, namely it involved very famous people, such as prominent politicians or businessmen. Emblematic is the case of Raul Gardini, an entrepreneur involved in (and who committed suicide because of) the scandal, that was very famous in Italy thanks to his successes in sports sailing competitions, even before that. All these events, already laden with news value, were being dramatized and made spectacular by the media, effectively becoming a product with many commonalities to entertainment.

This process of commercialization pushed the media to increasingly mix information content with entertainment features. With a loosening of the ties (also economic) with the political system described in the previous paragraph, the media had to make profits on the market. Profit is made through advertising; advertising is attracted by high audience levels; high audience levels are achieved by being attractive to the public. And the media have become more attractive by hybridizing their formats, which are increasingly oriented towards forms of infotainment, i.e. formats that seek information through the logic of entertainment programs.

The innovative atmosphere affected not only the formats, but also those who produced them. In those years, a new generation of journalists entered the world of journalism. In 1983, active professional journalists under the age of 40 accounted for 37% of the total. This was a professional group of which almost two thirds entered the profession after 1978. Of these, 49.1% were women (Buonanno, 1988). Alongside feminization and young people, two other marked characteristics are the *northernisation* and *metropolisation* of recruitment at the expense of the central regions and provinces, where recruitment was most prominent in the 1960s. This certainly produced changes in the way politics was told. New television programs and new formats were created, that were much more interested in metropolitan areas such as Rome and especially Milan.

Talk shows — i.e., TV programs in which people of different opinions face each other, where more space is given to conflict than to information (Novelli, 2016) — which precisely in

those years began to proliferate, are the most striking example of infotainment and rejuvenation of the media system.

Two factors in particular deserve more in-depth discussion. The first is the emergence of a large number of entertainment programs. Quiz games, variety shows and game shows began to fill TV broadcast schedules and changed media habits, with audiences becoming less accustomed than in the past to hard news (or a serious way of telling the news) and more and more accustomed to entertainment programs. For example, highly successful TV programs like *Pronto Raffella*, *Il Pranzo è servito*, and *La Corrida* emerged in the mid-1980s, demonstrating the widespread popularity of television entertainment (Gozzini, 2011).

To meet these new audience needs, journalism also had to adapt itself. For this reason, new formats of news programs were born, such as talk shows or "TV reporting on crime", i.e., programs that offered mediated live coverage of trials and crime news. Well-known programs like *Samarcanda*, *Il rosso e il nero*, *Milano Italia*, and *Radio Londra* also emerged in this context. This has created a hybridization of formats, with infotainment programs, that is, where the demarcation between information and entertainment is increasingly blurred.

The second feature that deserves attention is the new role of the audience within the programs. The audience, in the sense of ordinary citizens who watch the program on a daily basis, began to be directly involved for the purposes of the show. This increased with game shows and variety programs, where increasingly the presenter engaged the studio audience to tell stories, or to play games with them by phone or in-person and win prizes. It was a consequence of commercialization: if the media wanted to attract popular audiences, they had to bring popular people to TV, with whom their audience could identify. Journalists stood in the midst of crowds to carry out their reports. This did not exempt the news programs: the anchors handed the microphones to the studio audience, allowing them to express their opinions on politics and current news. These opinions were often very negative, public attitudes were aggressive, shouting and blaming the corrupt political class. The shouting and the angry audience were elements closely linked to commercialization, because negativity and anger drove audience ratings. But at the same time, it contributed to the creation of a climate of opinion that was profoundly negative towards politicians and in support of the investigating judges, thus fostering outrage among public opinion and delegitimization.

7 Conclusion: How Exogenous and Endogenous Factors Influenced the Journalistic Field

The description provided in the last paragraphs demonstrates why the *Tangentopoli* scandal was a "unique event", where the media had the freedom to address a political issue like never before. As Entman explains, a political scandal always emerges from a confrontation among various actors to define the public discourse agenda (Entman, 1989, 2012). Even though, in theory, these actors have equal possibilities in determining the topics of discussion, in the specific case of *Tangentopoli*, the aforementioned external and internal factors have given significant advantages to the media, allowing them to have much more power than political actors.

The changes that we have just illustrated, both exogenous and endogenous, have profoundly modified the journalistic field, producing effects on party-media relations by increasing the autonomy of the media towards politics. The fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, as mentioned earlier, meant the weakening of political ideologies, reflected in a polarization that no longer concerns the great social cleavages of the 1900s but much

more aleatoric and contingent aspects (Bordignon, 2013). This produced consequences in the journalistic field in two ways, deeply interpenetrated with each other: in the first instance, parties are no longer able to fulfill the role of socializing agencies as they did in the past (Mancini, 2015). This role was replaced by the media, specifically television, which was experiencing significant development in those very years, both in outlets and content (Gozzini, 2011; Blumler, 1992). Secondly, the voters are no longer mobilized by the parties or their political subcultures, but rather by new issues, more related to daily life (Dahlgren, 2009). In light of these changes, policy pressures on journalism have become less powerful. In a sense, parties, and their leaders, were no longer dictating the agenda, as both their influence on newsrooms and their public grip was weaker than in the past. This weakness was further exacerbated by the Maastricht Treaty, which resulted in a period of austerity for Italy's public spending and consequently increased the population's discontent with the political class.

The loss of relevance of ideologies has also led to a shift in the public's attention away from collective actors (as parties and unions were) to prominent individualities (Thompson, 2000). This process was certainly also driven by the so-called media logic, which has personalization as one of its main features. In this scenario, the renewed prominence of the new class of magistrates, that was being formed in those very years, perfectly fits in. These new judges were young, acculturated, ambitious, and fully aware of the logic of the media. In light of this, they exploited the aforementioned changes to gain media visibility, something that the judicial body had never had before, but at the same time they offered journalists highly newsworthy characters — heroes to contrast with the politicians/villains on whom people were beginning to flock to their discontent.

This process of leaving behind political engagement and individualization, however, took on distinctive characteristics in those years (Gozzini, 2011), at least in Italy. Political participation has abandoned traditional parties but has spilled over into alternative forms of participation, namely movements (della Porta & Diani, 2005). These new actors (magistrates and movements) offered new interlocutors to journalists, allowing them to loosen the ties (and influences) that came from political actors, offering them pushes for autonomy.

What in our study we defined as "external factors" has found favorable ground in the field of journalism, made possible by a series of internal factors that have profoundly changed it. They found a media system in the midst of a "commercial deluge" (Blumler, 1992) with a proliferation of outlets that exacerbated the competition between media. As mentioned, in order to survive in a market with such an abundance of outlets, the media could no longer address only the elites, but there was a need to broaden its target audience, directing its offerings to mass audiences. The media had thus to mix entertainment-related content with hard news, with an increase in the use of those techniques of "popularizing" news.

This is, in a sense, an increase in autonomy toward politics, but an increase in heteronomy versus the market. The involvement of ordinary citizens came both with these sensationalism techniques, but also by giving them the opportunity to express themselves directly, to voice their discontent with the corrupt political class. Commercialization on the one hand has limited journalistic autonomy vis-à-vis the market, but it has certainly increased autonomy vis-à-vis the political sphere. As long as journalists were able to sell their news and broadcasting programs, they did not have to worry about pressure of any kind.

Tangentopoli was the perfect topic to gain this autonomy: on the one hand, it was profitable, because it was highly newsworthy. On the other hand, it further weakened the political class, increased popular discontent with them, and prevented them from exerting any form of influence on journalism. From this perspective, the *Tangentopoli* case appears to act as a catalyst

for the transformation of the relationship between media and politics with the emergence of an adversarial style of journalism, which consequently became more independent from politics.

Drawing on Bourdieu's field theory, and differently from media centric theories, we have considered journalism as a field inhabited by a plurality of actors and different interests and logics that co-evolve together with the socio-political and economic context. In other words, this means that depending on certain socio-historical circumstances, a specific hierarchy of values related to journalistic practices can become dominant in relation to an event or a sequence of events. This approach has the merit to highlight how changes in terms of journalistic practices and values, in relation to the political system and parties, have been constructed and made possible simultaneously *from the above* (the then ongoing metamorphosis of the Italian political-institutional architecture, with a clear change in the balance of powers to the detriment of traditional political parties and figures), *from within* (via the emergence, or the strengthening, of new journalistic formats and logics different from the historical habit of political partisanship), and *from below* (the existence of audiences morally, more than ideologically, involved in the public experience of the scandal).

In light of that, our findings suggest considering the journalist field as a repertoire of different and competing logics and interests, a dynamic professional sphere where the value of news is at stake. However, depending on the specific socio-historical circumstances, a specific hierarchy of values connected with journalistic practices can become dominant in the field in relation to a particular event or a sequence of events, while subsequent circumstances and events can determine a further transformation of the field and the rise of a different symbolic hierarchy. Our argument is consistent with Entman's insight about the differentiated and intermittent treatment of political scandals (Entman, 2012). A mediated scandal — i.e., the process of the symbolic and discursive construction of a political scandal —, while interrupting the ordinary political experience, feeds the uncertainty on the future development of the political situation and foster the intensification of struggles over the boundaries of the political field and over the very definition of politics by actors who are not professional politicians (Sapiro, 2022). However, the outcome of the process is not obvious and is strictly dependent on several factors, as we discussed in previous paragraphs. When it results in a political crisis, such as in the case of *Tangentopoli*, much of day-to-day life becomes questioned and "the social genesis of corresponding power relations becomes obvious" too (Koch, 2022, p. 4). This increases the margin of freedom for a "transformational change", opening the possibility for political action by actors "external" to the political field, such as the media, which can try to challenge the preexistent sociopolitical order.

References

Almagisti, M., Lanzalaco, L., & Verzichelli, L. (Eds.) (2014). *La transizione politica italiana. Da Tangentopoli a oggi*. Roma: Carocci.

Ares, M., Breitenstein, S., & Hernández, E. (2019). The Political Consequences of Corruption Scandals: Main Findings and Challenges. In H. Tumber & S. Waisbord (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal* (pp. 456–465). London: Routledge.

Belligni, S. (2000). Magistrati e politici nella crisi italiana. Democrazia dei guardiani e neopopulismo (POLIS Working Paper). *POLIS*. https://ideas.repec.org/p/uca/ucapdv/11.html

Benson, R. (2013). *Shaping Immigration News: A French-American Comparison*. New York, NY: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9781139034326

Benson, R., & Neveu, E. (Eds.) (2005). *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Berger, P.L., & Luckmann T. (1966). *The Social Construction of Reality: A Treatise in the Sociology of Knowledge*. New York, NY: Penguin.

Berman, E.P. (2014). Field Theories and the Move Toward the Market in US Academic Science. *Political Power and Social Theory*, *27*, 193–221. https://doi.org/10.1108/S0198-871920140000027015

Bird, S.E. (1997). What a Story! Understanding the Audience for a Scandal. In J. Lull & S. Hinerman (Eds.), *Media Scandals* (pp. 99–121). New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Blumler, J. (1992). *Television and the Public Interest*. London: Sage.

Boydstun, A.E., Hardy, A., & Walgrave, S. (2014). Two Faces of Media Attention: Media Storm Versus Non-Storm Coverage. *Political Communication*, *31*(4), 509–531. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584609.2013.875967

Bordignon, F. (2013). *Il partito del capo. Da Berlusconi a Renzi*. Santarcangelo di Romagna: Maggioli.

Boschetti, A. (2003). *La rivoluzione simbolica di Pierre Bourdieu*. Venezia: Marsilio.

Bourdieu, P. (1973). L'opinion publique n'éxiste Pas. *Les Temps Modernes*, *318*, 1292–1309.

Bourdieu, P. (1991). *Language and Symbolic Power*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Bourdieu, P. (1992). *Les règles de l'art*. Paris: Seuil.

Bourdieu, P. (1994). *Raisons pratiques. Sur la théorie de l'action*. Paris: Seuil.

Bourdieu, P. (1995). *Champ politique, champ des sciences sociales, champ journalistique*. Paper presented at 5th Cahiers de recherche GPS (Groupe de Recherche sur la Socialisation) of Université Lumière Lyon.

Bourdieu, P. (1996). *Sur la television, suivi de l'emprise du journalisme*. Paris: Liber Éditions.

Bourdieu, P., & Wacquant, L. (1992). *Réponses. Pour une anthropologie réflexive*. Paris: Seuil.

Boutyline, A. (2022). Holding a Position: Public Opinion as Cognition in a Disorganized Field. *Poetics*, *95*, 101710. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.poetic.2022.101710

Buonanno, M. (1988). *L'élite senza sapere. Uomini e donne nel giornalismo italiano*. Napoli: Liguori.

Brants, K. (1998). Who's Afraid of Infotainment?. *European Journal of Communication*, *13*(3), 315–335. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323198013003002

Caciagli, M. (2017). *Addio alla provincia rossa: origini, apogeo e declino di una cultura politica*. Roma: Carocci.

Cappellini, B. (2006). Dall'approfondimento all'ampliamento: il lungo percorso di riposizion-amento del quotidiano italiano. In C. Sorrentino (Ed.), *Il campo giornalistico. I nuovi orizzonti dell'informazione*. Roma: Carocci.

Champagne, P. (1988). Le cercle politique. Usages sociaux des sondages et nouvel espace politique. *Actes de la Recherche en Sciences Sociales*, *71-72*, 71–97. https://doi.org/10.3406/arss.1988.2407

Champagne, P. (1995). La double dépendance. quelques remarques sur les rapports entre les champs politique, economique et journalistique, *Hermès*, *17*(18), 215–229. https://doi.org/10.4267/2042/15218

Cobb, R.W., & Elder, C.D. (1972). *Participation in American Politics: The Dynamics of Agenda-Building*. Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press.

Colarizzi, S. (2022). *Passatopresente. Alle origini dell'oggi 1989–1994*. Roma/Bari: Laterza.

Croce, C. (2019). The Levels of Critique. Pierre Bourdieu and the Political Potential of Social Theory. *Sociologica*, *13*(2), 23–35. https://doi.org/10.6092/issn.1971-8853/9753

Crossley, N. (2004). On Systematically Distorted Communication: Bourdieu and the Socio-Analysis of Publics. *The Sociological Review*, *52*(1 suppl), 88–112. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-954X.2004.00475.x

Crossley, N., & Roberts, J.M. (Eds.) (2004). *After Habermas. New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Dahlgren, P. (2009). *Media and Political Engagement*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

della Porta, D., & Diani, M. (2005). *Social Movements: an Introduction*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Diamanti, I. (2012). *1992. Tangentopoli*. Roma/Bari: Laterza.

Duval, J.D. (2019). The Restricted Autonomy of Journalism and Cinema. *Biens Symboliques*, *4*, 1–29. https://doi.org/10.4000/bssg.337

English, J.F. (2011). Festivals and the Geography of Culture. African Cinema in the "World Space" of its Public. In L. Giorgi, M. Sassatelli & G. Delanty (Eds.), *Festivals and the Cultural Public Sphere* (pp. 63–78). London: Routledge.

Entman, R.M. (1989). *Democracy Without Citizens. Media and the Decay of American Politics*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Entman, R.M. (2012). *Scandal and Silence. Media Responses to Presidential Misconduct*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Fabbrini, S. (1995). Il compromesso storico. In G. Pasquino (Ed.), *La politica Italiana* (pp. 391–403). Roma/Bari: Laterza.

Farneti, P. (1976). I partiti politici e il sistema di potere. In V. Castronovo, (Ed.), *L'Italia contemporanea 1945-1975* (pp. 61–104), Torino: Einaudi.

Fieschi, C., & Heywood, P. (2004). Trust, Cynicism and Populist Anti-politics. *Journal of Political Ideologies*, *9*(3), 289–309. https://doi.org/10.1080/1356931042000263537

Fligstein, N., & McAdam, D. (2012), *A Theory of Fields*. New York, NY: Oxford University Press. https://doi.org/10.1093/acprof:oso/9780199859948.001.0001

Forcella, E. (1959). Millecinquecento lettori. *Tempo Presente*, *6*, 451–458.

Gentiloni Silveri, U. (2019). *Storia dell'Italia contemporanea, 1943–2019*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Gervasoni, M., & Orsina, G. (2017). Political Delegitimation in Republican Italy, 1945–2011. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, *22*(1), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2017.1267977

Giglioli, P.P. (1996). Political Corruption and the Media: the Tangentopoli Affaire. *International Social Science Journal*, *48*, 381–394. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-2451.00039

Giglioli, P.P. & Mazzoleni, G. (1991). Concentration Trends in the Media. In F. Sabetti & R. Catanzaro (Eds.), *Italian Politics: A Review Volume*. London: Pinter.

Giglioli, P.P, Cavicchioli, S., & Fele, G. (1997). *Rituali di degradazione. Anatomia del processo Cusani*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Gorski, P.S. (2013). Bourdieusian Theory and Historical Analysis: Maps, Mechanisms and Methods. In P.S. Gorski (Ed.), *Bourdieu and Historical Analysis* (pp. 327–366). Durham: Duke University Press. https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctv1168cx9.18

Gozzini, G. (2011). *La mutazione individualista. Gli italiani e la televisione 1954–2011*. Roma/Bari: Laterza.

Graziano, L. (1979), Compromesso storico e democrazia consociativa: verso una "Nuova Democrazia"?. In L. Graziano & S. Tarrow (Eds.), *La crisi italiana. Vol. 2: Sistema politico e istituzioni* (pp. 719–767). Torino: Einaudi.

Guarnieri, C. (1992). *Magistratura e politica in Italia. Pesi senza contrappesi*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Hallin, D., & Mancini, P. (2004) *Comparing. Media Systems. Three Models of Press and Politics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511790867

Koch, M. (2022). State-Civil Society Relations in Gramsci, Poulantzas and Bourdieu: Strategic Implications for the Degrowth Movement. *Ecological Economics*, *193*, 107–275. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ecolecon.2021.107275

Krause, M. (2017). How Fields Vary. *The British Journal of Sociology*, *69*(1), 3–22. https://doi.org/10.1111/1468-4446.12258

Lamont, M., & Thévenot, L. (Eds.) (2000). *Rethinking Comparative Cultural Sociology: Repertoires of Evaluation in France and the United States*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press. https://doi.org/10.1017/CBO9780511628108

Lang, G.E., & Lang, K. (1983). *The Battle For Public Opinion*. New York, NY: Columbia University Press.

Lemieux, C. (2001). Une critique sans raison? L'approche bourdieusienne des médias et ses limites. In B. Lahire (Ed.), *Le travail sociologique de Pierre Bourdieu: dettes et critiques* (pp. 205–229). Paris: La Découverte. https://doi.org/10.3917/dec.lahir.2001.01.0205

Luhmann, N. (1971), *Politische Planung: Aufsätze zur Soziologie von Politik und Verwaltung*. Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-663-07662-9

Mancini, P. (2000). How to Combine Media Commercialization and Party Affiliation: The Italian Experience. *Political Communication*, *17*(4), 319–324. https://doi.org/10.1080/10584600050178906

Mancini, P. (2002). *Il sistema fragile*. Roma: Carocci.

Mancini, P. (2012). Instrumentalization of the Media vs. Political Parallelism. *Chinese Journal of Communication*, *5*(3), 262–280. https://doi.org/10.1080/17544750.2012.701415

Mancini, P. (2015). *Il post partito. La fine delle grandi narrazioni*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Mancini, P., & Gerli, M. (2018). "Assassination Campaigns": turbolenza e copertura giornalistica dei casi di corruzione. *Rivista Italiana di Politiche Pubbliche*, *1*, 65–90. https://doi.org/10.1483/89476

Mancini, P., Marchetti, R., & Mincigrucci, R. (2017). La copertura giornalistica della corruzione. Drammatizzazione polarizzata, giudiziarizzazione e assenza di indignazione condivisa. *Polis*, *31*(2), 207–240. https://doi.org/10.1424/87206

Marchetti, D. (2009). The Revelations of Investigative Journalism in France. *Global Media and Communication*, *5*(3), 368–388. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742766509346610

Marini, R. (2006). *Mass Media e discussione pubblica. Le teorie dell'agenda setting*. Roma/Bari: Laterza.

Marini, R. (2017). Potere dei media, interdipendenza tra poteri e pluralismo dell'informazione. *Problemi dell'informazione*, *42*(1), 3–30. https://doi.org/10.1445/86113

Marini, R. (2021). Ragionando di advocacy nel giornalismo. La difesa dei diritti alla prova dell'immigrazione e della società multiculturale. *Problemi dell'informazione*, *46*(2), 187–212. https://doi.org/10.1445/101582

Marletti, C. (1985). *Prima e dopo. Tematizzazione e comunicazione politica*. Torino: Nuova ERI.

Marletti, C. (2010). *La Repubblica dei media. L'Italia dal politichese alla politica iperreale*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Marletti, C., & Roncarolo, F. (2000). Media Influence in the Italian Transition from a Consensual to a Majoritarian Democracy. In R. Gunther & A. Mughan (Eds.), *Democracy and the Media: a Comparative Perspective* (pp. 195–240). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mazzoleni, G. (1995). Towards a "Videocracy"? Italian Political Communication at a Turning Point. *European Journal of Communication*, *10*(3), 291–319. https://doi.org/10.1177/0267323195010003001

Mazzoleni, G., & Sfardini, A. (2009). *Politica Pop. Da Porta a Porta all'Isola dei Famosi*. Bologna: Il Mulino.

Mazzoni, M., Marchetti, R., Mincigrucci, R., & Stanziano, A. (2023). Strumentalizzazione o tematizzazione? Una nuova prospettiva per studiare la politicizzazione della corruzione. *Polis*, *37*(1), 37–66. https://doi.org/10.1424/106953

McNair, B. (2007). *Journalism and Democracy: An Evaluation of the Political Public Sphere*. London/New York: Routledge.

Michailidou, A., & Trenz, H.-J. (2021). Rethinking Journalism Standards in the Era of Post-truth Politics: From Truth Keepers to Truth Mediators. *Media, Culture & Society*, *43*(7), 1340–1349. https://doi.org/10.1177/01634437211040669

Mincigrucci, R. (2020). Political Scandals in the age of Pop-politics: the Glamourization of Corruption. In A. Haller & E. Michael (Eds.), *Scandalogy 2: Cultures of Scandals – Scandals in Culture* (pp. 162–183). Köln: Herbert von Halem.

Müller, K.B. (2006). The Civil Society-State Relationship in Contemporary Discourse: A Complementary Account of Giddens' Perspective. *The British Journal of Politics and International Relations*, *8*(2), 311–330. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-856x.2006.00212.x

Nelken, D. (1996). The Judges and Political Corruption in Italy. *Journal of Law and Society*, *23*(1), 95–112. https://doi.org/10.2307/1410469

Novelli, E. (2016). *La democrazia del talk-Show. Storia di un genere che ha cambiato la televisione, la politica, l'Italia*. Roma: Carocci.

Orsina, G. (2017). Antifascism, Anticommunism, Antipolitics: Delegitimation in Berlusconi's Italy. *Journal of Modern Italian Studies*, *22*(1), 7–26. https://doi.org/10.1080/1354571X.2017.1267978

Pizzorno, A. (1998). *Il potere dei giudici. Stato democratico e controllo della virtù*. Roma/Bari: Laterza.

Postman, N. (2005). *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Show Business*. London: Penguin.

Pujas, V., & Rhodes, M. (1999). Party Finance and Political Scandal in Italy, Spain and France. *West European Politics*, *22*(3), 41–63. https://doi.org/10.1080/01402389908425315

Rochefort, D.A., & Cobb, R.W. (1994). *The Politics of Problem Definition. Shaping the Policy Agenda*. Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.

Sapiro, G. (2003). Forms of Politicization in the French Literary Field. *Theory and Society*, *32*, 633–652. https://doi.org/10.1023/B:RYSO.0000004920.14641.1b

Sapiro, G. (2019). Rethinking the Concept of Autonomy for the Sociology of Symbolic Goods. *Biens Symboliques*, *4*, 1–50. https://doi.org/10.4000/bssg.334

Sapiro, G. (2022). Structural Crises vs. Situations of (Political) Crisis. A Bourdieuan Approach. *Rassegna Italiana di Sociologia*, *2*, 299–321. https://doi.org/10.1423/104930

Saresella, D. (2016). *Tra politica e antipolitica: la nuova "società civile" e il movimento della rete (1985–1994)*. Firenze: Le Monnier.

Schmitz, A., Witte, D., & Gengnagel, V. (2017). Pluralizing Field Analysis: Toward a Relational Understanding of the Field of Power. *Social Science Information*, *56*(1), 49–73. https://doi.org/10.1177/0539018416675071

Schudson, M. (2005). Autonomy from What?. In R. Benson & E. Neveu (Eds.), *Bourdieu and the Journalistic Field* (pp. 214-223). Cambridge: Polity Press.

Sorrentino, C. (2006). *Il campo giornalistico. I nuovi orizzonti dell'informazione*. Roma: Carocci.

Sorrentino, C. (2007). *Tutto fa notizia: leggere il giornale, capire il giornalismo*. Roma: Carocci.

Sparks, C. (2000). Introduction. The Panic Over Tabloid News. In C. Sparks & J. Tulloch (Eds.), *Tabloid Tales. Global Debates over Media Standards* (p. 1–40). Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield.

Swartz, D.L. (1997). *Culture & Power. The Sociology of Pierre Bourdieu*. Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. https://doi.org/10.7208/chicago/9780226161655.001.0001

Thompson, J.B. (2000). *Political Scandal. Power and Visibility in the Media Age*. Cambridge: Polity Press.

Thompson J.B. (2005). The New Visibility. *Theory, Culture & Society*, *22*(6), 31–51. https://doi.org/10.1177/0263276405059413

Tumber, H., & Waisbord, S. (2019). Media and Scandal. In H. Tumber & S. Waisbord (Eds.), *The Routledge Companion to Media and Scandal* (pp. 10–21). London: Routledge. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781351173001-2

Roberto Mincigrucci – Department of Political Science, University of Perugia (Italy)

 https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5754-387X

 https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Roberto-Mincigrucci

Roberto Mincigrucci is a Post-doctoral Fellow at the University of Perugia (Italy), where he teaches Prevention and Emergency Management Communication. His fields of research are journalism, corruption and online disinformation. His work has appeared in a number of international peer-reviewed journals, including the *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, the *European Journal of Communication* and *Contemporary Italian Politics*.

Matteo Gerli – Department of International Human and Social Science, University for Foreigners of Perugia (Italy)

 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0675-6901 | matteo.gerli@unistrapg.it

 https://www.unistrapg.it/it/docenti/matteo-gerli

Matteo Gerli is Assistant Professor at the Department of International Human and Social Science of the University for Foreigners of Perugia (Italy), where he teaches courses in Sociology of Communication and Political Communication. His research interests lie primarily in the areas of the Sociology of Media and Communication and the Sociology of Science and Knowledge, both from theoretical and empirical perspectives. His publications include books, book chapters and articles on international scientific journals.

Marco Mazzoni – Department of Political Science, University of Perugia (Italy)

 https://orcid.org/0000-0003-0367-7538

 https://www.unipg.it/personale/marco.mazzoni

Marco Mazzoni is Associate Professor of Sociology of Communication at the University of Perugia (Italy), where he teaches courses in Sociology of Communication and Public Relations. His fields of research are journalism, corruption and the analysis of the different forms of political communication. His work has appeared in a number of international peer-reviewed journals, including the *International Journal of Press/Politics*, *Journalism*, *Journalism Studies*, the *European Journal of Communication*, the *International Journal of Cultural Studies*.