# Mediatization and sociopolitical crisis in Peru. Imaginaries and practices of social actors

## Mediatización y crisis sociopolítica en Perú. Imaginarios y prácticas de actores sociales

## Mediatização e crise sociopolítica no Peru. Imaginários e práticas de atores sociais

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**ABSTRACT** | The article analyzes the imaginaries and practices of social actors in the context of mediatization and sociopolitical crisis in Peru. The study is based on a qualitative approach, whose method is grounded theory; semi-structured/in-depth interviews were conducted with 24 key informants in four regions of the macro-south of Peru, as well as a documentary analysis; qualitative data were processed using Atlas.ti v.22 software. As a result, it is highlighted that the media builds symbolic power in the actors' social imaginary in accordance with political and economic power, which is reflected in the degeneration and crisis of political parties, disenchantment, and citizen apathy regarding politics, leading to a sociopolitical crisis. It is concluded that, in a political-media system, with government intervention in the media and the instrumentalization of journalists, the mediatization of politics increases, with the resulting polarization and ideological radicalization, and civic education configures in the instituting/radical imaginary of the actors to rebuild the nation-State that produces a diverse, plural, and inclusive community of destiny.

**KEYWORDS**: mediatization of politics; social imaginaries; sociopolitical crisis; social actors.

**RESUMEN** | *El artículo analiza los imaginarios y las prácticas de actores sociales en torno a la mediatización y a la crisis sociopolítica en Perú. El estudio se basa en el enfoque cualitativo, cuyo método es la teoría fundamentada; se aplicaron entrevistas semiestructuradas y a profundidad a 24 informantes clave en cuatro regiones de la región macro sur del Perú, así como una revisión documental; los datos cualitativos se procesaron con el Software Atlas.ti v.22. Como resultado, se destaca que, en el imaginario social de los actores, los medios de comunicación construyen poder simbólico en acuerdo con los poderes políticos y económicos, lo que se traduce en la degeneración y crisis de los partidos políticos, la decepción y la apatía ciudadana respecto de la política, y la consiguiente crisis sociopolítica. Se concluye que, en un sistema político-mediático, con intervención gubernamental en los medios y la instrumentalización de los periodistas, se profundiza la mediatización de la política con la consiguiente polarización y radicalización ideológica, y la educación ciudadana se configura en el imaginario instituyente/radical de los actores para reconstruir el Estado-nación productor de una comunidad de destino diverso, plural e incluyente.*

**PALABRAS CLAVE:** *mediatización de la política; imaginarios sociales; crisis sociopolítica; actores sociales.*

**RESUMO** | O artigo analisa os imaginários e as práticas dos atores sociais em torno da cobertura midiática e da crise sociopolítica no Peru. O estudo fundamenta-se na abordagem qualitativa, cujo método é a teoria fundamentadas nos dados; foram aplicadas entrevistas semiestruturadas e em profundidade a 24 informantes chave em quatro regiões do macro sul do Peru, bem como a revisão documental; os dados qualitativos foram processados no Software Atlas.ti v.22. Como resultado, destaca-se que, no imaginário social dos atores, a mídia constrói poder simbólico de acordo com os poderes políticos e econômicos, o que se traduz na degeneração e crise dos partidos políticos, na decepção e apatia dos cidadãos em relação à política, e a consequente crise sociopolítica. Conclui-se que, em um sistema político-midiático, com a intervenção do governo na mídia e a instrumentalização dos jornalistas, a midiatização da política se aprofunda com a consequente polarização e radicalização ideológica; onde a educação cidadã se configura no imaginário instituinte/radical dos atores para a reconstrução do estado-nação que produz uma comunidade de destino diversa, plural e inclusiva.

**PALAVRAS CHAVE:** midiatização da política, imaginários sociais, crise sociopolítica, atores sociais.

## INTRODUCTION

Internationally, the mediatization phenomenon has been noticeable since the 1990s, when mass media gradually shifted their traditional role of reporting on politics from outside politics due to the process of mass-mediatization of politics. With the globalization processes of television, communication digitalization, the emergence of the Internet, the web and the popularization of social networks, the phenomenon has only advanced and consolidated (Marín-Lladó & Pérez-Tornero, 2020).

In Peru, during the last 30 years, as a result of the neoliberal economic and political model, sociopolitical relations between the State and society have been significantly weakened. This has occurred as a consequence of the weakening of society's political institutions, mainly political parties, which have been delegitimized and discredited by the political regime of Fujimorism implemented during the 1990s; this crisis has resulted in the proliferation of independent political movements (Tanaka, 2002).

Given the crisis of political parties, there is an institutional rupture in the power relations between society and the State and, therefore, a greater fragility and even an institutional vacuum in the interaction between those two components of the sociopolitical dynamics occurs. This fragility and institutional vacuum has been progressively covered, at first, by the mass media. According to Quiroz (2005), in the market economy, the mechanisms used by politicians to offer proposals and convince voters-consumers are replaced by media scenarios.

Thus, when establishing power relations between society and the State, the actors have been reorganized in recent years and, as a result of the incorporation of the mass media into the political process, the phenomenon of the mediatization of politics has arisen. In this process, these media play a decisive role in the sociopolitical interaction of the actors, perversely influencing the structural changes of the social system (Hjarvard, 2016), as a result of the intervention of the State in its dynamics (Strömbäck & Esser, 2014).

Mediatization of politics brought with it the convergence, divergence, virtualization, datafication and automation of processes aimed at the construction of a media ecosystem. Thus, mass media and digital spaces merge with the political work, broadening the contexts of replicative exchanges on the Internet, with the generation of political discourses, whether militant or not, in social networks (Slimovich, 2020). The new hypermediatized society brings into circulation discourses that transform and divide through complex media platforms (Maestri, 2018), where the citizenry produces and consumes narratives in renewed transmedia digital formats (Scolari, 2018).

Nevertheless, mass media had gained political prominence, hand in hand with economic powers, before the sanitary emergency produced by COVID-19. During the pandemic, social media have been significantly incorporated. Therefore, as a result of the previous mass-mediatization, the mediatization of politics has deepened. This phenomenon has resulted in various scenarios of sociopolitical action and interaction between social and institutional actors, producing perverse effects on the citizenry's political behavior. It has largely led to the citizens' apathy towards politics and the stateless political practice of politicians and the media: production and dissemination of biased and even manipulated information (fake news) about the sociopolitical and economic reality.

Within this context, the political behavior of social actors, mainly from the macro southern regions of Peru, does not occur at the margin of the phenomenon of politics mediatization, but rather, from their local and regional peculiarities based on the rationality of the Andean culture, they establish social and institutional relations in conditions of inequality before the media practices and political practices implemented by the centers of power through the mass media. In view of this situation, the aim of this article is to analyze the imaginaries and practices of social actors regarding mediatization and the sociopolitical crisis in Peru.


## THEORETICAL BASIS
### Politics mediatization

As a framework for analyzing the political discourse of social actors, we resort to the theory of political-media systems proposed by Hallin and Mancini (2004) in *Comparing Media Systems*, which establishes three models of media systems: the polarized pluralist model (Mediterranean countries in Europe), where the combined effect of the politicization of the media, the instrumentalization of journalists, and State intervention in information issues, emphasizes the instrumentalization of the media as its genuine characteristic. In the corporatist democratic model (central/northern Europe), three relational dynamics coexist: commercial vision of the mass media and its link with political and civil groups, political parallelism and journalistic professionalism, and freedom of the press and strong State intervention in the media, seen as a social institution and not as purely private enterprises. The liberal (Anglo-Saxon) model is configured around the development of a strong commercial press and its dominance over other forms of press, the early development of commercial broadcasting, the relatively strong professionalization of journalism, the development of a strong tradition of fact-based information and objectivity, the separation between media, political parties, and social organizations, and limited State intervention in the media. Based on

these models, Castromil and colleagues (2020) define the media system as a stable order that determines the relationships between media and political and economic institutions.

However, mediatization is conceived as a process of social change in which the media have become increasingly influential and deeply integrated into different spheres of society. I.e., society increasingly submits to, or becomes dependent on, the media and its logic. Thus, mediatization is distinguished from mediation, which refers to the more neutral act of transmitting messages and communicating through different media (Esser & Strömbäck, 2014). Mediatization is a temporally extended social meta-process, which produces sociocultural changes (imaginaries and practices) in the relations between politics, media and citizenship based on technological transformations (media, social networks, media platforms), where democracy is reduced to the scene, dramatization and entertainment (Cuéllar, 2021). As an incremental process, mediatization generates dependence of society and politics on the media and their logic, because the latter seek to impose their own agenda and supplant the political agenda, with the consequent political-media polarization (Hjarvard, 2008; Chavero et al., 2013). The massification of the Internet intensified mediatization, although previously television placed it as a central medium in everyday life (Krotz, 2017).

Moreover, mediatization has its origins in the notion of public opinion which implies, on the one hand, the relative autonomy of the media in relation to political institutions and, on the other, the configuration of the media as a parallel scenario for the action of governments, parties and parliaments (Saperas, 2020 cited in Castromil et al... 2020), 2020) Castromil and his colleagues (2020) conceive mediatization as the separation between decision and representation, where mediatized democracy is no longer political in the search for the supreme good, nor is government, but rather a stage game, represented through the media. Thus, mediatization can be understood as the commodification of politics.

Therefore, the mediatization of politics is a long-term process, in which the direct and indirect effects of the media are increasingly marked on political processes, institutions, organizations and actors, whose dependence on the media increases and are shaped by the media (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014). This conception is four-dimensional in nature: media, independence and independent influence of the media; media influence, the media are the most important source of information on politics and society; political logic, prevalence of journalistic interest in the content and coverage of politics and current affairs, and media logic, domino effect of the media on political processes and

on political actors and institutions (Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014; Esser & Strömbäck, 2014).

From semiotics, Veron (1993) conceives the mediatization of politics as a process that affects all social discourses, specifically political discourse; therefore, it does not simplify or unidimensionalize, but turns it into increasingly complex discursive strategies. The mass media, through semiotic-discursive processes, construct the public and media sphere, by means of discourses of identification and polemic between them and us, using sources of information, media autonomy, media practices, and political practices. According to Berrocal-Gonzalo and colleagues (2022), media and political practices have greater support and dependence on the media (mass, such as television and digital, such as social networks), accounting for pop politics or video-politics.

**Actors' social imaginaries**

Due to the nature of the methodological approach adopted, the study does not seek a comparative analysis of the sociopolitical discourses or public opinion of the social actors, but rather the analysis, understanding and interpretation of their subjectivities and intersubjectivities. Therefore, we adopt the category, theory and perspective of social imaginaries, in the sense that, at present and in the context of mediatization, the construction of social reality is produced through generalized strategies in mass channels of social mediatization, among which naturalization, agenda setting and narrativization stand out (Pintos, 2003), thus building different strategies of symbolic valuation that provide a construction of meaning differentiated according to social positions: dominant, mediating, or subordinate.

Accordingly, as a methodological perspective, social imaginaries are oriented to the social order problem analysis and are conceived as socially constructed and differentiated schemes, whose entity has a high degree of abstraction, based on the relevance/opacity code, and focus their analytical attention on the feelings and thoughts (perceptions), social meanings (interpretations), and actions/behaviors of the actors: social intervention processes (Pintos, 2005). Regarding feelings, for Max Weber, before being rational, the great types of life are characterized by non-rational presuppositions that are lived as such and are progressively integrated into ways of life. For example, myths and collective phantoms are at the very heart of all political life (Maffesoli, 2022); thoughts are ideas that for Charles Peirce are only in the mind, not in the physical world, as distinguished from signs/social meanings, because these are everywhere; thus, both thoughts and everything that surrounds us are signs; even man is a sign in development (Ramírez & Aliaga, 2022), and social action refers to all types of human actions oriented by the actions of others, which may be present or future, denoting a symbolic meaning (Weber, 2002).

According to the above, social imaginaries are magmas of imaginary social meanings instituted and effective, conceived as people's ways of being, thinking and acting, based on symbols and meanings (Geertz, 2003; Castoriadis, 2007; García-Rodríguez, 2019), are sources of production of human realities/societies, and regulate the practices of a community from the ways of feeling and thinking, codifying the desire of life of a people, a culture and a community (Leff, 2010). To the extent that reality is perceived in a singular way, there cannot be a single truth but multiple truths (Randazzo Eisemann, 2012). In this regard, for Baeza (2000), the analysis of social imaginaries implies questioning the modern and instrumental vision of consciousness, because they significantly influence the ways of thinking and acting in society. Therefore, a social imaginary is not the sum of individual imaginaries, but requires social legitimization through social relations, whose role is social cohesion in society.

From the reconstructive perspective of social reality, the instituting social imaginaries are oriented towards the radical imaginary. In this state, the imaginary is capable of resisting the processes of colonization and instrumentalization and of restoring life worlds from their roots (Habermas, 1999; Castoriadis, 2007). In this radicality, social imaginaries incorporate the intentional and effective dimensions of dominant social meanings (Leff, 2010). I.e., the process of reconstruction and transformation of social reality is impossible and inconceivable outside the productive or creative imagination, or radical imaginary (Castoriadis, 2007). Social imaginaries are radical as sources of creation. In this way, imaginaries would be reserve and power: reserve as an updating of culture, and power as creativity and dynamization of subjectivity (Martínez Posada & Muñoz Gaviria, 2009) for collective action.

From the perspective of the semiotics of social imaginaries, Dittus (2022) argues that these are an extension of the semiotics of signification, in which every cultural object means something, i.e., beyond the communicative phenomenon, the semiotic fact becomes the most generalized social phenomenon of the production of meaning: socio-semiotic phenomenon, where the media produce symbolic significant discourses that generate certain socio-political behaviors in citizens. To the extent that social reality is structured in thought, according to Charles Peirce, in semiotics the subject has access to reality by means of signs; i.e., reality is mediated and contained by semiotic processes, where the subject makes continuous associations, because signs function in infinite correlates (Ramírez & Aliaga, 2022).

**METHODOLOGY**

The research methodological approach is qualitative. The method adopted is grounded theory, which is epistemologically sustained in the inductive generation

of the categories of analysis, i.e., the researcher distances him/herself from any attempt to verify previous theories, and from an immersion in the social phenomenon generates a new theory rooted and forged from the data (Ramírez & Aliaga, 2022). The methodological strategy is constant comparative analysis, which allows comparing one piece of data with another in a constant and repeated manner to identify subcategories of analysis to be used in coding, thus establishing a coherent relationship between data and theory. Coding is a fundamental element as an analytical process of selection and labeling of data to generate categories, whose conceptualization and integration in the form of theory will give rise to the interpretation of the phenomenon studied (Estrada-Acuña et al., 2021).

### Participants and research techniques

The population-subject of study is constituted by social actors: social communicators, university professors and professionals dedicated to social leadership. The sampling technique applied is purposive, in complement to the theoretical sampling in which participants were selected under methodological criteria of key informants: availability of privileged/relevant information on the phenomenon under investigation; representativeness within the social groups studied, and accessibility, willingness and interest to participate in the study (Sommanustweechai et al., 2018). The scope of the study is circumscribed in four regions of the macro south of Peru, where 24 key actors/informants participated: Arequipa (10), Puno (6), Cusco (4) and Apurímac (4), due to data saturation. In qualitative studies, emphasis is placed on the particular/individual to study it in depth; therefore, the population-subject of study is a reduced number of actors (Duque & Aristizábal Díaz Granados, 2019). The study was conducted during 2022, before the failed coup d'état of President Pedro Castillo.

The data collection techniques applied were: semi-structured and in-depth interviews, and documentary review. These techniques were applied in two moments: first, we conducted the documentary review to gather information from secondary sources on the dynamics of mediatization and its implications in the situation of sociopolitical crisis in the country, whose instrument applied is the bibliographic record card, summarizing and recording, document by document, the relevant information identified on the basis of the content analysis technique. Secondly, we applied the interview guide; to this end, the social actors were strategically identified, considering their social and thematic representativeness at the level of the regions of the study.

### Data analysis procedure

The process of data analysis and interpretation was based on five phases: first phase, the interview guide applied to the key informants, under their

verbal consent, was audio-recorded. These interviews were manually recorded/transcribed into Word documents and edited to evaluate the quality of the information collected.

In the second phase, the research team, based on the content analysis technique (Duque & Aristizábal Díaz Granados, 2019) and the qualitative data analysis software Atlas.ti (Barquín et al., 2022; Quispe-Mamani et al. 2022), read and analyzed four transcribed interviews with higher data density (quotes/rooting), and identified the emerging subcategories of analysis that translated into the actors' behavioral patterns and served to code the data available in the other transcribed interviews.

During the third phase, through constant comparative analysis and thanks to the coding process, the research team identified 823 quotations, distributed and grouped into four main categories of the social imaginaries of actors, previously identified, and into a differentiated number of emerging subcategories of analysis.

In the fourth phase, with the available interviews/primary documents and the agreed upon emerging analysis subcategories, using Atlas.ti v.22 software, the frequency of interventions/testimonies of the actors expressed in the form of rootedness/quotations was identified for each emerging analysis subcategory, and then their representative quotations were retrieved.

The fifth phase involved the analysis, discussion and interpretation of the results of the study through qualitative content analysis and discourse analysis.

Finally, to guarantee the scientific nature of the research, a combination of three methodological principles was used: the techno-methodological symbiosis between grounded theory and Atlas.ti (Rojano et al., 2021), methodological triangulation between two different data collection techniques (semi-structured interview and documentary review, to analyze the same phenomenon), and triangulation of researchers, analyzing the data in a complementary manner among the four experts of the team (Forni & De Grande, 2020; Llanos-Contreras et al., 2021).

**RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

During the empirical research, 12 subcategories of analysis emerged, distributed around four main categories of analysis that account for the social imaginaries of actors regarding mediatization and sociopolitical crisis in Peru: feelings, thoughts, meanings and actions (figure 1).
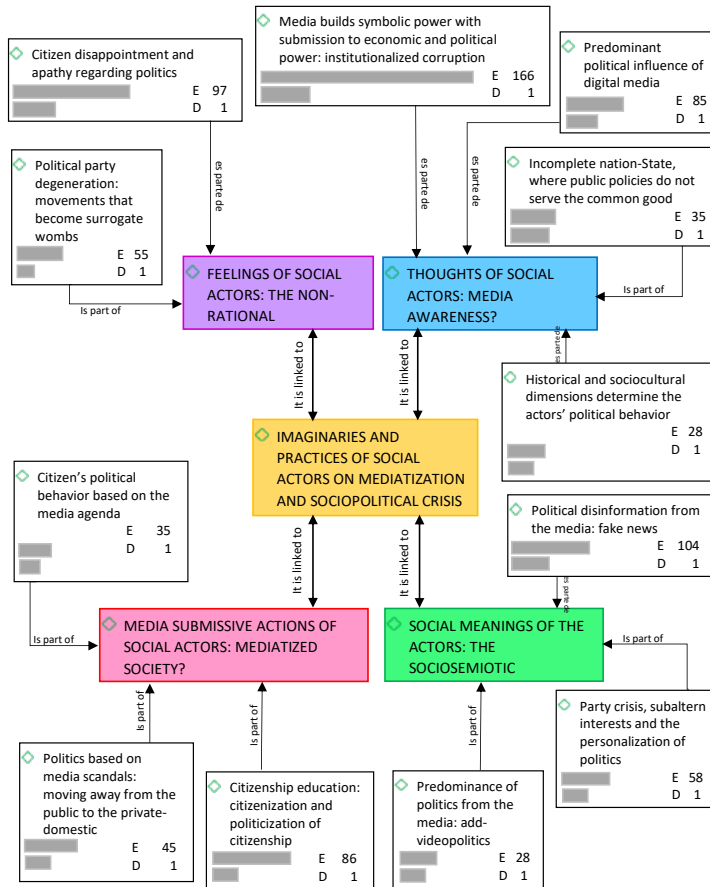
**Figure 1. Imaginaries and practices of social actors on mediatization and sociopolitical crisis**

*Source: Own elaboration.*

**Sentiments of social actors: the non-rational**

As a basic foundation of social imaginaries, feelings refer to that non-rational and non-irrational dimension of social actors, raised from Weber's sociology, according to which the social action/behavior of actors has its origin and support in natural instinct and intuitive action that are prior to rationality: reflexivity and thought. In this regard, concerning the phenomenon of the mediatization of politics and the sociopolitical crisis, according to figure 1, social actors have experienced, on the one hand, feelings of disappointment and citizen apathy with respect to politics (E=97[1]), a social imaginary according to which there is a significant political disaffection of the citizenry regarding political practice and,

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**1.** It is the concentration of information expressed by the social actors, which gives rise to the emergence/origin of the subcategory of analysis.

therefore, the exercise of political rights, with the consequent cession of popular sovereignty to the representatives from time to time. Thus, democratic politics is reduced to mere electoral democracy (Dahl, 1989) or audience democracy (Manin, 1998). This political behavior of the social actors would be contributing to the instability and permanent sociopolitical crisis in the country. The following testimony is representative of the imaginary experienced by social actors:

> I can assure you that 80% of the population is not interested in politics, in fact, they don't even read, they don't even give themselves the pleasure of the displeasure of seeing who are the ones behind our favorite candidate, like you and me, we are so apathetic to the public (quote 1:27[2]).

On the other hand, the degeneration of political parties: movements that become surrogate wombs (E=55) is an imaginary that emerges from the feeling of the actors regarding the behavior of political parties/movements of a merely electoral nature. With the phenomenon of the mediatization of politics, the citizens' feeling is that, during the last few years, political parties and movements have become political instruments of their owners to channel their candidacy for national, regional, and local political office/position.

> Nowadays, the parties have become surrogate wombs, they no longer train anyone, gentlemen, the parties grab and say you know what, you are well-known, they know you, what's more, you have money, I want you to be my candidate. Now, you want to be my candidate, well, you have to pay your fee, those are now the political parties (quote 1:6).

Thus, partisan politics has gone from a process of participatory and dialogical intermediation between society and State (Sartori, 2012) to a process of commodification of politics and power, which implies the transformation of ideas and public services into merchandise, affecting citizen participation and collective action (Robles & Córdoba-Hernández, 2018). In this process, the media plays an important/determining role in the production of signifying symbols (García, 2020), aimed at generating certain attitudes and political behavior in the citizenry.

### Social actors' thoughts: media awareness?

The ideas that social actors develop in the context of social and political mediatization are influenced by the dynamics and logic implemented by the political-media system which, according to the models of Hallin and Mancini (2004), in the Peruvian case, would be relatively close to the polarized pluralist

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**2.** 1 is the interview number (first interview), 27 is the 27th quote of the interview 1.

model, where the media put into play their bargaining power in the face of State interventionism in informative matters and the journalists' instrumentalization. In this scenario, social actors develop imaginaries regarding the relationship between media and politics: on the one hand, the media build symbolic power in agreement with economic and political power, which translates into institutionalized political corruption (E=166). This social imaginary reveals the dynamics and logic of mediatization of politics, where relationships are established between media and political and economic institutions (Cuéllar, 2021).

> We always heard that the media is the fourth power; I disagree, because it is not the fourth power, it is the extension of the economic power that has always existed in countries, especially in our country (quote 2:5).

> It is not only the economic part, but also the ideology, they are trained in all the neoliberal thinking and serve that thinking, that ideology. It is not like in the provinces, where we have a certain suspicion, which bothers us, makes us uncomfortable (quote 3:22).

> The media become an instrument for the exercise of politics and power (quote 21:17).

On the other hand, the predominant political influence of the digital media (E=85) is the social imaginary that has emerged in the context of the network society, driven by conservative currents, and which in daily life has been used by citizens as a counterweight and balance in the process of mediatization of politics, traditionally driven by the mass media. This mediatized socio-political reality in the country has generated a phenomenon of ideological polarization: on the one hand, the mass media concentrated in the country's capital (Lima), controlled by the political powers (governments in power) and economic powers (private companies) and, therefore, with a clear conservative tendency (Figueroa Burga et al., 2011) and, on the other, social media, which served as platforms for the expression of discourses and narratives linked to citizen demands for more transparent/objective information in the face of the monopolization of media policy by the mass media. According to the selective exposure of Humanes in Cuéllar (2021) and the mediatization of the political agenda by Chavero and colleagues (2013), as a result of the process of mediatization of politics, these media have become agents of polarization and ideological radicalization in Peru.

> I think that social networks, Facebook, TikTok, Twitter, WhatsApp, now are the channels where they can generate a high political incidence, of course it will not be massive, we cannot reach the mass media, because those are monopolized by a conservative right wing, we will not get there, but people do have political incidence (quote 9:34).

Therefore, the imaginaries of social actors show that media awareness inevitably transcends the process of mediatization of politics, because political processes, institutions, organizations and actors increasingly depend on the media and are shaped by them (Mazzoleni & Schulz, 1999; Strömbäck, 2008; Strömbäck & Esser, 2014; Esser & Strömbäck, 2014).

However, the study reveals two specific social imaginaries that transcend the phenomenon of instability and the long-standing sociopolitical crisis in the scenario of the mediatization of politics. I.e., Peru as an unfinished nation-State (E=35) and the historical and sociocultural dimensions (E=28) are social imaginaries that permanently shape the population's political behavior, whose practical political participation is ephemeral at the national, regional and local levels. In his seven essays on the interpretation of Peruvian reality, Mariátegui had warned that Peru was a nation under construction. In this regard, Arguedas, through all the ethnic groups, had identified the complex sociocultural diversity that configured Peru. Therefore, Basadre has sustained the thesis of Peru, problem and possibility, because the future of the country depended and depends on the historical recognition of that sociocultural plurality/diversity (Suárez Sánchez, 2016), which is still a pending issue.

> I am one of those who think that we are not a nation-State, there are many people who say we are a nation-State: there is the constitution, the institutions, the ministries are open, formally, of course it is logical if we are a nation-State (quote 3:28).

> It is not a state that produces a community of destiny embodied in the internal nation (quote 3:30).

> I think that we are a country with a complex democratic culture, I would not say that it is a deficient democratic culture, as it is often described, but that it is complex due to historical, cultural and social issues that influence the political life and behavior of the population (quote 3:2).

### Actors' social meanings: socio-semiotics

In the social world, actors construct social reality through signs and symbols, which give meaning and significance to everyday life. Thus, the mediatization of politics is symbolic/semiotic, because the public and media sphere is discursively constructed through the mass media (Veron, 1993) and it is a socio-semiotic phenomenon because the media produce significant symbolic discourses to influence the socio-political behavior of citizens (Dittus, 2022). Thus, during the study, three social imaginaries instituted with the mediatization of politics have emerged.

Political disinformation from the media: fake news (E=104) is a sociopolitical imaginary that has been instituted with the introduction of media systems based on media devices and formats driven, a priori, by the mass media (García, 2020). Faced with the monopoly of public broadcasting of distorted information, social media emerge with the expansion of information and communication technologies as alternative information media. Over time, they have become means of political disinformation, through new signs/symbols (media characters and actors): trolls. This dynamic of mediatized politics accounts for the configuration of sociopolitical imaginaries as instruments of political manipulation (Maffesoli, 2022).

> The media have lost their raison d'être, they do not inform you but misinform you, they do not entertain you but they distort things (quote 2:6).

In the imaginary of social actors, the crisis of parties: particular interests and personalization of politics (E=59) has been instituted during the last years, worsening with the mediatization of politics and losing protagonism, to become instruments at the service of political personalization (Chavero et al., 2013), because party politics revolves around the media skills of party/movement owners.

> The crisis of the parties, now there are parties that have their own owners. Cesar Acuña has his party, here in the region Mr. Richard Hancco has his party/movement, he is the owner, imagine what the political life of this movement will be like (quote 1:51).

As part of the media consciousness, the predominance of politics from the media: ad-videopolitics (E=28) is an imaginary that deepens with the mediatization of politics in the country. Likewise, the political empowerment of the mass media has deepened the phenomenon of the mediatization of politics and, based on its bargaining power in the face of government interventionism in informative matters and instrumentalization of journalists, has generated ideological polarization (Chavero et al., 2013; Maldonado & Del Valle, 2021). In this process, journalists have played a paradoxical role between information transparency and betrayal of the profession's values and ethical principles; therefore, in *The Journalist and the Murderer* Malcolm (2012) argues that every journalist who is not so stupid as not to see reality knows that what he or she is doing is morally indefensible.

> Unfortunately, so much power has been given to the media, that I once heard some colleagues at work say that journalists should put their governor, their congressman, what the population is going to vote for, that the journalist should say who is going to be their authority (quote 1:46).

**Social actors' actions of media submission: a mediatized society?**

Politics based on media scandals: retreat from the public to the private-domestic (E=45) implies that the social imaginary has been translated into the social behavior of actors based on the frivolization of political practice, emptying it and withdrawing public affairs to the private-domestic. As Berrocal-Gonzalo and colleagues (2022) argue, in the face of citizen apathy towards politics, political leaders use the various media to project significant spectacularized political information (infotainment) that captures the interest of citizens.

> If tomorrow we talk about candidate X being involved in a marital scandal, people will care more about that problem than about his/her proposal (quote 1:53).

Citizen political behavior based on the media agenda (E=35) is one of the imaginaries instituted with the mediatization of politics that accounts for the passive and submissive behavior of the citizenry (media consciousness) based on an overwhelming media agenda, becoming a fertile ground when the citizenry possesses an ephemeral political and civic culture. In this scenario, under the assumption of the need to guide citizens in their understanding of reality, over time, the media agenda ends up influencing the priority of citizens' agendas in different spheres (Cuéllar, 2021).

> The media have so much power[3], they are the ones who set the daily agenda, they are the ones who decide what is discussed at home, what is the topic of conversation, what is shared at work and so on, they are the ones who are setting the tone in Peru (quote 2:31).

Finally, in the social imaginary of the actors, citizenship education: citizenization and politicization of citizenship (E=86) becomes the instituting or radical imaginary (Castoriadis, 2007) aimed at understanding one of the actions pending and historically postponed by the political actors in the country.

> Emphasis must be placed on citizenship education, education in democratic values, it seems to me that this is absent, it is absent in the education of youth, courses that have to do with sociology, philosophy, history, civic education have been removed (quote 3:94).

From all points of view, education is a unifying tool in cultural terms, as Vasconcelos argued, and a means of socioeconomic integration to build the nation, as proposed by Mariátegui (Donoso, 2010). The main purpose of education is to form capable, autonomous and free individuals, and to use their surplus energy in the construction of the common good.

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**3.** The symbolic power of the media allows them to negotiate with the political powers in office.

## CONCLUSIONS

On the one hand, in the actors' social imaginary, the mediatization of politics has implied the degeneration of political parties converted into mere instruments for the political-electoral promotion of their leaders, a phenomenon which, in turn, has generated citizen disappointment and apathy towards politics. These emerging imaginaries from the non-rational dimension would be configuring passive and submissive sociopolitical behaviors to the political-media system implemented in the country.

On the other hand, Peru, conceived as an unfinished nation-state and in which the political behavior of the actors responds to historical and sociocultural dimensions, are social imaginaries instituted in Peruvian society that inevitably transcend into socio-political life. This sociocultural fragility of the country has been fertile ground for the construction of media awareness in the population, through the mediatization of social and political life.

Likewise, both the predominance of politics (ad-videopolitics/telenovelization) and political disinformation (fake news) from the media are social imaginaries that account for discourses and narratives of social actors around the mediatization of politics. Government intervention in the media and the instrumentalization of journalists have led to the construction of socio-semiotic discourses aimed at manipulating the political behavior of citizens, where party crisis and political personalization come into play.

Finally, the mediatized society would have been produced thanks to the media awareness of the actors; in this scenario, the political behavior of the citizenry is based on media scandals and the media agenda. These media imaginaries and practices have been instituted with the process of mediatization of politics. In this context, citizenship education emerges as the instituting/radical imaginary to reconstruct/reform the sociopolitical reality in Peru. In this regard, future research is called upon to address the problem holistically, based on mixed methodologies and incorporating political and institutional actors.

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