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EDITORIAL

Communicative Resilience Under Conditions of Backlash and Information Disorder

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ABSTRACT:

This introductory essay presents the special issue *Communicative Resilience: Civil Society's Response to Information Disorders* and argues for a shift in how resilience is understood in communication research. Rather than treating resilience as recovery or as a set of technical fixes (fact-checking, media literacy, or platform moderation), the essay frames it as a transformative, everyday process of meaning-making. In contexts marked by polarization, backlash, and attention-driven platforms, civil society actors sustain action by recombining identities, narratives, emotions, and viewpoints, while building networks of coordination and mutual support. Across the cases gathered in the issue, resilience emerges as multi-actor and relational. It relies on alliances that extend beyond institutions, develops alternative infrastructures for visibility and trust, and contests dominant frames that normalize hate or disinformation. The contributions collectively show how these communicative practices can widen participation and help publics bounce forward under pressure.

KEYWORDS:

Communicative resilience; Information disorders; Conservative backlash; Civil society; Power relations

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1. Conservative Backlash and Information Disorders

We are witnessing a profound crisis in democratic governance, alongside the rise of authoritarianism and populist politics, the re-emergence and normalization of racism and misogyny, and an intensification of societal polarization. At the same time, progressive values, such as feminism and ecologism, are being openly questioned and contested, and long-standing commitments to human rights are increasingly being eroded, relativized, or reframed as matters of partisan dispute. These challenges are not confined to any single country or political system; they are global in scope and visible across different contexts worldwide, fueled by digitalization.

Digital media were initially seen as tools for democratization and empowerment. What was once widely celebrated for its potential to expand access, foster horizontal participation, and amplify plural voices has gradually become an infrastructure that intensifies political spectacle, epistemic fragility, and social distrust. As public life migrates to these platforms, relevance is increasingly computed rather than debated; it is filtered through affinity, proximity, and the numerical grammar of metrics. In parallel, participation becomes inextricably linked to data extraction. Engagement is tracked, modeled, and fed back into the system. These mechanics shape the horizons of visibility, constraining what can appear as plausible, urgent, or legitimate (Rodríguez-Ferrandis 2024).

Within these platformed environments, attention is a scarce resource (Heitmayer 2025), and visibility is often secured through affective intensity (Papacharissi 2016). Outrage, fear, resentment, and moral indignation tend to travel faster in the post-mediatic public sphere than nuance, uncertainty, or deliberative reasoning (López García and Campos Domínguez, 2025). As a result, social argumentaries are becoming more emotionalized, privileging identity-based cues and moral polarities over evidential claims and argumentative complexity (Brady, Wills, Jost, Tucker, and Van Bavel 2017). As Boler and Davis (2018) sustain, emotions have never been peripheral to political life or to mediated public communication. Political preferences, collective identities, and patterns of mobilization have always been shaped by affective attachments, moral sentiments, and shared feelings that orient interpretation and action. From this perspective, it is misleading to claim that contemporary politics has become more emotional in any straightforward sense. The main shift is that the visibility of emotion has increased relative to factual truth claims.

The spread of recent Anglo-American internet vernacular labels such as doom (doomscrolling, doomerism) and cope/copium (Abebe 2025) helps to capture this affective turn as a key mechanism of contemporary information disorders. These terms name socially shared stances toward public events in hyper-mediated environments, where people increasingly "process" collective realities through resignation—doomerism—or via self-comforting rationalizations—cope. In this sense, cope operates as a rhetorical device that legitimizes conclusions deliberately distant from objective truth to reduce dissonance and sustain group loyalties. As Abebe (2025) illustrates, cope is invoked when struggling partisans cling to the single poll suggesting their candidate is not collapsing, or when wage earners reassure themselves that the ultra-wealthy must be miserable anyway.

In far-right counter-mobilizations, coping often takes the form of protective reframes that shield identity commitments. Feminist claims are dismissed as fabricated or exaggerated hoaxes allegedly sustained by subsidy-driven networks, and gender-equality policies are recast as ideological indoctrination (Carrillo and Iranzo-Cabrera 2024). Climate politics, in turn, is frequently contested through conspiratorial repertoires that seek to obstruct urgent action by discrediting climate policies, leaders, activists, and international commitments, and by portraying the ecological transition as economically prohibitive or simply unviable (Sendra-Duro 2025). Together, these dynamics normalize personalized "peepholes" (Abebe 2025) on reality

and reward emotionally coherent narratives over evidential robustness, creating fertile ground for polarized frames to circulate, harden, and become commonsensical within platformed publics.

This affective reconfiguration is not merely a matter of individual psychology but is structurally conditioned by the infrastructures through which publics now encounter and interpret political life. Social media platforms have become a fertile space for backlash repertoires because algorithmically curated visibility tends to privilege high-arousal content, antagonistic framing, and simplified moral binaries (Brady 2017). Hashtags, memes, and short-form video formats enable the rapid packaging and circulation of "us vs. them" narratives, while influencer ecologies and recommender systems amplify their reach and repetition (Gillespie 2018). Moreover, rather than simply hosting contention, the platformed public sphere increasingly turns antagonism into a performative resource. Real-time metrics quantify attention and reward escalation, repetition, and melodramatic scripting, often in Manichean registers of heroes, villains, and victims (Rodríguez Ferrándiz 2024).

Importantly, this ecosystem is sustained by both vernacular participation and organized political infrastructures. King's (2025) "relationship map" of conservative policy entrepreneurs (CPEs) conceptualizes media—including social media—as the pivotal node through which elected officials, think tanks, interest groups, and political operatives extend influence, coordinate narratives, and communicate policy goals to the public. In contexts of concentrated media ownership (Iranzo-Cabrera, Calvo, and Valera-Ordaz 2022), partisan post-truth "offers" and moralization tend to flourish (Couldry and Rodríguez 2016), producing a communicative environment in which hate speech becomes routinized (Carratalá 2019; Niñoles and Ortega 2020), and civic cynicism spreads widely (Dahlgren 2018). Conservative backlash is also being pursued through strands of conservative legal activism, often discussed under the rubric of "lawfare" (Blokker 2024). This involves using courts, litigation, and rights-based claims to reshape the normative landscape. It aims to narrow or reinterpret established rights (e.g., abortion or freedom of expression), to block or slow the institutionalization of emerging rights (e.g., euthanasia or the legalization of surrogacy), and to halt or roll back further expansion in areas such as same-sex marriage and LGBTIQ+ rights (Blokker 2024; Gloppen 2018; Handmaker and Taekema 2023).

Alongside this, social platforms come into play, and their proprietors may operate as plutocratic facilitators. They channel such content into segmented "information silos" that intensify polarization and vitriol. Ultimately, King (2025) argues that the conjunction of agenda-setting, the capture of key institutions, including the appointment of senior administrative officials, and the consolidation of a supportive media ecosystem points to a gradual abandonment of democratic norms and a trajectory toward authoritarian consolidation, rather than mere rhetorical radicalization. In this context, attacks against progressive movements become continuous and mutually reinforcing, and a key development is their growing uptake by mainstream conservative parties. Frames that once circulated primarily at the radical right margins increasingly migrate into conservative discourse, as the reputational costs of advancing exclusionary or rights-contesting claims appear to decline. Immigration operates as a master frame that conservative actors have progressively normalized (Haas, Stoetzer, Schleiter, and Klüver 2023). A similar pattern is visible in anti-gender politics, where feminist claims are reworked through narratives that cast equality measures as coercive, illegitimate, or "ideological." (Tarullo, Calvo, and Iranzo-Cabrera 2024)

Climate politics follows the same trajectory. Adversarial framings that mobilize "climate cost sceptics"—distributed across the political spectrum—gain traction when conservative parties begin to accommodate them, a shift that Dickson and Hobolt (2024) warn may ultimately weaken climate action. These developments underline the need to reassess the common assumption that civil society action and legal mobilization necessarily operate as democratizing or "civilizing" forces. As Eder argues, civil society does not necessarily engage in civilizing actions; there is always the possibility of a "perversion of civil society fostering uncivil

social relations" (Eder 2014, 556). In a related vein, Stengel (2019) notes that when "populism" is stretched too broadly, the specific danger of fascism may be downplayed while more ordinary political phenomena become dramatized.

The shift toward ultra-conservative values has had tangible electoral consequences, already visible in recent regional and national elections in countries such as Germany, Italy, and France, and echoed in the June 2024 European Parliament elections (Milosav, Dickson, Hobolt, Klüver, Kuhn, and Rodon 2025). Drawing on the 2024 European Election Studies (Popa, Hobolt, van der Brug, Katsanidou, Gattermann, Sorace, Toygür, and Vreese, 2024), which cover 27 countries and nearly 25,000 voters, far-right parties achieved unprecedented support, especially among young men (21%). Attitudinal factors tied to values and norms—self-placement on the right, prioritizing economic growth over climate policies, and stronger authoritarian orientations—are positively associated with the propensity to vote for the far right in the latest European elections (Milosav et al. 2025).

In this sense, what draws many Gen Z and Millennial men toward far-right formations is rooted less in episodic grievances than in broader cultural attitudes that are activated, amplified, and stabilized within today's platformed information environment (Renström and Bäck 2024). This attraction is often intertwined with a diffuse sense of threat and status loss. Some young men come to perceive themselves as "losers" (Breyer, Palmtag, and Zollinger 2025) or "underprivileged" (Blokker 2024) in a rapidly changing social order, particularly in relation to gender equality and the expansion of women's rights (Off, Charron, and Alexander 2022), as well as in connection with real or perceived competition with migrants over public services and welfare resources (Cavaillé and Ferwerda 2023). Notably, these threat perceptions tend to re-emerge reactively in contexts where egalitarian social change has been publicly defended and normalized, functioning as a backlash repertoire that is readily mobilized and intensified through platformed publics.

Finally, these dynamics are frequently accelerated in moments of crisis, both global (COVID-19) and place-based (extreme weather disasters or acute political conflicts), which heighten informational volatility and expand audiences' demand for immediately legible, emotionally coherent explanations (Moreno-Castro, Vengut-Climent, Cano-Orón, and Mendoza-Poudereux 2021; Alonso and Larrondo 2025). In such contexts, misinformation and disinformation become more actionable when linked to affective repertoires. Influencers and political leaders can amplify misleading narratives at scale, while technologically mediated strategies—such as coordinated disinformation or hybrid warfare involving cyberattacks and hacking—further destabilize public epistemic infrastructures (Monsees 2023).

The dynamics described above suggest that contemporary information disorders constitute a structural condition of platformed societies, shaping how crises are interpreted, how collective threats are politicized, and how backlash repertoires against progressive movements gain traction. Under these conditions, public sense-making is increasingly organized around affectively charged, identity-confirming narratives. At the same time, institutional trust and deliberative capacities are eroded through polarized truth claims, harassment, and routinized hate. This diagnosis makes the question of resilience to conservative backlash unavoidable. But resilience cannot be reduced to an instrumental or purely technical solution, confined to fact-checking, media literacy tools, or platform moderation. If information disorders are embedded in the attention economy and in the infrastructures that govern visibility and participation, resilience needs to be conceived as more than resistance to disruption. It should be understood as a multi-level capacity to endure, adapt, and, where necessary, transform the communicative and institutional conditions under which democratic life unfolds.

2. Moving beyond an instrumental understanding of resilience and communication

The concept of resilience has recently attracted significant scholarly attention regarding how societies respond to crises and disruptions. This heightened focus has also exposed the conceptual heterogeneity of resilience, which can be traced to its disciplinary origins. Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013) identify three core principles that define resilience as an analytical concept: persistability, adaptability, and transformability. These principles reflect the diverse ways resilience has been conceptualized across academic fields. Initially, in physics and mathematics, resilience referred to a material's capacity to withstand stress and return to its original state. This normative emphasis on stability and continuity shaped the initial use of the concept in ecological science, where resilience refers to a system's ability to sustain core functions despite disturbance. Simultaneously, ecological approaches marked a decisive break with linear models of equilibrium by emphasizing non-linearity, uncertainty, and the coexistence of multiple system states (Lorenz 2013). Psychological perspectives further developed the concept by shifting the focus from mere persistence toward adaptability and, in some cases, transformability. In this context, resilience is often understood as a dynamic process through which individuals handle disruption, learn from adverse experiences, and possibly experience positive change (Reid and Botterill 2013).

Collectively, these disciplinary trajectories demonstrate how the concept of resilience has broadened to include various approaches to continuity, adaptation, and transformation. Within social systems, resilience is closely associated with processes of social change. Lorenz (2013) contends that social resilience is crucial for short-term interventions as well as for reinforcing social structures that mitigate future crises. From this standpoint, resilience "manifests not only in times of disasters but also in crises and emergencies, thus in times of danger and uncertainty" (2013, 12). This framework identifies three principal capacities: (1) adaptation, defined as modifying structural arrangements to prevent or reduce future disruptions; (2) coping, which concerns how social actors address the effects of past disruptions; and (3) participative capacity, understood as the ability to effect change through engagement with other social systems and broader socio-political contexts.

This conceptualization raises important questions about resilience in social systems. First, crises are not merely external shocks; they also involve a loss of meaning and a breakdown of established expectations. Therefore, crisis becomes part of the ongoing flow of social systems, positioning resilience as a dynamic process rather than a set of separate outcomes resulting from specific events. Second, resilience operates across multiple levels, with different actors, institutions, and systems playing vital roles in shaping social transformation. Finally, the identification of crises (i.e., their causes, boundaries, and potential solutions) is rooted in existing power relations. As Keck and Sakdapolrak (2013, 14) emphasize, "social resilience is not only a dynamic and relational concept, but also a deeply political one." In this view, the central challenge for applying resilience to social systems is avoiding the re-naturalization of society and uncritically transferring ecological ideas into social contexts risks creating forms of structural determinism that hide important questions about agency, meaning, and contestation. As Cote and Nightingale (2012) argue, what counts as resilience and who is seen as a resilient actor are deeply connected to power relationships. Adding power to crisis and response analyses enables resilience to be understood in a more nuanced, situated fashion—one that moves beyond overly positive perspectives. In fact, as the authors suggest, the resilience of authoritarian regimes problematizes resilience as a purely functional capacity, revealing its ambiguous political nature.

More instrumental views of resilience in public policy often overlook civil society as an active participant in adaptation and transformation during various crises. The participatory ability of resilience relies on including diverse voices in crisis response; when such voices are excluded, resilience diminishes because specific needs

and locally based understandings of social situations are ignored (Voss 2008; Hyvärinen and Vos 2016). Labeling individuals as vulnerable or defenseless further diminishes resilience, legitimizes external intervention, and raises concerns about fairness and legitimacy. Colten, Kates, and Laska (2008) refer to the citizen networks and initiatives that arise during crises as "shadow responders," noting that they are systematically ignored by dominant authorities despite playing a crucial role in community organization during such times.

From a social research perspective, including civil society cannot be seen merely as crisis management. More broadly, collective responses to crises involve specific discourses that guide adaptation, transformation, and participation. Social resilience addresses citizens' knowledge during crises, as well as political interpretations of social processes and how actors intervene in them. As Trenz, Heft, Vaughan, and Pfetsch (2021, 123) emphasize, "resilience is not necessarily restricted to restoration, but can be highly innovative." For these authors, resilience must be understood in relation to resistance to better grasp the transformation of social systems more holistically. From their perspective, resilience may shift into resistance when civil society faces challenges such as economic insecurity or political repression. This concerns both "bouncing back" to a previous state and "bouncing forward" toward social change. The authors' perspective is especially useful for understanding the role of civil society in resilience because it: (1) warns against depoliticizing the resilience concept; (2) emphasizes the importance of involving diverse actors in resilience practices; and (3) views resilience practices as contextual, situated, and relational. Additionally, this approach has a distinctly communicative implication, encouraging further exploration of the discursive dimensions of resilience and how meaning-making itself becomes a central resource during moments of crisis. This perspective is vital for the argument we develop here.

Previous research has warned of the risks of eroding local capacities, entrenching unequal participation, systematically overlooking citizen responses, and naturalizing power relations in resilience agendas (Cote and Nightingale 2012; Olsson, Jerneck, Thoren, Persson, and O'Byrne, 2015). However, we emphasize that civil society is not just an actor for institutional responses to specific crises. We therefore argue for an understanding of civil society responses as culturally significant practices that reshape meaning, organization, and the trajectories of social systems, rather than merely as operational fixes. The communicative and cultural dimensions of resilience also emphasize that crisis responses are never value-neutral: they reflect normative orientations, collective identities, and culturally rooted forms of participation (Calvo, Yauri-Miranda, and Haro-Barba 2021). Civil society framed crisis challenges in terms of shared inequalities, situating them within broader political-economic systems and connecting them to specific agendas. Through their actions, they translate diffuse harms into publicly understandable experiences and create spaces for collective meaning-making that support identities and inspire action.

However, when the instrumental concept of resilience is applied to communication, it is mainly viewed as a technical tool for managing crises. In this perspective, communication supports prevention, preparedness, and mitigation through pre-tested campaigns, helps coordinate emergency responses, and aids in recovery by providing information and facilitating dialogue (Nicholls 2012). From this angle, communication is primarily seen as the transmission of information, with its effects measured according to the operational logic of a specific disaster. Its roles include monitoring risk perception, updating instructions, and identifying lessons learned after the event (Hyvärinen and Vos 2016). Although these methods are crucial for institutional crisis responses, they also risk depoliticizing communication flows. They tend to ignore the power relations that influence crisis narratives, limit communication to isolated emergency events, and marginalize the everyday networks that organize civil society outside formal institutions, ultimately prioritizing certain types of resilience over others.

Buzzanell (2010) provides a comprehensive view of communication as a set of complex, multidimensional processes, which include: (a) restoring normalcy during disruptions, (b) reinforcing identity references, (c) activating networks for mutual support, (d) employing alternative logic for action, and (e) acknowledging negative emotions while focusing on constructive responses. These are more than crisis management strategies; they are core resilience processes. As Buzzanell notes, "human resilience is constituted through communicative processes" (2010, 10). Therefore, communicative resilience encompasses integrating new identities, narratives, emotions, and viewpoints into everyday life, involving diverse actors beyond just institutions. This perspective places communication at the core of civil society's responses to crisis, since "the heart of resilience theory is the resilience processes that mediate adversity and outcomes" (Van Breda 2018, 12). The importance of this communicative focus has increased as hybrid crisis responses have developed. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated digitalization to an unprecedented level, turning platform-based communication into a core element of resilience efforts (Masiero, Milan, and Treré 2020). Under social distancing measures, civil society actors combined online and in-person practices, repurposed existing tools, and acquired new skills to organize, mobilize, and maintain social connections. This demonstrates resilience as an ongoing redefinition of public engagement, rather than a simple return to past routines.

Everyday social networks proved especially valuable for coordination and care precisely because they were embedded in the rhythms of daily life. Prior research shows that digital platforms are not merely operational infrastructures; rather, they articulate diverse needs, practices, and modes of engagement (Calvo 2025). Yet their potential for meaning-making and networked coordination coexist with platform dependencies, design conventions, and unequal digital literacies that constrain inclusion and skew visibility. In this sense, although digital media can foster politicization as a form of resilience, civil society remains vulnerable to the volatility of platforms and to broader dynamics of social change. The Internet thus emerges as a highly dynamic and often dissonant environment, producing uneven conditions for resilience (Trenz et al. 2021). This reinforces the need to conceptualize resilience as a long-term, multi-actor process shaped by power asymmetries, rather than a short-term, instrumental response. An overly operational view of resilience and communication risks obscures the very conditions that make crisis responses necessary.

In this section, we highlight the limitations of framing resilience and communication as short-term, instrumental practices during specific crises and instead propose a broader, civil-society-centered understanding. First, resilience goes beyond immediate responses to specific disruptions; it includes society's ability to persist, adapt, and transform. In complex social systems, these processes require careful attention to the actors involved and the power relations that shape their participation. Crises are multiple and multidimensional: they include disasters as well as ongoing, structural disturbances. What counts as a crisis and whose experiences define it is itself a matter of power. Communication plays a key role in these processes, with civil society engaging as an active agent that interprets, reframes, and intervenes in crisis dynamics. The growing importance of the Internet means that much of this interpretive and organizational work now occurs within digital environments, which bring their own constraints and opportunities.

Moving beyond an instrumental understanding of resilience and communication advances the central argument in two key respects. First, it enables recognition of the diverse practices of civil society, which extend beyond material responses to encompass cultural interpretation and collective sense-making. Second, it positions communication itself as a site of crisis, particularly in digital environments where disinformation, polarization, and hate speech generate structural and political disruptions that undermine shared meanings. Within this special issue, communication is conceptualized as both an object of resilience and the primary means through which resilience is constructed, as actors engage with and challenge disruptive ideas circulating in unequal and restrictive digital infrastructures. Thus, communicative resilience emerges as a political practice aimed at transforming the ongoing crisis of meaning in contemporary societies.

3. Introduction to the special issue

3.1. Contributions in the special issue

The articles in this special issue enable a comprehensive analysis of how diverse social actors respond to disruptions through context-specific communicative practices within platform-mediated ecosystems shaped by episodic and structural crises. Employing a range of methodologies and theoretical frameworks, these studies demonstrate how organized citizens intervene during complex crises, challenge dominant narrative frames, and address informational harms associated with polarization, hate, and disinformation.

Serrano, Pitarch-Garrido, and Picó-Garcés (2026) open this perspective by showing that, when institutional responses are delayed, digital volunteer networks mobilize to create alternative coordination channels. Using a mixed-methods approach that combines surveys of citizen initiative leaders, social network analysis, and analysis of public channel publications, the article offers a detailed mapping of the solidarity ecosystem. The results reveal a higher density in recognition networks compared to collaboration networks and indicate that trust is more often placed in community-based and academic actors than in public administrations. This study demonstrates how connected citizens reframe catastrophe from a narrative of catastrophism to one collective solidarity, thereby establishing communicative resilience as a collective response to institutional voids.

Goulart Massuchin and Urizzi Cervi (2026) examine biopolitical conflict by analyzing contestation within institutional channels. Their study contrasts the YouTube chat of the Brazilian Chamber of Deputies with a public survey on its website, employing automated textual analytics and similarity trees. The chat exhibits a homogeneous pro-bill discourse, while the survey reveals a plural opposition that redirects the debate from abortion to issues such as rape and the protection of minors. Collaborations with media outlets, feminist organizations, early childhood networks, and professional collectives demonstrate that, even within institutional spaces shaped by far-right influence, connected publics can reshape the discursive landscape.

Cambronero-Garbajosa (2026) addresses online hate as a persistent disruption of the digital public sphere. Utilizing semi-structured interviews analyzed through grounded theory, the study identifies four principal citizen practices: mapping the sources, coordination, and objectives of hate; maintaining connections and care via semi-private spaces, mass reporting, love bombing, and support plans; generating alternative narratives for ambivalent or peripheral audiences; and intervening in channels by pressuring advertisers or negotiating with platforms. The analysis underscores tactical dilemmas, such as the risk of amplifying hate through counter-speech versus employing strategic silence to avoid algorithmic cycles of outrage. The findings indicate that communicative resilience emerges when these practices are enacted as sustained strategies that build collective capacities both within and beyond platforms.

The discussion then addresses the role of young European actors in contexts characterized by disinformation and institutional disengagement. D'Ambrosi, Parito, and Pasciuto (2026) analyzes interviews with Italian activists aged 18 to 35 who participated in mobilization efforts prior to the 2024 European elections. Thematic analysis reveals that these activists identify threats such as echo chambers and disinformation, recognize deficiencies in institutional communication—e.g., opacity, slow response, and lack of accessibility for youth— and employ pedagogical strategies such as workshops, SHIFT/SMART methods, and non-formal education to promote media literacy within their communities. These activists function as informal educators, reframing content and sustaining democratic debate beyond electoral cycles.

Pane (2026) advances the analysis by interviewing youth civil society organizations participating in the Use Your Vote campaign. These organizations act as disintermediators, localizing European messages, integrating hybrid formats—that is, digital, face-to-face, and non-formal education—and addressing informational disorders in peripheral regions. The article also examines ambivalence toward generative AI,

highlighting both efficiency gains and concerns regarding threats to the authenticity of civic voice. This analysis illustrates how young actors navigate democratic participation in a post-truth and post-digital context. Collectively, these studies depict youth as agents who translate, amplify, and refine institutional communication from contextual perspectives.

Subsequent articles expand the analysis to encompass symbolic struggles, counter-narratives, and contests over representation in virtual, urban, migrant, community, and media environments. Zou and Cortés Gómez (2026) employ thematic modeling, content coding, and multimodal annotation to compare institutional discourses in videogames such as Animal Crossing and Fortnite, which often neutralize political urgency through gamified commemoration. In contrast, marginalized communities leverage platform affordances such as symbolic spatiality, collective rituals, and bodily aesthetics to construct performative counter-narratives that restore agency and political memory.

Within the urban context, Smania (2026) utilizes critical multimodal discourse analysis to demonstrate how Rivolta Architettonica employs architectural critique through comparative devices, particularly before-and-after contrasts, the translation of technical vocabulary into accessible evaluative criteria, and semiotic oppositions that reshape value fields such as tradition versus modernism, beauty versus ugliness, and respect versus arrogance. These strategies broaden access to aesthetic judgment and engage interpretive publics across national boundaries. Collectively, these multimodal practices establish an alternative framework of urban common sense and function as enduring civic practices.

Tarullo, Renedo Farpón, and Díez-Garrido (2026) investigate Latin American migrant activism in Spain by integrating social media scraping, quantitative interaction analysis, qualitative coding, and in-depth interviews. This methodology uncovers an ecology of practices that, despite significant structural constraints, sustain public agency and broaden migrant organizations' scope of intervention. Through anti-racist campaigns, counter-information strategies, testimonial narratives, and legal support, these organizations reshape their political presence within a context marked by inequality and institutional racialization.

In the media domain, two additional articles illustrate how collective actors intervene in public debates to challenge dominant narratives and enhance representation. Rosique-Cedillo and Crisóstomo-Flores (2026) analyze audiovisual materials, supported by an in-depth interview, to examine how El Salto TV constructs alternative representations of migration. Their approach centers migrant voices, employs visual strategies that avoid sensationalizing suffering, and incorporates historical, structural, and political contexts that contrast with the alarmist frames prevalent in mainstream media.

Novais and Christofoletti (2026) employ a qualitative methodology—that is, narrative interviews and analytic induction—to investigate how Brazil's Coalition in Defense of Journalism adapts its practices in response to political changes. Their findings indicate that during Jair Bolsonaro's administration, the coalition primarily adopted a reactive stance, denouncing attacks, building resistance networks, and reaffirming journalism's democratic role in a hostile environment. The transition to Lula da Silva's government facilitated a shift toward proactive strategies, such as institutional dialogue, policy development, and the creation of protection mechanisms. This study demonstrates how the coalition balances vigilance against ongoing threats with opportunities for constructive engagement in a more favorable political climate.

These articles collectively reviewed cover a wide range of cases, including citizen-led responses to climate emergencies, political disputes on institutional platforms, strategies to counter digital hate, youth mediation in Europe, aesthetic and urban transformations, migrant activism, and community-based media interventions. They offer a comprehensive overview of resilience from a communicative perspective, demonstrating how diverse social actors interpret, challenge, and respond to contemporary crises through context-specific communicative practices. These studies show that civil society responses to crises, controversies, and exclusion are not merely instrumental or operational; rather, they constitute culturally significant practices that

reorganize meaning, shape participation, and create new opportunities for public intervention. These contributions provide valuable insights for the fields of communication and resilience, as discussed in the following section.

3.2. Contributions to communicative resilience

The contributions in this special issue reconceptualize communicative resilience as a set of situated, relational, and inherently political social practices activated in response to both episodic and structural crises, rather than as an instrumental capacity or a linear return to normality. Consistent with the preceding theoretical framework, resilience is presented as a dynamic process defined by persistence, adaptation, and transformability. This process is articulated through communication and shaped by meaning-making frameworks, power relations, and socio-technical infrastructures. The analyzed cases demonstrate how civic actors develop diagnoses, contest meanings, and reorganize social ties to reconstitute collective capacities amid uncertainty, inequality, and epistemic struggles.

Resilience initially appears as situated reactivity. During periods of uncertainty and disruption of social expectations, communicative networks are activated to facilitate information circulation and provide both practical and symbolic orientation. For instance, during the DANA floods in Valencia, Serrano et al. (2026) show how citizens rapidly established communicative infrastructures that enabled collective action in the absence of institutional support. This immediate reactivity coexists with more enduring and structural crises, such as digital hate, where actors employ sustained strategies of coping, protection, diagnosis, and counter-narrative, thereby creating ecologies of support in response to systematic aggression (Cambronero-Garbajosa 2026). In institutional contexts, this reactivity enables the reframing of hegemonic discourses, contestation of moral interpretations, and increased visibility for previously marginalized positions (Goulart Massuchin and Urizzi Cervi 2026).

Resilience is articulated as communicative in two interrelated ways: communication functions both as the primary axis of response and as a constitutive element of the crisis itself. In digitized institutional spaces, conflicts arise from struggles to define meanings, stabilize interpretations, and compete for algorithmic visibility. Goulart Massuchin and Urizzi Cervi (2026) show how a consultation on criminalizing legal abortion becomes a site where actors reorganize the semantic field through narrative coordination, discursive framing, and communicative visibility, underscoring the active role of digital infrastructures in shaping participation. More broadly, the erosion of communicative legitimacy, evident in disinformation, diminished factual authority, and emotional saturation, compels youth organizations and civic networks to implement pedagogical forms of intermediation that foster shared interpretive frameworks (Pane 2026). In the audiovisual domain, Rosique-Cedillo and Crisóstomo-Flores (2026) demonstrate how El Salto TV reconstructs the visual and narrative grammar of migration coverage to address persistent representational inequalities in mainstream media.

The articles further emphasize that communicative resilience is intrinsically connected to a social justice perspective. Crisis is understood as both a disruptive event and a manifestation of historical structures of inequality that limit the participatory capacities of specific groups. Tarullo, Renedo Farpón, and Díez-Garrido (2026) show how the coloniality of power restricts the autonomy of migrant associations, prompting them to activate mutual aid, legal education, and counter-narratives that challenge racial and labor hierarchies. Similarly, Zou and Cortés Gómez (2026) demonstrate how marginalized communities use multimodal counter-narratives in virtual environments to resist informational exclusion. In both cases, social justice enables subordinated groups to gain visibility, contest dominant meanings, and sustain political agency in contexts marked by structural invisibility.

Resilience is therefore closely linked to communicative agency that actively intervenes in social systems. The studies in this issue demonstrate how civic actors generate criteria, knowledge, infrastructures, and action repertoires to transform narrative frameworks on specific issues. Smania (2026) illustrates how Rivolta Architettonica challenges expert authority and democratizes urban aesthetic judgment through the critical use of professional vocabulary and creative visual resources. D'Ambrosi (2026) presents youth activists as pedagogical agents who develop media literacy initiatives to enhance their peers' participatory capacities and reinforce democratic deliberation. In both cases, agency functions as social transformability, expanding collective opportunities for intervention.

These capacities are shaped by media and institutional structures that influence the scope of civic intervention. In the European context, Pane (2026) identifies a structural crisis in EU public communication, where multilingualism, promotional discourse, ecosystem fragmentation, and algorithmic inequality undermine legitimacy. Civil society organizations respond by serving as local anchors, reterritorializing messages through mediation, translation, and democratic pedagogy. In Brazil, Novais and Christofoletti (2026) examine Brazil's Coalition in Defense of Journalism within a context of structural violence, media concentration, impunity, and judicialization, where state persecution, organizational precarity, and funding dependency limit access to decision-making. These structural conditions simultaneously constrain possibilities and drive organizational innovation.

Within this context, digitalization is described as an ambivalent domain, serving both as a source of risk and as a facilitator of collective resilience. The analyzed cases show how civic actors navigate these conditions by adopting reflexive and context-specific uses of digital tools that integrate creativity, caution, and experimentation (Cambronero-Garbajosa 2026; Pane 2026). During the Valencia DANA, digital platforms enabled rapid message dissemination and distributed cooperation but also facilitated the spread of disinformation and service disruptions that overwhelmed the ecosystem (Serrano et al. 2026). A similar tension appears in D'Ambrosi et al.'s (2026) analysis, where generative AI and virality present both risks and opportunities. Zou and Cortés Gómez (2026) further extend this ambivalence to gaming environments such as Animal Crossing and Fortnite, which, while highly participatory and creatively generative, remain susceptible to platformization and co-optation. Thus, the digital sphere constitutes a contested field where civil society capacities are continually produced, diminished, and reconstructed.

Creativity and multimodality are central dimensions of these processes. Rather than relying on a single format or platform, civic actors employ hybrid combinations of visual, textual, performative, and digital materials to reshape the production and circulation of public meaning. For example, Smania (2026) explains how Rivolta Architettonica uses visual repertoires such as before-and-after collages, chromatic contrasts, memes, montages, and ideological tagging, supported by concise textual cues that articulate symbolic oppositions and democratize aesthetic judgment, making urban critique more accessible. Similarly, Rosique-Cedillo and Crisóstomo-Flores (2026) show how El Salto TV constructs audiovisual narratives that avoid sensationalism through hybrid documentary approaches, integrating testimony, music, sound effects, and archival material. Multimodality thus serves as a fundamental mechanism of participation, enhancing accessibility, expressiveness, and the transformative potential of social systems.

These processes are reinforced by affective and relational dimensions, which are essential for sustaining resilience over time. In the digital hate ecosystem examined by Cambronero-Garbajosa (2026), practices such as semi-private care spaces, support plans, co-moderation, mass reporting, and love bombing foster safety, trust, and well-being for individuals maintaining public visibility. These emotional infrastructures help mitigate fatigue and disrupt algorithmic cycles of outrage. Similarly, during the Valencia DANA, neighborhood coordination and mutual aid established bonds of proximity that transformed technical connectivity into collective capacity (Serrano et al. 2026). In European youth contexts (D'Ambrosi, Parito,

and Pasciuto 2026; Pane 2026), peer pedagogy and collaborative networks generate relational capital that facilitates message translation and sustains democratic participation. Thus, resilience is also expressed as organized care.

Several contributions highlight the situated nature of these dynamics, emphasizing that the form resilience assumes depends on political and geographical context. In Brazil, the transition from the Bolsonaro era to institutional recomposition brings localized violence, press delegitimization, and disinfodemia to the forefront. The experience of Brazil's Coalition in Defense of Journalism demonstrates how monitoring and jurisprudence become territorially grounded tools (Novais and Christofoletti 2026). In Europe, transnational youth coalitions, media education, and electoral campaigns converge in a context of cascading crises, prompting youth organizations to reimagine the relationship between citizenship and communication (D'Ambrosi et al. 2026). In both contexts, context is understood as a constitutive element of shaping resilient practices.

Collectively, this special issue advances an understanding of communicative resilience as a situated, relational, and multimodal practice that is simultaneously reactive and propositional, pedagogical and aesthetic, organizational, and affective. The studies show that civil society does not merely absorb crises; instead, it reorganizes meaning, shapes participatory modalities, and creates new opportunities for public intervention by engaging with and transforming unequal media infrastructures. This perspective reconceptualizes resilience as more than recovery, positioning it as an instituting force of the commons that enables agenda-setting, discursive autonomy, innovation, and the creation of communicative infrastructures that foster mutual support amid digital disturbance.

4. Conclusions

Communicative resilience is best understood as a plural, context-dependent concept that resists a single, universal definition. Instead of describing a fixed capacity that individuals or societies possess, it refers to a set of practices through which actors maintain meaning, coordination, and collective agency amid disruption. This is significant because the disruption involved is no longer limited to specific emergencies. In today's platformed societies, crisis increasingly appears as an ongoing, ambient condition. The public sphere is reshaped by attention incentives, algorithmic visibility, and emotional amplification, while conservative backlash and misinformation shape the very ways public issues are understood. In this environment, resilience cannot mean a simple return to previous communicative norms, because polarization, moral binaries, and recurring attacks on progressive values characterize what is considered normal. This special issue, therefore, moves resilience beyond notions of recovery and stability, toward a process-oriented understanding that includes endurance, adaptation, and, in some cases, transformation. Conceptually, this change is especially important once we realize that communicative vulnerability is created by social, political, and cultural forces—including the infrastructures that determine what circulates, what becomes salient, and which actors maintain prolonged visibility.

These repositioning challenges a field that too often views resilience through an instrumental lens, especially in crisis communication research. In that narrower perspective, resilience is often seen as the effectiveness of messaging, the efficiency of coordination, or the correction of falsehoods through technical measures like fact-checking, media literacy, or platform governance. While we do not oppose these tools, we argue that they become insufficient when the crisis is understood as structurally mediated. In the context of conservative backlash and information disorders, communicative harm arises from patterned conditions. Outrage, fear, and moral indignation spread rapidly, while nuance and thoughtful reasoning struggle to stay prominent. Under such conditions, misinformation and disinformation become "actionable" when linked to

emotional responses and identity-affirming narratives, and backlash frames become persistent when they circulate through formats and networks that favor repetition. The importance of studying practices during crises and dislocation lies in the fact that crises speed up time and heighten uncertainty, which increases the appeal of simple explanations and confrontational scripts. They also test institutions, reveal governance gaps, and deepen distrust. In these scenarios, complexity is reframed in emotionally consistent ways, including those that oppose women's rights, migrants' rights, LGBTIQ rights, or climate action.

Against this background, the special issue's main contribution is to highlight communicative resilience as a form of labor and organization that occurs within contested environments. The cases in the issue show that resilience is built through hybrid repertoires that connect online and offline infrastructures. During disruptions, civil society actors develop provisional communication systems to coordinate aid, share guidance, and stabilize shared interpretations—especially when official communication is fragmented or delayed. However, the issue also shows that resilience is not purely functional. It is deeply cultural and political because it relies on the ability to keep discursive spaces open long enough for stories to be told, responsibilities to be assigned, and futures to be envisioned. This is where the connection to information disorders becomes crucial. When the post-media public sphere is filled with antagonism and rapid claims, resilience often means maintaining interpretive consistency amid volatility, counteracting the fragmentation caused by algorithmic visibility, and shielding publics from the exhaustion of constant high-arousal mobilization. The special issue helps conceptualize resilience as a practice of public sense-making in conditions where truth is routinely challenged, appropriated, and relitigated, and where hate speech and harassment can become normalized features of participation.

A particularly important contribution to the issue, and one that connects directly to the earlier argument about affective politics, is the attention it gives to affectivity as a constitutive dimension of resilience. Platformed communication rewards emotional intensity, but the issue shows that resilience is sustained through affective infrastructures that look very different from outrage-driven virality. Under conditions of backlash and hostility, resilience can depend on practices of care and protection that reduce burnout and enable continued participation: peer support, semi-private coordination, moderated labor, and relational work that maintains trust. This is not incidental. If conservative backlash gains traction by offering identity-protective reframing—for instance, by portraying feminism as "indoctrination" or climate action as illegitimate and economically unviable—then communicative resilience must be able to counter the emotional satisfactions of those framings without defaulting to moralistic denunciation that deepens polarization. In this sense, communicative resilience involves more than informational correction; it involves sustaining alternative repertoires of belonging, dignity, and shared responsibility that can compete with the affective coherence of backlash narratives.

The struggle over resilience cannot be confined to platforms alone, because backlash increasingly occurs across institutional spaces. The same conservative efforts that spread through social media, memes, influencer communities, and recommender systems also pursue change through legal activism, policy initiatives, and institutional influence. Therefore, resilience must be examined on multiple levels. It pertains to public communication, but also to the organizational ecosystems that coordinate narratives, set agendas, and maintain informational silos. This institutional perspective explains why the question of resilience becomes essential. If backlash and information disorders are embedded in attention economies and visibility infrastructures, then resilience is not just a technical tool; it is a way of understanding how democratic life can endure in environments where communication systems systematically reward polarization, devalue deliberation, and normalize attacks on human rights commitments.

This directly informs the future research agenda presented in this special issue. One key area focuses on infrastructure. Future studies should explore how actors develop and manage communicative infrastructures

that lessen reliance on unpredictable platform logics, including the creation of channels, repositories, protocols, and hybrid networks that maintain coordination without yielding visibility to algorithmic turbulence. A second key area involves affectivity. Research should consider emotions as part of participation infrastructure, examining how publics handle fear, anger, fatigue, and moral injury, and how care practices work to counteract the escalation tendencies typical of platformed publics. A third key area addresses the relationship between resilience and transformation. Instead of viewing resilience solely as adaptation, scholars need to investigate when resilience practices merely help actors survive within current frameworks and when they serve as transformative capacities that reshape agendas, institutions, and communicative norms.

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