

Dealing with fake news potential interference in Brazilian elections

2018 is a year of elections not only in Brazil but also in other [five Latin America countries](#). Disinformation campaigns have already had important impacts in several countries of the region, such as Venezuela, Colombia and Argentina. Nevertheless, with presidential elections approaching, the diffusion of fake news for manipulating public opinion acquires higher stakes.

Although [fake news are not a new phenomenon and may have already even fueled conflict](#), they became a worldwide concern particularly after accusations of Russian interference in [Donald Trump's election](#). Nowadays social media and apps such as WhatsApp are major outlets for the spread of deceiving content, but the same means of communication are being used by fact-checking [NGOs](#), journalists and activists to counter misinformation campaigns.

Regulation initiatives are taking place worldwide. For instance, the European Commission has recently proposed an [EU Code of Practice](#) for dealing with online false information. In Latin America, combating the use of deceptive news as political tactic is also involving strategies of state control. In Brazil, for example, the Supreme Electoral Tribunal has organized a [task force](#) against fake news in light of 2018 elections.

According to some specialists, in Brazil, the [susceptibility to false propaganda might be particularly high](#) due to the current polarized political landscape and because the country is among the [world's heaviest social media users](#). In this context, Facebook has declared its support for [two projects](#) fighting misinformation in Brazil: *Vaza*, *Falsiane* and *Fátima* that will be available starting June 2018.

In August 2018, the [new Brazilian electoral reform](#) takes effect, authoring politicians to advertise in social media. Candidates, parties and coalitions may use paid tools (SEA – search engine advertising) and organic tools (SEO – search engine optimization) with supervision. This and other law provisions have the main goal to tackle the fake news challenge through regulation.

Recently several Brazilian and Latin-American NGOs have signed an [open letter](#) calling attention to the inadequacy of a purely regulatory approach for dealing with fake news. They have voiced concern about the negative impacts of importing what they call Global North solutions without critically assessing the particularities of media functioning in the region.

During the 2017 Internet Governance Forum, Frank La Rue affirmed the need to consider power imbalances concerning media ownership concentration in Latin America. “The problem is that fake news becomes a perfect excuse to just silence or shut down any alternative or any dissident voice”, adds the UNESCO's expert.

State-centered answers are only a partial solution to the problem of fake news and may have the unintended consequences of more censorship and surveillance. Without disregarding the normative dimension of the phenomena, it is important to envisage comprehensive public policies that respect and protect the individual sphere of freedom.

For further information, Access:

BLOOMBERG. [Fake News risks plaguing Brazil elections, top fact-checkers say.](#)

NEXO JORNAL. [Os desafios das fake news na América Latina.](#)

OPEN DEMOCRACY. [Combating fake News: an impossible feat?](#)