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MEDIA DEMOCRATIZATION IN BRAZIL REVISITED

9 in Nederveen Pieterse, Jan and Cardoso, Adalberto (eds.) *Brazil Emerging: Inequality and Emancipation*, Routledge, August 2013

Carolina Matos

<A>Introduction

A core concern that has lain at the center of the public service broadcasting ethos has been the ways in which ideas, information, and debate can contribute to promote progress, assisting in national development and improving the health of a particular democracy. One of the key purposes of my book *Media and Politics in Latin America* (2012) was to precisely examine the state and the challenges posed to public service broadcasting (PSB) and the public media at the turn of the twenty-first century in Brazil and in Latin America in a comparative perspective to the ‘crisis’ of identity of public communication structures across Europe and in the UK due to various factors including increasing media commercialization, expansion of new technologies, and fragmentation of audiences.

This chapter provides a synthetic summary of the key intellectual debates and research findings of *Media and Politics in Latin America*. It contains a synthesis of the methodology employed and some of the main research findings obtained from the online survey conducted with Brazilian students from the Communication Department at UFRJ University in Rio de Janeiro.

Some of the questions asked included the potential and capacity of public communications to deepen the democratization project in Brazil. It also examined the ways in which the public media can offer better quality information and debate to

larger sectors of the Brazilian audience independently of socioeconomic status, thus functioning as a unifying public sphere and assisting in the social inclusion of less privileged sectors of Brazilian society in national political debate. Here it is important to evaluate for instance the experiences of PSBs in European democracies, their historical and cultural relationship to democratization, and the lessons that can be learned from precisely this tradition of public service broadcasting in Europe and how they can be applied to the Latin American case (Matos 2012).

The four main lines of inquiry that I have pursued in this research have consisted firstly in comparing and contrasting the tradition of public service broadcasting in Europe to the situation, and the ways in which this has been directed to the public interest, to the authoritarian tradition of misuse of public communication structures for political purposes in Latin America and in Brazil. Thus another line of inquiry closely connected to this is the further assessment of the exact nature of the relationship of public communications with the state, the public interest, and the public sphere. This leads to the third line of inquiry, which is the examination of the debates on what constitutes ‘quality’ programming and information in both the private *and* public media, for the assessment of the tradition of PSB is tightly linked to issues of quality information and drama, in-depth political coverage, and accuracy, balance, and honesty in reporting. This is situated within the context of the ‘crisis’ of civic forms of communication and of political and ‘serious’ journalism in advanced democracies due to excessive commercialization, posing what many claim to be a tendency of lowering down quality standards (or ‘dumbing down’) as well as threatening media pluralism and the public sphere.

This chapter thus starts by examining briefly some of the challenges posed to the deepening of democracy and media democratization in Latin America, shifting the

focus to look at the Brazilian case in comparative perspective to the UK and in greater depth. It further underlines the interweaving of economic and social inequality with the strengthening of political diversity and the struggle to advance media democratization in Brazil. The second half of the chapter provides an overview of the research methods employed in the research, highlighting some of the survey findings conducted with students on how they understand the public media and how it can contribute to the country's democratization project.

<A>Latin American Media in Comparative Perspective

The Latin American continent has changed significantly since the fall of dictatorship regimes. Democracy has slowly began to flourish in the continent amid the rise to power of center to center-left-wing governments in recent years, culminating in new approaches to foreign policy, new efforts of restructuring the state, expansion of internal and global markets, and the deepening of welfare and income distribution programs. Other innovations have included the adoption of initiatives aimed at empowering public communications to assist in the democratization process as a means of guaranteeing information rights to vast segments of the population independently of economic income and social status.

Political liberalization in Latin America has undoubtedly opened the avenue in the continent to revisit these debates on media democratization in a changed historical and political context that is a contrast to the dictatorship years of the 1980s, but that is nonetheless not entirely free from some of the dark clouds of the period, including the rise of accusations of the return to censorship practices and anxieties over press freedom. Nevertheless, governments across the continent not only are having to listen to the demands of civil society players, academics, journalists, and other members of

the public in favor of a better and more accurate media, but are being pressured to formulate new media regulation policies capable of attending to the public interest. Democratic strategies are thus been envisioned as a means of reverting the region's current indicators of high media concentration and predominance of the market in the media sector (i.e., Moraes 2009).

Notably, the gradual democratization of Brazil and its social and political institutions in the last three decades has taken place not altogether disassociated from the authoritarian legacy that has marked the very formation of Brazilian society. As my last research has shown (Matos 2008), political liberalization and market expansionism in Brazil during the re-democratization period paved the way for the rise of journalistic professionalism in newsrooms. The improvements in the media and journalism during the 1990s, including wider commitments to equilibrium in political reporting during election campaigns, as well as the restructuring of key media industries, such as the newspapers *O Globo* and *Folha*, in order to better attend to multiple post-dictatorship publics (Matos 2008), are still far from being the main symbols of genuine media democratization. Moreover, the recognition alone that the media became more professional, including wider voices in the mediated sphere, is not a reason enough to state that the struggles for media democratization are a thing of the past. In many ways the fight has just began.

That a close relationship exists between media development, good governance, and the health of a democracy has been emphasized by various journalists, policy makers, and researchers (i.e. Schramm, 1964; Norris 2004). The 2010 UNESCO report, *Media Development Indicators: A Framework for Assessing Media Development*, underlined the close relationship that exists between the health, independence, and quality of the media with a country's development.¹ As Norris

(2004: 1) has also argued, media systems can strengthen good governance and promote positive development, especially if there is a free and independent press capable of performing the watchdog role, holding powerful people to account, and acting as a civic forum of debate between society's competing interests.

However, a freer and more independent media and balanced press can operate only if they are not subject to either political or economic constraints (Hallin and Mancini 2004), and if public service media systems are also directed to serving the common good, and not misused for the personal interests of political and/or economic groups. It is no surprise that in Europe the state's participation in the ownership or regulation of the broadcast media in liberal democracies has been largely based upon the need to guarantee standards of 'neutrality', minimizing political bias (Dunleavy 1987).

The UK for instance has managed to establish a sophisticated system of regulation and funding of PSB that has made it easier for broadcasters to be less obsessed with audience numbers and economic pressures, and thus more committed to serving the public. Set up under the 2003 communications bill, the UK's broadcasting regulator, *Ofcom*, has been an example of reference in media regulation in Europe, having defined a solid framework of regulation for British PSB.² *Ofcom* mainly requires UK public *and* commercial broadcasters (BBC, C4, ITV) to produce news with "impartiality and accuracy," with no editorial stances on political and controversial issues. This is seen as a means of guaranteeing an adequate degree of balance and fairness in the provision of news to the wider public (Ofcom, 2008a, 2008b).

As Dunleavy (1987) argues, public service broadcasting regulation in the UK has managed to act as a counterweight to the press, neutralizing or balancing the biases of the partisan British tabloids by offering more ‘trustworthy’ information. Its role in broadcasting is seen as one that is tightly connected to the public interest, as well as to the uses of the public media for educational and cultural purposes (Santos and Silveira 2007), further securing political coverage that is impartial between parties and tends to privilege the collective good.

UK’s PSBs have also been successful in fostering and mediating debate around the core issues of the day, providing a good balance of in-depth information and analysis with quality entertainment. British newspapers have grown under a tradition of editorial independence that has its roots in the struggles for press liberty and independence against monarchs and the state during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in Europe. Thus the British press has operated under a system of self-regulation largely represented through the Press Complaints Commission (PCC), a weak and largely inefficient body in contrast to *Ofcom*. Moreover, the notion of ‘balance’ in the press is understood differently than in broadcasting, and in the former it is largely perceived as being the end result of the competing views put forward by different newspapers in the marketplace. Nevertheless, calls for the statutory regulation of the press were raised emphatically in the aftermath of the *News of the World* phone-hacking scandal in June 2011, an issue that raises a whole new debate in the tradition of press self-regulation in the country.

However, the focus of this research is largely public service broadcasting as well as broadcasting regulation. Arguably, the literature on media democratization (Voltmer and Schmitt-Beck 2006; Curran and Park 2000; Sparks 2007) stresses how countries as different as South Africa, Chile, and China have encountered various

problems in regards to the democratization of political communications. There were difficulties with implementing a more neutral, independent public service broadcasting (PSB) model similar to the UK's BBC in various new democracies for instance.

As Voltmer and Schmitt-Beck (2006) further underline, some countries in Eastern Europe have managed to implement PSBs with some degree of independence both from the state *and* from market competition. This is currently Brazil's main challenge. Thus at a moment when Brazil is worried about media democratization, countries like the UK are interested in preserving the tradition of PSBs in an increasingly uncertain future for European public service broadcasters and for organizations like the BBC (Scannell 1989; Raboy, 1996; Keane 2000; Curran and Park, 2000).

In the case of Latin America and Brazil, there are a series of global, national, regional, and local issues that need to be tackled that are closely interwoven with improvements in media systems and public communication structures. The 2004 report published by the United Nations Program for Development, *Democracy in Latin America: Towards a Democracy of Citizens*, talked to political leaders, business elites and entrepreneurs, academics, and forty-one presidents in order to assess the main obstacles to the consolidation of democracy in the continent. One important element cited were the tensions that existed between the institutional powers of the countries. The report nevertheless listed three main points, including internal limitations as a consequence of inadequate institutional controls and the multiplication of interest groups that functioned like lobbyists. The report also underlined external factors provoked by international markets, such as the threat posed by drug dealings as well as increasing media concentration. In answer to the question on who exercised

more power in the region, the response was the financial economic sector (79.8 percent) and the commercial market media (64 percent).

After taking into consideration their historical differences, levels of economic and political development, power, and wealth, it is possible to underscore that democracies across the world in an age of globalization face similar democratic struggles in regards to inequality of income, economic deprivation, social exclusion of certain segments of society, and poverty as well as various other forms of taken-for-granted injustices. As Blaug and Schwarzmantel (1988: 1) note, several countries have not achieved the goal of becoming fully democratic states, encountering various difficulties in putting into practice the core values of democratic theory given the complexities of economic globalization and national politics.

As Held (1995: 3) states, democracy is associated with values of not only political equality, but liberty, common interest, self-development, and social mobility, or a means to legitimize the decisions of those voted into power. Democracy, continues Held (1995), needs to be deepened and extended both within *and* between countries, something essential if democracy is to claim its relevance in the centuries ahead. For democratic struggle, as Blaug and Schwarzmantel (1988) also assert, is above all about *expanding* the space for the inclusion of a wider citizen body, avoiding exclusions based either on property, gender, race, or ethnicity, which is a problem of both developed *and* developing societies alike. What differs is the degree and the extent of that inequality.

In this way the improvements in media systems in a particular country are closely interwoven with other betterments in the political sphere, including a country's economic power and increase in quality levels of education and culture.

This is precisely why the strengthening of the public media platform is closely linked to the *development* and democratization of a country's culture, as well as to the overall improvements in the *quality* of its education and the number of people who have access to it. Thus it is to some of the key achievements in media democratization in Brazil and in other Latin American countries, as well as to the core obstacles that impede further democratization of communications, that I turn to next.

<A>Challenges and Achievements

Brazil's authoritarian legacy has resulted among others in the marginalization of politics from the mainstream media. Television commercial broadcasting in the country to start with has been allowed to operate largely unregulated (Lins da Silva 1990; Straubhaar, 2001). There has been a tendency to privilege entertainment and a consumerist aesthetic to the detriment of more accurate and in-depth (political) debate. To start with, public communication policies in Brazil date back to the period of the dictatorship of the 1960s. This has occurred in spite of the fact that the progressive 1988 Brazilian Constitution emphasized in its key articles the need for a complex media system composed of the state, public, and the private sectors, as well as having introduced various articles concerning the need for regional and independent production in the broadcasting field.

Debates on the necessity for further media democratization and the updating of outdated laws, many of which were created before or during the dictatorship years, eventually culminated in the realization of the much awaited *Confecom* (National Communication Conference) discussions in 2009. These were perceived as a direct result of the struggles and pressures placed on governments and elites during the redemocratization period by civil society representatives, journalists, and academics since the 1988 Brazilian Constitution. Many Brazilian academics have underscored

how the country has advanced less in media reform in contrast to others in Latin America. The realization of the *Confecom* debates and the implementation of *TV Brasil*, followed by the unification of various state and educational channels, the granting of some funds to support regional players, and the commitment assumed by the former administration in favor of the creation of a new regulatory framework for the media, have been some of the main achievements in media reform in the last eight years of the Lula governments.³

Interviewed for this research, Cesar Bolano, professor at the Federal Sergipe University and UnB, pointed out that a key demand of civil society is simply to ratify the articles 220, 221, and 223 of the Brazilian Constitution. This to start with would begin to pave the way for media democratization. Notably, the first article prohibits the formation of monopolies and favors press liberty; the second states that radio and television stations should prioritize educational, artistic, and cultural rationales; whereas the third declares that the private, public, and state systems should be explicitly contemplated as a means of guaranteeing the functioning of a proper complex media market that has all these sectors.

Bolano has also added that not much improvement has been detected in the restructuring of the public media platform in the country. In an interview given to the *National Forum of Communication Democratization* (FNDC), Bolano emphasized that the public media has still the same space as before: “What happened was a restructuring of the public television, but the public TV in Brazil still has the same space ... in terms of audience share and effective production.”⁴

The fact of the matter is that media organizations in Brazil still cultivate close ties to particular political parties, either directly or indirectly and regardless if they are

private or public vehicles. According to former TV Cultura vice director of journalism, Gabriel Priolli, who was interviewed for my research in *Media and politics in Latin America*, the idea in favor of the public media was already subjected to politics since its very birth:

In 2005, when the *mensalao* scandals emerged, that was when they ‘sold’ the idea to Lula to have *TV Brasil*, of having a strong public network capable of competing with the private, as the government wanted a media which could be more favourable ... The government wanted an instrument to defend itself, and it convinced itself that it was important. This is a contradiction with the real role that public TV should have. ... There is actually a lot of idealism and hypocrisy in this whole discussion ... People say that all you need is another option to *TV Globo* for people to change channels, but the reality is that they do *not*, they do not change to *TV Brasil*. I believe that this issue has a direct relation to education as well, for a better quality education produces audiences of better quality.

The public media sector in Brazil thus suffers from various historical deficiencies. It is composed mainly of the respected but funding-starved *TV Cultura* in SP and its counterpart *TVE* in Rio, as well as other regional outlets controlled by local politicians and sectors of the evangelical Church.⁵ The community channels are broadcast on cable television (i.e., TV Senado, etc.), whereas the educational stations are in the hands of state governors. The current Brazilian TV market that is funded with public resources includes the television stations *TV Cultura*, which has an annual budget of R\$160 million; *Radiobras*, with R\$100 million; and *TVE*, which had R\$35 million in 2004 and which has been incorporated into *TV Brasil*. There are also other

resources that go to the television stations of the legislative federal, state, and municipal powers, plus *TV Justica* and university channels (Possebon 2007: 290), all of which have a low audience rating. The main media players in Brazil nonetheless—*Globo*, *Record*, *SBT*, *Bandeirantes*, and *Rede TV!*—have 82.5 percent of the national open television audience, of which 53 percent of the public are composed of people from the so-called class C (low middle class).⁶

The total funding for *EBC* includes money from the federal government as well as donations. According to the former minister of communications, Franklin Martins,⁷ the new channel received a budget of R\$350 million. The main programming is provided by Rio's educational television (*TVE*), with two programs from *Radiobras*. The morning slot is largely dedicated to children's shows as well as distant-learning programming. *TV Brasil's* programming also consists of hourly independent and regional programs, including the famous high-brow talk show *Roda Viva* and the journalism program *Jornal da Cultura* from *TV Cultura*, which is being retransmitted by *TV Brasil*.

After conducting a seminar with regulators and experts from across the world on the topic, in December 2010 however, one year after the *Confecom* debates, the Brazilian government announced its intention to implement new and updated media regulation policies, which were put on hold and given to the government of Dilma Rousseff (2011–14) to evaluate. The Ministry of Communications of the Dilma government hinted at the possibility of establishing two communication agencies.⁸ *Anatel* would continue monitoring technical aspects, whereas the other agency would be created to ensure that the articles of the Constitution are respected. Little advanced in the first six months of the Rousseff administration, beyond the debates on abandoning controversial terms such as 'control of the media' in texts and documents.

It clearly seems that debates on the formulation of new broadcasting regulation and media reform will occupy practically most of Dilma's mandate in office.

Without a doubt, the politicization of broadcasting, and the relationship established between media sectors with governments and the state, varies from country to country. It is dependent on historical and cultural factors; the degree of partisanship of the media; the size and power of the commercial press; and the extent to which journalists operate within a relatively strong regime of press freedom (e.g., Hallin and Mancini 2004). Notably, Brazil's reality can be considered more similar to the Argentine and Chilean cases in terms of the existence in the country of a stronger commercial press, media independence, and relative press freedom. In common with these other countries, journalism in Brazil has been engulfed in a history of censorship and struggle for stronger editorial independence, and the redemocratization years have seen the mainstream commercial press deal with the complexities of creating a more professional journalism culture to attend to the needs of the country's multiple publics and interests (Matos 2008).

Argentina for example is seen as being a contrast to the Brazilian case. In the latter country, the powerful lobby of *TV Globo* and of other market liberals is currently being considered a major impediment to further media democratization, amid other fears of limits to press freedom due to new regulation policies. Nonetheless, the media reforms that have been carried out in Argentina have been signaled out by academics and others in Brazil as having been in overall positive. In October 2009, the new audiovisual communication services law was sanctioned, substituting the legislation from the dictatorship period. The new law establishes some limits on media concentration, with each firm not being able to have more than ten radio and TV stations. It also authorizes the creation of the Federal Council of

Communications, establishes quotas for local production, and poses limits on foreign participation in the firms of the sector in 30 percent. This has not occurred nonetheless without clashes between the biggest media group in the country, *Clarín*, and the Kirchner government.

Moreover, in Ecuador media reform debate has reached center stage since 2009. Discussions have emerged concerning the establishment of a Communication Council to regulate content, whereas in Venezuela, in spite of the creation of the international channel, *Telesur*, the Hugo Chavez government is being accused of power abuse. It has denied the renewal of the concession for the most popular and oldest channel in the country, *RCTV*, accused of supporting Chavez's coup in 2002.

Thus similar to the critical deliberations regarding the democratic potentials of the public sphere, which can be provided by new technologies, the public media sector can be seen as being capable in developing countries of being much more pronounced and more committed to the public interest than it currently is. It has the capacity of boosting political pluralism, while assisting also in the development of educational and cultural levels and granting this access to wider sectors of the population.

Another important point to emphasize in this debate is that education should not be disassociated from the politics of communications. It is evident that both are tied together and mutually interdependent. Thus the clear purpose of improving the quality of education in the country, of boosting cultural levels to wider sectors of the population, should be clearly connected to media democratization and media reform. Thus judging from the responses of the UFRJ survey and the interviews with experts, it is clear that sectors of the public in Brazil are interested in media improvements and

quality programming, and are open to a more balanced combination of in-depth debate and information with entertainment, as we shall see next.

<A>Methods and Empirical Work

My current research has made use of a sophisticated triangulation methodology. This includes the application of an online survey to 149 communication students at UFRJ university in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; the conduction of in-depth interviews with 12 policy makers, journalists, and politicians; the discussion of programs from the public TV channel *TV Brasil*; as well as the critical assessment of the impact and uses of party political websites and blogs during the 2010 Brazilian presidential elections campaigns, which saw the election of the country's first woman president, Dilma Rousseff.

Notably, the difficulties in Brazil with implementing further media reform are rooted above all in the clashes between the opposing political players in the region, mainly the progressive and conservative forces represented in politics, government, and sectors of the media, as well as the political pressures placed on public communications by politicians from across the political spectrum, be it the Workers' Party (PT) or the Social Democrats of the PSDB. These have been the two main political players in the country that emerged in the aftermath of the dictatorship and have vied for power and control over the structures of government since then. Thus the highly politicized nature of the country's institutions and of the media still, in spite of the gradual growth of professionalism in newsrooms and the gradual expansion of the role of the media as a Fourth Estate, can be seen as being a key barrier and roadblock to wider democratization of the media as well as national development.

My research also investigated the nature of the medium of television and the different discourses and the similarities surrounding both the public and private broadcasting 'style', highlighting how the distinction between the two has become increasingly blurred and difficult to pin down. This is similar to what has happened with the commercial and public television channels in the UK, where the BBC has become in the last recent years more undistinguishable from commercial broadcasters like ITV in regards to programming and content. Many programs, genres, and discourses for instance are encountered in either one or the other, such as quality drama.

However, I have shown how there are still subtle differences between private and public broadcasting mainly in what we can classify as style, discourse and language, and types of approach to programming and content, including for instance the choice and selection of programs to occupy the peak slots. These differences are also perhaps more manifested in other areas than news, including in overall more subtle variations in the aesthetics adopted, the tone of the programming, and the selection of themes and topics covered by each station.

Commercial television stations like *TV Globo* for instance privilege during peak slots soap operas, news, or blockbuster entertainment whereas the public media has a tendency to include new broadcasts, historical programs, or quality drama. The peak slots of *TV Brasil* for instance were largely dedicated to journalistic, historical, popular culture programs, and/or documentaries. As both the interviews and the online survey that I conducted showed, the public media still does provide a wide space for the proliferation of debate, which according to many of the interviewees needs to be much better explored, as we shall see next.

<A>Survey Results

A persistent pattern that emerged from the answers of the online survey conducted with university students from UFRJ was that the penetration of public television is still small among most of them, and does not constitute the core part of their key television-viewing material. As stressed in some of the answers of the UFRJ survey, there is still widespread misunderstanding, lack of interest, and inadequate knowledge of what exactly the public media stands for and the place it should occupy in Brazil in the near future. The public media's potential and capacity thus still remains relatively unexplored. Many revealed, however, how they mainly watch commercial television, *TV Globo*, and cable and satellite television, with some abandoning more TV and shifting to the Internet instead, a trend that is happening worldwide and is significant in the UK largely among the younger generations.

These television-viewing patterns, which privilege commercial programming, largely serve to confirm the already known dominance of commercial television in everyday life in Brazil among most sectors of the population, especially the working classes but also across sectors of the elites. That said, a significant 71 percent of students of the UFRJ online survey said that they endorsed the public media. They recognized its importance, further underscoring the role that the public media could have in correcting market failure, complementing the commercial media, as well as contributing to wider media pluralism and democratization.

In terms of which television stations are most popular, most respondents of the UFRJ survey said that they watched *TV Globo* (97 respondents or 65 percent) and cable and satellite television (99 or 66 percent). Only 3 percent (4) chose the public media option and a slightly higher number opted for the Brazilian public station

options, *TV Brasil* (8 or 5 percent) and *TV Cultura* (8 or 5 percent). These received similar percentages to the small open commercial television stations, *TV Record* (7 or 5 percent) and *Rede TV!* (4 or 3 percent). Channels *Bandeirantes* and *SBT* appeared in a middle position, with 25 or 17 percent for the former and 18 or 18 percent for the latter.

The responses for favorite TV programs were however quite varied. A popular TV choice was *TV Globo's Jornal Nacional* (38 or 25 percent). The option of the 8 o'clock soap opera appeared with 13 percent (20), although in the previous question concerning television genres, only 6 percent chose soaps. Nonetheless, the quantity of different programming selected is just another confirmation of how contemporary global media audiences have become much more fragmented than before. Forty-seven percent chose other programs that were not included in the list. The journalistic programs that appeared here as options were *Roda Viva* and *Observatorio da Imprensa*, which received respectively 1 percent each (1), as did the programs *Reporter Brasil*, which is the main news broadcast from *TV Brasil*, as well as *Sem Censura*, the popular debate program previously broadcast on *TVE*, whereas Brazil's *Big Brother* scored 3 percent (or 4 answers).

Among the preferred programs freely listed by the respondents were films, popular national programs, or American series. Seven percent wrote 'films', whereas others chose the *TV Bandeirantes* program *CQC* (4 percent),⁹ football (3 percent), *Friends* (2 percent), and *House* (2 percent). Other Brazilian programs selected included *Jornal das 10* (2 percent, *TV Globo* news program), *Jornal da Globo* (1 percent), and the popular long-running talk show *Programa do Jo* (1 percent). An interesting issue to observe was that the viewing of American series and programming

has not transcended that of national ones. Programs such as *Jornal Nacional*, films, news, soaps, and football appeared alongside or above American series.

The UFRJ online survey results thus underscored how a segment of the audience in Brazil, as well as in the UK, still give significant importance to quality programming and are open to the correct combination of quality entertainment with in-depth information and debate. This came out quite clearly in the selection of options included in the survey, which appears in full in *Media and Politics in Latin America: Globalization, Democracy and Identity* (I. B. Tauris, 2011). Regarding the question on what attracted their attention to TV, the predominant answer was ‘the quality of a program’ (58 percent or 86). In second place was the option ‘information’ (22 percent or 33) chosen.

Thus such answers endorse the fact that television, be it in the UK or in Brazil, is expected by viewers to be both entertaining and informative, while at the same time also offering quality programming. These values are strongly associated with the public media ethos and indicate that journalists, producers, and other academics in Brazil have something to tap into if they seriously want to create a quality public media for the public interest, one that is capable of attracting a wide audience and of being influential in defining public policies and in serving as the country’s core public sphere vehicle of debate.

Most audiences, however, still see little difference in terms of the *type* of information broadcast in news programs on either media, although the differences are very much more subtle, as mentioned previously. It is thus clear that both commercial *and* public TV are becoming increasingly blurred, and that there are many overlaps (e.g., broadcasting of news and drama in both) that are here to stay and that, on the

other hand, should not be seen as serving to undermine the significance still of the public media platform in an increasingly changing and complex world.

The responses from the survey also detected a space for the production of high-quality drama and art films as well as music programming. This is still relatively ignored by the commercial media, or receives little financial support or incentive (e.g., Laurindo Lalo 2006). Thus the answers of most respondents made it clear that there is a significant space for the public media in Brazil in assisting in expanding debate, as well as investing in quality cultural and educational programming.

As the interviewees also emphasized in their choice of options in the survey, it is essential to develop a public media platform that is adequate for the needs of national citizens, be it in the UK or Brazil. Such a contestation casts doubts over the suitability of the application of the BBC model to many Latin American countries due to their historical, cultural, political, and social particularities. There is also the fact that in many, as we have seen, the relationship between political actors and the media is still marked by fever pitch tensions, a high degree of politicization still, and a long authoritarian and historical tradition of misuse of media structures for the personal interests of mainly individual oligarchic politicians, as well as media owners or private interests.

Regarding some of the key conclusions of my research, which I do not have sufficient space to go into detail here, it is important to note to start with that the public media platform in Latin American countries can really exist and contribute to strengthen press freedom *only if* it remains independent from both the public and the private sectors. It cannot fortify debate, serve as a vehicle for the public interest, or boost political pluralism, representing the whole of the political spectrum and the

diverse interest of Brazilian society, as class liberal theory on the media would have it, *if* it continues to reinforce the tradition of use of the communication public structures for the personal interests of politicians or other vested private and/or commercial groups.

Thus the public media platform in Brazil needs to find its own formula of success, one that can go beyond the commercial fixation with audience numbers, which has tended to prevail in the public station in São Paulo, *TV Cultura* for instance, or the dependency on government support or on an officialdom editorial line, as *TV Brasil* has been accused of doing. Finally, the data collected in my research has largely revealed how, in spite of the challenges that it faces regarding political pressures and problems with lack of large audience numbers, the ‘public’ media in Brazil does still have a potential to be a force for change and expanding democratization, and contribute to quality debate.

<A>Tentative Conclusions

In spite of growing professionalism, liberal media cultures in the newsroom, and improvements in quality standards and balance criteria in the last decades due to market pressures, civil society demands, and political democratization (Matos 2008), the mainstream commercial media in Brazil are still highly vulnerable to both internal and external political as well as economic pressures. Given the political use still of the public communication structures in Brazil and in many other Latin American countries, the public media is thus also not immune from the negative impact of partisanship practices. Nonetheless, the contestation of this fact is no reason to dismiss its capacity to be directed towards the public interest, as the success of cases like the UK’s PSB have proven for better or for worse.

Moreover, public media can also assist in internationalization and in better inserting Latin Americans in the global order. They can play a role in gradually reversing the historical legacy of political, cultural, and social marginalization imposed by the legacy of European (neo) colonialism. Therefore arguments in regards to the capacity of stronger public media in Brazil of being capable of serving as an instrument of media independence and freedom from both political and economic constraints (Matos 2008) are in tune with the times.

It does seem evident also that the philosophy and ethos of PSB has not died, and that various developing countries that are pursuing an agenda of massive investment in the public service platform are not going against the tide. These countries are pursuing a legitimate path of democratizing more knowledge by creating the means to strengthen public debate, to improve educational levels, and to invest in high-quality programming capable of boosting cultural emancipation and, in this way, slowly paving the way for wider cultural and educational equality and social integration of less privileged sectors of the population in the country's emerging public sphere.

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¹ The report was the result of debates that were held at the 2006 International Intergovernmental Programme Council for the Development of Communications (IPDC).

² The Communication Act of 2003 requires Ofcom to set quotas for UK national and international news as well as national and regional news on the commercial PSBs in both peak and off-peak viewing times. See the bibliography or information on the Ofcom reports.

³ See “Novas leis e projetos na America Latina esquentam polemica entre midia e governos” [New Laws and projects in Latin America heat polemic between media and governments], FNDC, September 29, 2010.

⁴ See FNDC interview.

⁵ There are 764 educational channels in the whole country, of which 459 are radio stations and 305 television channels. The other ‘public’ television channels in Brazil are TVE-RS, Parana Educativa, TV Cultura SC, TVE-ES, TVE Bahia, TV Ceara, Rede Minas, TV Brasil Central, TV Rio Grande do Norte, TV Cultura PH, and TV Palmas. The public sector

platform and decision-making organ is composed also by the state radio station, Radiobras, Radio MEC, the Cabinet of the Presidency, and the Rio state television, TVE Brasil.

⁶ “Ipea sugere medidas para democratizar a mídia no País” [Ipea suggests measures to democratise media in the country], Lara Haje, Camara dos Deputados, November 11, 2010.

⁷ Interviewed by telephone on August 5, 2010.

⁸ “Bernardo diz que discussão caminha para ter duas agências na área de comunicação” [Bernardo says that discussion is about having two communication agencies], FNDC, February 16, 2011.

⁹ *CQC (Custe of que Custar)*, or *What It Takes*, is a program that mixes journalism with humor. The program consists of a group of reporters asking embarrassing questions to celebrities.