
Media and Democracy in Brazil

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Abstract

This article examines the process of deepening of media democratization in Brazil in a comparative perspective with European countries, assessing the role that mainly public communication systems can have in strengthening national development as well as contributing to provide a wider platform for an international dialogue between advanced democracies and developing societies. Latin American countries have emerged at the dawn of the twenty-first century with a series of challenges to confront, ranging from coming to terms with their authoritarian past to tackling persistent problems of economic and social inequality, as well as inserting themselves fully in the global economic order. Latin American nations have a weak public sector and are seeking to fortify existing public spaces of debate in order to expand citizens' information rights and create the means for wider cultural emancipation. It is precisely when public service broadcasters are most vulnerable in Europe that they start to be seen as relevant in other parts of the world. The article looks at the historical evolution of public communications platforms, giving first a general overview of their development in some Latin America countries and their relationship with the public interest, before investigating the Brazilian case in greater depth and in a comparative perspective with the role that public service broadcasting systems have played in European societies. In order to understand the functioning of media systems in Brazil and their relationship to political and economic factors, it is necessary to situate this debate within both local and global specifications, engaging with current globalization debates and cultural imperialism theses, as well as the current political problems of the wider region and the impact of economic underdevelopment on the country's communication systems.

Keywords: Brazilian broadcasting, Latin American media systems, media reform and globalization, public communications

The Latin American media environment currently faces serious challenges which range from historical factors to regional political problems and gradual shifts in cultural attitudes. As Fox and Waisbord (2002, ix) have claimed, both local politics and media

globalization have significantly shaped the development of the Latin American media in the 1990s. Argentina, for instance, has seen a situation of limited competition and TV networks controlled by the state slowly give way to an internationalized market environment. In Brazil, as my last work (Matos, 2008) has shown, market expansionism from the 1990s onwards occurred in parallel with the growth of political liberalization and with a widening of public debate in the mediated public sphere. In such a scenario, calls for the strengthening of the public media grounded on public interest purposes have reached fever pitch.

A key question investigated here is how media democratization can assist in the deepening of the political democratization project in Brazil. In an increasingly globalized world, it can be affirmed that the public media can stand as a space for the fortification of national culture, but not in opposition to globalization, being further a vehicle which can be capable of reinforcing both local and national identities and cultures in negotiation with the global sphere. This article attempts to give an overview of the development of media systems in Latin America in a comparative perspective, emphasizing the specific situation of Brazil and the relationship that has been established between public communications and the public interest.¹ It focuses particularly on examining the ways in which private interests have shaped the evolution of commercial broadcasting in the absence of a tradition of media regulation. It thus examines current debates initiated by governments that are striving to reverse the historical deficiency of public communication structures and their misuse in favor of personal and/or political interests.

The Media System in Latin America: A History of Neglect of Public Communications

Latin America is a site of multiple cultures and hybrid identities that are deeply and historically tied with European culture and the colonization process. In spite of the cultural diversity of the countries in the region and their historical, political and

¹ This article is taken from one of the chapters of the forthcoming book, *Media and Politics in Latin America: Globalization, Democracy and Identity* (I.B. Tauris, 2012).

economic differences, Latin America is currently seeking wider integration and formation of a common public sphere at the same time that it is attempting to tackle poverty, improve educational levels and boost economic growth. Political liberalization and the growth of multiple public spheres has been followed by the ascent of the market forces, the implementation of neoliberal reform programs and the reinforcement of privatization and deregulation policies, thus paving the way for media globalization in the region.

In countries like Brazil, public television has had a historical record of failures. Various efforts have been made to strengthen the public media system since the return to democracy. The media environment in Brazil and Chile has been transformed since the 1990s, with the entry foreign companies and competition from them, the expansion of cable and satellite services and the introduction of new technologies. As Fox and Waisbord (2002, xxii) assert, the whole Latin American region has had a weak tradition of anti-trust legislation as well as a culture of promiscuous relationships between government officials and media owners, all of which have undermined aspirations for democratic change in the media sector.

Thus the broadcasting model that developed in Latin America has been somewhat similar to the commercial-inspired, US-style entertainment (Sinclair, 1999; Straubhaar, 2001). This has consisted of privately owned television and radio stations and private newspapers financed by both private and public (state) advertising. A few companies have controlled wide shares of the market, while a few under-funded public (state) television channels dedicated to educational interests are mainly owned by sectors of the Church and oligarchic politicians. This situation has been highly characteristic of the Brazilian broadcasting system (Matos, 2008), and has been largely built on a combination of political control and limited regulation.

From the 1990s onwards, Latin American media systems were influenced by international trends, which included increasing media commercialization and the formation of giant global multimedia corporations. The globalization of communications

thus imposed competitive threats on media owners in the continent. The second generation of the Marinhos, owners of the Globo Organization in Brazil, have had to adapt for instance to the competition from international media in the cable market (Fox and Waisbord, 2002) by forging alliances with Murdoch's News Corporation for satellite television and making deals with AT&T for cellular phones. The 1995 Cable Law also created the means for the start of the internationalization process, initiating a break with Brazil's tradition of media protectionism and accelerating the entry of global media companies.

Media globalization has, however, produced inequalities within the continent. Certain countries in Latin America have been more affected than others, with Brazil and Mexico, which have stronger national production markets and audiences, registering lower levels of media concentration and higher media diversity compared to other weaker countries in the region. Liberalization policies have also facilitated the emergence of giant media conglomerates in Latin America, seeing the rise of duopolies in Argentina, the Grupo Clarin and Telefonica, Grupo Santo Domingo and Grupo Ardilla in Colombia, and Grupo Phillips and Cisneros in Venezuela. As Fox and Waisbord (2002, 18) have summarized, globalization in the region has:

contributed to the consolidation of a three tier structure formed by large producers and exporters of audiovisual content in Brazil, Mexico and Venezuela; medium-size producers and exporters in Argentina, Chile, Colombia and Peru and modest-size producers with virtually no exports in Bolivia, Central America, Ecuador, Paraguay and Uruguay.

Media systems in the region have also seen a transition away from family-owned or partisan media to more internationalized corporations. In the case of Argentina, in 1989 a reform law demanded the privatization of state-owned commercial television stations, eliminating further cross-media ownership limitations (Fox and Waisbord, 2002). As Sinclair (1999, 84) has stated with regard to Argentina, the history of military intervention and populism had previously 'prevented the development of a supportive relationship between the state and private TV owners', something that has characterized countries like Mexico and Brazil (1999, 84). Only after the 1980s did Argentine TV become free of direct government control, with the governments of

Alfonsín in 1983 and Menem in 1989 turning TV over to private ownership. This paved the way for the expansion of cable TV in the country.

The current progressive centre-left and left governments that have been in power in most Latin American nations in recent years, including in countries like Brazil, Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Chile,² have adopted a new approach to media policy, seeing communications as having a role in social and economic development (Moraes, 2009) and examining and applying democratic strategies capable of further advancing media democratization. It can be said that the debates of the 1990s are somewhat a revival of the UNESCO New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO) discussions during the 1960s and 1970s in favor of a more just global media order, with balanced flows between countries, less biased international coverage produced by the news agencies of developing countries, and the strengthening of public and community media in Third World countries.

As Fox (1997, 7) reminds us, it was Latin America that emerged as the first Third World region that identified problems in its communication system, proposing policies and attempting to carry out broadcasting and press reforms. Critics in the San Jose meetings, which were sponsored by UNESCO and held in Costa Rica to discuss national communication policies, attacked the huge US imports, the lack of regional exchange and the absence of public services and channels of popular participation. Concerns here were with both the reform of national media as well as with the changes in international flows, with suggestions that National Communication Policy Councils should be established, composed of representatives of different groups. The UNESCO meetings were eventually abandoned a decade later after the withdrawal of US and UK representatives in 1984 and 1985, and again in 1994 and 2003 at the World Summit on Information Society (WSIS) in Geneva. The meetings of the 1970s nonetheless occurred in a very specific historical context, mainly in a situation of military oppression, destruction of forms of democratic participation in government and suspicion towards forms of regulation for the public interest (Fox, 1997, 8).

² This includes the governments of Lula in Brazil, Nestor Kirchner and then Cristina Kirchner in Argentina, Evo Morales in Bolivia and Rafael Correa in Ecuador.

In particular countries of the region, however, there were already clear pressures towards the construction of a public broadcasting service grounded on educational imperatives, although this movement has had a troubled life. In most Latin American countries though, the regulation of broadcasting clashed with national and international forces standing behind commercial broadcasting. Politicians also traditionally maintained an interest in using the state (public) media to reach out to voters and to gain political support, something that began during the Vargas period in Brazil in the 1940s as well as during the Peron years in Argentina (Fox, 1997, 13).

Countries like Peru, Chile, Venezuela and Mexico at the time shared a common concern in applying public service ideals to their media, but this was met with opposition from Latin American media owners, who saw this as an attempt to limit free expression. Thus, from the late 1970s onwards, governmental attempts at media reform were largely abandoned or shifted to other avenues, such as the United Nations. Evidently, concerns regarding media reform and channels of media participation still persist today, although the political, economic, cultural and social context in which these debates are taking place is very different. The timing is also much better. In Latin America political liberalization has undoubtedly opened an avenue in the continent to revisit these debates in a very changed atmosphere.

In Argentina the Law of Audio-visual Communication Services, presented by the president Cristina Kirchner and approved on 17 September 2009 by the Chamber of Deputies, could limit the power of private media conglomerates. The law impedes any private television company from owning more than 35% of media, demands that official publicity to be regulated and that licenses be renewed every 10 years rather than 20, allocating a third of the electronic radio spectrum to non-profit organizations. It also prohibits horizontal and vertical concentration, establishing minimum quotas for national productions. The law is seen by experts in the continent as ground-breaking, and as a sign that the whole region might soon follow this example (e.g. Moraes, 2009). This has angered the Clarin group, which holds around 80 percent of the cable TV concessions in Buenos Aires.

In Brazil, there has been pressure from civil society players to journalists, politicians and some media entrepreneurs, pressures have been placed in regards to the formulation of a media regulatory framework. The government is set to implement such framework - based on more than 600 proposals approved during the Confecom (National Conference on Communications) debates of 2009 – from the end of 2010. Following the launch of TV Brasil, a council for the Empresa Brasileira de Comunicacao (EBC) was established, including representatives of civil society, which is responsible for the former state television channel (NBR) and another eight broadcasting stations. It is to the relationship between the state and Brazil's broadcasting tradition that I next turn.

Broadcasting in Brazil and Media Regulation Policy

The State in Communication Policy

The expansion of global media as a consequence of increasing cultural, political and economic globalization is seen to have transformed the very nature of the previous strong relationship that existed between the media and the state (e.g. Curran, 2000; Hardy, 2008; Sparks, 2007; Thusu, 2000). The fact that media systems are transcending the barriers of the nation-state has raised concerns that media globalization is actually contributing to diminishing the power of countries to regulate and/or use their media for educational and cultural purposes. As various authors have noted (e.h. Morris and Waisbord, 2001; Straubhaar, 2001), the state continues to matter because it can still play a role in shaping (national) media policy. As academics like Garnham (1986, in Morris and Waisbord, 2001) have stated, globalization has not eliminated the relevance of the state, and many critical globalization theorists (e.g. Petras, 1999) claim that it has been the state that has permitted international trade agreements and the free flow of capital, and thus sanctioned many of the practices of current neoliberalism.

The arguments with regard to the decline of the state stress that it has become weakened in a situation where market forces have imposed their dominance and have

dictated current developments, including the expansion of cable and satellite technologies across borders, the growth of telecommunications companies and the increase in the power of multinational media conglomerates, facilitated by the liberalization of media systems. This also includes a weakening of the state's capacity to rule within a certain territory without interference from other states (Morris and Waisbord, 2001, i). The state's participation in the ownership or regulation of the broadcast media in liberal democracies is largely based upon the need to guarantee standards of 'neutrality' and to minimize political bias. According to Baldwin and Cave (1999, 9-13), many of the rationales for regulating can be described as 'market failure', mainly when the market fails to produce results in accordance with the public interest. The state can also have a role in assisting in the extension of the public sphere through regulation and subsidy (Hardy, 2008). Thus it is clear that states do remain important in shaping the structure of media markets.

As Dunleavy (1987) has argued, public service broadcasting regulation in the UK has managed to act as a counter-weight to the press, neutralizing or balancing the biases of the partisan British newspapers and tabloids by offering more 'trustworthy' information. Thus its role in broadcasting is seen as one which is closely connected to the public interest and to the use of public media for educational purposes, securing political coverage that is impartial between parties. As Dunleavy (1987) further notes, the state is supposed to balance the interests between competing groups in society. This role of the state as a mediator of diverse and competing interests is associated with the pluralist conception of the state as being politically 'neutral'.

In the Latin American case, it is clear that the state is still very politicized, more than three decades after the fall of the dictatorships in the region. The more contemporary context, nonetheless, is assigning a new role to the state. As Moraes (2009) has further stated, the debates taking place in Brazil in recent years concerning the communication field can actually contribute to revitalize the public sphere and the regulation capacity of the state in socioeconomic and cultural life, reinforcing the social-democratic function of the state and slowly paving the way towards a more publicly oriented media platform committed to the collective good.

The Public Media in Brazil

Since its origins in the 1920s, Latin American broadcasting has not had a role in social and economic development and has not privileged public service ideals (Waisbord, 1995). Due largely to state sponsorship, Mexico and Brazil developed the largest broadcasting industries in the region. Traditionally the state was assigned a role of political control and censorship, as well as being the main advertiser or sponsor in many Latin American countries during the dictatorship years. The state performed an arbitrary authoritarian role, having served as an investor in the construction of the telecommunication infrastructure and as a supporter of the private media.³

The relationship between the public media and the state has always been an uneasy one in the history of broadcasting in Brazil, with the former having been constructed more as a state model media than a proper public communication platform. The public media sector in Brazil, as it stands, suffers from various historical deficiencies. Brazil has thus always had a weak public media sector which has been composed mainly of the respected but funding-starved TV Cultura in São Paulo and its counterpart TVE in Rio, as well as other regional outlets controlled by local politicians and by sectors of the evangelical Church.⁴

National broadcasting policies in Brazil have traditionally been closely aligned with political interests and state control. Broadcasting regulation has been under control of the Ministry of Communication, with presidents using the distribution of radio and television licenses as a form of political patronage. The Brazilian state was a prime contributor to the development of the newspaper market and the modernization of

³ The state is still the biggest advertiser, participating in around 7.13 percent of all advertising investment, which is approximately US\$ 493.136 million (Lima, 1996, 99, in Matos, 2008).

⁴ 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 also includes the state radio station, Radiobras, *Radio MEC*, the Cabinet of the Presidency and Rio state television, TVE Brasil.

television (Abreu, 2002; Lins da Silva, 1990; Matos, 2008;). As Fox (1997, 61) notes, the Brazilian Telecommunications Code of 1962 included aspects of the authoritarianism of the former Getulio Vargas regime, such as the power of the president to distribute broadcasting licenses. According to Caparelli (1986, in Fox, 1997), between 1965 and 1978, the code enabled the military government to distribute almost 60 percent of the television channels in Brazil to its friends.

State intervention in South America has had the main aim of reinforcing governmental powers rather than promoting democratic forms of communication (Matos, 2008; Waisbord, 2000). The 1988 Brazilian Constitution stipulates that the Executive body has the power over television and radio concessions, with Congress able to ratify the decision, or not. Thus state interventionism in Brazil has been characterized by a mixture of clientelistic practices, political patronage and censorship control rather than concerns with the public interest. In many other Latin American countries also, public broadcasting sectors have established a relationship of political clientelism with local, regional and national governments.

The rights to communications were established in the Federal Brazilian Constitution of 1988 mainly in Article 220 which prohibits restrictions on freedom of expression. Although the 1988 Constitution contained some advances, critics have argued that not much has been done to make these rights effective (Saravia, 2008, 75). The constitutional articles that deal with social communications, for instance, have not been regulated. The Brazilian broadcasting media have also had to comply with public interest commitments defined by the 1988 Federal Constitution. The articles included in the constitution that deal with regional programming, and which suggest a preference for cultural and educational television outputs, are defended by civil society groups. According to Lima (2007, a project that requires the regulation of the article on the regionalization of cultural and artistic production has circulated in the National Congress for 17 years and has not been approved. However, Article 222 was altered by constitutional amendment in 2002 to permit the entry of foreign capital in the sector.

Civil society players and officials linked to the government and organized groups have underscored the necessity of building a solid regulation framework for the country to replace outdated laws such as the *Código Brasileiro de Telecomunicações* (1962), and to follow from some initiatives of the 1990s, including the Cable Law (1995) and the *Lei Geral de Telecomunicações* (LGT, 1997), which are seen as having benefited mainly commercial groups. According to Bolano⁵ (2007), the public policy laws for the communication sector mainly consist of the *Código de Telecomunicações* and of the 1997 LGT, with broadcasting being still controlled by the old law, and cable TV and other forms of paid TV linked to the telecommunications sector. As Bolano states, the political debate in the communication sector is divided into three big groups: Conservatives (who defend the interests of broadcasters); Progressives (the movements in favor of media democratization) and Liberals (who support the interests of the telecommunication sector), with the concerns of social movement groups attracting the least attention, whilst the corporate media sectors prevailed.

Thus, in many emerging democracies like Brazil, public service media and broadcasting does not have a history of having contributed to strengthen democracy, and it has not served to boost educational and cultural levels. Rather, the market media and commercial broadcasting have largely taken on this role, and have also traditionally been allowed to develop somewhat unregulated in most countries of the region. Further, as Saravia (2008, 72) reminds us, the whole notion of communication rights itself is a relatively new phenomenon, with the first discussions on this taking place in the 1960s.

The 1st National Conference on Communications (Confecom) to discuss some of these issues was held in the first week of December 2009 in Brasília bringing together members of opposing sides, such as civil society players, journalists, representatives of media outlets and a small group of media entrepreneurs who have been debating media policy reform for at least the last seven years. It was also seen as a direct development

⁵ See 'Sem dar consequencia, vamos perder o legado da Confecom' (Without giving continuity, we are going to lose the legacy of Confecom), in Ana Rita Marini, *FNDC*, 13/08/2010.

of the launch by the Brazilian government of the first public television station, TV Brasil, in December 2007.⁶

Other distortions of public communication systems are the misuse of state structures for political purposes. Oligarchic politicians and Church interests control many 'public' radio and television stations throughout Brazil, especially in the north-east (Matos, 2008). In Brazil's north-east the Collor de Mello family dominates the media in Alagoas, the Sarneys in Maranhão and the recently deceased famous conservative politician Antonio Carlos Magalhães (ACM) in the State of Bahia. Chaos and irregularities mark the process of radio and TV concessions. Currently, many public TV and radio stations are in the hands of politicians. Statistics from the Deputy Chamber in the legislative years of 2006–9 indicated that 30 percent of Brazilian senators and various MPs hold concessions for radio channels and TV stations (Lopes, 2008). As Table 1 shows, in the mid 1990s politicians controlled 30–40 percent of the total number of radio and television stations in the country.

More recent research launched by academic Venicio de Lima (2007) stressed how at least 50 percent of the more than 2000 community stations permitted to operate by the Ministry of Communications belonged to people linked to politicians. These numbers indicate a rise in the radio and television stations owned by politicians and point to the fact that, in spite of political democratization, the state is still politicized and subject to the pressures of particular groups in opposition to the less privileged sectors of society. The ties with the state were weakened from the 1990s onwards but still maintained. Certain legislation that was of interest to the media market has been approved in the last few years by federal governments, including the privatization of the telecommunications system and permission for foreign capital to participate in the national market (Matos, 2008) after the revision of articles in the Brazilian Constitution.

Thus, in their fear of a stronger public media sector posing a threat to the commercial media, market liberals in Brazil have pointed to the bad state of the structures of the

⁶ See *FNDC* interview.

public media in the country, including the promiscuous relationships between the weak and partisan state media with politicians from the north-east and the dominance of the sector by the evangelical church, as the main reason to condemn the restructuring of the new PSB platform, and to argue in favor of the hegemony of the market.

The Brazilian Government's Policies for the Communication Sector: A Debate

Just as many Americans oppose an active regulatory role for the state because of their fear that state intervention will encourage partisan manipulation, in Brazil similar worries were expressed at the time of the emergence of the Empresa Brasileira de Comunicacao (EBC). The close links between the government and the revitalization of the public media have thus been subject to heated debate. The opposition has questioned the intentions of the government, suggesting it may intend the channel for its own political purposes. The government of Luis Inacio Lula da Silva is seen by critics as having done little to change the media scenario in Brazil (e.g. Lugo-Ocando, 2008; Moraes, 2009) beyond the realization of the Confecom debates, although the Ministry of Culture has been actively involved in attempts to strengthen the public media platform. The program for the sector of social communications presented by Lula in 2006 for his re-election bid stressed the democratization of communications as necessary for the deepening of democracy, underscoring knowledge as an important tool in national development.

Critics have nonetheless pointed out that the main governmental actions on this front have been the creation of TV Brasil and the realization of the Confecom debates at the end of 2009. The latter saw the approval of 672 proposals by representatives of the government, social movements and groups such as the National Forum for the Democratization of Communications (FNDC) and some businessmen that would be submitted to Congress and the Executive powers for ratification in 2010 and 2011. Confecom emerged as an important milestone in its recognition of the urgency of discussing public policies on communications in the country, approving 672 proposals in defense of a system of regulation that includes wider societal participation, the formation of a journalism council as well as the definite regulation of constitutional

articles that deal with the production of regional, educational and cultural programming. Considering the highly politicized nature of Brazilian institutions and the media, many of the proposals are seen by market liberals as opening a loophole for media censorship.

Various scholars (e.g. Saraiva, 2008) have defended, among other things, the strengthening of community media as a means of further democratization of social relations in Brazil and the registration of all the concessions in order to evaluate if those given to particular entities are not operating against the law. In an interview given to the FNDC, the first president of the Latin Union of Political Economy of Information, Communication and Culture (ULEPICC) and professor of the Federal Sergipe University and UnB, Cesar Bolano, emphasized how the public media continues to have the same space as it had before: 'What happened was a restructuring of the public television, but the public TV in Brazil still has the same space as before, in terms of audience share and of effective production.'⁷

The federal government has also committed itself to taking broadband into the poorest regions of the country, with one of the proposals envisioning an equal distribution of concessions for digital technology between the public, private and state systems. The government also wants to create digital television channels for the ministries of Culture, Education and Communications, as well as distribute channels for unions and social movements, introduce legislation to restrict cross-media ownership and ensure that television stations transmit programs produced by independent production companies. There are also proposals defending the regulation of articles of the Constitution, including Article 220, which prohibits the existence of monopolies, and Article 221, which foresees the regionalization of radio and television production.

The ideological tensions that existed in the 1970s during the NWICO debates have not altogether diminished: the Brazilian Association of Radio and Television Broadcasting (Abert), which is closely connected with TV Globo for instance, considered the results a

⁷ See *FNDC* interview.

'regression' and the newspaper *Estado de São Paulo* affirmed that if the results were transformed into law this could restrict press liberty. Soon after the realization of the Confecom debates, the National Cultural Conference was held in March 2010, which defended further commitment to the regionalization of programs and criticized the concentration of media groups. These initiatives were met with hostility from the main media players, with newspapers like *O Globo* and *Estado de São Paulo* classifying the measures of both conferences as an attempt to control the press by radical sectors of the government and as a way of inhibiting the action of the private sector.⁸

Concerns have been raised in relation to the political links that it has maintained with the federal state. With regard to the current project of strengthening public sector broadcasting, concerns have been raised in relation to the political links that it has maintained with the federal state, mainly the role that the government has played in implementing the public media platform. These links began to slowly decline following the first anniversary of TV Brasil, but they have not altogether disappeared. These concerns are still embedded in the core critiques made by sectors of the market media of TV Brasil and to other media policy initiatives. Certainly, the main difference between a democratic public service model and one of direct government control and interference, more associated with authoritarian regimes, is the existence of regulatory structures that, among other things, institutionally guarantee partisan fairness and quality in programming.

Thus the issue is much more complex than some sectors of the opposition claim. For the project of strengthening the public media platform is the natural consequence of the re-democratization of Brazilian society since the end of the dictatorship in 1985, which has included a gradual democratization of the country's social and political institutions, the increase in democratic demands being made by the middle and lower sectors of Brazilian society and the pressures for wider social inclusion.

⁸ *Estado de São Paulo* and *O Globo* criticize the document of the Cultural Conference (see Rosa, 2010).

One need only look at the history of broadcasting in the country to see that the pendulum has largely swung towards the market and has encountered difficulties in permitting the construction of a journalism vulnerable to political and economic pressures, much in the same way as the current public and commercial media are. As Santos and Silveira (2007, 76) note, the reasons why the state should still have a role include its capacity to organize the use of limited resources, stimulate technical advances, guarantee fair competition and favor national development. Thus the debate goes beyond the more straightforward issue of 'to regulate' or 'not to regulate', but is rather about how to design a model of regulation that is in favor of the public interest.

Conclusion

Where are Latin American media systems heading in a context of increasing economic globalization, expanding political liberalism and demands of civil society players for a diverse communication platform that can attend to the needs of the country's multiple identities? As Fox (1997, 30) notes in her discussion of the reasons that media reforms were largely abandoned in the 1970s in Latin America, many of the countries in the region had more serious problems to discuss during the first years of re-democratization, ranging from trials for human rights abuses to re-structuring economic growth programs.

Furthermore, as in the case of Eastern European countries, nations such as Brazil are now in the aftermath of the dictatorship encountering difficulties in implementing public service broadcasting, from designing a public media platform that can be fully separated from both political and economic interests to raising citizens' awareness of who the public media audience is, what they want and expect from these services, and the ways in which they can provide positive competition for the commercial media, improving quality programming and providing wider in-depth debate.

The media landscape in Brazil today is undoubtedly different from how it was back in the 1970s. Media conglomerates have expanded in the whole of Latin America and are

interconnected both nationally and internationally as a result of the growth of cable and satellite and new technologies. This has made these media industries become more complex, difficult to regulate and their ownership patterns are much more blurred. Multiple audiences/publics cut across the boundaries of nation-states and with diverse tastes. It is precisely in such a rapidly changing digital environment that the fortification of a public media committed to citizenship remains all the more necessary.

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Table 1 Radio and TV stations controlled by politicians in Brazil (1994)

| <i>Channels</i> | <i>Total Brazil</i> | <i>Current politicians and past</i> | <i>%</i> |
|-----------------|---------------------|-------------------------------------|----------|
| TV | 302 | 94 | 31.12 |
| Radio | 2908 | 1169 | 40.19 |

Source: Lima (2001: 107, in Azevedo, 2006, 34)