Media Development
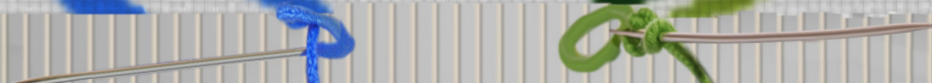
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Communication
in Solidarity

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Membership of WACC provides opportunities to network with people of similar interests and values, to learn about and support WACC's work, and to exchange information about global and local questions of communication rights and the democratization of the media.

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Media Development Vol. LXX 2/2024

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EDITORIAL

Ever since a right to communicate was imagined by Jean D'Arcy in 1969, the concept has been controversial. Like the right to memory, without which individuals and communities would be deprived of their identity and dignity, neither figures in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). In its place, the fall-back position has been UDHR's Article 19: "Everyone has the right to freedom of opinion and expression; this right includes freedom to hold opinions without interference and to seek, receive and impart information and ideas through any media and regardless of frontiers."

The right to communicate (being able to speak up in public or in private) is distinguished from the right to communication (having equitable access to communication infrastructures and technologies). Both fall under the umbrella term *communication rights*, which expands freedom of opinion and expression to claim spaces and resources in the public sphere that enable everyone to engage in transparent, informed, and democratic debate. In short, this becomes a matter of *communicative justice*, understood as:

"An environment that enables individuals and collectivities to fully participate in social communication. This means that infrastructures (such as networks, frequencies and channels) should be affordable and accessible on a non-discriminatory basis. It also implies the accessibility to and control over the resources needed for communication, such as financial resources. Also, communicative capabilities, such as linguistic, dialogical skills and the know-how to retrieve and order information, should be accessible and affordable."[1]

All this may seem straightforward and obvious. Yet many people remain confused, arguing that the terms are vague, that they cannot be encoded in law, and that freedom of opinion and expression covers all eventualities.

For this issue of *Media Development*, we

Assessing Communication Rights: A Handbook
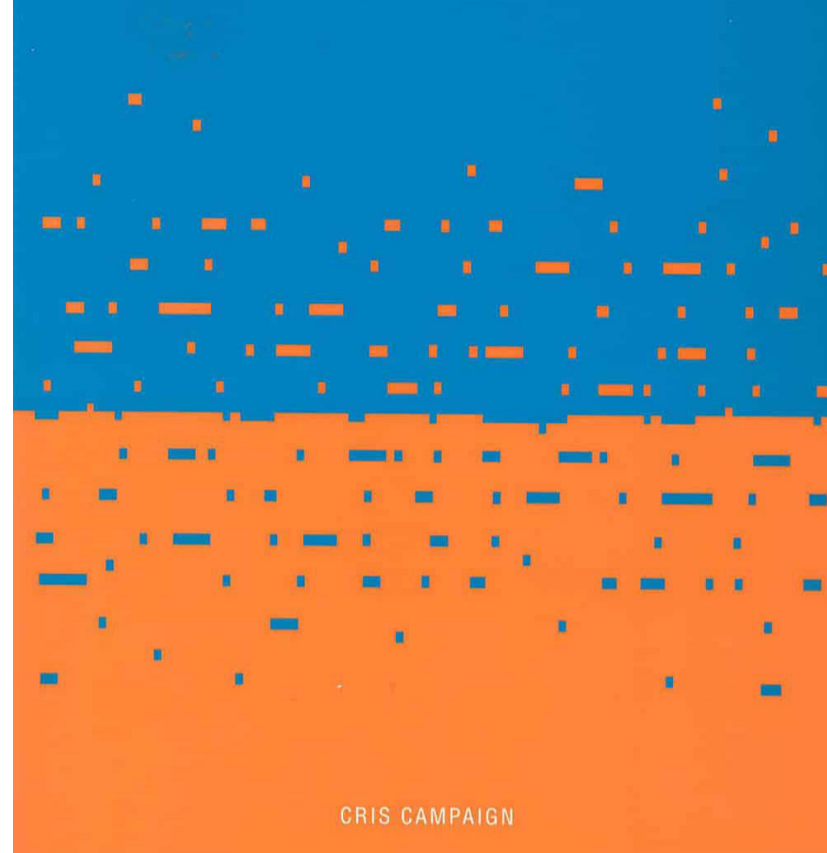
CRIS CAMPAIGN

This *Handbook* was published in 2005 as part of the CRAFT project (Communication Rights Assessment Framework and Toolkit) of the CRIS Campaign.

invited contributors to describe their understanding of these terms but without – if possible – using the words right to communicate, right to communication, or communication rights. This proved easier said than done, underlining that, while the terms might not be readily understood, a rights-based approach has been correct all along.

For Nico Carpentier, "Communication is part of the democratic-participatory struggle itself. We communicate about power relations, democracy and the political. In doing so, we again engage in struggles over how power should and should not be distributed in society. We communicate about how societal problems need to be resolved, what problem-resolving procedures we should use, how our political cultures should function (and how not), and –importantly – we communicate about which democratic ideology we should translate into political practice and what level of participation – minimalist or maximalist – we should have."

In her deeply personal account, Maria El-

ena Hermosilla reminds us that, "Without communication, there are no relationships. It is the symbolic dimension of social relations. Learning to communicate goes beyond the mere apprenticeship of learning how to construct messages. It is not enough to master media languages. It is necessary to investigate in order to understand many dimensions if we want to comprehend and, above all, to have an impact."

And reconsidering the question in the context of the digital era, Pradip N. Thomas argues that an "emphasis on autonomy and self-determination requires us to investigate the worth and validity of a much more decentralised and local understanding of communication rights where people determine communication rights challenges along with the required solutions. This inability to translate communication rights at a local level has arguably been one of the key bugbears of communication rights activists."

It is immeasurably sad that the past decade has once again seen horrific and sustained assaults on the integrity and aspirations of many people worldwide, including in that so-called bastion of democracy the USA, where juries are literally still out on matters of corruption, misuse of power, and impunity. Over the same period, freedom of expression and opinion has been gravely undermined by a concentration of media ownership and control that now extends to digital platforms, state censorship, silencing, and hate speech/images as both democratically and undemocratically elected leaders seek to subvert the rule of law and to mask their own and their cronies' contempt for human rights.

As articles in this issue of *Media Development* show, we must resist by every means possible the steady erosion of democratic values, press freedom, and people's capacity to see, hear, and express their needs and concerns in public without obstruction. Only in this way can we retain a peaceful and sustainable future as a shared vision for all. ∎

Note
1. Hamelink, Cees J. (2023). *Communication and Human Rights. Towards Communicative Justice*, pp. 126-7. Polity Books.

Compassionate communication as human solidarity

Cees J. Hamelink

In a recent book on "Communication and Human Rights", I propose that all discussions on communication rights, the right to communicate or the right to communication should be based upon the notion of "communicative justice".[1] This means doing justice to the human capacity for compassionate communication. This mode of human communicative behaviour features four fundamental human rights principles. Its realisation is possible only when Article 28 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR) is taken seriously.

In the UDHR four principles are essential: the respect for human dignity, the right to freedom, the right to equality, and the right to security. Applying these principles to human communication – in its manifold manifestations – four basic standards emerge: communicative dignity, communicative freedom, communicative equality, and communicative security.

Communicative dignity means that communicative behaviour is guided by respect for human dignity. It avoids the humiliation of people through de-individualization, discrimination, disempowerment, and degradation. Communicative freedom means that people are free to accept or reject each other's claims on the basis of reasons they can evaluate. The respect for the communicative freedom of others requires that

we accept the other as fundamentally different from us and see their alterity as a unique feature that cannot be assimilated and reduced to similarity.

Communicative equality means that in communicative behaviour the participants are equal to initiate communication, that speech acts are symmetrical, and that communication roles are reciprocal. Communicative security means communicating in a caring manner. Security means knowing you will be cared for. A secure society is a community of mutual care in which people are protected against forms of verbal and non-verbal harm to their physical, mental or moral integrity. Since human security is most deeply undermined by experiencing anxiety, communicative behaviour avoids practices and politics of fearmongering. Communicative security also requires an environment in which people can trust that their interactions are not monitored by third parties.

I propose to place the notion of "communicative justice" at the core of these communicative standards:

DIGNITY			FREEDOM
	COMMUNICATIVE JUSTICE		
EQUALITY			SECURITY

Communicative justice

The concept "communicative justice" refers to a not-yet-realised common standard of human communicative behaviour. This standard represents an entitlement to dignity, equality, freedom, and security in all human communicative acts. It represents a mode of communication that does justice to the human capacity for compassion.

The core of compassionate communication is human solidarity. The notion of solidarity originates in Roman law, where it referred to the accountability of each member of a certain community for the debts of any other. This limited view of solidarity was expanded with the French revolution when *solidarité* took on a meaning beyond the context of the law and came to suggest the idea of mutual responsibility between an individual and society. Solidarity began to mean a commitment of the individual to support the community and a commitment of the community to support the individual. This is primarily a moral commitment that cannot be enforced as a legal duty.

The concept, however, provides a framework of mutual obligations and responsibilities among members of communities (local, national, and even global) that binds them to the realisation of standards of common achievement. This resonates with early ancient philosophers such as Socrates and Aristotle who discussed solidarity as virtue ethics because in order to live a good life one must behave in a way that is in solidarity with the community.

Compassionate communication is an act of constructive power against the destructive power of communication. This mode of communication presents alternative solutions, includes all in an open and critical dialogue, explores the multiplicity of knowledges, and exposes deliberate acts of harm to the life-environment.

Imagination

Human rights tell inspirational stories through which people can become agents of their own destiny. The human rights regime presents us with an image of a compassionate world. This amounts to the challenge to go from imagining a human rights-based society to realising a human rights-based society. Against the imagination of a world that accepts human rights as "common standard of achievement" (UDHR), there are formidable forces that are hostile to the imagination of autonomy, equality, and human security.

The communicative justice that I have described requires a process of institutional and mental transformation to a caring, egalitarian, convivial and secure social order. This reflects the provision of the often forgotten Article 28 of the UDHR which states: "everyone is entitled to a social and international order in which the rights

and freedoms set forth in this Declaration can be fully realized." This transformation means having the moral courage to commit to active participation in the public cause, to revolt against situations that we experience as unjust and immoral, to accept that our moral universe extends to future generations but also to new arrivals in our societies such as refugees and migrants.

Realising that living always means living with others, we have to take responsibility for a world in which we and others can live with dignity, freedom, equality and security. We have to decide how we will relate to this moral challenge. ∎

Note
1. Cees J. Hamelink (2023). *Communication and Human Rights. Cambridge*, Polity Press.

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Recent issues of *Media Development*

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Power, participation, discourse and communication

Nico Carpentier

Power is pervasive, all-encompassing, and ultimately ungraspable. At the same time, power generates difference through a logic of privilege. Even though a distinction between "the powerless" and "the powerful" is too simplistic, we can still see, throughout the world, assemblages of the privileged, articulating alliances of different elites, who can have their desires more easily fulfilled.

Cultural Studies authors, such as Stuart Hall and John Fiske, have used the Gramscian notion of the power-bloc to mark these dynamics. To use Fiske's words:

"It is a poststructural opposition because its categories are not stable nor structurally set, but mobile, strategically and tactically formed and dissolved according to the perceived exigencies of the issue involved and its situating conditions. 'The power-bloc' and 'the people' are not social categories, but alliances of social interests formed strategically or tactically to advance the interests of those who form them." (John Fiske, *Power Plays, Power Works*, 1993, p. 10)

This then brings us to empowerment, which is the redressal of the power imbalances between those who belong to the power-bloc and those who do not, and who Hall and Fiske call "the people", in the context of the mobile and always somewhat changing power relations that they also describe. Of course, this is easier said than

done, as the theoretical fluidity of power relations at the macro-level often clashes with the harshness and rigidity of the practices of the power-bloc at the micro-level, and the frustrations and feelings of hopelessness they sometimes cause.

Moreover, the degree of empowerment, and how much – what I have called in *Media and Participation* (2011) – maximalist participation we want, is a political choice. It not a given, but it is a choice, driven by ideology. Some ideologies legitimate power differences – at least to some extent – through an argumentation linked to meritocracy, efficiency and individualism. This also connects to different approaches to democracy with, for instance, the influential model of competitive-elitist democracy favouring power differences and stressing the democratic importance of the power-bloc.

Other ideologies are more egalitarian, and aim to limit power imbalances in society, driven by notions of solidarity, needs and communalism. Again, also here we can find a translation into different democratic approaches, with, for instance, the model of participatory democracy – with its objective to equalize power relations – as a significant alternative.

Also, this line of argument is grounded in the idea that power relations are not a given. Instead, they are object of political struggle, with outcomes that cannot be guaranteed. Which power differences are accepted in particular societies, and which are unthinkable or unacceptable is part of a societal negotiation and thus power struggles. This is where the world of ideas – the realm of the discursive – becomes important, as this struggle is *about* participatory-democratic ideologies, *about* ideologies of legitimate empowerment, *about* how to democratically organise a particular society so that justice and equality can play a significant role in that society.

Of course, the discursive is entangled with the material – for instance, how capital is distributed in society – but the discursive offers ways to think different distributions, and to think a different world. But at the same time, the discursive can be activated to legitimate the status-quo, or even to move towards a more inegalitarian world. In this sense, the discursive opens up avenues for hope, but it can also bring tragedy and hardship.

Communication allows discourses

This then raises the question: Where is communication all this? When we define communication as signifying practices that allow for the circulation of discourses, then the link becomes apparent, as communication then becomes a tool for the participatory struggle, a part of this struggle and an object of struggle in itself. As a condensation of discourse, communication is a vehicle that allows a diversity of discussions to take place, performing the power (im)balances in the discussions about endless numbers of themes that circulate in all societies.

Communication allows discourses, for instance, about the environment, about migration, about redistribution and about recognition to circulate, but also to engage in the political struggle about them, through an endless flow of signifying practices related to their definition, problematisation and prioritisation.

But we communicate also about communication and media; or, in other words, we use signifying practices to articulate discourses about communication. For instance, we argue about what kind of communication is desirable. Remember Jürgen Habermas's work about the ideal speech situation, outlining a situation where people (and their ideas) are not excluded, where there is no coercion and where all assertions can be questioned. Or, as another example, let's take Pierre Bourdieu's reflections about symbolic violence, to show that also communication can be violent, and thus undesirable.

And again, power plays a role here, as these two authors try to articulate communication with a discourse of equality and respect, in order to counter communicative practices that deny particular people this equality and respect. In some cases, this discourse on communication is translated into regulatory and/or legal frameworks, which is again connected to the exercise of power, allocating rights to entire populations

or particular groups, or forbidding particular signifying practices (e.g., Holocaust denial in some Western countries).

Finally, also communication is part of the democratic-participatory struggle itself. We communicate about power relations, democracy and the political. In doing so, we again engage in struggles over how power should and should not be distributed in society. We communicate about how societal problems need to be resolved, what problem-resolving procedures we should use, how our political cultures should function (and how not), and –importantly – we communicate about which democratic ideology we should translate into political practice and what level of participation – minimalist or maximalist – we should have.

Of course, these three discursive levels are entangled with the material. For instance, communication technologies and infrastructures impact on all three levels, but if we want to understand power, participation and communication we need to pay more attention to their discursive components and connect these theoretical reflections more with our democratic-participatory desires and actions. ∎

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Communication rights and autonomy in the era of data

Pradip Ninan Thomas

The ability to Voice, Access resources and technology, the strengthening of local capabilities within an enabling environment and being able to communicate through a language of one's choice – these remain fundamental building blocks in the creation of sustainable communication environments.

In the context of community networks in some parts of Latin America such as in Chiapas, Mexico, local indigenous communities locate and position voice and access within the larger desire for "autonomy" and development that is needs-based and designed, implemented, managed and controlled by local communities. There is a sense in which the word "autonomy" refers to a wanting to be left alone after different forms of internal and external colonialism deprived these communities of their land, resources and rights.

Both the State and the private sector have been responsible for corralling indigenous communities into environments in which life with dignity is unviable and in depriving them of access to resources that they traditionally had access to – land, water sources, forest-based and other resources. It is deplorable that the Chiapas region in Mexico supplies half of Mexico's electricity and 30% of its water but that 90% of indigenous communities do not have access to energy, plumbing and health care.[1] They then have little choice but to make lifestyle choices that are inimical to their health and livelihoods.

Indigenous communities have also been marginalised in the communication environments in which we live. The story of universal access to telecommunications reflects the ways in which large companies and monopolies have been able to skirt their commitments to universal service obligations (USOs) that are often included in licenses. There are numerous cases from around the world of telecom carriers not fulfilling these obligations ostensibly because connecting remote populations is financially unviable.

The need for Autonomy therefore needs to be seen in the context of real gaps and the failures of both the State and the private sector to invest in infrastructures and enabling environments.

In Aotearoa, this autonomy is expressed in the term *tino rangatiratanga,* which translates to self-determination, sovereignty, independence and autonomy. In the words of Te One and Clifford (2021)[2]:

"Tino rangatiratanga refers to Māori control over Māori lives, and the centrality of mātauranga Māori (Māori knowledge). While focused on a Māori worldview, tino rangatiratanga also has a close association with the challenges that have come from the loss of Māori control through colonial practices and has been used as a framework from which Māori have continued to challenge governments for recognition of our individual and collective self-determination."

This desire for autonomy has been expressed through both legal and cultural means. In the context of Chiapas, the Zapatistas were involved in enabling local autonomies that took the form of self-governance and consensus-based decision-making that enabled the broad participation of local people in their own affairs. While the history of that struggle has been well documented and is in some ways unique, most indigenous communities around the world are not fortunate enough to be heirs to such frameworks of resistance and practices of democracy. It is difficult for them to practice any form of autonomy

as they are often part of State structures that only offer centralised development with little option for any form of autonomy.

In countries such as India where there is a marked reluctance to recognise that "tribal" groups are indeed First Nations, any expression of autonomy has been met with State violence – the most egregious example of such violence being the widespread attempt to manage and make pliable communities who are deemed to be sympathetic to armed insurgents fighting for autonomy who are often described as Maoists.

Decentralised forms of development and technologies of access

Such autonomies need to be seen in the context of the global desire for decentralised forms of development and technologies of access such as wi-fi and mesh that can be deployed to create networks and connectivities that count. However, the availability of such technologies is just one of the building blocks of communication rights in our data driven world. While autonomy and self-determination describe the basis for personal and collective well-being that is based on local decision making, these terms also need to be used to make sense of critical needs related to communication rights.

Maori communities who have fought for their language, cultural rights, and traditional knowledge now acknowledge that both data sovereignty and data governance are essential aspects of their struggle for self-determination and autonomy. As the report *Te Kahui Raraunga: Maori Data Governance Model* (n.d.) notes – this is both about data for self-determination *and* Maori authority over Maori Data in line with similar initiatives established by the Canadian First Nations Information Governance Centre.

"Māori data governance (MDGov) refers to the processes, practices, standards and policies that enable Māori, as collectives and as individuals, to have control over Māori data ... [There is] a focus on self-determination and intergenerational wellbeing; recognising data as a valued

cultural resource; an emphasis on collective data rights; and prioritising Indigenous values as the basis for good data governance" (4-5).[3]

So, I think communication rights need to be seen both in terms of enabling media/digital diversity and fair traditions of algorithmic management at a macro level along with efforts to establish data self-determination and data sovereignty at micro, community levels. This way of interpreting communication rights is markedly different from earlier traditions that focussed on curbing/regulating Big Media – media ownership along with, at best, making a case for media alternatives.

While this approach remains valid, the emphasis on autonomy and self-determination requires us to investigate the worth and validity of a much more decentralised and local understanding of communication rights where people determine communication rights challenges along with the required solutions. This inability to translate communication rights at a local level has arguably been one of the key bugbears of communication rights activists.

So, it is not just about community radio and the need for policies in support of this sector but a community radio that is deeply integrated with a community's struggles for self-determination and autonomy. We need also to expand our understanding of Voice, Access and affordability in the context of our data driven societies and to upgrade and integrate community radio with the affordances of community networks.

Given the availability of a range of connectivity technologies and the critical importance of digital transactions in our everyday lives, there simply has to be greater emphasis on data control at local levels. This imperative needs to be seen against the reality of both political and economic surveillance, data insecurities and the rather cavalier approach taken by both governments and Big Tech to data.

For the most part, the language of communication rights and its priorities have been set by well-meaning experts and that includes academics like this author and organisations such as WACC who have made major investments in finding solutions to communication rights. While I am not in any way discounting the need for global communication rights activism and global communication rights advocacy, a decentralised approach to communication rights does enable integrated solutions in which communications, well-being and community are not treated as separate units but as threads in a tapestry that is woven locally.

I think the examples from Chiapas and that of Maori data self-determination exemplify an approach to communication rights that is focussed on local control over data that can make a difference in how people live their lives, how they want to deal with the data and metadata that they generate and how they share such data with others – be it government agencies or the private sector. These autonomies are by no means complete given the lives of such communities in extremely contentious contexts characterised by multiple claims on local land, local resources and local lifestyles.

Autonomy and self-determination are not cut from the same cloth and there are different approaches, priorities, interpretations and understandings of autonomy. What is common to all these understandings is the primacy given to collective solutions to the challenges facing these communities including that of how to engage with data, collect data, use and share data within a framework in which connectivity is based on community needs and driven by community interests.

Dinerstein (2015: 61) offers what reads like a Freirean understanding of autonomy:

"My working definition of autonomy as the art of organising hope comprises four modes of the autonomous praxis: negating, creating, contradicting and excess. In the key of hope, negating is deciphered as a rejection of the given – capitalist, patriarchal and colonial – realities… The creating mode of autonomy anticipates the future by modelling concrete utopias (i.e.,

invents new practices, relations, sociabilities and horizons…). The contradicting mode of autonomy is about navigating and resisting the danger of appropriation and translation of autonomy into the grammar of power and the necessity of disappointment. Finally, excess is informed by the category of the not yet (i.e., it is related to the search towards the realisation of an unrealised reality that can be invented or rendered visible by anticipating it in different contexts)."[4]

Dinerstein's definition points to autonomy as a plan of action that is both practical and that is based on organising Hope.

As we engage with communication rights in the context of the digital worlds that we live in, it will do well to engage with how the concept of autonomy can illumine the theory and practice of communication rights. ∎

Notes
1. Godelman, R. (2014), The Zapatista Movement: the fight for indigenous rights in Mexico, Australia Institute for International Affairs, July 30. https://www. internationalaffairs.org.au/news-item/the-zapatista-movement-the-fight-for-indigenous-rights-in-mexico/
2. Te One, A. & Clifford, C. (2021), Tino Rangatiratanga and well-being: Maori self-determination in the face of Covid 19, *Frontiers of Sociology*, 3. https://www.frontiersin.org/articles/10.3389/fsoc.2021.613340/full
3. Te Kahui Raraunga: Maori Data Governance Model (N.D.1-45), Tahu Kukutai, Kyla Campbell-Kamariera, Aroha Mead, Kirikowhai Mikaere, Caleb Moses, Jesse Whitehead and Donna Cormack. https://tengira.waikato.ac.nz/__data/assets/pdf_file/0008/973763/Maori_Data_Governance_Model.pdf
4. Dinerstein, A. C. (2015) *The Politics of Autonomy in Latin America: The Art of Organising Hope*, Palgrave Macmillan, Hampshire and NY.

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Sobre cómo romper el silencio

María Elena Hermosilla

Son meses y días de calor intolerable para una chilena criada en el frío. Es el "calentamiento global". En el litoral, los incendios forestales queman Viña del Mar y amplios sectores de Valparaíso; se identifican más de ciento treinta muertos. ¿Cuántos más yacerán entre las cenizas? En ese ambiente lúgubre y ardiente vivo estas vacaciones ya permanentes de la jubilación y del ocaso de mi carrera profesional. Entonces, llega la invitación de la WACC para escribir un corto artículo sobre un tema cuyo nombre que no debo mencionar… pero que ha sido casi obsesivo para mí a través de los años, aún hoy. Es una adivinanza, cuya tentativa de respuesta, de éxito muy relativo (este artículo), quiero compartir.

Todo comenzó en los 60, en la Escuela de Periodismo de la Universidad de Chile. Primer día de clases, el Director, Ramón Cortez Ponce, habló a aquella juventud bisoña, que quería saber en qué se había metido. Y dio una definición de periodismo como la "actividad que pone en relación a la *Humanidad Actora* con la *Humanidad Espectadora*"…Me pareció una suerte de división del trabajo entre los que "hacen" la noticia – actúan y participan – y los que "miran a otros hacer"…

Quedé estupefacta, porque el venerable personaje había dirigido un importante diario nacional y tenía estudios en el exterior.

Yo había recibido la educación laica y republicana de los Liceos del Estado, en que *la*

igualdad, la libertad y la justicia eran valores fundamentales de la democracia, sistema en el que pensábamos vivir. Por otra parte, la educación familiar religiosa y los albores del pensamiento crítico en la Iglesia Católica (Vaticano II), nos hablaban de solidaridad, de responsabilidad con los que sufren, con los pobres y excluidos. Con esos valores cursé la universidad y aprendí dentro de sus aulas – y también fuera – todo lo que pude. No quiero aburrirlos/as con el relato de mis experiencias de estudiante, siempre en grupos que buscaban que los llamados a ser "espectadores", tuvieran como y donde hacer oír su voz.

Pertenezco a una generación de jóvenes, hombres y mujeres, que en la década del 60, entendieron que el país necesitaba cambios estructurales, primero con la "Revolución en Libertad" de Eduardo Frei Montalva, demócrata cristiano, y luego con el Gobierno de izquierda la Unidad Popular (UP), del socialista Salvador Allende Gossens.

Los años de la UP (1970/73) fueron de gran movimiento en pensamiento y acción en el ámbito comunicativo. La gran influencia de Armand y Michelle Mattelart, a través de la investigación y las publicaciones de la U. Católica; de Paulo Freire y Manuel Calvelo, desde el "hacer" educación y comunicación popular. El marxismo de Althuser (*los medios como aparatos ideológicos de estado*), versus (así lo entendía yo entonces) la *pedagogía del oprimido* de Freire. "Comunicación o Dominación", el libro que escribió Freire en Chile, y "Para leer el Pato Donald" (Mattelart y Dorfman). Fue un gran honor que hayan vivido en Chile y producido ideas y libros que han iluminado América Latina y otras regiones del mundo.

Reflexionar, aprender, construir

El golpe de Estado de 1973, – además del dolor, el miedo, los amigos muertos, encarcelados o exiliados, el proyecto de vida personal y colectivo frustrado –, me dejó en claro que, si bien habíamos sucumbido ante fuerzas infinitamente más poderosas, que contaban con enormes recursos financieros, militares, internacionales etc., en el ámbito político, no habíamos logrado convocar a una mayoría de conciencias a favor del proceso que encabezaba el Presidente Allende, especialmente en sectores menos politizados.

En esos tres años, hubo importantísimos esfuerzos comunicativos populares, sobre todo en el campo cultural, con Quimantú, la gran editorial del Estado. Pero justamente en la llamada "lucha ideológica", la que se daba a través de las grandes radios comerciales, la gran prensa, los canales más vistos en TV, nos habían destrozado. ¿Qué se hace cuando no se tiene el control o el apoyo de los medios? ¿Cuál era la relación entre la comunicación, la cultura política y el poder económico y el poder de las armas? ¿Cómo los "sin voz" podían defender sus intereses en situaciones tan críticas como las que vivimos?

El desafío era reflexionar sobre estos temas, aprender, construir estrategias. Entonces, decidí irme a estudiar fuera de Chile, entendí que la dictadura se prolongaría porque pensaba "*dar vuelta*", refundar el país... Lo logró en 17 años, por la fuerza de las armas, una feroz represión política, férrea censura a los medios y la implantación de un *modelo socioeconómico neoliberal extremo*, que empobreció a grandes mayorías y obligó a cientos de miles a partir al exilio, pero que abrió el país a modos de vida y de pensamiento nunca antes vistos. La mal llamada, "*modernización*".

Regresé en 1983, divorciada, con un hijo en edad escolar, con un magister ("mestrado" en portugués) en comunicación por la UFRJ (Brasil) y un largo periodo en Paris, del que aprendí que lo que yo buscaba se encontraba en América Latina. Además de investigación y docencia, había vivido en Brasil la fuerte experiencia de trabajar en comunicación rural, en un Estado donde predomina el minifundio.

Mis grandes experiencias brasileras

- Conocer y entender el sistema Globo de Comunicaciones, la gran apuesta comunicativa y cultural del Estado y empresariado brasileros para la constitución de un gran mercado en el marco de un proyecto de desarrollo nacional a largo plazo (transnacionales, industrialización

nacional, agroindustria, inversiones estatales en energía). Mucho más que manipulación de conciencias, era una recolonización de ese país continente, con una gran diversidad cultural, étnica, histórica y social, mediante una única propuesta cultural padronizadora, propia de las megaciudades de Rio y Sao Paulo.

- Haber vivido relativamente cerca, a fines de los 70 e inicios de los 80,de la gran efervescencia social, cultural y económica del Gran Sao Paulo, del ABC paulista y el desarrollo del movimiento popular a partir de las comunidades eclesiales de base y de los sindicatos. La existencia de periódicos populares, de programas de radio, videos educativos, emisoras educativas, etc. Fue allí, en Sao Bernardo do Campo – donde Lula da Silva desarrolló su liderazgo político -, en esa efervescencia, que participé en un multitudinario congreso de la Unión Cristiana Brasilera de Comunicaciones (UCBC) y tuve acceso a un fuertes e importantes debates sobre la teoría y la práctica de la comunicación popular.

- En Brasil aprendí también que la comunicación sobrepasaba en mucho el periodismo, sino que es un tipo de relación entre grupos y personas que viabilizaba las relaciones más diversas. Sin comunicación, no hay relaciones. Ella es la dimensión simbólica de las relaciones sociales. Aprender a comunicar sobrepasa el mero aprendizaje de cómo construir mensajes. No basta con dominar lenguajes mediales. Hay que investigar para entender muchísimas dimensiones si se quiere comprender y sobre todo incidir. Por ejemplo, estudiar los géneros de la TV – la telenovela, los magazines (la entretención) – y su relación con los sueños y aspiraciones de las mujeres, porque la TV entonces, tenía una gran centralidad en toda la Región. Y la ficción televisiva calaba hondo en la identidad de género. También aprendí a valorar la importancia del trabajo interdisciplinario en los estudios de comunicación y el gran aporte que hacen la antropología, la sociología y las ciencias políticas a nuestra tarea.

- Discutiendo la teoría de los aparatos ideológicos de Estado y gracias al texto del argentino Eliseo Verón "Semiosis de la ideología y del poder", aprendí que hay producción de sentido tanto en el polo de la emisión como en el de la recepción. En esas actividades de semiosis reside la ideología. *El poder está en la circulación de los mensajes*. Ahí se nos plantea todo un desafío: por fin, me libraba de "Cómo leer en Pato Donald". Así mismo, aprendí que en las postrimerías del siglo XX, ya no era posible comprender la comunicación social como una "*influencia externa*", sino como una "*dimensión constitutiva*" de todos los fenómenos sociales, económicos, políticos y culturales.

Aires de apertura en Chile
Volví con Chile en dictadura, con Pinochet en el gobierno, la censura en plena vigencia, así como los aparatos de represión. De Parlamento, ni hablar, la propia Junta de Gobierno funcionaba como tal. A pesar de ello, se percibían aires de apertura, como el retorno de los exiliados, movilizaciones populares (organizaciones de DDHH, mujeres) y la búsqueda de acuerdos políticos que permitieran unidad para retornar a la democracia. Comenzaron a circular medios alternativos escritos y funcionaban numerosas ONGs, financiadas por la cooperación extranjera. Existían radios de carácter nacional que tenían noticiarios pluralistas de gran calidad, y que vivían en permanente peligro de ser sacadas del aire.

En 1985 entré a trabajar a CENECA, un centro de investigación independiente (ONG), formado por ex docentes de diversas universidades, que tuvo un importante rol en dictadura: el estudio de las industrias culturales y de las expresiones artísticas como el teatro, la música popular y la literatura. Tan importante como los estudios fueron las intervenciones culturales en el mundo popular: Programa de Teatro Popular, Video en la animación comunitaria, Radios Participativas, Recepción Activa de TV y otras.

En el contexto latinoamericano, había gran preocupación por la "*influencia*" de los contenidos de los medios de comunicación en la infancia, las familias y las comunidades, especialmente en el mundo religioso. Surgieron numerosos programas, como el Plan DENI, de

la Iglesia Católica, de nivel regional; el trabajo de Mario Kaplún en Venezuela y luego en Uruguay; la UCBC en Brasil. Numerosos grupos en Argentina, con diversas metodologías. En Perú, un importante programa en la Universidad de Lima. Grupos en México, en diversos espacios.

En CENECA, Valerio Fuenzalida y otras personas crearon el Programa de Recepción Activa de TV, cuyo fin era formar audiencias activas y críticas frente a las propuestas de sentido de los programas de TV, a partir de la exploración de las percepciones de los destinatarios sobre la TV, sus diversos canales, programas y contenidos. Partíamos de la investigación, y desde allí, diseñábamos actividades educativas donde la gente pudiera descubrir conceptos y sus propias percepciones, temores, aspiraciones, demandas, etc. en torno a los programas de TV. Pretendíamos *empoderar* a los grupos frente a la oferta televisiva, colaborar a que las personas comprendieran como funcionan y como se financian los medios. Y sobre todo, que descubrieran sus *capacidades expresivas*. Y aspiraran a cambiar lo que les parecía inadecuado. En resumen, se trataba de ayudar a *ciudadanizar a las audiencias*.

El Programa constaba de un sistema para investigar la recepción, con técnicas cualitativas; metodología educativa para estimular la expresión de las personas de los grupos; manuales educativos segmentados (alumnos de colegios, mujeres populares, jóvenes rurales, profesores), y un sistema de evaluación de la implementación del programa. Por fin, me encontraba trabajando para contribuir a empoderar a aquellas personas que según el pensamiento tradicional, debían cumplir el rol de "espectadores" pasivos, o así eran considerados.

Me incorporé a un proyecto de exploración de las percepciones de las mujeres pobladoras sobre la TV, sus géneros y sus programas. Financiaba el proyecto una organización llamada WACC (World Association for Christian Communication). Me intrigó y quise conocer más. Fui de a poco participando más y más, CENECA se afilió a la WACC y yo terminé como Presidenta Latinoamericana a fines de los 90. Este trabajo con WACC ha sido un trabajo militante, del que he aprendido el tremendo valor de la comunicación en la formación de comunidades, la participación social, el respeto a las personas y a sus identidades culturales, su ecumenismo, y la solidaridad con los grupos marginados y oprimidos para que puedan hacer oír su voz.

Así comenzó una historia que duró décadas y que marcó profundamente mi opción de trabajar con grupos de mujeres, las temáticas de género y la comunicación, así como en promover *políticas democráticas de comunicación*, que consideren la incorporación justamente de esos sectores excluidos de los medios tradicionales para que logren presencia en el espacio público.

En esos años, en un contexto aún autoritario y hostil, y en la más completa clandestinidad, se desarrollaron seminarios con la participación del Colegio de Periodistas, ONGs de comunicación, sindicatos, estudiantes de periodismo e investigadores, para elaborar una *Política Nacional de Comunicaciones para la Democracia*, que pretendíamos implementar una vez derrotada la dictadura. Esta propuesta era notablemente más avanzada que la de la antigua democracia chilena anterior al Golpe de 1973, cuando el sistema comunicacional funcionaba como parte del mercado y *la libertad de expresión consistía en la libre empresa de medios*.

La propuesta se basaba en el derecho a la libertad de expresión y opinión de la Carta de Derechos Humanos de la ONU, perfeccionada con aportes del Nuevo Orden Mundial de Información (NOMIC). Sus principios básicos eran 1) La comunicación es un *servicio a la ciudadanía*, no una mercancía. 2) El modelo comunicacional democrático *requiere de un tipo de sociedad democrática* en los planos político, social, económico y cultural. 3) Las personas deben internalizar y llevar a la práctica el *Derecho a la Comunicación*. Como tal, se entendía en la democratización del poder de emisión: pluralismo en el sistema de medios y dentro de cada medio.

Pero ya en el primer Gobierno democrático post dictadura, del Presidente Patricio Aylwin, *esta propuesta no fue considerada*. La dictación de

la Ley 19.733 sobre Libertad de Información y Opinión y Ejercicio del Periodismo, la llamada Ley de Prensa, *dejó al sistema de medios al arbitrio del mercado*, lo cual ha contribuido a acentuar cada vez más la concentración de la propiedad de los medios en nuestro país.

Otra Ley resguardó el carácter público de la cadena estatal TV Nacional de Chile, pero con la *obligación de autofinanciarse a través de publicidad comercial*, compitiendo con el resto de los canales privados por el rating y la torta publicitaria. Se dictó, además, la Ley del Consejo Nacional de TV, encargado de otorgar las concesiones de TV y el supervisar el correcto funcionamiento del sistema televisivo.

El derecho a la comunicación

Comenzaba a circular en Chile un nuevo concepto, *el Derecho a la Comunicación, o Derechos a la Información y Comunicación,* cuya procedencia era el frustrado Nuevo Orden Informativo Internacional (NOMIC), de la UNESCO, y su audaz propuesta de *establecer en cada país políticas públicas democráticas de comunicación*.

Otros países y otras prácticas surgieron en los años 90 que aludían o aportaban a este concepto de "derecho a la comunicación". Señalo dos que me parecen de gran importancia. Convocadas por WACC, en enero de 1998, nos reunimos en Lima, Perú, 38 mujeres provenientes de 12 países de la Región, en un Seminario sobre "Género, Comunicación y Ciudadanía en A. Latina, Retos y Perspectivas al 2.000".

En la Declaración final del encuentro, las comunicadoras señalamos que "las mujeres constituimos más del 50% de la población de la Región, hacemos aportes al desarrollo económico, social y político de nuestros países, y sin embargo, este aporte no se refleja en nuestra presencia en los centros de poder, donde se toman las decisiones que nos afectan a todos y a todas".

Más adelante, se dice que relevamos la importancia de incorporar y hacer realidad el *Derecho a la Comunicación de las mujeres*, para construir procesos ciudadanos y profundizar la democracia. Y se señala en qué consiste este derecho:

* Libertad de expresión y libre circulación de las ideas.
* El Derecho al acceso a la información y a ser debidamente informadas.
* Derecho al acceso a los medios de comunicación como fuente de información, como voceras de nuestras identidades y como sujetas activas de la construcción ciudadana y democrática.
* El Derecho a tener nuestros propios canales y producir mensajes comunicacionales.
* El Derecho a contar con marcos jurídicos, condiciones económicas y tecnológicas para nuestro desarrollo en este campo.
* El Derecho a participar en niveles de decisión, en organizaciones e instancias de comunicación, públicas y privadas.

A comienzos del Siglo XXI, a nivel global se impulsó la Campaña CRIS (por su sigla en inglés: Communication Rights in the Information Society), apoyada por WACC, para incidir en la Cumbre de Ginebra sobre la Sociedad de la Información, convocada por Naciones Unidas bajo la Organización de la UIT, organismo que contaba entonces con 189 estados miembros y un Consejo Consultivo que reunía ¡660 empresas privadas!

Las ONGs representantes de la sociedad civil en la Cumbre debieron organizar su foro aparte, el cual tuvo por objetivo demostrar y documentar la importancia del Derecho a la Comunicación para la gente, contribuir al nacimiento y comprensión del Derecho a la Comunicación, promoviendo el concepto, su reconocimiento y su realización.

Que la comunicación sea un *Derecho*, tiene una tremenda *importancia jurídica*. Si está consagrado en la Constitución y en las leyes, los y las ciudadanas podemos apelar a su *exigibilidad*, siendo el Estado el garante de su cumplimiento. En otras palabras, las mujeres empoderadas y conscientes de nuestro valor que nos reunimos en Lima en 1998 – si dicho Derecho estuviera sido consagrado en el Perú o en América Latina toda- podríamos haber exigido que se nos escuchase sobre un tema determinado, para lo

cual requerimos de medios para hacernos oír. El Estado, como garante, debería buscar el modo de proporcionarlos.

De ahí la trascendencia de avanzar en la discusión, la promoción y la consecución del Derecho a la Comunicación, para que las personas, las comunidades, las etnias, las minorías, las identidades de género, los distintos grupos etáreos e incluso las grandes mayorías, puedan hacerse oír en el espacio público, mostrar sus especificidades, exponer sus opiniones, aprobar o rechazar las decisiones que afectan a su vida. Decir "NOSOTROS Y NOSOTRAS EXISTIMOS", somos indígenas, somos ancianas, somos madres adolescentes, tenemos problemas. Es un derecho humano. Es un desafío pendiente en casi todo el mundo.

A inicios de este siglo, se forjaron muchas esperanzas con el advenimiento de la Sociedad de la Información, a mi juicio, demasiadas. Millones tienen acceso e intercambian mensajes diariamente. Trabajan online. Pero no tienen el control de nada, ni del algoritmo, ni del software, ni del hardware, de las redes, de nada… Ni del contenido de una carta de amor, que hoy puede ser creado igual o mejor por la IA. Frente a estos nuevos fenómenos, hay nuevos especialistas que aplican nuevos enfoques, que a su vez, intercambian en nuevos debates…Quiero tener fe en sus logros.

Y así estoy terminando mi "vida útil", entendiendo como tal mi capacidad de actuar para intentar "*cambiar el mundo*". He aprendido mucho y la realidad ha mudado drásticamente. Hoy, en Argentina, que logró una Ley de Medios democrática con una serie de características positivas que facilitan la expresión de la ciudadanía, mis queridas amigas y colegas periodistas se movilizan para impedir que el nuevo Presidente, el "libertario" Javier Milei, privatice los medios públicos que tanto esfuerzo costó construir. Y que no destruya la Defensoría de las Audiencias, verdadero modelo para otros países de la Región.

Sabemos hoy en día que la comunicación es una dimensión constitutiva de todos los procesos sociales, culturales, económicos. No un torrente exterior – una "influencia" – de agua sucia que mana de los aparatos ideológicos – llámense medios, iglesias, escuelas, familia, partidos políticos – y contamina las conciencias de las grandes masas inertes y de cerebro vacío, llenándolas de ideología. En sociedades complejas, esa misma complejidad nos hace desarrollar capacidad de criticar y formar nuestras propias opiniones, pero ¡ojo!, hay mucha gente a la que esto no le gusta.

También sabemos que para que *exista comunicación democrática, ésta debe darse en una democracia plena. Y viceversa*. Una no puede existir sin la otra, se necesitan mutuamente para vivir, como las plantas al aire, al sol y al agua.

Como creo que los/las que no tenemos el poder del dinero ni el poder de las armas, el único poder que tenemos es nuestra participación social y política. Estoy convencida que en este campo de la democracia y las comunicaciones, hay muchas batallas aún que dar. Una de ellas es que se *reconozca el derecho a la comunicación*, como algo natural, así como se debe reconocer el derecho a la vivienda, al aire limpio y al trabajo decente. Es necesario entender que los esfuerzos por la existencia del derecho a la comunicación, son esfuerzos por la democratización de nuestras sociedades. ∎

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Communiquer comme un droit

Mathilde Kpalla

Il y a plusieurs décennies, Jean d'Arcy a promu sans relâche le concept de droit à la communication dans les instances internationales. Depuis, de sérieux débats continuent sur la reconnaissance ou non de ces droits et surtout l'appréhension de ceux-ci. Comprenons-nous vraiment ce que c'est qu'est un droit à la communication ou les droits à la communication ?

En effet, selon le *Manuel d'évaluation des droits à la communication* produit dans le cadre de la campagne CRIS :

« *Les termes* «droit à la communication» et «droits de la communication» sont étroitement liés mais ne sont pas synonymes, tant dans leur histoire que dans leur usage. Le premier est plutôt associé au débat sur le NOMIC et suppose la nécessité de la reconnaissance juridique d'un tel droit, comme cadre général d'une mise en œuvre plus efficace. Il relève également d'un sens intuitif en tant que droit humain fondamental. Le deuxième insiste davantage sur le fait qu'une série de droits internationaux qui visent à défendre la communication existe déjà, mais que bon nombre d'entre eux sont souvent bafoués et exigent une mobilisation et une affirmation actives. Les deux ne se contredisent pas … »

Le Droit à la Communication se fonde sur l'histoire, puisqu'il a toujours existé un lien entre le pouvoir et la domination de la communication, et qu'il a été impératif d'établir des droits face au potentiel diktat que cela suppose. En 1948, la Déclaration Universelle des Droits de l'Homme a consacré, dans son article 19, le Droit à l'In-formation, qui comprend des droits individuels, comme d'informer et d'être informé, la liberté d'opinion, la protection de la vie privée et le libre accès à l'information, ainsi que des droits institutionnels pour les médias, les professionnels et des droits collectifs.

Il faut avouer que concilier droit et communication est un exercice difficile étant donné que ces deux concepts sont évolutifs. Le concept même de communication est dynamique, pas statique dans le temps, ni dans l'espace. En effet la communication définit un individu, son être, son essence, sa culture, sa différence. Parler de doit à la communication suggère donc « être » pour un individu sans aucune pression ni marginalisation. La communication est au centre même du fonctionnement de nos sociétés. Elle permet d'avoir une certaine organisation sociale. Il existe d'importantes différences entre les pays, les cultures et les systèmes idéologiques sur le problème des droits de l'homme.

Les droits à la communication tentent ainsi d'éliminer les différents obstacles sociaux, historiques, économiques et psychologiques à la communication, de favoriser un climat de respect mutuel et de renforcer les capacités de tous en matière de communication et dialogue. Ils sont donc fondamentaux.

Le mouvement a fait son chemin depuis que Jean d'Arcy en 1969, a lancé le concept du droit à la communication et qu'il précisa dix ans plus tard en ces termes :

« Nous voyons aujourd'hui que ce droit embrasse toutes les libertés, mais qu'en outre il apporte, aussi bien aux individus qu'aux sociétés, les notions d'accès et de participation à l'information et de courant bilatéral de l'information, toutes notions nécessaires, comme nous le comprenons bien maintenant, au développement harmonieux de l'homme et de l'humanité. »

Des mouvements sociaux, des organisations et aussi des citoyens s'y sont investis. Avec des résultats remarquables en termes de sensibilisation.

Mais alors si cela touche à nos droits fondamentaux et inaliénables pourquoi y'a t'il tant de mal à cerner ce droit ou ces droits ? Pourquoi y'a-t-il tant de mal à comprendre le concept de « droit à la communication » ou droits à la communication ».

Alors à quoi doit-on se référer lorsque l'on parle de « droit à la communication » ? Faut-il changer de terminologie ? Et que devrait-on alors dire ? « Démocratisation de la communication ». Puisque c'est de cela qu'il s'agit en fait.

Car plus que jamais, il est essentiel de continuer la lutte face à la menace de contrôle qui pèse. Et surtout, de tout temps, cette époque est celle où la société est le plus confrontée aux défis liés à la communication. Les nouvelles technologies de l'information et de la communication, les réseaux sociaux, l'intelligence artificielle. Autant de vastes champs qui requièrent réflexions et solutions.

Mais aussi au-delà de tout, le droit ne règle pas tout. Notre prise de conscience en tant individu, en tant que communauté, notre utilisation responsable des outils de communication et surtout la décision d'être notre propre modérateur seront les meilleurs garde fous en ce moment où on a l'impression qu'au-delà de tout contrôle, de tout droit « l'être » est numériquement instrumentalisé.

Alors droit à la communication ou « droits à la communication », « démocratisation de la communication », la communication doit pouvoir permettre à l'individu « d'être », dans le respect mutuel des libertés fondamentales de tous. Communiquer comme un droit, dans le respect des droits d'autrui. Aucune autre expression ne peut remplacer le « droit à la communication » ou les « droits à la communication ». ∎

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Radios et réseaux sociaux, des réponses aux besoins d'interactions sociales des jeunes

Sébastien Nègre

La famille, les amis, l'école, le travail, les loisirs constituent autant d'espaces essentiels pour les interactions sociales des jeunes.[1] Partout dans le monde, les médias et les réseaux sociaux permettent, eux aussi, aux jeunes de s'exprimer, s'informer, partager leurs préoccupations, poser leurs questions, se familiariser avec d'autres expériences... Autant d'interactions permettant d'appartenir à un groupe (une communauté).

En France, 80% des jeunes utilisent les réseaux sociaux pour échanger avec leurs amis, 60% pour suivre les actualités et 40% pour trouver des informations utiles.[2]

Au Mali, la "vieille" radio joue toujours le rôle de média de première importance, mais doit pourtant s'adapter aux jeunes publics. Il y a l'incontournable WhatsApp (et ses populaires groupes de discussion, combinant vocaux, vidéos, images, textes, liens), le classique et (déjà) vieillissant Facebook, sans oublier le jeune et (déjà) incontournable TikTok. Puisque ces réseaux permettent aux jeunes d'échanger sans passer par les radios jugées "vieillottes", beaucoup de radios locales s'inspirent des nombreuses Web TV et de leurs interactions à l'antenne et hors antenne.

Pourtant, des professionnels des médias

alertent ! De la capitale Bamako, jusqu'aux villages isolés, les comptes qui rassemblent ne sont pas forcément ceux de la radio, mais directement ceux des jeunes animateurs.trices et journalistes, plus ou moins "stars". La plupart n'ont pas été formé.e.s aux usages et aux risques des réseaux sociaux. En méconnaissant la loi sur la cybercriminalité, ils s'exposent à des poursuites judiciaires. En diffusant des informations fausses ou incomplètes, ils induisent les jeunes publics en erreur et les rendent vulnérables au harcèlement.

Dans le pays voisin, le Burkina Faso, la réalité médiatique a changé au point que des radios locales (Basnéré, Voix des lacs, etc.) sont formées par Radios Rurales Internationales à l'usage de WhatsApp et Facebook comme outils d'interaction des émissions, mais aussi à la diffusion d'audios WhatsApp directement à l'antenne.

Dans d'autres contextes, le besoin d'interactions sociales des jeunes rejoint des besoins culturels essentiels. Au Canada, la revitalisation des langues et des cultures des Premières Nations, des Inuits et des Métis passe notamment par les émissions radio autochtones où « *les publics fournissent leur rétroaction aux animateurs. trices de l'émission par le biais des médias sociaux.* »[3] En effet, *"nous voyons bien souvent ces plateformes comme de simples outils,* constate le Professeur Jeffrey Ansloos,[4] *mais il convient davantage d'y voir de véritables espaces où les gens interagissent et entretiennent de vraies relations sociales.* » En 2019, ses recherches montrent que « *les jeunes Autochtones ont créé des communautés Twitter fort dynamiques sur la revitalisation des langues autochtones.* »[5]

Autre constat : les jeunes qui interagissent peuvent aussi être… des professionnels de la communication. En Asie, journalistes et animateurs. trices radio décrivent l'utilité professionnelle des réseaux sociaux qui « *ne requièrent pas nécessairement une éducation formelle. Je peux facilement utiliser ces plateformes,* » décrit Kajal Komal de Radio Sagor Giri (Bangladesh). Selon l'AMARC Asie-Pacifique,[6] les réseaux sociaux permettent aussi de s'adresser aux responsables issus des générations précédentes. « *Lorsque nous informons nos politiciens sur des problèmes, ils nous écoutent souvent et prennent des décisions,* » constate Suraj Pratap Narayana Mishra de Radio Mayur (Inde). Les interactions entre jeunes permettent également « *de transmettre directement les questions de la communauté. C'est grâce aux réseaux sociaux que j'apprends à connaître les problèmes cachés de la société, ce qui m'aide à produire mes émissions radio,* » souligne Sabita Teli de Radio Kapilvastu (Népal).

Les interactions en ligne et entre jeunes rejoignent donc souvent une demande profonde de changements sociaux et politiques. En Tunisie, les immenses manifestations, composées majoritairement de jeunes, ont permis la « révolution Facebook » de 2011. Dix ans plus tard, dans un contexte de réduction des libertés fondamentales, Facebook reste incontournable, mais TikTok a fait son apparition.[7]

Communautés nationales et internationales interconnectées

Partout dans le monde, en dehors de tout lien avec un média « traditionnel », directement sur YouTube, Instagram, Snapchat, VK, Telegram, des journalistes, des « producteurs.trices de contenu », des « influceurs.euses » rassemblent des jeunes autour de « communautés ».

« *Au Mexique, au Brésil et ailleurs, les jeunes court-circuitent les institutions culturelles héritées du monde ancien pour se faire producteurs autonomes,* » décrit l'anthropologue Néstor García Canclini.[8] « *Par des mouvements de protestation en ligne, les jeunes font un usage intensif des réseaux sociaux pour s'informer et coopérer en créant des communautés nationales et internationales interconnectées.* »

Sans surprise, le tableau comporte aussi ses zones d'ombre. Tandis que la radio demeure un média accessible (faible coût, alphabétisme facultatif, émissions en langues locales, informations en temps réel, nombreuses interactions), les réseaux sociaux peuvent rejoindre des critiques adressées traditionnellement à la presse écrite et à la télévision. En créant des obstacles liés au niveau de vie, au degré d'étude, au genre, à la langue et à beaucoup d'autres types de marginalisation, les réseaux sociaux creusent les inégalités d'accès à l'information et aux interactions.

Par ailleurs, il est connu que la documentation a explosé ces dernières années sur les liens entre mauvais usages des réseaux sociaux et santé mentale des jeunes (anxiété, dépression, cyber-harcèlement dont les filles sont plus victimes que les garçons, etc.).

Autres conséquences sociales néfastes, en Chine. Alors que les médias sociaux (WeChat, Weibo, Douyin, Youku, etc.) « *rendent les connexions plus fréquentes et plus faciles* »[9] pour les 90,000,000 de jeunes et que les diffusions en direct (« *streaming* ») constituaient « *parfois la seule source d'interaction sociale* »[10] pendant les confinements du Covid 19, le terme « *shekong* » (*phobie sociale*) est devenu « *de plus en plus populaire auprès des jeunes sur les réseaux sociaux chinois, dont beaucoup ont peur des interactions sociales dans la vie réelle.* »[11]

Les risques liés aux fausses nouvelles (« *fake news* ») et à la santé mentale rappellent donc l'immense devoir de responsabilité qui incombe aux Etats et aux entreprises. Ces acteurs devraient fournir des espaces numériques sains et sûrs, permettant des interactions bénéfiques et constructives.

Quel que soit le contexte, le besoin d'interactions sociales des jeunes sur les réseaux sociaux se retrouve plus que jamais au cœur du champ médiatique. En 2023, WhatsApp ne faisait même pas partie du Top 10 des plateformes utilisées selon 314 responsables de média de 56 pays. En 2024, pour le contenu et l'interaction, WhatsApp et TikTok représentent désormais leurs deux réseaux sociaux prioritaires.[12] ∎

Notes

1. Sont « jeunes » les personnes âgés de 15 à 24 ans (ONU).
2. « *Enquête sur les pratiques des jeunes Français âgés de 16 et 25 ans sur les réseaux sociaux* », Diplomeo et BDM (HelloWork), 2023.
3. « À cœur ouvert - La radio autochtone au Canada », Commission canadienne pour l'UNESCO, 2019.
4. Jeffrey Ansloos, de la Nation crie de Fisher River, Professeur agrégé de santé autochtone et de politique sociale, Institut d'études pédagogiques de l'Ontario, Université de Toronto.
5. « *Using Twitter to support Indigenous cultural revitalization and youth well-being* », Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), Canada, 2019.
6. « *Youth Social Media Experience Survey* », AMARC Asia-Pacific, 2024.

7. « *Quand TikTok sert de relais aux protestations en Tunisie* », Nawaat, 2021.
8. « *Villes et réseaux : les jeunes changent la donne* », Problèmes d'Amérique latine, 2017.
9. « *Interaction and Communication of Chinese Teenagers on WeChat Social Media* », Runyan Tian, Atlantis Press, 2022.
10. « *La Chine durcit l'accès aux streams pour les plus jeunes* », Le Monde, 2022.
11. « *Most young Chinese say they struggle to make connections as 'social phobia' becomes new buzzword* », South China Morning Post, 2023.
12. « *Journalism, media, and technology trends and predictions 2024* », Reuters Institute, 2024.

Sébastien Nègre travaille depuis 23 ans dans le domaine de la radio, des médias et du développement. Franco-Canadien, il est actuellement Chef d'équipe des métiers radio à Radios Rurales Internationales. Il a travaillé pour l'UNESCO, l'AMARC, la Deutsche Welle Akademie et pour des organisations représentatives des médias. Il a également travaillé comme journaliste, rédacteur en chef et directeur d'antenne pour des radios nationales et locales, entre autres au Mali, au Maroc, en Tunisie, au Canada et en France, et comme formateur notamment au Burkina Faso, Guinée et Liban. Ses expertises sont centrées autour du développement des médias, la SBCC (Communication pour le Changement Social et Comportemental), la formation, la coordination d'équipe (direction d'antenne, chef d'équipe), le journalisme (rédaction en chef, reportage, présentation) et l'EMI (Education aux Médias et à l'Information). Convaincu par l'impact social des médias et des TIC comme acteurs de changement, passionné par les besoins d'interaction des publics, actif dans les complémentarités entre la radio et les autres supports, il croit fondamentaux le pluralisme des médias et la diversité au sein des médias.

A "brand-new" world communication order: BNWCO?

Aliaa Dakroury

There is always a "once upon a time" prologue in stories, but they do not necessarily end with "happily ever after". I am not sharing any spoiler when I argue that it is a very familiar story of human communication. The story of our human need to communicate on the one hand, and the barriers imposed on such communication daily on the other. How so? Let's review some of these instances of real challenges to our enjoyment of human communication.

As a start, let's agree that humanity has always been curious to discover ways to communicate over distance; this happened thousands of years ago, when human beings used light, signals, and sound to communicate. This was followed by the use of symbols, languages, up to the age of print. World War II was instrumental in highlighting a list of needs for all human beings regardless of their background (be it race, gender, culture, colour. etc..) as a result of the atrocities of this war. Remember Eleanor Roosevelt, the chair of the United Nations Human Rights Commission, holding up the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights* on 10 December 1948. So many promises and so many high hopes to overcome WWII's harmful acts with the Declaration's 30 articles.

Fast-forward to 2024, the United Nations is preparing for a "Summit of the Future" to discuss solutions for a better tomorrow! If I were to submit a white paper for this meeting, I would appeal to the audience, observers, advocates and importantly policymakers to take note of the need for a "Brand New World Communication Order" BNWCO!

There are a number of urgent challenges that need to be discussed on the international front to fully realize the future and great potential of information and communication for humankind: from freedom of movement, access to information, fairness in covering news, cultural expression, and gender balance among many hopes if the UN intends to come up with multilateral solutions for a "Better Tomorrow". For the sake of time and space, let me focus on the most pressing needs below.

Technological constraints: Media ownership and control

Lessons drawn from the Arab Spring showed us the way for utilizing social and new media as tools for democratizing societies and enhancing citizen-engagement. Conversely, and throughout the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one expects true, balanced, fair, and actual coverage of news from international and national media outlets; sadly, this did not happen.

On the Canadian front, legitimate questions about the role of publicly funded media to fulfil the right of the public to know have been raised by multiple groups. Of significant importance, an open letter prepared by Canadians for Peace and Justice in the Middle East (CJP-ME) to the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) signed by more than 66 non-for-profit and non-governmental organizations decrying the biased coverage of demonstrations, the retaliation against journalists who signed letters to their newsrooms calling for fair news reporting on the Palestinian-Israel conflict, among other unethical practices.

Even the e-audience – particularly pro-Palestinians – have experienced unpreceded technological censorship of their content on social media (Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok for example). Such media outlets are arguably using algorithms to block users' shared content – a true crisis for

freedom of expression. Interestingly, users created ways around such censorship, as *The Washington Post* reports, by using coded spelling to confuse the corporate content moderation system of algorithms. For example, "P*les+in1ans" were used instead of "Palestinians" – recently termed "algospeak". We should legitimately question the current and future corporate technological surveillance of users' content and how the public can self-produce content freely and uncensored,

Which language and whose right?

In Canada, the English Montreal School Board (Quebec's largest English-language school board) decided to sue the provincial government as it required them to write all of their communication in French. This is quite interesting for two reasons: first that Canada is characterized by its bilingualism policy – iconic to its history and the *Just Society* pioneered in the late 1960s by Pierre Trudeau. The second is Bill 96 passed in Quebec in particular that emphasized the promotion of using French and affirming that, "French is the common language of the Québec nation" (2022). Such policies affect immigration numbers in the province as it forces linguistic barriers onto day-to-day life for many Quebec residents whose native language is not French.

Extending it to clothes?!

Yes, you read that quite right. A government can decide what clothes you wear to work, public places and services offered to you. Human Rights Watch explicitly underlined the dark irony of expressing one's own culture "Quebec's Ban on Religious Clothing is Chilling: To Be Like Us, You Must Dress Like Us" (2019). In other words, if you wear any of these categories of clothes representing one's religion, including Muslim headscarves (hijabs), Jewish skullcaps, Sikh turbans, and other symbols of other faiths for example, you will not be able to receive services like healthcare or public transit, etc. A reminder that freedom of dress is a clear reference to the human right to autonomy and an expression of their own personal and cultural identity. Political

institutions should support inclusivity and the personal choice to self-represent and communicate oneself to others.

Time for a Brand-New World Communication Order: BNWCO!

We need to reconsider history when we attempt to propose new solutions. In fact, history repeats itself once again. The "happy end" of adopting the Universal Declaration of Human Rights proved to be unsatisfactory, and if we continue to depend on the enactment of mere legislation and laws without fully understanding the role of communication in participatory democracy, we will end up once again behind.

In the upcoming Summit, sincere consideration of the challenges posed by the role of communication in attaining the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals should take a *beyond-information* scope. It would pinpoint the role of corporate powers (on national and international fronts) in marginalizing opposing views and portraying them as the "other" to exclude their opinions and stances from the public sphere. Similarly, it would focus on understanding the breadth of hate speech and spreading dis- and misinformation online in societies and the impact of such actions on discrimination, especially on minority groups. The role of media in covering news and the recurrence of MacBride Commission complaints from developing countries: the negative stereotypical and sensational coverage of places, people, and ideas to fit into the corporate mode of commercial production of news.

In sum, while there is a large array of possibilities to communicate, current national and international policies do not endorse a full exchange of communication on different levels, from clothes, culture, and food to ideas, opinions, and political stances. All such communication is not only a marker of civil society, but also a demonstration of a democratic and participatory approach to justice and human rights. ∎

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Creating public communication spaces that are open, accessible, comfortable, and sociable

Working Group

An international working group prepared a paper for the symposium on "Communication for Social Justice in the Digital Age", which took place in Berlin and online September 13–15, 2021. It set out an understanding of public space today, outlined what issues are at stake, and proposed measures aimed at restoring openness and accountability.

The Working Group shared a definition and description of the spaces where people communicate their lives, needs, and dreams as human beings:

"Democratic public communication spaces are spaces for considered dialogue – both analogue and digital – that would explicitly strengthen excluded voices; guarantee citizens the right to own and control their data, information and knowledge, free from commercial, state or other co-option; and contribute to, uphold and validate social justice, communication rights and the common good."

In these spaces, citizens would have equal access to data, information, knowledge and opportunities for exploring and understanding expert insights. This would be based on minimum guaranteed access to cost-free or affordable media, information and literacy training (formal and informal); analogue, digital, and online systems; software and hardware; connectivity, bandwidth and networks; and sustainable energy sources for their communication technology.

The Working Group condensed its most urgent recommendations into the following, trusting that they will support democratic public communication spaces to thrive, be they on- or offline. Bearing in mind the above definition of public space, these recommendations can assist in creating spaces that are open, accessible, comfortable, and sociable. Activities can be engaged in safely and within the users' control, and with luck, users can participate in a space whose governance is transparent, accountable, and sovereign to the users.

Ethical and theoretical

* Ensure justice, equity, equality: content, languages, cultures, forms, channels, platforms, devices.

* Guarantee affordable access to autonomous, local, democratically controlled media production and dissemination.

* Prioritise voices/spaces of those who have trad-

itionally been excluded, isolated or neglected in media, communication and political ecosystems.

Political

* Create civil and faith-based communities of resistance to the neoliberal, consumerist ideology which enables current media ecosystems to thrive.
* Build widespread, global coalitions of interest – transparent, participatory, collaborative – to expand the public sphere, between digital and analogue industries, civil society and inter/governmental bodies.

Educational

* Build awareness of the complex nature – both positive and negative – of the digital "public" sphere and digital "public" spaces.
* Develop communication skills: Dialogue, conversation, negotiation, listening, openness to contrary opinions.
* Ensure availability of low-cost or cost-free media, information and digital literacy training.

Technical

* Ensure meaningful access to affordable, quality devices, technology, systems and networks.
* Normalise open, interoperable data, software, hardware, platforms and standards.
* Support and encourage open source, creative commons and culturally appropriate, shared ownership of information and knowledge. ∎

Source: "In what ways has the digital era changed the notion of public space?". In *Media Development* 1/2022.

Silenced voices: Communication blackout in Palestine

Women, Media & Development (TAM)

The following article – written at the end of January 2024 – comes from the Women's Media & Development Association "TAM", a WACC project partner based in Jordan. It offers a "no holds barred" perspective on the silencing of Palestinian voices and media since October 2023.

For three months, Palestinians witnessed the deadliest attacks since 1948. Over 25,490 individuals were killed, 70% of the victims being children and women. Additionally, nearly 85% of Gaza's population has been forcibly displaced, and are facing a humanitarian crisis. Yet, despite the scale of this catastrophe, Israel has used various tactics to hide the truth in Gaza, to cover up their war crimes and delay intervention.

The chilling silence appeared when Israel's "defence minister" Yoav Gallant announced a complete siege on Gaza stating, "There will be no electricity, no food, no fuel, everything is closed." Which gives the world a clue on how much control Israel has over Gaza.

For three months, Gaza endured relentless bombings, field executions, torture, and a humanitarian crisis that is ending with famine. Women in Gaza also face an additional set of challenges. Besides carrying the burden of providing food and shelter for their families, they are facing shortages in hygiene products and newborn birth supplies. Pregnant women or women who are delivering are also facing lack of appropriate nutrition, medical care, and supervision.

A Palestinian boy charges a mobile phone from batteries offered as a free service in his Gaza neighbourhood as it experiences power shortages (File: Ibraheem Abu Mustafa.)

As for orphaned female children, they are taking the responsibility upon themselves to care for their younger siblings. Others are disabled or injured with no one to take care of them. All of this with multiple attempts from the Israeli occupation forces to silence the Palestinians and shut them off from the outside world.

After they enforced the siege, Gaza turned into a graveyard with no place for its people to seek shelter. The Israeli occupation carried out intense bombing in Gaza, all while trying to avoid documentation by journalists and civilians. They directly and deliberately cut cables at the start of the war, causing multiple interruptions to the main fibre optic routes connecting Gaza to the outside world. Even after bombing communication towers, the occupation continued its intense attacks on civilians, completely cutting off communications to Gaza City and the northern part of the Strip.

These actions destroyed all remaining international routes connecting Gaza to the outside world, according to statements by the Palestinian Telecommunications Company. As a result, telecommunications services in Gaza came to a complete halt. This directly affected the ability of emergency and medical teams to continue their work, making it difficult to reach the injured as calls for ambulance assistance stopped and the injured had to suffer in silence in the hope of being found by rescuers and medical teams.

Targeting of journalists

Another troubling reality in the attempt to silence Gaza is the targeting of journalists and their families. At least 80 Palestinian journalists have been killed by Israeli occupation forces, according to the Gaza media office. More than 50 media premises or offices in Gaza have been completely or partially destroyed by Israeli attacks. Many journalists lost their houses to Israeli airstrikes and were forcibly displaced; more than 82% of female journalists have been forcibly displaced, some even pregnant, and lost their houses, their money, and any access to food or water.

Journalists face direct threats by Israel through calling them on their personal cell phones. For example, Motaz Azazia, a journalist who documented many Israeli war crimes in Gaza and gained millions of followers on Instagram, was contacted on his phone by a person with a heavy Israeli accent. When Motaz asked who they were, they replied, "I'm nobody," then proceeded to ask Motaz to post against Hamas and inquire about the possibility for Gazans to

Civilian survivors after an airstrike. Photo: Motaz Azaiza. By mid-January 2024, according to Oxfam, the daily death rate in Gaza was higher than any other major 21st century conflict. "Using publicly available data, Oxfam calculated that the number of average deaths per day for Gaza is higher than any recent major armed conflict including Syria (96.5 deaths per day), Sudan (51.6), Iraq (50.8), Ukraine (43.9) Afghanistan (23.8) and Yemen (15.8)."

flee to Egypt.

This wasn't the first time Motaz was contacted by anonymous calls with a heavy Israeli accent. Other journalists faced death threats, and some lost all their family, paying the price for speaking truth to power. For instance, Wael Al-dahdouh received a chilling phone call about the murder of his wife and children while he was live on air. He stated later on, "They're taking revenge on us through our children." Even after international attention was directed to this matter, nothing was done to stop the murder of journalists in Gaza, which unfortunately resulted in Wael losing Hamza, his son, who was also a journalist, to an Israeli airstrike.

While the suffering in Gaza remains severe, the situation in the West Bank presents its own set of challenges. Three months ago, when the escalation started, the West Bank suffered another form of oppression. They separated each town with checkpoints, and groups of armed Israeli settlers protected by the Israeli occupation forces roamed around Palestinian towns, terrorizing whoever crossed their path. In some cases, they fatally shot individuals. Additionally, there were intense night raids resulting in arbitrary ar-

rests of over 3,600 people.

The West Bank witnessed another form of silencing as Israeli occupation forces randomly checked people's phones at checkpoints, searching for applications like Telegram or any social media platforms to monitor posts, likes, and comments about the situation in Gaza. If they found support for Gazans, they would arrest and humiliate individuals publicly. In some cases, men were detained in their underwear at checkpoints before being taken to Israeli prisons.

This tactic has prevented Palestinians in the West Bank from posting or discussing Gaza, specially when moving around towns, fearing phone searches. If soldiers found nothing on a person's phone or suspected app deletion, they would physically assault them before releasing them. As for Palestinians living under Israeli government control, they face arrest for posting about Gaza under the allegation of "supporting terrorism".

Social media censorship

In the digital realm, voices advocating for Palestine and Palestinian human rights face a new battleground: social media censorship. Meta's

policies and practices on platforms like Instagram and Facebook have come under scrutiny for silencing individuals and organizations expressing solidarity with Palestine. This intensified with the unfolding of events. The methods of censorship varied, including the removal of posts, suspension or permanent disabling of accounts, restrictions on engagement with content, and even "shadow banning" – all of these actions restricted conversations about Palestine.

In conclusion, the plight of Palestinians remains a pressing humanitarian crisis exacerbated by Israeli aggression and suppression. The silence imposed by the intentional bombing of communication towers in Gaza, coupled with the systematic targeting of journalists, underscores the extent of Israel's control over the region and its efforts to conceal the truth.

Despite these efforts, the resilience of the Palestinian people and their supporters persists, with social media platforms becoming a new battleground for advocating Palestinian rights and exposing Israel's war crimes in the region, despite facing censorship and oppression. The international community must continue to amplify Palestinian voices, and challenge oppressive tactics. Only through collective action and solidarity can the voices of the silenced be heard, and true justice achieved. ∎

Resources
Statistics.
Israel announces blockade.
Women & female Journalists.
Meta's censorship.
https://www.hrw.org/report/2023/12/21/metas-broken-promises/systemic-censorship-palestine-content-instagram-and
Journalists: https://www.mediasupport.org/news/the-silencing-of-gaza/
https://www.aljazeera.com/program/newsfeed/2024/1/8/al-jazeeras-wael-dahdouh-pays-tribute-at-his-sons-burial
Motaz's phone call: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wSBfycLKvMg

Unleashing the power of expression in the Palestinian struggle

Jack Nassar

In Bethlehem, the harmonious sounds of last Christmas' carols mix with geopolitical horrors. Despite being Jesus' birthplace, the Holy Land wrestles with escalating war in Gaza and Israeli settler attacks in the West Bank. Here, the power of expression becomes crucial for empowerment and resistance, navigating challenges like disinformation and surveillance while seeking an authentic narrative.

Expression encompasses beliefs, thoughts, actions, and reactions, transcending mere verbal exchanges and serving as a unifying force within societies. In the Palestinian context, expression emerges as a counterforce against disinformation, fake news, and propaganda disseminated by politicians and mainstream media.

Understanding the significance of expression requires considering the historical context of colonial powers branding oppressed nations as savages, barbarians, and uncivilized, while labelling resistance movements and freedom fighters as terrorism and militants. This pattern persists today, prompting crucial questions: How can occupied people express their desires for freedom and liberation? What options are available to them? Examples from Vietnam, Ireland, India, and the US offer insights into the diverse paths taken.

Palestinians have employed a range of strat-

egies in their quest for freedom, including armed resistance, civil disobedience, peace negotiations with land concessions, recognition of their occupiers as a state on ancestral lands, peaceful marches, and boycott movements. However, each endeavour has been met with severe counter-actions, such as suppression, arrests, outlawing, labelling as terrorists and anti-Semites, bombings, and land seizures.

Expression plays a pivotal role in shaping definitions and meanings, raising crucial inquiries about the legal grounds for armed resistance under international law and the simultaneous condemnation of such actions as terrorism. The discourse extends to topics like Israel's right to defend itself against the populations it colonizes, the mutual aspect of the right to self-defence, and the subtle distinctions between anti-Zionism and anti-Judaism. These discussions become paramount in the ongoing pursuit of justice.

Social media use and misuse

In the digital realm, social media platforms have become a battleground for expression as Palestinians seek to shape their narrative and challenge historical misrepresentations in their quest for freedom. In Palestine, the intersection of expression and human rights, particularly freedom of expression, is of immense importance. Balancing communication tools with individual privacy is crucial in the digital age, and promoting media literacy becomes paramount.

The suffering and devastation faced by Palestinians in Gaza often go unnoticed, with their narrative marginalized and distorted. Continuous surveillance and constraints on free expression compound the psychological toll. Major social media platforms like Facebook, Instagram, and Snapchat have deactivated accounts promoting the Palestinian perspective and used algorithms to limit the visibility of pro-Palestine content, highlighting the urgent need to protect expression and combat disinformation that skews global perceptions.

Within the Palestinian struggle, communication distortion involves the manipulation of

religious texts, particularly the Bible, to justify actions contradictory to its teachings. This manipulation creates a moral dilemma for Palestinian Christians and American Evangelical Zionists, calling on believers to discern between genuine compassion and manipulated narratives.

The Gaza war has left an indelible mark on every single one of the Gaza Strip's 2.2 million civilians. They have endured unimaginable losses, including fatalities, injuries, displacement, starvation, and the destruction of homes. The scale of devastation is immeasurable, affecting the physical, emotional, and financial well-being of the population. Thousands remain missing, buried under rubble, perpetuating the lasting psychological toll that will haunt future generations.

Palestinian Christians in Gaza, already vulnerable, face devastating consequences. Most homes and businesses have been bombed, leaving them with bleak prospects for shelter or employment post-war, if they survive. The current Christian population in Gaza has sharply declined to around 1,000 from 3,500 before the 2007 Israeli siege. Alarmingly, the death rate among Christians is disproportionately higher. Israeli airstrikes bombed the compound of the 4th-century Saint Porphyrius Church, Gaza's oldest, murdering 18 Christians, including 9 children and infants, amounting to the termination of around 2% of Gaza's Christian population in just one strike. Considering all Christians murdered in the ongoing genocide, the percentage rises to approximately 3%, equivalent to the tragic loss of about 1,100,000 murdered Americans.

Unfortunately, the dire plight of Gaza's Christians often eludes mainstream Western media, notably American and European Evangelicals. There's a stark absence of any inclination to mourn, grieve, or offer prayers for the murdered Christians. This lack of acknowledgment underscores the challenge in persuading former colonizers to recognize the injustices committed by present colonizers and acknowledge the true victims. Zionist Evangelicals and some other Western Christians consciously choose to ignore the suffering of Gaza's Christians, neglecting

support despite the historical, cultural, and religious significance of this community dating back to the time of Jesus. This disregard appears deeply rooted in current political agendas and a century-old dispensational theology.

Eliminating double standards

Essential efforts are required to restore trust in international law, grounded in a collective commitment to universal morality and equality. Urgently eliminating double standards, especially in cases like Palestine, Ukraine, and Artsakh, envisions a world where nations are treated equally. Recent instances, such as South Africa's genocide submission to the ICJ and cases brought before the ICC by Mexico and Chile, underscore the vital need to hold Israel accountable. Expression, extending beyond local boundaries, permeates the global sphere, necessitating diplomatic endeavours to ensure that the Palestinian perspective is not only recognized but also given equal significance.

I earnestly yearn for an end to the ongoing war, recognizing the immeasurable toll on innocent lives. My heartfelt thoughts are with all who have endured suffering. In our pursuit of safety, I echo the belief that "Never Again" should not be the destiny of any human being. Western governments must not ignore the plight of the Palestinian people; collaborative efforts for genuine peace, justice, and equal rights must prevail.

Embracing the wisdom of Martin Luther King Jr., we must remember that violence begets more violence, and peace is not merely a distant goal but a means by which we arrive at that goal. Acknowledging our imperfections, it is crucial that bias, even in favour of our own "kind", never comes at the expense of others. Let us unite in our commitment to a brighter future built on shared humanity, empathy, and a resolute pursuit of a lasting peace. ∎

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Repensar el derecho a la comunicación desde el pensamiento latinoamericano y desde las epistemologías del sur

Camilo Pérez y Jair Vega

Los pueblos Kogui y Kankuamo de la Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta, en Colombia, asumen la comunicación (Jui Shikazguaxa) como un proceso que implica dos acciones simultáneas: en primer lugar, se comunica desde adentro, desde casa (en un sentido individual y colectivo al mismo tiempo), y, en segundo lugar, comunicar se entiende como un proceso que contribuye a hacer amanecer al otro (no como un acto unidireccional, instrumental, sino como un propósito dado en el proceso de comunicarse con lo otro, humano o no humano, que a la vez me incluye).

Este es tan solo un ejemplo de la diversidad que podemos encontrar en ese universo llamado América Latina, el Abya Yala, que nos reta a repensar el concepto de "derecho a la comunicación" tanto desde las epistemologías del sur como desde el pensamiento social latinoamericano.

Desde la perspectiva anglosajona, el derecho a la comunicación se centra principalmente en la

libertad de expresión y el acceso a la información, a los medios de comunicación masiva y las TICs como herramientas para garantizar la participación ciudadana y la circulación de diversidad de ideas en una sociedad democrática. Este enfoque tiende a enfatizar los derechos individuales y la regulación mínima de los medios para fomentar la competencia y la libre expresión.

Desde las epistemologías del sur, el derecho a la comunicación se entiende como un mecanismo para la resistencia, la emancipación, la descolonización del conocimiento y la acción. La comunicación no se asume como una acción instrumental, separada de las demás dimensiones de la vida, siempre está ligada a una movilización y a un propósito social o comunitario: bien sea en la alimentación, el cuidado de la salud o del ambiente o la celebración de un ritual. Ello implica que la participación en los procesos comunicativos, así como la dimensión política de la comunicación, se entienden como prácticas ligadas a la vida misma y no como ejercicios independientes e instrumentales para conseguir fines específicos.

Esto va incluso más allá de los enfoques participativos y horizontales, que promueve la democracia liberal, donde todos los actores sociales tengan voz y agencia en el proceso comunicativo, se trata de asumir la comunicación como inherente a sentido de la existencia misma, ligada bien sea a la vivencia espiritual, la acción colectiva o la demanda emancipatoria.

Ejemplo de ello es la experiencia de muchos pueblos indígenas en torno a la apropiación de medios de comunicación occidentales como la radio, la televisión e incluso las TICs para adecuarlos a sus lógicas propias. En Colombia, algunos pueblos indígenas han recibido ofertas de licencias para radios o televisiones bien sea comunitarias o de interés público. Aunque las consideraron atractivas, decidieron tomarse un tiempo para analizar la lógica de estos medios, para apropiarlos en consonancia con sus procesos de comunicación propia, de forma que no fuesen en contra de su cultura, organización social y propósitos como pueblos. Cuando esto no se logró, rechazaron las ofertas de estos medios

para garantizar su derecho a la comunicación.

Paradójico, pues visto desde fuera, contar con estos medios supondría para ellos materializar el derecho a la comunicación (en tanto acceso a tecnología, producción y circulación de información). Cuando se logró apropiar el medio, surgieron experiencias de medios apropiados con un propósito, con un sentido local, como los casos de "Tayrona Estereo", y el podcast "El Mochilón de la Sierra" realizados desde la Comisión de Comunicación Propia e Intercultural del Pueblo Kankuamo, el proceso de "Mokana Estereo" en el Atlántico o los procesos de comunicación impulsados por Pütchimaajana, la Red de Comunicaciones del Pueblo Wayúu, o por TIKCARIBE, el tejido indígena de comunicación del caribe.

Elemento fundamental para comprender los retos sociales, culturales y políticos

Por su parte, el pensamiento social latinoamericano ha abordado de manera profunda y multifacética el tema de la comunicación, reconociendo su importancia como elemento fundamental para comprender los retos sociales, culturales y políticos de la región. Desde aquí, la comunicación se entiende como un proceso complejo que involucra hibridaciones, mediaciones individuales y comunitarias, construcción de significaciones, identidades y subjetividades colectivas, así como tejidos sociales. Desde estas perspectivas, es imposible analizar la comunicación como una acción o espacio instrumental que puede servir para cualquier propósito, tal como se asume en gran medida en las teorías anglosajonas de la comunicación.

Se destaca entonces la relevancia de la comunicación popular, que reconoce el poder de las comunidades para contar sus propias historias, expresar sus necesidades, defender las formas de representación mediática de sus pueblos y culturas y luchar por sus derechos a través de prácticas de comunicación propias y participativas. Este enfoque también cuestiona la democracia liberal y su apuesta limitada por los derechos a la comunicación, argumentando que la democratización de los medios no puede lograrse únicamente a

través de la regulación estatal, sino que requiere una movilización social y un cambio en las estructuras de poder.

La pedagogía crítica de Paulo Freire, la resignificación de la comunicación popular hecha por Jesús Martín Barbero, el análisis crítico de las estructuras de poder en la comunicación de Armand Mattelart, y el llamado a unas otras comunicaciones de Rosa María Alfaro son ejemplos de cómo el pensamiento latinoamericano resalta la necesidad de una comunicación alternativa y emancipadora.

Estos enfoques radicalizan el sentido de la participación y el empoderamiento comunitario, lo que implica un rol activo de las comunidades en la toma de decisiones, en los procesos de producción de contenidos, en la elección de los medios de comunicación más convenientes para la representación de sus propias realidades, trascendiendo la fórmula anglosajona de pensar lo que los medios le hacen a la gente, para pensar en lo que la gente puede hacer con los medios.

Retomando el ejemplo inicial del pueblo Kankuamo, este tipo de concepciones desafían los enfoques occidentales de la comunicación y surgen desde epistemologías diferentes, proponiendo la comunicación como una relación en la que se teje con lo otro para entender/construir el camino conjunto. Este es un proceso más complejo que pensar la comunicación como fórmulas unidireccionales o bidireccionales para transmitir o intercambiar mensajes entre unos y otros.

En resumen, las epistemologías del sur y el pensamiento latinoamericano nos invitan a repensar el derecho a la comunicación más allá de la libre expresión y el acceso a la información y a los medios; y asumirlo desde la defensa y el fortalecimiento de los procesos de comunicación propia y apropiada que permitan que los pueblos puedan tomar sus propias decisiones sobre procesos y productos comunicacionales que se gestan sobre y desde sus territorios, respetando la diversidad cultural, lingüística y epistémica de los grupos históricamente marginados, y generando procesos comunicacionales anclados en los saberes y necesidades propias.

Rethinking "communication rights" from Latin American social thought and from the epistemologies of the South

Camilo Pérez and Jair Vega

The Kogui and Kankuamo communities of the Sierra Nevada de Santa Marta in Colombia understand communication (Jui Shikazguaxa) as a process involving two simultaneous actions: firstly, communication stems from within, from home (both in an individual and collective sense, simultaneously), and secondly, communication is understood as a process that contributes to enlightening the other (not as a unidirectional, instrumental act, but rather as a purpose inherent in the process of communicating with others, be they human or non-human).

This is just one example of the diversity that can be found in the universe called Latin America, or the Abya Yala, which challenges us to rethink the concept of "communication rights" from both the epistemologies of the South and of Latin American social thinking.

From the western perspective, the right to communication mainly focuses on freedom of expression and access to information, mass media, and ICTs as tools to guarantee citizen partici-

pation and the circulation of diverse ideas in a democratic society. This approach tends to emphasize individual rights and minimal regulation of the media to foster competition and freedom of expression.

From the epistemologies of the South, communication rights are understood as a mechanism for resistance, emancipation, and decolonization of knowledge and action. Communication is not seen as an instrumental action apart from other dimensions of life; it is always linked to mobilization and is directed towards a social or community purpose, whether in food, health care, environmental care, or the celebration of a ritual. This implies that participation in communicative processes, as well as the political dimension of communication, are understood as practices linked to life itself and not as independent and instrumental exercises to achieve specific ends.

This goes even further than participatory and horizontal approaches, promoted by liberal democracy, where all social actors are supposed to have a voice and agency in the communicative process; it is about assuming communication as inherent to the sense of existence itself, linked either to spiritual experience, collective action, or emancipatory demands.

One example of this is the experience of many indigenous communities in Colombia regarding the appropriation of Western media (such as radio, television, and even ICTs) to adapt them to their own logics. In Colombia, some indigenous communities have been offered licences for community or public interest radios or televisions. Although they found them attractive, they decided to take time to analyze the underlying logic of these media, in order to appropriate them in accordance with their own communication processes, so that they would not go against their culture, social organization, and community purposes. When this was not achieved, they rejected the offers of these media to guarantee their communication rights.

Paradoxically, from an external perspective, having access to these media would mean materializing communication rights for them (in terms of access to technology, production, and circulation of information). When the medium was appropriated, experiences of appropriated media with a collective purpose, with a local meaning, emerged: such as the cases of "Tayrona Estereo" and the podcast "El Mochilón de la Sierra" produced by the Commission of Own and Intercultural Communication of the Kankuamo People, the "Mokana Estereo" process in Atlántico, or the communication processes promoted by Pütchimaajana, the Network of Communications of the Wayúu People, or by TIKCARIBE, the indigenous communication network of the Caribbean.

A fundamental element for understanding the social, cultural, and political challenges

For its part, Latin American social thought has profoundly addressed the issue of communication, recognizing its importance as a fundamental element for understanding the social, cultural, and political challenges of the region. Here, communication is understood as a complex process involving hybridizations, individual and community mediations, construction of meanings, identities, and collective subjectivities, as well as social fabrics. From these perspectives, it is impossible to analyze communication as an action or instrumental space that can serve just any purpose, as is largely assumed in western communication theories.

The relevance of popular communication is then highlighted, recognizing the power of local communities to tell their own stories, express their needs, defend the forms of media representation of their peoples and cultures, and fight for their rights through their own and participatory communication practices. This approach also questions liberal democracy and its limited commitment to communication rights, arguing that media democratization cannot be achieved solely through state regulation but requires social mobilization and a change in power structures.

Paulo Freire's critical pedagogy, the re-signification of popular communication by Jesús

Martín Barbero, the critical analysis of power structures in communication by Armand Mattelart, and the call for other ways of communicating by Rosa María Alfaro are examples of how Latin American thought highlights the need for alternative and emancipatory communication.

These approaches emphasize the relevance of community participation and empowerment, implying the importance of the active role of communities in decision-making, in content production processes, in choosing the most convenient media for the representation of their own realities, transcending the western formula of thinking about what the media do to people, to think about what people can do with the media, on their own terms.

Returning to the initial example of the Kankuamo people, their types of conceptions of communication challenge Western approaches and emerge from different epistemologies, proposing communication as a relationship in which one interweaves with the other to understand and co-construct a joint path. This is a more complex process than thinking of communication as uni-directional or bidirectional formulas for transmitting or exchanging messages between one another.

In short, the epistemologies of the South and Latin American social thought invite us to rethink the right to communication beyond freedom of expression and access to information and media; and to assume it from the perspective of defending and strengthening those processes of their own and appropriated communication that allow local communities to make their own decisions about communication processes and products that arise on and from their territories, respecting the cultural, linguistic, and epistemic diversity of historically marginalized groups, and generating communication processes anchored in their own knowledge and needs. ∎

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Alternative media: Alternative to what?

Lorenzo Vargas

The following article reviews some of the main ways in which scholarship on community and alternative media has sought to understand itself and argues that despite disagreements around definition, these debates have translated into tangible calls for social transformation in the form of the communication rights and media reform movements.

The concept of "alternative media" begs the question "alternative to what?". Downing characterizes alternative media as defined by a radical political, social, or cultural agenda (Downing, 1984, quoted by Couldry, 2009: 25). Atton views alternative media as an opportunity for the "other" to represent herself (Bosch, 2009: 72) and proposes a "typology" that identifies content, form, democratic distribution, and transformed social relations as defining categories (Atton, 2022 in Payne, 2002: 60).

Atton also sees alternative media as an opportunity to challenge established media practices which are seen as common sense (Atton, 2015: 2). O'Sullivan points to the collectivist method of production in alternative media content as a defining feature (Elghul-Bebawi, 2009: 24). Hamilton and Harcup prefer terms like "community" or "grassroots" media (idem: 20-21), while Rodriguez prefers "citizen's media" because they can be pathways to more active acts of citizenship (Bosch 2009: 72).

These debates about definition also raise

questions about what the term alternative media specifically refers to, since it encapsulates practices as diverse as community radio, citizen journalism, ethnic newspapers, independent podcasting, and grassroots cinema. Coyer defines it as not-for-profit, participatory, and made for and by local audiences in ways that revitalize the local in the context of the global (Coyer 2011: 168-169). Other understandings are based on the type of organizational structures in alternative media (Downing), as well as their relationship to the market economy (Atton; Williams; Elghul-Bebawi, 2009: 22).

But despite these difficulties around definitions and forms, "alternative" media capable of promoting peace, democracy, and sustainability are needed today more than ever given the climate crisis and the rise of far-right political movements (Hackett 2016: 16-17). Couldry and Rodriguez echo this call when they point out that the concentration of media and digital power in a few, often corporate, hands is undermining social progress, and that there is a need to advance a different logic of communication, rooted in radical democracy and active citizenship (Couldry and Rodriguez, 2015).

Questions of identity

One of the defining characteristics of alternative media is that it challenges hegemonic identities and creates platforms for non-dominant social identities to gain recognition. Some of these identities are held by ethnic or linguistic minorities. For instance, in her study of *Africa Scene,* a weekly migrant-produced show broadcast on a community radio station in Dublin, Moylan argues that producers' identities shift because of their position as voices of a marginalized population (Moylan, 2009). Similarly, in her study on the contestation of stereotypes by Muslim girls in New York, Noor (2007) highlights the role of collective identity as a starting point for challenges to dominant narratives. Guedes Bailey argues that "diasporic" community media can be spaces where exclusion can be overcome through a process of identity negotiation (Guedes Bailey,

2015). This is especially true in contexts where "ethnic" communities do not recognize themselves in mainstream content (Deuze, 2006).

A similar example, this time focused on Indigenous identities, is the work of Pietikaiken, who examines journalistic practices inside various Sami media in Finland. He argues that collective identity is created and reproduced because Sami journalists are moved by a sense of duty in protecting Sami culture (Pietkaiken, 2008: 12-14). Magallanes-Blanco points out that, in her study of Indigenous participatory video practices in Peru, Kenya, and the Philippines, activists employ some common narratives rooted in their Indigenous identities (Magallanes Blanco, 2015). Bellotti adds that Indigenous community media reinforces "ethnic identity", which helps advance decolonization, Indigenous governance, and organizing (Bellotti, 2020).

Indigenous community media production also plays a key role in enabling resistance in contexts marked by state repression and market forces (Myers, 2016: 101). Meadows adds that Indigenous community broadcasting can contribute to "Indigenous public spheres" in which indigenous broadcasters and audiences engage in a dialogue that permits the creation and maintenance of Indigenous identities (Meadows, 2015).

Other scholars point to the importance of alternative media in promoting social identities that advance gender justice. In their study of participatory communication projects in India, Pavarala and Malik argue that the work of women in these projects "contributes to their empowerment as women and a reconfiguration of their understanding of their rights", leading to a shifted identity from shy and "even scared" women to women who are empowered as community reporters. (Pavarala & Kuman Malik, 2009: 96, 104).

A similar example is found in the work of Matewa, who argues that women's participatory video production processes at a community level contribute to individual and collective empowerment, which is rooted in an identity shift towards a justice-oriented understanding of citizenship

(Matewa, 2009: 117). Likewise, Vivienne and Burgess' study of a queer digital storytelling collective in Australia point to the negotiation of the tensions between visibility and hiddenness, secrecy and pride, and the construction of new queer identities (Vivienne and Burgess, 2012: 363).

Another dimension of identity formation is that of political identities claimed in opposition to dominant discourses. Santana Lourenco examines alternative media production practices in Brazilian slums marked by social and political exclusion and argues that collaborative media production stimulates collective identity formation because "the cooperative nature of video production can be a bond that strengthens community identities" and can lead to new identities of "socially awakened citizens" with political rights (Santana Lourenco, 2007: 89-96).

Similarly, Beybinia Kejanlioglu et al. highlight the role of the media content and production in promoting political identities in opposition to mainstream's media portrayal of social issues in Turkey. (Beybin Kejanlıoglu, et al., 2012: 292). Hayes, whose work on cultural mediation between locals, migrants, foreign donors at a community radio station in Mexico concludes that the framing used in media content reinforces rural and campesino identities, which help fuel activism and political mobilization (Hayes, 2018).

Lastly, O'Brien sheds light on structural barriers to women's equal participation in Ireland's community radio movement, which ultimately create momentum for gender justice-oriented change as women identify these barriers and develop political identities of resistance (O'Brien, 2019). Payne's thinking moves in the same direction by advancing that "mediated representations of "interest groups" such as women's organizations are seen as a constitutive practice because they mobilize feminist identities to be produced by feminist media production (Payne, 2012: 66).

Citizenship, participation, and voice

Another useful framework is that of "citizens' media", presented by Rodriguez. She argues that alternative media function as a site for the reconfiguration of civic identities through the performance of these identities in media production (Rodriguez, 2011: 82). Citizen's media allow people to perform everyday local identities and ways of life that have not been permeated by anti-democratic logics (ibid).

As such, Rodriguez defines citizens' media as spaces where people can learn to manipulate their own languages, codes, signs, and symbols, empowering them to name the world on their own terms (Rodriguez, 2011: 24). She points out that the impact of alternative, community, or citizen's media projects includes the reappropriation of public spaces, the creation of landscapes of collective memory, the defying of fear, and the reconstruction of public imaginaries. Other impacts include greater community-led advocacy (Davis, 2015), and better conflict resolution (Aldana Orozco et al., 2013). Local ownership and control of media is also key as this allows people to shape their communication landscapes (Pettit et al., 2009).

Bosch argues that citizen's media are "rhizomatic" because they are rooted in horizontal relationships and tend to follow a logic of multiplicity, fluidity, and subversion (Bosch, 2009). The concept of the "rhizome" is key to understanding community media as essential spaces of connection for civil society and of mediation with state and market forces in defence of community interests (Carpentier, 2016).

Another way in which alternative media have been characterized is as "participatory". Alternative media theory has often highlighted the role of these forms of media in fostering more democratic power relations in terms of media production and decision making inside media organizations (Carpentier, 2011: 68). This position emerges in response to mainstream media, in which media production is reserved for professionals and in which "participation remains unidirectional, articulated as a contribution to the public sphere but often mainly serving the

needs and interests of the mainstream media system itself" (idem, 69).

In contrast, alternative media "enable and facilitate access and participation so that ordinary people, especially those who are misrepresented and disadvantaged, can have their voices heard and valued. This is facilitated through a horizontal power structure that shies away from 'traditional' media professional practices" (idem, 97). Guo highlights that alternative media also help to promote local trust (Guo, 2017). For Carpentier, this approach can be defined as "co-deciding" on content, editorial policy, technology, and structure (Carpentier, 2011: 124- 131).

In sum, participatory approaches generally understand participation as far more than "taking part in something". They take a more political approach that sees their work as a challenge to unbalanced power structures. Carpentier proposes focusing on social processes, social and economic actors, decision-making, and power relations to better understand participatory media processes (Carpentier, 2016).

Central to both citizenship and participation-oriented approaches is the idea of voice. For Couldry, voice is a political issue that is both a social process and a value to be pursued, and that entails the possibility of expressing one's perspective on the world – and for that voice to be recognized and considered in decision-making processes at different levels (Couldry, 2015: 44 and 51). Voice is, therefore, critical for the advancement of democracy. Nevertheless, if through the "unequal distribution of narrative resources and access to narrative forms, people lack control over the materials from which they must build their account of themselves, then that represents a deep denial of voice, a form of oppression" (idem, 46).

Thomas provides an excellent example of what this denial looks like in practice. He points out that there are broad sectors of Indian society that "have been traditionally expected to remain silent, even in the face of the most atrocious atrocities committed by the forward castes and the wealthy", and that the *jan sunwai* public

hearings that led to legislation on the right to information served as spaces for the recognition of individual and collective voices (Thomas, 2015: 138).

Radical media

Fuchs and Sandoval's "critical media" approach review some of the approaches described above that emphasize participation and local-level impact as the defining features of alternative media. To them, these approaches are unable to challenge corporate media power and dominant discourses because they speak only to small counter-publics and lack the resources to reach a broader audience. This is because alternative media face the constant dilemma of seeking to remain critical of power – which often means they have very limited access to financial resources – while operating in capitalist economies where financial resources are central to their ability to influence public opinion (Fuchs and Sandoval, 2015: 173).

They also argue that this characterization of participation as the defining feature of alternative media ignores the fact that conservative groups have employed participatory approaches to advance their agendas (Fuchs and Sandoval, 2010: 143-145). Atton echoes some of these criticisms by pointing out that over-emphasis on participation and production practices has led scholars to ignore the role of audiences and how audiences interact with content (Atton, 2007: 23).

In response, Fuchs offers the concept of "critical media", emphasizing that to be considered alternative media, the content produced by a given outlet must be "critical". To Fuchs, this means being in opposition to corporate media monopolies, advancing the interests of the working class and the oppressed in the public sphere, working hand in hand with social movements, and promoting alternative forms of development (Fuchs, 2010: 181-185). In this definition, "commercial and non-participatory media can be understood as alternative as long as they disseminate critical media content". They argue that alternative media must aim at reaching larger audiences to have greater public influence,

even if this comes at the expense of a democratic and participatory structure (Fuchs and Sandoval 2010: 146-150).

This view is echoed by Downing's "radical media" approach emphasizing content (Downing 2001 in Fuchs and Sandoval, 2010: 148), even if Downing does argue for democratic organizing principles within alternative media organizations (Downing 1984, 2001 in Atton, 2007: 19). Crucially, Fuchs and Sandoval argue that, given the current context of media/digital monopolies and oligopolies, there is a need for urgent media reforms that allow for new ways to resource alternative media, such as new taxes on media corporations and participatory budgeting (Fuchs and Sandoval 2015: 173).

Media power

Couldry's "media power" framework takes a more structural approach to defining the field that can perhaps reconcile the content and structure-oriented approaches discussed above. He defines alternative media as "media that espouse practices of symbolic production which contest media power itself, which is the concentration of power to construct social reality" (Elghul-Bebawi, 2009: 29). This stance rejects liberal understandings of the media as a "fourth power" that acts as a watchdog to keep different forms of power in check and moves beyond understandings of the media as mere conduits for powerful groups (Couldry & Curran 2003, 3-4). Rather, Couldry sees media power as an emergent source of power in itself, which lies primarily in its ability to represent social reality, an ability that is generally not made explicit (idem, 3-4).

The contestation of media power can take several different forms and can be grouped under the broad concept of "alternative media". Alternative media are therefore defined as "media production that challenges, at least implicitly, actual concentrations of media power" (idem, 7). In this sense, Couldry views alternative media as characterized by practices that introduce alternative forms of mediation and challenge the power of mainstream media institutions.

Social movement media

Another way in which media scholarship has attempted to define alternative media is as media that help serve the needs of social movements. Social movement media can be understood as "independent channels of communication set up by activists and social movement organizations to spread their message, frame their goals and demands, and to interact with media organizations" (Rucht ,2004: 29 in Cammaerts, 2015: 445).

For Cammaerts, social movement media play several roles, like tackling lack of visibility of social issues in mainstream media coverage. But to him, one of the most critical roles is that of "self-mediation, which is a process of disseminating, communicating, and recording a series of movement frames that allow for self-reflexivity and archiving and transmitting movement tactics and ideas." These media practices and processes "allow social movements to become self-conscious", thus creating opportunities for the movement to organize internally as well as outwardly with other social movements (Cammaerts, 2015: 448, 453).

Boler adds that web-based platforms created new opportunities for people to express themselves, which has contributed to the emergence of new forms of social movement media. She points to the desire to increase sense of community, to have a public voice, to be heard, to create spaces for productive debate, to express anger or dissatisfaction, and to "correct" what the mainstream media get wrong as the main motivators for people to engage or alternative media production (Boler, 2015: 544-547).

Online platforms also allow social movement content to become less institutional and more people-led: "in place of content that is distributed and relationships that are brokered by hierarchical organizations, social networking involves co-production and co-distribution, revealing a different economic and psychological logic: co-production and sharing based on personalized expression" (Bennet and Segerberg, 2012: 742-752).

Treré argues that social movement media

are more than mere instruments for social movements. On the contrary, they constitute crucial spaces for movements to create, reproduce, and challenge social imaginaries about the world. He argues that social movements interact with, appropriate, and challenge entire ecosystems of digital, analogue, and in-person media practices technologies to advance their struggles and that in so doing they help generate the collective identities that drive mobilization (Treré, 2018: 15-41).

In this light, understanding specific media and communication practices within social movement media is a useful entry point to better understand the field. Mattoni argues that social movements generally develop a broad range of media practices, or "repertoires of communication", and deploy them depending on each context, stage of mobilization, and set of objectives. These practices can be used to build solidarity, share knowledge, reach out to other actors, and engage in resistance (Mattoni, 2013). They are also used to expand the movement (Jeppesen, 2014).

In her study of the Occupy Movement in the United States, Kidd (2015) identifies several examples of communication practices as understood by Mattoni. She argues that practices such as "the human mic, in which participants repeated speakers' statements en masse"; the occupation of public space to advance an idea of "the commons" and to challenge the neoliberal privatization and individualism; the creation of platforms for story-telling as a way to generate trust and broader awareness of social issues; and the production of the movement's own news content were central for its emergence and helped define its goals and tactics (Kidd, 2015: 462-466).

Some activists have also engaged in "hacktivism", which entails disruptive protest and direct action against network infrastructure to defend cyberspace from state control and aggressive market forces (Milan, 2015: 550-551). Other movements have taken this a step further by seeking to establish citizen-led communication infrastructure for their own communities, like community internet networks (Rey Moreno, 2017; de Filippi, 2015).

Other social movements, such as the *Indignados* and 15-M movements in Spain, placed the right to communication at the heart of the movement, and adopted democratic communication practices across their mobilization efforts. This allowed the movement to help turn many "small media" into "one big media" capable of providing an influential alternative narrative around austerity and precarity that challenged mainstream media in ways that could be felt in the public sphere (Barranquero & Meda, 2015).

One of the most salient communication practices among social movements is that of "trans-media storytelling". This entails sharing messages across multiple platforms "with each new text making a distinctive and valuable contribution to the whole" in ways that allows decentralized activists to "create alternative media representations and express alternative political possibilities" (Hancox, 2014). This approach is key in enabling social movements to increase their visibility among several audiences (Costanza Chock 2013, pg. 99-101).

Media reform

Many of the aspirations for more democratic communication have led to sometimes successful calls for policy reform. These have been calls for structural changes to communication ecosystems in favour of democratization and the dismantling of oppressive power structures. These efforts have also sought to tackle "communication and information poverty" (Daza et al., 2007), a form of poverty that "contributes to people's sense of powerlessness and inability to make themselves heard" and that manifests itself in the form of limited access to communication platforms, under or misrepresentation in the media, low levels of media literacy, restricted access to relevant and accurate information and knowledge, exclusion decision-making processes, and limited media freedom (Vargas and Lee, 2020: 40).

Understanding communication and information from a rights-based perspective, perhaps

best crystalized in the form of the theory and practice of "the right to communicate" or "communication rights" has been critical to these efforts. Lee et al. argue that this is because taking a rights-based approach provides activists with a common lens with which to view, understand and address communication and information issues (Lee et al., 2010).

The notion of communication rights eventually turned into a social movement. It emerged at a global level during the 1980s, when the UNESCO-initiated MacBride Commission called for the democratization of communication systems and highlighted that communication is a basic need for development. Despite the failure of the MacBride process, the movement re-emerged in the 2000s in response to the ITU's World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in the form of the Communication Rights in the Information Society (CRIS) Campaign (Calabrese, 2010: 323-325).

The CRIS Campaign argued for the right to freedom of expression as the starting point for communication rights, but pointed out that an analysis of how power imbalances may in some cases undermine freedom of expression was needed. For example, "a poor person seeking to highlight injustice in their lives and a powerful media mogul each have, before the law, precisely the same protection for their right to freely express their views. In practice, however, the former lacks a means to have her/his voice heard, while the latter can powerfully amplify her/his message and ensure it is widely heard" (CRIS Campaign, 2005: 22).

As a result, CRIS called for the right to freedom of expression to be promoted alongside other established rights in the International Bill of Rights as well as for diversity of media content, democratization of ownership and control of media institutions, press freedom, support for diverse and independent media, and democratic access to media (CRIS Campaign, 2005). More recently, documents such as the Charter of Digital Rights promoted by the civil society network European Digital Rights (EDRi) have put the spotlight on new important dimensions of this equation such as data protection and transparent governance (European Digital Rights, 2015).

These aspirations have been translated into policy in some national contexts, always thanks to the activism of the community and alternative media movements. The most far reaching have taken place in Latin America, where during the first two decades of this century progressive governments and civil society worked shoulder to shoulder to introduce policy frameworks that sought to democratize access to the media. Some examples are the Organic Law of Communication in Ecuador; the General Law of Telecommunications, Information and Communication Technologies in Bolivia; and the Audiovisual Communication Services Law in Argentina. With different degrees of success, these policies tended to promote the equitable distribution of broadcasting licenses between the public, private, and community/Indigenous sector; established rules to prevent and/or discourage media concentration; and created strong regulatory agencies (Segura and Waisbord, 2017).

The success of these movements in Latin America is mostly the result of broad coalitions and alliances with several other social actors. This echoes Hackett and Carroll's analysis that describe media reform movements as somewhat unusual because they tend to be embedded in other social struggles as opposed to constituting movements in and of themselves. Their successes have been the result of their ability to build coalitions with other social movements or as connectors of social movements (Carroll & Hackett, 2006).

Conclusions

The field of community and alternative media is characterized by an astounding diversity. This makes the search for a single prism to understand a field as diverse as society itself an impossible task. Guedes Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier offer a very useful way out of the labyrinth of definitions. They identify the need for a simultaneous multi-theoretical approach

that understands alternative media in four key ways: alternative media as serving a community, as an alternative to the mainstream, as a link to civil society and seeking to challenge power, and as "rhizome" or "crossroads" that help connect people, movements, states, and markets (Guedes Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpertier 2007: 27-33).

They also argue that alternative media are "trans-hegemonic" and not exclusively counter-hegemonic in that they "oscillate between acceptance and rejection, resistance and compliance, and restriction and creation" (Guedes Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpertier 2007: 153).

The rise of digital platforms has also transformed the alternative media landscape. On the one hand, it has created new opportunities for self-expression and organization. Boler argues that web-based platforms have contributed to the emergence of new forms of social movement media. She points to the desire to increase sense of community, to have a public voice, to be heard, to create spaces for productive debate, to express anger or dissatisfaction, and to "correct" what the mainstream media get wrong as the main motivators for people to engage in online alternative media production (Boler, 2015: 544-547).

Online platforms also allow social movement content to become less institutional and more people-led: "in place of content that is distributed and relationships that are brokered by hierarchical organizations, social networking involves co-production and co-distribution, revealing a different economic and psychological logic: co-production and sharing based on personalized expression" (Bennett and Segerberg, 2012: 742-752). On the other hand, the rise of digital platforms has been a factor in fueling far right-wing "alternative" media outlets in places like the United States which, brushing aside any ethical quandaries, employ participatory and horizontal media production practices to advance anti-rights discourse and disinformation.

This dilemma reinforces the need for a clear definition of what actually constitutes alternative media so that appropriate policy interventions to promote media diversity, the public interest, and communication rights can be developed. It also underlines the need to think about the whole debate from a perspective that is less focused on the medium or technological platform of the day, and more from one that understands communication as a right that needs to be guaranteed through structural media reforms that democratize media and digital power. ∎

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Medios y democracia en México

Lenin Martell

El 1 de diciembre de 2018, Andrés Manuel López Obrador (AMLO) asumió el cargo como presidente constitucional de los Estados Unidos Mexicanos. Fue el primer presidente de izquierda en acceder al Poder ejecutivo en la historia del país. Como parte de su plataforma política y económica, prometía la redistribución de la riqueza, la democratización de las instituciones públicas y la información, entre otras muchas otras propuestas. Un mes después, el 23 de enero de 2019 (Jiménez & Muñoz, 2019), AMLO presentó en cadena nacional a los nuevos directores de los medios públicos federales en México. El anuncio reflejó esperanza para muchos ciudadanos, trabajadores de los medios estatales y culturales, y periodistas quienes por muchos años habían luchado por tener un sistema de comunicación democrático y equitativo.

El acontecimiento fue inédito, pues nunca antes un mandatario de la República había anunciado quiénes serían los nuevos encargados de los medios; sobre todo, en esta ocasión, eran representantes de la sociedad civil (una tarea que, generalmente, la relegaban a mandatarios de menor rango).

A cinco años del gobierno de la llamada Cuarta transformación, es un hecho que la relación medios-Estado-sociedad ha experimentado cambios sustanciales: con algunos medios,

como los públicos-federales, se han estrechado los vínculos, producto de un mayor acceso a la información, incremento en la participación de los ciudadanos en los medios, mayor independencia con respecto del gobierno, y el hecho que estos han logrado ampliar la conversación en la vida pública. Sin embargo, con otros, como los comerciales –entre ellos El Reforma y El Universal, Televisa y TV Azteca— el vínculo ha sido ríspido. Las razones han sido varias, entre ellas: la exigencia de pago de impuestos por parte del Gobierno federal; la derechización y sesgo en los ángulos editoriales de estas empresas periodísticas; el incremento de *fake news*, la baja calidad de sus contenidos y el hecho que no reciben publicidad oficial como en otros sexenios. Como consecuencia, las audiencias han buscado otras alternativas de información y entretenimiento.

Por otra parte, existen aún puntos endebles en la relación medios-Estado-sociedad, como el asesinato a periodistas en algunos estados del país, la precarización de los salarios de los trabajadores de los medios, la necesidad de mayor apoyo financiero a los medios públicos, el retroceso en el marco jurídico de los medios de comunicación, el acceso universal a las plataformas tecnológicas, entre otras problemáticas que limitan la consolidación democrática del sistema comunicativo mexicano.

Para entender estos cambios recientes, es necesario remontarnos a sexenios de gobierno anteriores, con el fin de contextualizar cómo era la relación entre el Estado-medios-sociedad en las primeras dos décadas de este siglo. Para evidenciar lo anterior, en este espacio discutiremos algunos eventos significativos que han marcado pauta en la relación medios-Estado-sociedad.

Antecedentes: 2000-2017

A principios de este siglo, diversos sectores de la sociedad civil intensificaron un debate sobre la inequidad que existía en el sistema de medios de comunicación en México, la cual se había caracterizado porque los gobiernos federales y estatales habían respaldado al modelo de radiodifusión privada desde los años 50 –proveyeron

concesiones, proporcionaron publicidad gubernamental y fueron consecuentes con la información de poca utilidad social y propagandística–. A pesar de que en la segunda mitad del siglo XX fueron apareciendo medios de titularidad estatal, su contribución a la sociedad fue limitada y funcionaron como medios de gobierno (Martell, 2021). Televisa y Televisión Azteca fueron dos de los conglomerados más beneficiados: incluso los presidentes en turno se dirigían en cadena nacional –desde Televisa— para dar información importante a la sociedad (Martell, 2023).

Sin embargo, hubo ciertos avances la rendición de cuentas que propiciaron una mayor participación de la sociedad en el espacio público:

En primer lugar, en el 2004, apareció el Instituto Federal de Acceso a la Información (IFAI), organización gubernamental creada para desarrollar mecanismos de acceso a la información y protección de datos. Posteriormente, hubo reformas constitucionales que dieron lugar al Instituto Nacional de Acceso a la Información en 2015 (Martell & Martínez, 2021). Lo anterior contribuyó para generar mecanismos para realizar investigación periodística que en el pasado hubiera sido casi imposible acceder, mucha de la cual tenía que ver con actos de corrupción por parte de los gobernantes. Así se desarrollaron medios como Revista Z; Proyecto Puente; LadoB, Chiapas Paralelo, RíoDoce, El Noreste, La Verdad de Juárez, ZonaDocs; Connectas; Quinto Elemento; Tejiendo Redes, entre otros.

En segundo lugar, hubo progresos en los mecanismos que protegían la práctica del periodismo y la protección a periodistas, aunque los números de periodistas asesinados y acosados por distintos poderes políticos y sociales continuaron a la alza en el país en distintas áreas de conflicto (Xantomila, 2022). Posteriormente, la creación de las Defensorías de las audiencias y códigos de ética en 2007 (Martell & Martínez, 2021) se reforzó con la Ley de Radiodifusión y Telecomunicaciones en 2014.

Otro factor importante que motivó una cambio de relación entre los medios y la sociedad en México fue los hábitos de consumo de las

audiencias. El entretenimiento sigue siendo de mayor preferencia que los noticiarios (en una relación 70%-30%. A pesar que el IFT autorizó un incremento del 65% de nuevas concesiones, 23% de los principales grupos regionales se siguen repartiendo el 65% de estas licencias (Martell & Martínez, 2021).

En cuanto a la radio, en algunos grupos radiofónicos, como Televisa Radio y Radio Fórmula, la programación dedicada a programas hablados se ha incrementado y los formatos se han diversificado, aunque no los contenidos. Esto ha hecho que escuchas provenientes de sectores medios urbanos busquen respuestas a sus nuevos estilos de vida. Sin embargo, salvo excepciones como la estación La Octava 88.1, la radio comercial carece de programas con perfil de servicio público.

Aún así, la radio comercial representa el 78% del mercado, mientras que las radiodifusoras públicas y comerciales solo el 22 por ciento (Martínez, 2016). Asimismo, tanto la radio comercial como la radio pública –salvo excepciones– han sido incapaces de atraer a nuevas audiencias, sobre todo aquellas más jóvenes, a través de nuevas herramientas tecnológicas, como lo son las apps y los formatos de podcast.

En cuanto al periodismo de investigación, ha incorporado más técnicas de investigación cuantitativa y cualitativa, lo que les permite realizar análisis de datos y confirmación de fuentes con mayor efectividad. Esto ha conducido a emprender rutas para el seguimiento de noticias; también ha permitido distinguir la capacidad para diferenciar y clarificar las noticias falsas. "Verificado 2018" fue ejemplo de esto durante el proceso de campañas presidenciales en 2018: 60 medios de comunicación se asociaron para verificar las fuentes de la información en un contexto en el que pululaba la información falsa. Entre los medios participantes se encontraban: Animal Político, Newsweek en Español, Pop UP Newsroom, y AJ+Español (Martell & Martínez, 2021). Este proyecto conjunto se convirtió en una gran herramienta de rendición de cuentas, después de este breve esfuerzo, el proyecto desapareció.

Los logros en un sector del periodismo, como el anterior, han mostrado progresos importantes para la rendición de cuentas y ampliación de la conversación local y nacional. Sin embargo, otro grupo de medios, sobre todo los más poderosos en el sistema comercial (Televisa, Televisión Azteca, y recientemente Imagen TV) ha producido programación de baja calidad y contribuido a expandir noticias falsas. Un caso notorio fue cuando Televisa inventó una noticia durante el temblor ocurrido en México en septiembre de 2017: por varios días, en el noticiario estelar se fabricó la noticia sobre una niña, de nombre Sofía, que estaba atrapada en los escombros. Las audiencias siguieron la historia cada noche. Después de varios días, se descubrió que había sido un invento de la reportera (Redacción AN, 2020). No hubo sanción por parte del gobierno a la televisora; tampoco a la periodista. Sin embargo, este tipo de hechos ha conducido a que las audiencias –especialmente las más jóvenes– busquen otras fuentes de información en plataformas digitales como podcast y Youtube (Martell & Martínez, 2021).

El episodio anterior, como muchos otros, es el resultado de un modelo de comunicación entre los medios de comunicación y el Estado gestado desde los inicios de Televisa en los años 50: intercambio de favores y un periodismo sensacionalista (propaganda y visibilidad política por parte de los gobierno o el congreso, a cambio de mayor número de concesiones) (Vidal Bonifaz, 2021).

En el plano jurídico, hubo avances importantes expresados en la Ley de Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión en 2014; fue parte de una reforma en 2013 a ocho sectores (económico; salud; político, etc.), los cuales, si bien no pudieron lograr sancionar completamente, si pudieron incidir en cuatro asuntos importantes (Martell & Martínez, 2021):

a) La noción de servicio público de radiodifusión y la fundación del Sistema Público de Radiodifusión del Estado Mexicano (SPR) (Secretaría de Gobernación, 2014);

b) la legislación de medios de comunicación (Diario Oficial de la Federación, 2014; Martínez,

2016);

c) los derechos de audiencia entendidos como derechos humanos (Martínez Aguilar, 2016); d) la creación de las defensorías de las audiencias (aunque algunas televisiones y radios estatales ya las habían tenido desde el 2007 (Secretaría de Educación Pública, 2007).

Para académicos, activistas en medios de comunicación, periodistas y otros sectores sociales, la reforma fue parte de una lucha de la sociedad civil desde 1979 que pugnaba por tener una estructura de medios más equitativa y mayor participación de la sociedad civil. La ley también permitió nuevos actores en el mercado de las telecomunicaciones como AT&T y Telefónica, que brindarían mayor ancho de banda y decremento en los servicios de telefonía celular.

La ley también abrió la posibilidad a una tercera televisora nacional, lo cual en teoría sopesaría el poder de los monopolios constituidos por Televisa y TvAzteca, aunque, para algunos analistas, en la práctica Televisa continuó dominando el mercado (Esteinou, 2013). Asimismo, Artículos, como el 88, permitían donaciones. Sin embargo, los procesos administrativos son tan difíciles de realizar, que los medios han desistido de buscar estos caminos como manera de financiar proyectos −entre ellos, documentales y/o series dramáticas. No fue una legislación perfecta, pero sí significó un gran progreso en la relación medios-Estado-sociedad al otorgar la posibilidad derechos de la comunicación a las audiencias.

A pesar de estos logros, en 2017, sectores conservadores en el congreso cabildearon para que se hiciera una contrarreforma a la ley de 2014; argumentaron que el Instituto Federal de Telecomunicaciones (IFT) no podía sancionar a los concesionarios y querían que se limitaran sus facultades. Pero no todos acordaron con esta propuesta, especialmente los sectores más críticos de la sociedad. Después de varios amparos interpuestos por miembros de la sociedad civil −como la Asociación Mexicana de Defensorías de las Audiencias (AMDA) y el Centro de Litigio Estratégico para la Defensoría de Derechos Humanos (CLEDH)-- la Suprema Corte de Justicia de la Nación declaró el 29 de agosto de 2022 acción de inconstitucionalidad y dejó inválida la ley de 2017 (Sistema Público de Radiodifusión del Estado Mexicano, 2022), por lo que, 16 de noviembre de 2022, reenvió al congreso el documento para legislar nuevamente.

Para analistas y activistas en medios, se congeló años de trabajo de legisladores y grupos de la sociedad civil que habían rendido esfuerzos por actualizar la ley de medios de comunicación. Asimismo, dejó en el limbo la aplicación de los derechos de las audiencias. Sin embargo, ante tal vacío legislativo, tanto los medios de comunicación como los defensores de las audiencias siguen basándose en los preceptos de la ley de 2014 para continuar con sus actividades.

El cambio de paradigma en la Comunicación Pública (2018-2023)

Para el 2016, Televisa ya había terminado de adquirir la televisión por cable y satelital (Sky), con lo que se había fortalecido como una empresa de telecomunicaciones, además se había beneficiado de recursos fiscales productos de la publicidad oficial. Asimismo, mantenía sus negocios en la radio, el ámbito editorial, fútbol profesional, cinematografía, juegos y sorteos (Martell, 2023). Pero el cambio del Poder ejecutivo significó reacomodos en su estructura de negocio y como poder mediático.

La llegada del Presidente Andrés Manuel López Obrador a la presidencia de la República, significó un cambio sustancial en la relación Estado, medios y sociedad. Las corporaciones de comunicación, entre ellas Televisa y TvAzteca, perdieron influencia con el Estado al disminuir percepciones en un 41 por ciento, por concepto de publicidad gubernamental (1,326,202,915 M/N) (Bravo, 2022). Asimismo, tuvieron que empezar a pagar impuestos al Estado −anteriormente habían sido condonados por los anteriores gobiernos−. Ambas televisoras fueron disminuyendo el número de audiencias (sobre todo las más jóvenes), ante la falta de oferta de contenidos atractivos; estas han emigrado hacia otro tipo de plataformas más novedosas para sus

intereses.

Como consecuencia, Televisa y TvAzteca, al igual que otros medios corporativos tuvieron que reducir su tamaño; o bien, emprender sociedades con otras empresas multinacionales para poder subsistir. A finales del 2021, Televisa recibía más remuneraciones económicas por la televisión de paga; en el 2022 tuvo que combinar su segmento de televisión por cable (Izzi-Cable con Megacable) y servicios de telecomunicaciones. Pero no fue así en la TV abierta; ahí la televisora se fusionó con el consorcio estadounidense Univisión, el 31 de enero de 2022; la compañía mexicana mantuvo la mayoría de las acciones.

Asimismo, en abril de 2023, se separaron los negocios del Estadio Azteca, revistas (rubro en extinción), casas de apuestas y el Club América, que cotizará en la Bolsa Mexicana de Valores (BMV) (Calderón, 2023) (Vidal Bonifaz, 2021). Estas transacciones de negocios tuvieron que realizarse para poder sobrevivir como empresa del entretenimiento y competir en el mercado internacional, pues a nivel local, sus propuestas de contenidos no pudieron con la oferta de plataformas de streaming, los cuales han sido muy orientados a la nota roja y al sensacionalismo.

Los medios públicos

Por su parte, la estructura de los medios públicos creció en este sexenio, en particular el Sistema Público de Radiodifusión del Estado Mexicano (SPR), el cual inició transmisiones en el 2014 y ahora tiene presencia, a través de Altavoz Radio (11 emisoras más Altavoz web) y Televisión 14 en prácticamente todo el país, más la plataforma digital MxPlus. En los últimos cuatro años, este sistema se ha consolidado: ha aumentado su audiencia significativamente, sobre todo en un sector de la población que busca información como documentales, películas contemporáneas e incluso noticiarios que discuten temas de manera crítica como la corrupción, medioambiente, diversidad sexual y de género, entre otras.

Al mismo tiempo, se ha abierto un debate acerca de la independencia editorial del SPR; mientras que para un sector de analistas en medios el Canal 14 tiene tintes oficialistas, para otros ha podido poner la balanza contenidos diferentes y críticos –que apuestan a difundir manifestaciones de la cultura popular– en el marco de un ecosistema mediático, constituido por una estructura de medios comerciales con contenidos de poca utilidad social y el incremento de *Fake News* (Martell & Serrano, 2023).

Mientras el SPR se ha robustecido, otros medios públicos federales, como el Instituto Mexicano de la Radio o Radio Educación se han quedado estancados ante atoros presupuestales, pocas propuestas de contenidos y conflictos sindicales. A pesar que la idea del presidente López Obrador era que el SPR coordinara los demás medios públicos federales, en la práctica ha sido una tarea complicada con algunos medios dadas las dinámicas internas de trabajo.

Los medios públicos de los estados, como el Sistema Mexiquense de Medios Públicos en el Estado de México, no han podido conseguir independencia política con respecto del gobierno en turno y sus contenidos continúan teniendo bajo impacto social; asimismo, la profesionalización del sector es limitada para lograr producir una programación con perfil de servicio público.

Uno de los sistemas que ha crecido en cuanto a su infraestructura es la radio universitaria. Actualmente se cuenta con más de 60 radios universitarias afiliadas a la RRUM (Redacción RRUM, 2022). Aunque algunas emisoras como Radio UDEM de la Universidad de Monterrey o Radio IPN del Instituto Politécnico Nacional han despuntado, una gran mayoría se han quedado estancadas con propuestas que poco apelan al gusto de las comunidades universitarias a las que representan.

A pesar de los obstáculos de los medios no comerciales, ha habido avances importantes en algunos medios (sobre todo los federales), como la instauración de los defensores de las audiencias –figura que se ha convertido en un mecanismo de rendición de cuentas para los medios–. Si bien este es un deber tanto de las emisoras públicas como privadas, prácticamente sólo las públicas han ido construyendo maneras de hacer efectiva

la labor de los defensores.

"La Mañanera"

Cada mañana de lunes a viernes, en punto de las 7 am, AMLO se dirige a los mexicanos para rendir un informe sobre sus actividades cotidianas. En el discurso matutino presidencial se abre una sesión de preguntas de reporteros, quienes viajan desde cualquier lugar del país para cuestionar al presidente o traen consigo problemáticas locales que pidan sean resueltas. El ejercicio ha abierto un debate sobre la pertinencia de los discursos: el ala crítica a su gobierno dice que no deben ser transmitidos por televisión pública nacional, porque son una forma de propaganda gubernamental, de atacar a periodistas y a grupos de poder que no están de acuerdo con él.

Mientras que un sector importante de la población afirma que se trata de un mensaje de alta relevancia nacional, mediante el cual se enteran de los verdaderos asuntos nacionales y de lo que hace el presidente cotidianamente; asimismo, afirman que los reporteros de periódicos locales de todo el país tienen la oportunidad de dialogar o cuestionar personalmente al mandatario, ejercicio que era imposible de realizar anteriormente. Lo que sí es cierto, es que la transmisión de La Mañanera se ha convertido en uno de los programas más populares de la televisión pública nacional (Luna, 2023) –Canal 14 tuvo un alcance promedio de enero a junio de 2023 de 313 mil 673 personas por día–.

Asesinatos contra periodistas

Los asesinatos contra periodistas continúan siendo el talón de aquiles para este sexenio en tanto es un tema que no se ha podido resolver. Es cierto que los ataques no provienen del Ejecutivo federal –en este sentido el nivel de censura ha disminuido considerablemente–, sino muchas veces de políticos o gobiernos de los estados o del crimen organizado. Aunque el gobierno federal ha instituido mecanismos de protección contra periodistas, algunos analistas piensan que no son suficientes o adecuados para respaldar a los reporteros que trabajan en zonas de riesgo (hasta la fecha, durante el sexenio de AMLO, han sido asesinados más de 40 periodistas) (Article 19, 2023; Cruz, 2023).

Mercado de las Telecomunicaciones

El mercado de las telecomunicaciones dio un viraje producto de presiones nacionales e internacionales. Para la investigadora Alma Rosa Alva, "la OCDE emitió, a petición del gobierno mexicano, un diagnóstico sobre la situación de las telecomunicaciones mexicanas (ya incluyendo en éstas a la radiodifusión)" (Alva, 2023). El documento recomendaba mayor competencia en el sector y participación externa; Alva afirma que "tal dictamen fue el punto de partida para la Reforma Telecom", la cual se materializó en junio del año siguiente.

La reforma constituyó un acuerdo entre la clase política en el poder y los empresarios del ramo de quienes no afectó sus intereses, sino que abrió cauce a nuevos negocios. Las propuestas ciudadanas que se habían venido trabajando desde décadas atrás, se hicieron a un lado para dar paso a una visión jurídica que favorecía las conveniencias de los grandes empresarios. La reforma también significaba una revitalización de la estructura económica del país para asegurar una transición a un mercado basado en plataformas digitales. Por lo tanto, hubo voluntad tanto de los líderes del sector como del gobierno en turno para consumar dicho cambio.

En el plano de los consumidores, a diez años de la reforma Telecom, se han visto algunos avances en esta materia; sobre todo en acceso a los servicios de telecomunicaciones para la población en general. El IFT reportó 540 mil pesos de ahorro para los usuarios. Asimismo, la ley puso límites a la concentración. Sin embargo, todavía existen pendientes sustanciales, como el acceso universal de internet. Según datos recientes (Primera década de la reforma a la Ley Federal de Telecomunicaciones y Radiodifusión, Pulso Noticias, Radio Educación, 22 de junio de 2023, https://www.facebook.com/radioeducacion/videos/609461954498653), los servicios de telefonía bajaron en un 30.8 %,

en celular 48.7 %. Aunque todavía hay preponderancia a la compañía American Móvil (propiedad de Carlos Slim), han entrado al mercado otros operadores como AT&T, Easy, Totalplay y Megacable. Se consiguió también la eliminación de la larga distancia y el roaming nacional, así como la 5G, o la inclusión para personas con discapacidad en estos servicios. Sin embargo, aún existen candados para elegir o migrar de operador, fallas técnicas en las líneas por los cableados de cobre, y se requiere de un mayor entrenamiento del personal para realizar la conversión a la fibra óptica en los hogares.

En cuanto a la banda ancha, 87 de cada cien personas tienen acceso a la banda ancha y móvil, y cada 70 de cien hogares a la banda ancha fija. La adopción de televisión restringida subió a 61/100 en los hogares, a pesar de que el precio aumentara 28% en televisión y 18% internet. También en TV se experimentó la transición a la TV digital .

Conclusión

A pesar del salto cuantitativo en el mercado de las telecomunicaciones, todavía hay rezagos importantes que la reforma no pudo resolver. Entre ellos se encuentran, la consumación jurídica de los derechos de las audiencias en la radiodifusión, pues, ante una contrarreforma en 2017 y serie de litigios ciudadanos, estos todavía no se han podido consolidar. Lo anterior es importante, porque enmarca al concepto de los derechos de las audiencias como un derecho humano. Si bien la ley Telecom creó el sistema de medios públicos descentralizado (SPR) para poder gestionar y brindar el servicio público de radiodifusión a nivel nacional, es necesario resolver la controversia constitucional en torno a los derechos de las audiencias para institucionalizar el servicio público de radiodifusión y convertirlo en una política de Estado.

Existen otros pendientes en el campo de la radiodifusión y telecomunicaciones que se tienen que resolver a corto y mediano plazo, dado que limitan el ejercicio democrático y desarrollo social del país. Algunos de estos son:

a) La existente brecha digital a pesar de que cada vez más ciudadanos tienen acceso a las plataformas digitales y que la ley obliga al Ejecutivo encargarse del tema de la inclusión.

b) Potencializar la competencia en el sector, dado que aún hay candados que obstaculizan que algunas empresas participen.

c) La ley construyó al IFT como órgano que regula al sistema de radiodifusión y telecomunicaciones; sin embargo, este no ha podido sancionar a los concesionarios, tampoco obligar a que los medios (sobre todo los privados) creen y cumplan sus códigos de ética.

d) Los grandes empresarios, como Ricardo Salinas Pliego, han evadido impuestos y los contenidos de sus medios siguen abusando de los derechos de las audiencias. Es tiempo de que se resuelva el limbo jurídico pendiente, para que se pueda sancionar a estos concesionarios.

e) En el rubro de la radiodifusión, se requiere potencializar producciones de mayor calidad y pertinencia social para sectores sociales más diversos y específicos como la niñez.

f) La profesionalización de los trabajadores de la radiodifusión debe plantearse como un elemento central para desarrollar la producción y programación de contenidos de calidad y utilidad social. ∎

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ON THE SCREEN

Saarbruecken (Germany) 2024

At Saarbruecken (22-28 January 2024), the Prize of the Ecumenical Jury (Max Ophuels Prize), endowed with €2500 by the Katholische Erwachsenenbildung Saarland - Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft e.V. and the Landesarbeitsgemeinschaft für Evangelische Erwachsenenbildung im Saarland e.V., represented by the Evangelische Akademie im Saarland, was awarded to *Jenseits der blauen Grenze* (Beyond the Blue Border) directed by Sarah Neumann (Germany, 2024).

Motivation: This film captivated us with its narrative power and universal relevance. The overwhelming power of the film lies in its profound portrayal of the self-sacrificing and selfless nature of friendship. The main character is at an existential crossroads in her life. On the one hand, a sporting career and ties to family and home beckon, while on the other there is freedom and heartfelt friendship. This dualistic structure reflects the conflicts that people can encounter time and again on their journey through life.

The audience is taken on an emotional rollercoaster ride and witnesses the inner struggles of the main characters. The subtle staging and impressive acting lend this film a unique intensity. The camera work, the visual language and the music emphasise the inner conflicts and make them tangible. It is remarkable how the film manages to penetrate the different levels of human existence while maintaining a sophisticated cinematic level.

The film's message encourages us to find true freedom in human relationships and deep friendship.

Members of the 2024 Jury: Georgi Abashishvili, Georgia; Philipp Huch-Hallwachs,

Germany; Sabrina Maas, Germany; Tamás Novák, Hungary.

Berlin (Germany) 2024

At the 74th International Film Festival Berlin (15-25 February 2024), the Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, awarded its Prize in the International Competition to *Keyke mahboobe man* (My Favourite Cake) directed by Maryam Moghaddam and Behtash Sanaeeha (Iran, France, Sweden, Germany, 2024).

Motivation: The filmmakers show us how paradise can be created in your own backyard. It requires a little laughing, drinking, dancing, and, of course, eating cake. Yet it also needs a strong dose of resistance and the courage to move beyond the confining patterns of social and political life. While this small story is in Iran, it offers promises for connection and joy to anyone anywhere late in life.

In the Panorama, the Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Catholic German Bishops' Conference, to *Sex* directed by Dag Johan Haugerud (Norway, 2024). Motivation: This is a film about sex and gender, though no sex is shown. The filmmakers demonstrate how honesty and intimacy are vital to human relationships. Through slow pacing and humorous conversations, the film focuses our attention on the nuances of our social constructions of gender and sex, and more importantly, of love.

In the Forum, the Jury awarded its Prize, endowed with € 2.500 by the Evangelical Church in Germany (EKD), to *Marijas klusums* (Maria's Silence) directed by Dāvis Sīmanis (Latvia, Lithuania, 2024).

Motivation: This black and white film relates the real story of silent film actress Maria Leiko travelling from Germany to Soviet Russia and trapped by the regime. Maria and the Latvian theatre company in which she was enrolled become victims of the massive purges of this period. The jury appreciated the transformation of the main character who witnessed the evils of the system and eventually decided on choosing silence as a form of resistance against outrageous violence.

In addition, the Jury in the Forum awarded a Commendation to *Intercepted* directed by Oksana Karpovych (Canada, France, Ukraine, 2024).

Motivation: Conversations between Russian soldiers and their families were intercepted by the Ukrainian army. In this documentary, director Oksana Karpovych confronts recordings of those conversations with images of destroyed Ukrainian houses and villages, creating a collision and a striking portrayal of war.

The members of the 2024 Jury: Fr. Francesca Šimuniová, Czech Republic (President of the Jury); Jacques Champeaux, France; S. Brent Rodriguez-Plate, USA; Marta Romanova-Jekabsone, Latvia; Karin Becker, Germany; Anita Nemes, Hungary.

Fribourg (Switzerland) 2024

The Ecumenical Jury, appointed by INTERFILM and SIGNIS, at the 38th Festival international du Films de Fribourg (March 15-24, 2024) awarded its Prize of 5.000 CHF, donated by the Church Aid Organisations in Switzerland "Lenten Offering" and "HEKS/Brot für alle", to the film "La Suprema" directed by Felipe Holguin Caro (Colombia, 2023).

Motivation of the Jury: Laureana, a young Colombian girl, leads her village of La Suprema in her dream of becoming a boxer. We were touched by the luminous simplicity and grace of this film, which is a beacon of hope. The difficult material conditions of this village community do not diminish its solidarity or its joy of existence. The film, set to a brilliant musical score, is a celebration of life.

Members of 2024 Jury: Anne-Cécile Antoni (France); Peter Dietz, Basel (Suisse) President; Julie Lagarrigue (France); Renata Werlen, Bern (Suisse). ▪