Pluralism in Chilean local, regional and community TV. Voices behind the cameras

Pluralismo en la TV local, regional y comunitaria chilena. Voces tras las cámaras

Pluralismo na TV local, regional e comunitária chilena. Vozes atrás das câmeras

Chiara Sáez Baeza, Universidad de Chile, Santiago, Chile (chiara.saez.baeza@uchile.cl)

Fernando Fuente-Alba Cariola, Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción, Concepción, Chile (ffuentealba@ucsc.cl)

Jorge Avilés Rojas, investigador independiente, Santiago, Chile (aviles.ignacio.j@gmail.com)

Abstract | The article presents the results of a qualitative study on media pluralism through semi-structured interviews with employees and managers of 28 regional, local, and community Chilean television channels. The main areas of inquiry were self-perception, financial sustainability, digitization, social sustainability, and institutionalism. Among the results, an understanding of pluralism focused on political and gender pluralism, and as a concept taken for granted rather than being problematized, stands out. The lack of economic resources is considered the main obstacle that prevents pluralism and a low level of knowledge about the legal obligations related to it is observed. The study concludes regarding the need to strengthen the sector from public policies, including the promotion of mechanisms that allow these channels to participate equitably in the relevant markets of the television industry.

Keywords: pluralism; television; local communication; community communication; Chile.

Resumen | El artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio cualitativo en torno al pluralismo mediático a través de entrevistas semiestructuradas a trabajadores/as y directivos/as de 28 canales chilenos de televisión regional, local y comunitaria. Las principales áreas de indagación fueron autopercepción, sostenibilidad financiera, digitalización, sostenibilidad social e institucionalidad. Entre los resultados, destaca una comprensión del pluralismo centrada en el pluralismo político y el de género, y como un concepto que se sobreentiende antes que se problematiza. Se considera la falta de recursos económicos como el principal obstáculo que impide el pluralismo y se observa un bajo nivel de conocimiento sobre las obligaciones legales relativas a este. Se concluye respecto de la necesidad de fortalecer el sector desde las políticas públicas, incluyendo promover mecanismos que permitan a estos canales participar de manera equitativa en los mercados relevantes de la industria televisiva.

Palabras clave: pluralismo; televisión; comunicación local; comunicación comunitaria; Chile.

resumo | O artigo apresenta os resultados de um estudo qualitativo sobre pluralismo midiático por meio de entrevistas semiestruturadas com trabalhadores e gestores de 28 estações chilenas de TV regionais, locais e comunitárias. As principais áreas de investigação foram: autopercepção, sustentabilidade financeira, digitalização, sustentabilidade social e institucionalidade. Entre os resultados, destaca-se uma compreensão do pluralismo voltada para o pluralismo político e de gênero, sendo um conceito dado como certo ao invés de ser problematizado. A falta de recursos econômicos é considerada o principal obstáculo que impede o pluralismo e observa-se um baixo nível de conhecimento sobre as obrigações legais relacionadas ao pluralismo. O estudo conclui sobre a necessidade de fortalecer o setor a partir de políticas públicas, incluindo a promoção de mecanismos que permitam que esses canais participem equitativamente nos mercados relevantes da indústria televisiva.

Palavras chave: pluralismo, televisão, comunicação local, comunicação comunitária, Chile.

Introduction

The difficult development of local, regional and municipal television in Chile shows similarities and differences to what has been observed at the Ibero-American level in recent decades. In Spain, despite a long tradition of regional and local public media since the early 1980s, the analog switch-off in 2010 meant a crisis and several historical projects disappeared (Guimerà & Alborch, 2011). Some regional broadcasters, such as Murcia, have been privatized (Rodríguez & Rosique, 2022) and currently there is no municipal TV station with a digital TV concession. In Argentina, there are local media in most provinces, but their content network consists of a mix of their own programs and those of the national broadcasters, and a large part belongs to the latter. The 2009 Audiovisual Communication Law opened a window for the development of community television, but despite its recognition as a contribution to pluralism, there was a "lack of political will to develop the non-profit sector, which is theoretically a priority of the new law" (Guimerà, 2013, p. 7).

In Chile, regional, local and community television has existed since the late 1990s. The sector was given a legal definition by Law 20.750 on Digital Television (Ley 20.750 de Televisión Digital, 2014). This regulation distinguished for the first time between the different types of concessions awarded in the country (national, regional, local, and community local). It also reserves 40% of the frequency spectrum for national or regional concessions dedicated to educational-cultural content and for regional, local and community channels.

This legal definition is primarily geographical, i.e., it focuses on the scope of the broadcasters' programs and not on the relationship of their content to the reference groups. Only in the case of local community television channels is there a broader (and also more demanding) description, as they are defined as non-profit legal entities under private law that are holders of a single concession within the limits established for local coverage concessionaires and that may not form chains or networks on a permanent basis. These concessionaires must ensure the promotion of social and local development and create space for the production of social groups or individuals residing in the coverage area of their concession (Ley 20.750 de Televisión Digital, 2014, Art. 15).

There is also no integrated public policy for this type of channel. The financing of audiovisual creation is limited to medium and small production companies, which are not always linked to local, regional and community channels. They are also not able to participate in the relevant sector markets (audience and advertising investment) because they are not taken into account by the agencies that centralize and sell this information.

According to the latest available data (Megatime, 2020), the four largest broadcasters with national reach concentrate 93.7% of advertising investment and 94% of viewers. This situation is exacerbated by the fact that many of the companies that own national media also invest in other industries in the country, such as retail, transportation and telecommunications, which can ultimately directly or indirectly affect advertising investment in local and regional media. In addition, there is an informational centralism that disregards the rest of the country (Galindo, 2014) and calls into question the integral informational pluralism of the Chilean television system.

Currently, private concessionaires of a commercial nature dominate the country's digital television: 55 channels, 14 regional and 41 local (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, 2022). The presence of public media at regional and local level is very low and is limited to six universities and one municipality, which has managed to overturn the prohibition of Law 20.750 in court (CS, 2017). The five existing community concessions were awarded at the beginning of 2018. There was a new tender for the award of six new frequencies (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, 2020), but there were no applicants, which testifies to a residual presence of the sector, far from the projections of a greater diversity of actors that digitization promised (Villarrubia et al., 2019). Similarly, no concessions were identified for indigenous peoples, which are legally provided for in the context of local community television, but without a specific procedure for application or associated support measures.

From the audience's point of view, the IX National Television Survey (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, 2017) revealed that 83% of respondents from regions other than the metropolitan area were unaware of the programming offered in their respective areas beyond the television windows offered by the National Public Television (TVN) through a news block during the central news broadcast. The X National Television Survey (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, 2021) shows that the percentage of satisfaction with regional television has dropped from 63% in 2017 to 20%, with the percentage being slightly higher in the south of the country and lower in the north.

Television in Chile is currently regulated by the law establishing the National Television Council (18.838 of 1989, amended in 1992) and the law on digital television (20.750, 2014). The National Television Council (CNTV) has the task of ensuring the proper functioning of television, which includes pluralism. Article 1 of Law 20.750 contains a definition of pluralism that associates it with various dimensions of diversity: "respect for social, cultural, ethnic, political, religious, gender diversity, sexual orientation and gender identity…". The law stipulates that it is the duty of concessionaires and licensees to fullfill with this principle. There is therefore a close link between CNTV's legal obligations, the proper functioning of television and

television pluralism, as Article 14, which was incorporated into Law 18.838 in 1992, states that "the Council shall adopt measures and procedures to ensure that the principle of pluralism is duly observed in the news, opinion and political debate programs broadcast by each television channel" (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, Art. 14). Since 2013, the CNTV has also conducted several studies on the subject of television pluralism (Consejo Nacional de Televisión, 2013a, 2013b, 2014, 2014, 2015a, 2015b). However, nine years after the law came into force, these have not taken into account regional, local and municipal channels, nor their broadcasters, messages or recipients. In this sense, we are facing an unexplored object.

Therefore, this article addresses media pluralism in Chile from the perspective of those who manage and produce regional, local and community television, as there is no published research on this topic to date.

Theoretical framework

This article is part of a broader research program on television pluralism[1] , whose epistemological basis contains theoretical assumptions from the political economy of communication and the political theory of media and democracy. I.e., it is a framework that examines the links between political-economic factors and the development of the media (Murciano, 1992) and understands media pluralism as a normative value related to the distribution of communicative power in the public sphere (Karppinen, 2010). As part of this program, we operationalized pluralism in three dimensions: "internal, external, and contextual pluralism, which in turn give rise to 11 measurement scales" (Sáez et al, 2022, p. 392), developing and validating an instrument to measure information pluralism in channels of national scope. This is related to recent theoretical thinking on these issues, such as that of Artero (2020), who proposes a model of media plurality based on three dimensions: competition, pluralism and diversity. As this research relates to a specific sector of the television system, we have developed a more specific conceptual approach that combines proximity and sustainability with the broader conceptual debate on pluralism.

Conceptually, the television typologies used in this article are close to the concept of proximity communication (Moragas et al., 1999), as opposed to the mega communication (Gubern, 1985) of national and generalist media. The normative

---

1. Pluralismotv.org

objectives of these media include tailoring their content to the needs of their communities and guaranteeing the population's right to communicate (Rodríguez & Rosique, 2022). They are recognized as a critical tool for the social control of traditional media powers (Toro et al., 2019) as well as for the empowerment of citizens and the positioning of local representatives in the public sphere (Cerbino & Belotti, 2016).

The content of Article 1 of Law 20.750 allows us to affirm that there is a relationship between TV pluralism and the different dimensions of media diversity in Chilean legislation. However, this approach is not implemented or operationalized when it comes to medium and small broadcasters, whose territorial focus is more specific. In this sense, a definition that focuses on the proximity of content seems appropriate, beyond the different management and financing models, "which have at least one self-produced program whose content is linked to the identity and reality of the inhabitants of the place [or places] where it is broadcast" (Fuente-Alba, 2013, p. 26). This concept gains importance in the scenario of constitutional change that the country is currently undergoing, as the idea of decentralizing the administration, culture and media systems is an important part of the debate. This sector has the potential to act as an intermediary between the state and the people: if there were regulation and public policies that supported them, these media could process citizens' non-compliance, raise social awareness of state intervention in certain situations and be decisive factors in local or national governance.

According to Parcu (2020), the hyper-segmented online advertising business model of digital media is disruptive compared to the traditional media model, which has an impact on media diversity. Added to this is the weak mediation between producers and consumers of online news, which leaves more space for the spread of disinformation. This raises the question of whether media pluralism and the quality of information are a public good in the digital age and whether this justifies more active state intervention in these issues. The proximity media experience Parcu's point in an even more acute way: regional, local and community television stations share a certain state of subordination and insecurity that jeopardizes their continuity over time, despite possible differences in both their ownership and purpose.

Barranquero and Candón-Mena (2021) discuss the sustainability of the so-called third sector or community media. However, theoretical research and our initial interviews with representatives of the broadcasters studied have shown that this problem also exists in local and regional, commercial, university and community media. The authors define sustainability as "all practices that promote the continuity, competitiveness and strengthening of community media, with the aim of maintaining their self-sufficient and autonomous character, their social mission and their commitment to citizenship and the surrounding communities" (p.

3), understanding it as a multidimensional and dynamic problem. They distinguish between five dimensions of sustainability: economic, political-legal, organizational, eco-social and information technology. This operationalization, as well as the theoretical framework of the research program in which this article is situated, served to organize the questionnaire used in this study. Since the subject matter in Chile has not yet been studied from this perspective, we felt it necessary to take a step further back and begin this exploratory study by analyzing the perceptions of the organizers of these channels before evaluating pluralism in content, as we have already done in the case of national channels.

Methodology

This is a qualitative study (Sierra Bravo, 2005). Its general objective was to investigate the perception of pluralism among employees and directors of local, regional and community broadcasters. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a sample of them that was intended to be as representative as possible in terms of type of station, gender, age and geographical region. A standardized questionnaire was used as the survey instrument, but was developed in an open-ended manner due to the qualitative nature of the study.

The specific objectives were: a) to examine the perceptions and opinions of employees and directors of these channels on media pluralism and its relationship to regional diversity, and b) to analyze their perceptions of pluralism in the programming of the television stations they manage or are part of. Five areas were examined: perception of pluralism, economic sustainability, digitalization, social sustainability and institutionalism.

Previously unsystematized information was collected and analyzed, which served as the basis for developing a version of the information pluralism measurement tool that is part of our research program, adapted to the specificities of local, regional and community television stations.

Region	Regional	Local	Community premises
North zone			
Arica y Parinacota			1
Tarapacá	1		
Antofagasta		1	
Atacama	1	1	
Center zone			
Coquimbo	1	1	
Valparaíso	1	1	
Metropolitana			3
Lib. Gral. Bdo. O´Higgins		1	1
Maule	1	1	
Ñuble		1	
Biobío		1	1
South zone			
Araucanía	2	2	2
Los Ríos			
Los Lagos	1	1	
Aysén			
Magallanes	1		
TOTAL	9	11	8

Table 1. Sample of channels participating in the qualitative phase
of the study according to typology

Source: Own elaboration.

Managers and/or staff from 28 broadcasters were interviewed: nine regional, 11 local and eight community broadcasters. Only in the regions of Los Ríos and Aysén was it not possible to collect information, as there are no open television projects there (only local pay TV).

Although the regional and local channels were mainly commercial media, we also found three city council-dependent stations (some of which only broadcast analog and do not continue digitally, as well as one that already broadcasts digitally) and three channels from regional universities.

Table 2 shows the distribution of the sample according to some contextual variables that we consider relevant and reveals the following trends: without differentiating by type and form of administration, the presence of women in positions of power does not even reach one third of the participating channels. In the community channels,

Regions	Community	Local	Regional
Female managers (%)	29.77%	29.77%	27.59%
Male managers (%)	70.83%	70.83%	72.41%
Volunteer workers (%)	92.31%	7.04%	3.55%
Paid workers (%)	7.69%	92.96%	96.45%
Average length of service	9.5 years	16.27 years	19.4 years
Medium seniority	6 years	18 years old	20 years

Table 2. Distribution of the sample according to gender of the managers,
type of workers, and seniority of the projects

Source: Own elaboration.

the majority of employees are volunteers, while the opposite is true in the local and regional stations. In terms of the age of the channels, the local and regional channels are almost twice as old as the community channels. The university channels of Concepción and Temuco are the oldest, at 28 and 29 years old respectively. The community channels also have long-standing projects that are 25 and 21 years old.

Results

Triangulation was used as the analysis strategy, in which the results of the interviews were examined for their relationship to the (general and specific) objectives, the background and the theoretical framework.

Perceptions of pluralism

In an overarching way, interviewees relate news pluralism to the political and gender balance expressed by the diversity of sources. In the regional broadcasters, they also emphasize the importance of including a stronger presence of indigenous people or other communities that have been made invisible in the public sphere. They also associate pluralism with the proximity between the broadcaster and the reference groups: in their case, selecting topics and making viewpoints visible from a decentralized perspective would lead to more pluralism.

The regional broadcasters consider political diversity as one of the most important variables, while the local and community broadcasters emphasize the diversity of sources and topics, which in turn generate a diversity of opinions and present a diversity of realities:

> Basically, I would say that we look at pluralism from a political point of view and accept it as the duty of the tv channel (...) without any restriction (man 1, regional channel, Tarapacá).

For us, pluralism means looking at all themes and actors from the point of view that a story generally has more than one version (man 1, local channel, Araucanía).

In this regard, the interviewees reflect an understanding of media pluralism that is essentially related to its internal dimension. Community broadcasters differ on this point, as their representatives associate pluralism with the diversity of channels, i.e., they see themselves as contributing to a greater external pluralism of the television system by filling an information gap in favor of their communities that the private commercial and public service media do not provide:

(...) We were born to fill a gap that has existed for years in terms of local television in Concepción (man 1, community channel, Biobío).

Some also understand pluralism in relation to empowering communities by giving them the way to express themselves through screens, or by making visible the problems of social groups related to gender, politics or territory. Only one of them combines the exercise of pluralism with the regular review of its editorial line. However, there is also the question of the compatibility of pluralism and editorial line:

When someone like José Antonio Kast2 comes and wants to express his knowledge on our channel, the Mapuche society hangs up on us. These are things like giving space to APRA, for example3 or giving space to neo-Nazi groups. The Mapuche society hangs up on us (man 1, community channel, Araucanía).

On the question of political pluralism, there is no common approach in the tv channels under city council administration. On the one hand, this condition does not allow them to develop political programs, especially in electoral contexts, which prevents them from accessing the means of electoral advertising. The other channel integrates political issues and emphasizes the diversity of political perspectives as an element of plurality.

For the local broadcasters, media plurality is also related to the subjectivities of the staff, i.e., how their criteria influence decision-making in terms of how to deal with issues and sources. This sector believes that it could be more pluralistic by increasing its reach, i.e. the scope or distribution of its content and the number of employees. This would allow it to cover more aspects of social reality and, secondly, to focus its efforts on integrating a greater diversity of actors and topics related to local issues.

2. President of the extreme right-wing Republican Party of Chile
3. Self-defense group against landowners in the Mapuche area.

The influence of pluralism on the editorial line is translated into practices aimed at the diversity of content in the program grid, but not directly linked to informational pluralism. Rather, they are everyday instances of the television industry, such as guidelines meetings. In the case of community broadcasters, the aim is to encourage community participation in the channel:

It is an everyday topic, as in all media. [...] When we propose a story, we usually tell the reporter what the topic will be, so we have situation A and situation B, we say the two visions (man 1, regional channel, Los Lagos).

In the case of regional and local broadcasters, the responsibility for ensuring pluralism lies mainly with the project owners, the directors, the executive producers and the press officers. In local channels, the way in which pluralism operates in editorial decision-making refers to scenarios of conversation between employees that are formal in nature (meeting guidelines), informal (dialogs during the pre-production of programs or explaining the pluralistic nature of the medium to new employees) or both. In the community channels, the responsibility for ensuring pluralism is understood as a collective task, although the management team makes editorial decisions on a daily basis.

In all three typologies, pluralism is a concept that is mostly taken for granted, not discussed or hardly discussed at all. This is also due to the lack of professional communicators who could bring in this perspective. Some interviewees point out that it is a concept that is constantly discussed and reflected upon within the teams. On the other hand, some community channels say that they discuss plurality in relation to the interests of the reference groups:

We meet every Thursday to discuss issues related to the canal, with the suggestions that come from outside. Basically, we start by coordinating roles with them, how we will work with the organization that presents a project or wants to air a program (man 1, community channel, Arica).

Relationships between financial sustainability and pluralism

When asked about the factor that most influences the lack of pluralism, the most repeated answer among the three types of broadcasters was economic resources, followed by the availability of sources in regional broadcasters and the lack of professionals for local and community broadcasters, which in turn is a consequence of the lack of economic resources:

I think the lack of resources [...] we work few persons. We don't have much income, so we can't create sources of labor (woman 1, regional channel, Atacama).

Secondly, the unwillingness of sources to give interviews is emphasized. Some local broadcasters point out that this problem is due to the idiosyncrasy of the communities and the modesty of their residents to expose themselves through so closer media.

In the case of community organizations, some of the problems are the lack of publicity of the sector due to the lack of interest from companies and to the detriment of its economic sustainability, the lack of diversity (age, gender) of staff, volunteers or activists and technical problems that are difficult to solve due to a lack of funding.

> In general, small and medium-sized enterprises do not have the culture to invest in local channels or they advertise very little on television (man 1, community channel, Arica).

On the other hand, there are relations with the mayors' offices and the political parties, but there are tensions due to the editorial influence sought by the representatives of the political world and the link between the television project and the institutional framework. This potential pressure from the municipalities is also a problem for some local broadcasters. Nevertheless, editorial independence is still seen as a given.

In the interviews, some broadcasters also spoke about the economic crisis that the two years of the pandemic have meant for them and its impact on advertising as a funding mechanism. There is also constant indirect pressure from the economy on private broadcasters, that affects their editorial independence:

> In a way, perhaps not so tacitly, if you have a company that finances your programs, of course you have to take care of that too. And we also have local channels today where interviews are paid for. Everyone pays for an interview to be on air, politicians or business people (man 1, local channel, Los Lagos).

Municipalities are also an important source of revenue for local trade channels, so a relationship of convenience is established:

> In these 15 years, I have only once received a call from the city council: 'You are putting too much pressure on us and if that is the case, the contract will not continue' (...) The team's decision was to take the risk, fortunately nothing happened, it was a stunt (woman 1, local channel, Araucanía).

Representatives of municipal broadcasters, on the other hand, state that their editorial freedom can be restricted by the political decisions of the municipality or even directly by the mayors. For those regional and local channels where this is not the case, respondents point to the following strategies: separation of sales and press

departments within the station to deflect direct pressure away from the editorial line; insignificant commercial advertising revenues; the management ability and the one of maintaining its independence; and the explicit stipulation in advertising contracts that the medium is not obliged to change or cut news content when dealing with issues sensitive to sponsors:

> We had no direct pressure in the sense that a businessman, a manager or an executive called us for a specific reason, no. We tried to separate the journalistic or content part from the commercial part (man 1, regional channel, Magallanes).

The entry of several local sponsors, managed through historical contacts with the community, also makes it possible that no single source of funding is relevant enough to influence the editorial line.

It was noted that one of the main problems for regional, local and community broadcasters in generating revenue is the lack of an audience measurement system that provides accessible and timely information. Interviewees pointed out that without this data, sponsors are not interested in commissioning advertising services to fund the station:

> Measuring ratings is useful for us to generate sales, as an argument for the number of people watching us. With digital television, there is no system for this and customers are interested in numbers and statistics (woman 1, local channel, Atacama).

The lack of both audience measurement data and advertising investment data reinforces the centralism of the television system and hinders the economic sustainability of medium and small companies in the sector.

In general, all respondents agree with the possibility of a common system for measuring audience ratings differentiated by typologies, scope or size (e.g. regional and national ratings are not analyzed in the same way), collects quantitative and qualitative information and integrates data by gender, age groups, socio-economic strata, coverage areas, tastes and preferences of the audience:

> Of course, you would have to take into account what the individual broadcasters offer, because I can't compare my own network with that of a national broadcaster (man 1, regional channel, Maule).

Several affirm that the Internet can be a good platform for the formulation of a measurement system and that it would be fruitful if a potential measurement could provide metrics similar to those of social networks. In the same vein, some

respondents doubt the applicability of a standardized system in small towns and prefer the use of surveys.

Although less common, there is a more conservative tendency that believes People Meter or a similar system could drive local and regional broadcasters to produce disposable content:

> (...) It would exploit aspects such as the police issue, sensationalism and show business per se, [leaving aside] important issues [where] television as a link can positively influence viewers by conveying more cultural, informative or historical messages (man 1, local channel, Valparaíso).

The representatives of the regional broadcasters believe that the lack of a system for measuring audience ratings in their sector leads to a certain lack of knowledge about their reference groups. However, this is offset by their territorial proximity to their communities, which enables them to create programming that is tailored to the interests of their audience. However, some broadcasters with more resources commission audience research to get to know their public better.

Relationship between digitalization and pluralism

There is an incredulous view of digital television among regional and local broadcasters. Respondents say that viewers do not know how to access digital terrestrial television (DTT) and are not aware of its possibilities.

In turn, they claim that this lack of knowledge is due to the state's lack of commitment to strengthen the education policy on digital switchover among citizens, as well as the delay of national broadcasters in giving up their analog signals. The delay in analog switch-off (supposedly until 2024) is also seen as a factor that has hindered viewers' transition to DTT, as are the unfulfilled promises:

> The cable operators in the region should have included us in their network according to the law [...] In the case of us, who are the only operators in the area, this should have happened almost automatically. Must-carry is not a reality (woman 1, local channel, Araucanía).

Among local broadcasters, there are some who see digital television as an opportunity to expand their reach and thus have a positive impact on pluralism. Others, however, emphasize that the technological change was an experiment with no meaning for the business and that it is the small broadcasters who are innovating.

On the other hand, there is a lack of knowledge among community broadcaster respondents about the requirements and costs of accessing the concessions that allow broadcasting on open digital television and, at the same time, about the use of the concessions granted. Opinions remain on the theoretical benefits of digitization,

the slow progress of digital migration, the high costs associated with acquiring this technology and the lack of knowledge among viewers:

> I don't know how much money is needed [...] Well, we reached, for example, that we had to have a certain amount, eight million and something, to be viable (man 1, community channel, Araucanía).

In all typologies, however, the use of digital platforms and social networks as support for the distribution, transmission and audience measurement of their content is viewed positively.

> Even more than digital television, I think we have focused on how we can mix our content or also insert it into social networks, because we know that today everyone has Facebook, Twitter, Instagram (man 1, local channel, Coquimbo).

Relationship between social sustainability and pluralism

There is a general complacency with regard to the knowledge of the reference groups and the appreciation of their television projects. Respondents limit themselves to describing their audiences by socio-economic group, age and gender without addressing community characteristics. The local and regional broadcasters consistently claim that they are close to their audience because of historical contact in their respective areas. They claim to know their audience through social networks and word of mouth, telephone and personal contact with the community. Commnity media, on the other hand, tend to take a community empowerment perspective and support coverage of territorial events:

> We want people to build the channel, with technical support, editorial support, content producers or professionals working in the channel (man 1, community channel, O'Higgins).

The community broadcasters interviewed state that they have a high level of knowledge about their audience, as there is still a joint work between the reference groups and those responsible for the television project. Although the degree of rapprochement varies, it remains an ideal that communities should be increasingly strengthened through the medium. When asked about the aspects that could be improved as a community broadcaster, it was stated that new target groups and topics should be sought beyond the respective territory, but which are linked to the interests of the reference groups. In this regard, one of the broadcasters has chosen to engage with cultural or social actors that promote the diversity of their audience.

They target groups over the age of 35 (in some projects mainly older people and women) in a segment of the middle and lower socio-economic middle class. For community channels, children and senior citizens are the main target groups:

> Always to the children, to the youth, to the grandparents who can't afford
> cable TV (woman 1, community channel, Metropolitan).

Relationship between institutionalism and pluralism

Although the formal obligations that broadcasters must fulfill before the National Television Council (protection of children, protected programming, monthly reports on cultural programming, etc.) and the press law are well known, there is no precise knowledge of the legal obligations related to pluralism.

There is confusion about the legal framework that regulates pluralism in Chile, and broadcasters' understanding of their legal obligations focuses on the right of reply, inclusive language, sign language, protection of the identity of minors, copyright, cultural programming quotas, programming restrictions in electoral periods and equal spaces between political sources.

On this point, responsibility is also assigned to the regulatory authority: There is no positive or negative incentive to comply with obligations related to pluralism. The responses suggest that the regulator takes up the concept in a careless and irrelevant way and that a more active role in promoting and informing broadcasters would be positive:

> Yes, we know them, but I believe that there is no incentive for us to adhere
> to them, no incentive of gross control or even a positive incentive. I believe
> that today it is a question of the conviction of each individual editor (woman
> 1, local channel, Araucanía).

> (...) I would like the National Television Council to be an institution that also
> educates, that it is an authority in which we can strengthen ourselves as
> media. There is no such conversation, it is very sporadic (man 1, local chan-
> nel, Los Lagos).

As far as public funding is concerned, regional and local broadcasters are divided into two groups. On the one hand, those that have already received funding, have experience and are successful in their applications. On the other hand, those broadcasters who have not received funding, who do not know the formulas or strategies to be successful, or who do not meet the application requirements:

> Just when I was doing the project, I checked to see if there was an opportu-
> nity to apply to others and sometimes we didn't meet certain requirements.
> The other time, I don't remember the name of a fund, they required a certain
> number of hours of programming and in-house productions, but we didn't
> meet them (woman 1, local channel, Antofagasta).

The latter group accuses politicians of arbitrariness in the distribution and allocation of funds. The Media Fund of the General Secretariat of the Government is most frequently applied for by broadcasters and most of them have already received it at least once. Some even regard it as a fixed annual income and others criticize its low amount (around US$ 3,300):

> We applied to the Media Fund, which finances regional content.

> Every year we win one (woman 1, local channel, Ñuble).

Industrial Development Corporation (Corfo, by its Spanish acronym) funds appear to be a recurring option among local broadcasters. The lack of success of these broadcasters in applying for CNTV funds and the lack of awareness of funds from the Ministry of Culture, Arts and Heritage is also striking. This suggests that the ability to access public funds depends on the staff available to prepare the applications. This is a constant problem with the three types of broadcasters included in this research, as they have few staff and generally only the minimum required to run a television signal. Other interviewees also point to political influences as a factor affecting the ability to win a bid.

Finally, all three types of broadcaster state that they have not been reported to the National Television Council for breaches of pluralism.

Discussion and conclusions

We have established that financial autonomy is a prerequisite for broadcasters to be able to develop over time. Economic conditions are perceived as an important factor that makes it more difficult to generate better news content, as this means, among other things, hiring more professionals and having more time to work in the field. We therefore recommend thinking about a system with multiple funding sources that ensures economic independence in the face of pressure. Heavy reliance on a single sponsor makes broadcasters vulnerable if they have to report something negative against them. Diversity of advertising is a worthwhile endeavor for freedom of content. Although this tension applies to all broadcasters, the greater proximity in the regional-local area increases the possibilities of a dependency-pressure relationship. Most respondents call for the existence of a ratings measurement system to contribute to the economic and social sustainability of the sector. This is related to the theoretical debate, because in order to realize pluralism, regulatory obligations and economic conditions that promote transparency and free competition in the markets are needed to develop and dynamize the television industry. However, all these improvements in internal and external pluralism require more public funding or public-private partnerships to move forward. This problem becomes even more urgent in the new national

context, where the debate on a new constitution calls for greater administrative and economic decentralization of the country. In this scenario, regional, local and community communication can have an important place, and their sustainability and financial autonomy should play a role in the debate on public policies. Data on gender and leadership is another point to consider with regard to public policy and opens the possibility for new studies that analyze the problem in more depth.

Since it is difficult to determine audience ratings with standardized instruments, the broadcasters studied often use social networks. At this point, it is important not to replace linear television data with social network metrics and to be able to rely on both in order not to obtain a distorted picture of reception. In this sense, we have observed a certain fear among some broadcasters of the results that a people meter of the sector could provide, as it could show negative figures for these channels. On this point, they could have their own system adapted to their reality, without giving up the idea of having a common tool and claiming institutional support, as this is essential for their economic sustainability.

Finally, a more forceful attitude is needed from the regulatory institutions with regard to pluralism as a legal mandate. This means that it is above the editorial line and that it is not a question of timing the existence of something and its opposite, but rather of increasing the diversity of genres and formats, of topics, of sources, of political parties. In this sense, it seems important to problematize pluralism within the broadcasters and not to take it for granted, but to give meaning to the concept when designing content.

Local, regional and community broadcasters have an advantage that national broadcasters do not have: a greater proximity to their target audience, their problems and desires, as they work in smaller geographical areas. This advantage can be used to focus television projects more explicitly on the proximity of content. In some interviews, a certain fetishization of audiovisual technical means can be observed in order to have better cameras, equipment or lighting. For this type of broadcaster in particular, the focus should not be on the technical aspects, but on promoting creativity and making different productions without imitating national productions: The audience is different, so are the technical resources and the size of the equipment.

References

Artero, J. P. (2020). Competencia, pluralismo y diversidad: integración en un modelo de pluralidad mediática (Competition, pluralism, and diversity: Integration into media plurality model). In Proceedings of the Communication and diversity. Selection of papers from the VII International Congress of the International Congress of the Spanish Association of Communication Research (AE-IC) (pp. 73-115). https://doi.org/10.3145/AE-IC-epi.2020.e06

Barranquero, A. & Candón-Mena, J. (2021). La sostenibilidad del Tercer Sector de la Comunicación en España. Diseño y aplicación de un modelo de análisis al estudio de caso de El Salto y OMC Radio (The sustainability of the Spanish Third Sector of Communication. Design and application of an analytic model to the case study of El Salto and OMC Radio). REVESCO. Revista de Estudios Cooperativos, (137), 1-20. https://doi.org/10.5209/reve.71863

Cerbino, M. & Belotti, F. (2016). Medios comunitarios como ejercicio de ciudadanía comunicativa: Experiencias desde Argentina y Ecuador (Community media as exercise of communicative citizenship: Experiences from Argentina and Ecuador). Comunicar, 47, 49-56. https://doi.org/10.3916/C47-2016-05

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2013a). Pluralismo en la sociedad y televisión. Un estudio exploratorio (Pluralism in society and television. An exploratory study). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Estudios. https://www.cntv.cl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/pluralismo_en_televisio__n_un_estudio_exploratorio_2013.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2013b). El Pluralismo en la televisión, la evaluación de los televidentes (Pluralism on television. Audiencie evaluation). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Estudios. https://www.cntv.cl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/resen__a_13_evaluacio__n_del_pluralismo_en_la_tv_abierta_plantilla_2013.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2014). Pluralismo y televisión: una percepción desde las audiencias (Pluralism and television: a perception from the audiences). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Estudios. https://www.cntv.cl/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/pluralismo_y_televisio__n_una_percepcio__n_desde_las_audiencias__copia.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2015a). Pluralismo, libertad de expresión y televisión (Pluralism, freedom of expression and television). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Estudios.

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2015b). Pluralismo en televisión: la mirada de informantes clave (Pluralism on television: the view of key informants). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Estudios. https://www.cntv.cl/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/pluralismo_en_televisio__n___la_mirada_de_informantes_clave.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2017). IX Encuesta Nacional de Televisión (IX National Television Survey). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Estudios. https://www.cntv.cl/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/ix_entv_final.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2020). Bases de llamado concurso público para el otorgamiento de concesión de radiodifusión televisiva digital de libre recepción para concesionarios de carácter local comunitario (Bases of call for public tender for the granting of digital television broadcasting frequencies of free reception for local community concessionaires). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Concesiones. https://tvdigital.cntv.cl/formularios/465_BASES_LLAMADO_A_CONCURSO_LOCALES_COMUNITARIOS_2020.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2021). X Encuesta Nacional de Televisión. Foco en Regiones (10th National Television Survey. Local Focus). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Estudios. https://www.cntv.cl/wp-content/uploads/2021/12/X-Encuesta-Nacional-de-TV-Foco-Regional.pdf

Consejo Nacional de Televisión. (2022). Concesiones de TV Digital (Digital TV Grants). Consejo Nacional de Televisión: Departamento de Concesiones. https://www.cntv.cl/concesiones-de-tv-digital/

CS (2017). Caso Corporación Municipal Desarrollo Social de Iquique / CNTV, Rol nº 97.695-2016. Sentencia de la Corte Suprema de 20 de marzo de 2017 (Iquique Council Social Development Corporation/ CNTV, Case No. 97.695-2016. Supreme Court sentence of March 20, 2017).

Fuente-Alba, F. (2013). La TV local ante el abismo de la TDT (Local TV before the abyss of DTT). RIL Editores.

Fuente, F. & Cariola, A. (2013). La importancia de la televisión local en el desarrollo de la identidad (The importance of local television in the development of identity). Revista Investigación y Desarrollo, 6(1), 9-17. https://docplayer.es/214266708-Revista-cientifica-investigacion-y-desarrollo-la-importancia-de-la-television-local-en-la-defensa-de-la-identidad-fernando-fuente-alba-cariola.html

Galindo, C. U. (2014). Genealogía de la concentración económica de los medios de comunicación en Chile: un análisis desde la historia social y la comunicación (Genealogy of the Economic Concentration of Mass Media System in Chile: An Analysis from the Perspective of Social History and the Communication). Perspectivas de la Comunicación, 7(2), 96-106. http://146.83.204.140/index.php/perspectivas/article/view/363

Gubern, R. (1985). Megacomunicación versus mesocomunicación (Megacommunication versus mesocommunication). Telos, 3, 6-7.

Guimerá, J. A. & Alborch, F. (2011). La crisis de la TDT local pública en España: el caso de Cataluña (The Crisis of Public Local Digital Terrestrial Television in Spain: The case of Catalonia). Revista Latina de Comunicación Social, 66, 292-312. https://doi.org/10.4185/RLCS-66-2011-934-292-313

Guimerà, J. A. (2013). Políticas de comunicación, pluralismo y televisión sin afán de lucro: el caso de Argentina (Communication policies, pluralism and non-profit television: the case of Argentina). Ámbitos, 23, 1-7. https://revistascientificas.us.es/index.php/Ambitos/article/view/9973

Karppinen, K. (2010). Rethinking Media Pluralism: A Critique of Theories and Policy Discourses (Doctoral Dissertation, University of Helsinki).

Ley 18.838 del 29 de septiembre de 1989, Crea el Consejo Nacional de Televisión (Nation Council Television Act) Law 18,838 (1989, 1992), of September 29, Creates the National Television Council. (1989, September 30). Retrieved from https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=30214

Ley 20.750 del 29 de mayo de 2014, Permite la introducción de la Televisión Digital Terrestre (Digital Terrestrial Television Act, of May 29, 2014) (2014, May 29). Retrieved https://www.bcn.cl/leychile/navegar?idNorma=1060307

Megatime. (2020). Inversión publicitaria en Televisión Abierta 2019, Chile (Advertising investment in Broadcast Television 2019, Chile). http://www.megatime.cl/2020/02/inversion-publicitaria-television-abierta-2019/

Moragas, M., Garitaonandia, C., & López, B. (Eds.) (1999). Televisión de proximidad en Europa. Experiencias de descentralización en la era digital (Proximity television in Europe. Decentralization experiences in the digital age). Universidad Autónoma de Barcelona.

Murciano, M. (1992). Estructura y dinámica de la comunicación Internacional (Structure and dynamics of international communication). Bosch Editores.

Parcu, P. (2020). New digital threats to media pluralism in the information age. Competition and Regulation in Network Industries, 21(2), 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1177/1783591719886101

Rodríguez, E. & Rosique, G. (2022). Privatización, servicio público y digitalización. El caso de 7 TV (Privatization, public service and digitization. The case of 7 TV). Revista de Comunicación, 21(1), 91-109. https://doi.org/10.26441/rc21.1-2022-a17

Sáez, C., Avilés, J., Riffo, F., García, J., Jiménez, J., & Breull, L. (2022). Medición del pluralismo informativo en la TV chilena: propuesta y resultados de aplicación de un instrumento multidimensional de análisis (Measurement of informative pluralism in Chilean TV: proposal and results of application of a multidimensional analysis instrument). Estudios sobre el Mensaje Periodístico, 28(2), 391-404. https://doi.org/10.5209/esmp.76616

Sierra Bravo, R. (2005). Técnicas de Investigación Social (Social Research Techniques). Paraninfo.

Toro, J., Mullo, A., & Hinojosa, M. (2019). La televisión comunitaria en la región central de Ecuador, TV MICC y PURUWA TV (Community television in the central region of Ecuador, TV MICC and PURUWA TV). Chasqui, (140), 215-230. https://doi.org/10.16921/chasqui.v0i140.3929

Villarrubia, A., Aguaded, I., & Delgado, A. (2019). Implementación de la Televisión digital en Chile: ¿una oportunidad real para la TV Comunitaria? (Implementation of digital television in Chile: a real opportunity for Community TV?) Chasqui, (140), 279 -296. https://doi.org/10.16921/chasqui.v0i140.3878

About the authors

CHIARA SÁEZ BAEZA, Sociologist. Ph.D. in Communication. Post-doctorate in Public Policy. Associate Professor at the Faculty of Communication and Image of the University of Chile. Author of *TV Digital, políticas públicas y democracia* (Digital TV, public policy and democracy) (Universitaria 2014), Apuntes para una Historia de la Comunicación Alternativa en Chile (Notes for a History of Alternative Communication in Chile) (RIL, 2018) and Medición y análisis del pluralismo mediático. Análisis de la TV chilena (Measurement and analysis of media pluralism. Analysis of Chilean TV) (Social Ediciones, 2022). Expert in television, alternative communication and communication policies. Responsible for the pluralismotv.org research program.

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5922-2949

FERNANDO FUENTE-ALBA CARIOLA, Journalist. Master in Audiovisual Industry, Markets and Technologies and Ph.D. in Audiovisual Communication and Advertising. Academic at the Universidad Católica de la Santísima Concepción. Producer of television programs, documentaries and researcher in the audiovisual industry, local television, media and identity. Author of La TV local ante el abismo de la TDT (Local TV in the face of the DTT abys) (RIL Editores, 2013).

https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4316-5097

JORGE AVILÉS ROJAS, Journalist and bachelor in Social Communication from the Universidad de Chile. Research associate at pluralismotv.org. Independent researcher.

https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3258-9545