

COMMUNITY TELEVISION IN BRAZIL: HISTORY, AND POPULAR PARTICIPATION IN MANAGEMENT AND PROGRAMMING¹

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Abstract:

Study of the main historical aspects of community television in Brazil and of the process of implementation and management of the first three community channels implemented on cable TV in the country. The study has three main objectives: highlight the pioneer experiences and try to comprehend their specificities as pioneers in community TV in Brazil; identify management practices and sustainability strategies adopted; and analyze the programming strategies and the conditions for access by the community to the programming frames. A series of methodological procedures is used, including bibliographical and documental research, as well as semi-structured interviews. Theoretical concepts on the different levels of participation in communication compose the theoretical reference board. As a conclusion, we find that by being used by civil organizations without financial purposes, the community channels represent an evolution in the public occupation of television technology and development of systems of collective management. The strategies for sharing the space in the programming are several, but they all have in common the preoccupation of supporting freedom of speech, democracy and pluralism.

Introduction

This paper presents a summary of the results of the research named “Community TV in Brazil”, carried out between 1999 and 2001, which had as central object the investigation of the forms of social participation in the community channels on cable TV.

The objectives are: to make a brief overview of the historical path of community TV in Brazil, highlighting its different types; to understand the management system and the supporting elements adopted by each of these pioneer community channels of cable TV in Brazil: *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre*, *TV Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro*, and *Canal Comunitário de São Paulo*; and finally, to analyze the programming strategies of the channels mentioned, specially regarding the participation of civil organizations in the programming frame.

There is, in Brazil, a variety of interests in the structuring of community television. Those may be educational-cultural, organizational-communal, commercial (source of local advertisement), or protest against the systems of management and control of the media. In this perspective, the existence of community TV of different configurations, and even the development of those constituted in the format of

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community channels as one of the basic channels of free use on cable television system were raised.

This research was carried out based on bibliographical and documental studies, analysis of audiovisual material produced by the “Street” TV teams and semi-structured interviews. The interviews were conducted personally with the coordinators of the channels studied during the month of June 2001. Only one of the interviews, the one with the coordinator of the channel from Rio de Janeiro, was done over e-mail.

Theoretically, the research is guided by the concepts of participation which allow capturing the insertion of people in the means of community communication, taking into account the possible levels of involvement² (see PERUZZO, 2004), which, in short, are: participation in the messages (most elementary level of participation, in which the person is interviewed, requests songs etc); participation in the production of messages, material and programs (consists on the development and edition of the content to be transmitted); participation in planning (involvement of the people in the establishment of the policies of the means, the development of the formatting plans of means of communication and programs, development of the objectives and principles of management etc); participation in management (participation in the process of management and control of a mean of communication).

In short, “the participation of the people may materialize only in his/her role as listeners, readers or spectators, taking part in the processes of production, planning and management of communication. The highest levels structure the insertion of criteria of representativity and co-responsibility, once it is an exercise of power and democratic (or shared) structure”(PERUZZO, 2004a:59).

1. Origins of community TV in Brazil³

Community TV in Brazil starts out in the format of a alternative TV, also called “Street” TV, characterized by the production of educational-cultural videos, which are shown in closed circuit or in public squares, and destined to collective reception. The first experiences occurred in the 1980s, in the context of battles for re-democratization of Brazil.

It is a kind of mobile TV, or, more specifically, mobile video. With a videocassette, a large screen (or TV monitor), sound amplifier and microphone on a vehicle (truck or WW Kombi), video productions are shown in public squares or to social entities. The exhibition is itinerant. This means that for a certain program, a few previously chosen locations are visited for exhibition and debates about the audio-visual programs.

The production and exhibition processes have educational purposes. These are generally experiences lead by NGOs (non-governmental organizations), Churches, Universities and Unions. However, in most of them, the participation of the people in the several steps of the audio-visual development process is viable. In the other cases the team, after studying the topics demanded by the local population, records (audio + images) debates or testimonials for later exhibition. There is also a practice of opening

² Based on the levels indicated by Merino Utreras (1988), which systemizes the principles of participation in communication approved at the meeting on self-management, carried out in Belgrado 1977, and in the CIESPAL/UNESCO conference in 1978: participation in production, planning and management levels.

³ Partially extracted from the article “Management of community channels in Brazil”(PERUZZO, 2001).

the debate after the exhibition of a program (or showing it afterwards), so that the people talk about what they saw. This technique is called “Open Camera”.

Several successful experiences of Street TV have been taking place in the last three decades. Among them are: TV Viva (Recife-Olinda), TV Mocaranga (Santarém-PA), TV Liceu (Salvador-BA), TV dos Trabalhadores (São Bernardo do Campo-SP), TV Maxambomba (Rio de Janeiro-RJ), TV Tagarela (Rio de Janeiro-RJ), TV Mangue (Recife-PE), TV Memória Popular (Natal-RN), TV Mandacaru (Teresina-PI), and TV Pinel (Rio de Janeiro-RJ)⁴.

The collection of these experiences of Street TV, through popular participation in the process of audiovisual production, intends to de-mystify television, discuss subjects of public interest related to the local groups, and motivate the involvement of the people in the democratization of the means of mass communication through the public appropriation of the information technologies.

However, there are also other modalities of community TV, such as the ones in the UHF (ultra high frequency) systems. They are “repeaters, not simultaneous” educational television⁵. They work at a local level, transmitting part of the programming of an Educational Television through an agreement⁶. They are known as Community TV, but are in reality local educational TV. This is a system that grants permission of use (not concession), and is under the control of the Secretaria Nacional de Comunicações (National Office of Communications), which allows 15% of the programming to be produced locally. In this space are introduced programs, generally called “community programs” and cultural local support⁷. They are channels preferentially destined to the County, University and Foundations.

Another type of community TV known in Brazil is the low potency, transmitted in open television, i.e. in VHF (very high frequency)⁸. These are televised transmissions of approximately 150 watts, directed to specific communities. These are not regulated by law, being, therefore, clandestine transmissions. They air occasionally, also because of the risks due to its illegal status. The first “pirate” televised transmission in VHS was the one of *TV Cubo* on September 27, 1986, at 18:45, on channel 3, in the area of Butantã, south zone of the city of São Paulo, with a transmitter of one watt of potency which covered only a radius of 1,5 km²⁹.

Other experiences of VHS transmissions also occurred in Rio de Janeiro, such as *TV Lama*, in Baixada Fluminense; *TV Vento Levou* (1998), with transmitted to Gavea, Leblon, Ipanema, and Copacabana; *TV Canaibal* (1990); and *TV 3Antena* (1990) (Amaral, 1995).

⁴ For details and more information on some of these experiences, see Círcia M. K. Peruzzo, *TV comunitária no Brasil: aspectos históricos*. (Community TV in Brazil: historical aspects) (2000), Irene c. Gurgel do Amaral, *A Movimentação dos Sem Tela* (The movements of the screenless) (1995), and Cassia Chaffin, *O Circo-Eletrônico – TV de rua* (The electronic circus - Street TV) (1995).

⁵ See this subject in greater depth in (PERUZZO, 2000).

⁶ Each Brazilian State has a educational television channel, located in the capitals, owned by the State Government. The educational channels which have obtained larger significance at a national level are *TV Cultura de São Paulo* and *TV Educativa do Rio de Janeiro*.

⁷ See BOTÃO & Zaccaria, 1996).

⁸ Same of open TV, such as TV Globo, TV Record, SBT etc.

⁹ See (SERVA, 1986, p.27).

These were experiences which have worked in a not very structured way and have been taken to cable by enthusiasts of communication through electronic means and means of democratization of the media. They didn't have a regular schedule of transmission as a way to mislead, or to create difficulties to the governmental inspection offices trying to find them. In spite of the risks demanded by illegal transmissions, these experiences dared to criticize the TV system practiced in the Country, showing possibilities of its social use.

There have also been a transmission experience through the open TV system, having as its main objective the democratization of techniques for production and transmission of sounds and images to social groups, which took place during the training lab in community communication, within the CODAL Project – Comunicação para o Desenvolvimento da América Latina (Communication for the development of Latin America), though ABVP – Associação Brasileira de Vídeo Popular (Brazilian Association of Social Video) in partnership with *TV Sala de Espera*. The experience happened in Belo Horizonte, capital of the State of Minas Gerais, from May 26 to June 4, 1995¹⁰. A series of programs for the local population was elaborated and transmitted through channel 8, in VHF.

These experiments have as objective to exercise freedom of speech and to question the system in Brazil for channel concession, as well as its programming, characterized essentially by marketing interests. In specific cases, such as the CODAL Project, the goal is to make the production techniques and channels of televised transmission democratic to social groups.

In Brazil, it was only in the 1990s that community TV per se emerged, that is, as one with regular transmission and participative in the national televised spectrum, in the form of community channel, on cable TV. Cable TV is one of the systems called TV by subscription, or paid TV. It consists of transmission of signals through a physical mean: the cable¹¹.

The community channels became viable through the Law 8.977 of January 6, 1995, regulated by the designation 2.206 of April 14, 1997, which institutes the obligation of the operators¹² of cable TV, beneficiaries of channel concession, to, have in their area of the service sector, six basic channels available for free use¹³, such as the channels for open public access (as known in other countries). At the moment, there are seven channels with free access, and from May 2002, the Justice System will also have the right to a channel, the TV Justiça, coordinated by the Supreme (Federal) Court.

The free channels have institutionalized from the negotiations between several influential groups that control the means of mass communication in Brazil (Government

¹⁰ See PERUZZO (2000), and WAINER (1995).

¹¹ Other systems of transmission of TV by subscription are: MMDS – Multi-channel Multipoint Distribution System, through microwave antenna (by air and land); DBS – Direct Broadcasting Satellite, by satellite, requiring a parabolic for reception; STV – Subscription Television, by satellite; DTH – Direct To Home, the satellite (digital) used by Sky and Direct TV. See Duarte, 1996.

¹² Registered companies which act through concession, using its own equipment and facilities to receive, process and generate programs and signals.

¹³ The Article 23 states that three should be legislator channels (destined for Federal Senate, Deputy and Legislation Assembly/ Deputy Chambers); one *university channel* (for shared used by universities located in the area of service); and one community channel (opened to free use by non-governmental / non-profitable groups). In 2003 *TV Justiça* (Supreme Court) was included.

and communication companies), politicians, and social groups, being amongst them the National Forum for the Democratization of Communication.

The first community channel installed was the one of Porto Alegre-RS, which made its first transmission on August 15, 1996 through channel 14 of NET SUL (Group Globo). On October 30, 1996 the *TV Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro* was launched, initially called *TV Carioca*, transmitting through channel 41 of NET/Cabo Rio. *The Canal Comunitário de São Paulo* is among the ones that started airing with the third batch¹⁴ and made its first transmission on November 1, 1997¹⁵. It transmits through channels 14 of NET¹⁶. The present study was developed base on the investigation of these three channels, which we will analyze.

2. Collective Management ¹⁷

The community channels on Cable TV thrive not only as a new way of making television, and community television, but also in communication management. They are formally structured as organizations of collective ownership and management, via non-profitable associations or management boards legally registered and instituted.

The three experiences of community channels in Brazil analyzed in this paper are very different among themselves. Nonetheless, they share common aspects, from their history¹⁸, up to the management and programming systems, as will be observed during the present study.

The community channels on cable TV have been created as a result of processes of social mobilization, more specifically of non-governmental non-profitable organizations, mainly those connected to the democratization of the community and social movement groups, as well as sectors of Churches, unions and non-profitable groups.

The process, since its origin, involves the participation of the people, from individual citizens to their representations through civil organizations. What changes is the intensity and amplitude, in other words, the quality of this participation from one experience to another. This means that while in some experiences there is a large participation in management, in others it is almost inexistent. That is, there are cases in which few people who are (or say they are) representatives, conduct the implementation and management process of community channels in an isolated and authoritarian way, with very low participation of local community organizations. Being for the lack of involvement and interest from the people or these organizations, for the lack of opportunity of active participation or for political/operational disagreements, the fact is that communal community channels¹⁹ don't really exist, in the sense that there is a lack of a shared action process, although they may be working in favor of the "community".

¹⁴ The *Canal Comunitário de Belo Horizonte* was launched in the beginning of 1997. The *Canal Comunitário de Brasília* started operating in July, 1997.

¹⁵ The channel of São Paulo was chosen for this study because of the option of working with a channel in a large city, apart from being one of the first to be installed in the Country.

¹⁶ Since January, 2004, it has used channel 9 by imposition from the operator.

¹⁷ Partially extracted from the article "Gestão dos canais comunitários no Brasil (Management of community channels in Brazil)"(PERUZZO, 2001).

¹⁸ About the history of channels see PERUZZO (2001).

¹⁹ See, for example, the cases of Brasília and of Belo Horizonte.

In the three experiences under consideration, the main aspects indicative of social participation in management are:

Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre (Porto Alegre’s Community Channel)

The Porto Alegre’s Community Channel is under the direction of one association called “Associação de Entidades Usuárias do Canal Comunitário em Porto Alegre” (Association of user organizations of the community channel in Porto Alegre). Any non-governmental or non-profitable organization may be part of the association. To participate, a group contributes with a fee varying accordingly to its payment ability. Only groups are allowed to participate in the association, therefore excluding the participation of isolated individuals, according to the statute.

The user’s association is structured by: a General Assembly, a Deliberative Council, an Executive Coordination, and a Fiscal Council. The General Assembly is the highest deliberative body.

The actual management of the channel is done by a Deliberative Council and an Executive Board, composed of 15 (fifteen) and 7(seven) members, respectively. The Executive Board is responsible for the administration of the association according to the rules established in the Statute and Internal Regime. The term is of two years, with no financial gratification for the work.

TV Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro (Rio de Janeiro’s Community TV)

Rio de Janeiro’s Community TV is under the management of the “Associação de Entidades Canal Comunitário de TV’s por Assinatura do Rio de Janeiro”(Association of organizations of Rio de Janeiro’s Community TV Channel by subscription). Only registered organizations may join in, as it happens in Porto Alegre’s Channel.

The association of Rio de Janeiro’s community TV is also composed of non-governmental and non-profitable organizations. It is managed by the following: General Assembly – the highest deliberative body, Executive Council, Fiscal Council and Ethics Council.

The Executive Council is composed of 15 members, with one-year terms (reelection permitted). The Executive Council is responsible for taking care of the running of the community TV in all its managerial and operational aspects.

In sum, all councils are elected by the General Assembly, with the representatives indicated by the members. The positions are also performed without financial earning.

Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo (City of São Paulo’s Community Channel)

The Community Channel of the City of São Paulo is under the direction of the “Conselho Gestor do Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo”(Management Council of the city of São Paulo’s Community Channel), instituted by an institutional provisory agreement of grounds of implementation of the *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo*²⁰, signed on August 4, 1999, legally registered.

²⁰ Presented as Statute, is the most comprehensive document about the internal structure of the Council.

Three organizations sign the Agreement and de Addition term: *TV Interação* (TV Interection), Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil – Seção São Paulo (Organization of Lawyers of Brazil – São Paulo’s chapter), and Associação Vida e Trabalho (Association Life and Work)²¹, which are the only represented and constituents of the Managerial Council of the city of São Paulo’s Community Channel²². However, it is important to highlight that one of these organizations, *TV Interação*, represents a group of other associations. It was set up during the time of discussion for the construction of a community channel in São Paulo.

The management of *Canal Comunitário de São Paulo* is responsibility of the Managerial Council, an Executive Board, a Fiscal Council, an Ethics Commission, and a Programming Commission.

The Managerial Council is the highest deliberative body. It is composed of one representative from each of the three organizations that sign the Institutional Agreement, i.e. 3 (three) members.

The Executive Board is composed of 12 (twelve) members, and as previously mentioned, there is also the Fiscal Council, the Ethics Commission and the Programming Commission. In sum, the Managerial Council is structured by formal nomination from the three organizations that sign the agreement, and within those three officers the chair-person is chosen, for one-year terms (re-election allowed). The Managerial Council is responsible for indicating the members of the Executive Board, the Fiscal Council, the Ethics Commission, and the Programming Commission, also for one-year terms (renewable only once).

Looking at the channels as a whole, we can say that the decisions are made in general assemblies and in councils and boards meetings, being the members elected by the General Assembly or the Deliberative Council, according to hierarchy, as it is in the channels of Porto Alegre and Rio de Janeiro. In the *Canal Comunitário de São Paulo* the decisions are made in plenary assembly of the Managerial Council and in board and councils meetings. The last two are designated by the Managerial Council.

The community channels have been developing a type of self-management, with peculiar characteristics, once the organizations with participate are not representative of all non-governmental and non-profitable organizations in their Counties, but only in those with spontaneously decided to become involved in the process of implementation of the channels. The more democratic the decision making is, respecting the decision hierarchy, as well as the election of members, the closer to self-management the channel is.

In the experiences analyzed, located in three important capitals of the Country, we can see the existence of common general assumptions. However, there are variation in the models and management.

In terms of assumptions common to the three channels, we can point out the sense of public interest as the main drive; non-profitable objectives; collective ownership (not individual); basis of support in social and non-profitable organizations, among others.

²¹ Associated with the Federação dos Empregados do Comércio (Federation of Employees of Commerce).

²² At the time of the development of this research, there was a request by another organization to compose the Managerial Council: the Associação dos Amigos do Canal Comunitário de São Paulo (the association of the friends of the community channel of São Paulo). Some groups that participate in the association uphold programs in the channel, such as the Public Ministry.

The most significant variations are in the models of management and strategies of use of programming frame adopted. However, the biggest difference verified between the *Canal Comunitário de São Paulo* in relation to the ones of Rio de Janeiro and Porto Alegre, is in terms of creation, management and use of the programming frame.

3. Supporting Strategies²³

The community channels come about in an autonomous manner and are obligated to find its own alternatives for financial feasibility. This is added to the aggravator instituted by law, which, in the same models of the communication vehicles of public ownership, such as the Radio and Educational TV, prohibits sell space for commercial advertisement, the main source of income of the private channels. Only cultural support is allowed (mention of sponsorship of shows), which has been proven insufficient, at least the way it has been applied so far.

The Law of Cable TV hasn't established other mechanisms of contribution that could help making the channels viable either, such as the establishment of a fund for a destined percentage from the Cable TV operators (on the collection from subscribers). After all, they end up using a channel with autonomous programming, no costs or other tax duties. Another gap in the law is not obligating the operators to give technical support to the production and edition of sounds and images – even if very limited – to promote the production of programs by the community channels themselves and their associated organizations which don't have the conditions to hold their own studios.

The community channels in Brazil are left to their own luck, however, it is from them that most is expected and asked of in terms of educational and cultural programming. The access to TV channels is granted to society, which is a great step forward, but the forms of support that make viable and competent are not guaranteed. Making TV requires specialized knowledge, the costs of production are high, not forgetting the high cost of equipment necessary to set up studios.

The *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre* is maintained by contributions made by the members, fee which varies from 10 to 200 reais per month, according to the possibility of each organization; sponsorships (cultural support) to shows; volunteer work, donations, payment of fees for the use of the recording and editing studio (not transmission).

The channel is relatively well settled with its own headquarters, a modest recording studio and a transmission center.

The *TV Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro* survives with the monthly payment of members; donations; volunteer work; collaborations from third-parties, such as the permission of use of a room for its headquarters by the *Movimento Viva Rio*, and of the center of transmission that operates from the studio at the *Universidade Estácio de Sá*.

The channel has been facing many difficulties to advance. There are few resources, situation aggravated because the members don't pay their fees regularly.

The *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo* survives with cultural support; by charging for the use of the space for transmission of programs; donations; and financial support from the organizations that sign the Institutional Agreement.

The channel is well structured with a studio and transmission center, and its own headquarters, with almost two-dozen employees.

²³ Partially extracted from PERUZZO (2001).

4. Social Participation in Programming²⁴

The community television has among its differences one which is fundamental for the understanding of its programming. It is the possibility of being a *producer* channel, or a *provider* channel. The channel is a producer when it itself produces the programs which it transmits. A provider channel, on the other hand, only opens and organizes the space for transmission of programs produced by others, being, in this case, the organizations that share the programming frame. It is a basic decision to be made by the board of a community channel, which will determine the strategy for the use of the frame. It depends on the conception of the community channel idealized by the leading group and by the technical and infrastructure conditions available.

Next, we will present the main aspects of programming, and the forms of social participation developed in each channel.

a) *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre* (Porto Alegre's Community Channel)

The *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre* airs from 1 to 4 hours, 2 hours on average daily, except on Sundays, always after 7pm²⁵. Not accounting for the “Jornal Eletrônico” (electronic news)²⁶, which is continuously on, the rest of the time.

According to the general coordinator of the *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre*, Jorge Vieira²⁷, the objectives of the channel were designed based on extensive discussions among the representatives from over one hundred organizations that participated in the assembly for the creation of channel. Compliant with the parameters of the Cable TV Law, which instituted the community channels, it was decided that the Channel should have as principles the respect to plurality, to democracy and to equality.

As we can perceive from the speech of its coordinator, the *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre* makes efforts on applying these principles by granting participation to all organizations, regardless of their political views or the amount paid for the monthly fee. In his words: the proposition is that there isn't any improper management at the local sponsor (the *Associação das Entidades Usuárias*, the association of user organizations) in the usage of the channel's space. “Its [the association's] objective is to coordinate programming, and to ensure the exercise of each organization's rights [...]. But the community channel doesn't belong to the sponsor. The community channel is public [...]. We have its right of use. We use it and that's all”.

The association of users of Porto Alegre's channel has today 187 registered organizations and other 70 members²⁸. It is open to receive new organizations that wish to become members, as long as they fit into the parameters of the law and of the statutes.

²⁴ Partially extracted from the article “As estratégias de programação dos canais comunitários no Brasil” (the strategies of programming of the community channels in Brazil) (PERUZZO, 2004b, unpublished).

²⁵ The amount of hours varies depending on the programming frame, which reflects the member associations' scheduling interests.

²⁶ Consists on rotating inscriptions with public service information.

²⁷ During interview granted to the author on July 9, 2001. The citations that follow by Jorge Vieira were also obtained during this interview.

²⁸ According to the statute, one organization is still considered a member up to six months without paying the monthly fee.

The participation of member associations in the life of the channel has always been characterized as a strategic preoccupation of the *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre*, from the creation process, to planning, management, and in programming.

In regards to access to programming, based on the statute and practice, all member associations – and only these, which by law should be non-governmental and non-profitable, have the right to air their programs without paying. The use of the frame is set on equal distribution of space, independently from the amount of the monthly fee paid for the membership. The organizations may also participate in programs produced by the channel itself.

At the moment, there are 11 (eleven) organizations transmitting their programs²⁹ through the channel. All together, there are 13 programs being played, two of which, “Telenotícias Comunitárias”(community TV news),and “Livre Expressão” (free expression), are produced by the channel itself. Furthermore, “Jornal Eletrônico” (electronic news), which is also produced by the channel, is 20 minutes long, updated daily, and structured by editorials that cover information such as: holidays and commemorative dates, cultural events, guide of opportunities (courses, jobs, internships), headline news from neighborhood papers and organizations etc.

“Telenotícias Comunitárias”(community TV news) is a journalistic program, 15 minutes long, aired twice a week. It consists on one block for news and one other for interviews, with the space open to the participation of the members for announcements of their activities and achievements. It was launched on January 11, 1999. The program broadcasts information sent by the members, interviews, glints of events and of other activities produced by them.

“Livre Expressão” (free expression) is a program conducted with the participation of the organizations that send one representative to talk about relevant issues. Only the members can participate in the program, which is set as a open tribune. It is used by the organizations with can’t produced their own shows, and by paying R\$ 25,00 per week³⁰ they may announce their events, invite for assemblies etc. (RODRIGUES, 2000:97).

The programs shown by the channel at the moment, and its respective organizations, are the following: “Programa da CEPA” – Comunidade Evangélica de Porto Alegre; “Portal Cósmico” – Templo do Espírito Universal³¹; “Atividades SIMERS”- Sindicato dos Médicos do Rio Grande do Sul; “Programa Paiva Netto”- Legião da Boa Vontade; “Programa da ADHONEP” – Associação Evangélica Cristo é a Resposta; “Mama África”- Fundação Segnhor; “Mensagens do EVRED”- Associação Evangélica do Reino de Deus; “Mensagem de Fé” – Associação Serviço Cristão; “O Sol Nasce para Todos”- Igreja Evangélica Nova Jerusalém; “Fora de Foco” – Associação dos Acionistas Minoritários das Empresas Estatais; “Norte em Ação”- Associação Zona Norte.

Each organization is responsible for its programs and by the contents broadcasted in them. They should commit to respect the regulations, the code of ethics and the principles established by the Association.

²⁹ The programs by the organizations are 30 minutes long, and shown once a week, with reruns.

³⁰ The fee is to cover expenses for recording and editing. The other channels are not charged a fee. The condition of participation is to be a member of the channel, paying a monthly fee.

³¹ The first two programs of this list have been operating in the channel since the beginning. They have never been absent and rarely repeat the shows.

The programs *Livre Expressão* and *Telenotícias* are produced by the channel itself, aiming to allow the participation of the organizations that don't have the condition to produce their own shows, as a way to promote democracy to the access to the frame, and to broaden the diffusion of contents of communal character.

Still discussing the matter "who" can participate in the programming frame, the *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre* allows the participation of member organizations only. That is, persons, individually, do not have space in the community channel, except for volunteer work³².

Given that it can infer the precedent information, the *Canal Comunitário de Porto Alegre* decided on being a producer and provider channel. This format was chosen, according to Jorge Vieira, after intense negotiation between the two associated parts.

b) *Televisão Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro* (Rio de Janeiro's Community TV)

The *Televisão Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro* airs from Monday do Friday, 12:30 PM to 22:30 PM (10 hours), and on Saturdays and Sundays, from 5:30 PM to 22:30 PM (5 hours), with a total of 60 hours per week.

According to its general coordinator, Alberto López Mejía³³, there are basically two goals in the *Televisão Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro*: "one is in compliance to democracy and the exercise of citizenship, to the democratization of means of communication, to open public access, and to the permanent quest to overpass one contradiction expressed in the law: the open access in a TV channel by subscription³⁴. The other goal is to become a center of televised experimentation, a critic reading of the means, valuing the diversity in cultural production without being subordinated to the forces of the market".

López Mejía says that the channel values especially the "experiences of local Community TV done in the "favelas" areas of Rio de Janeiro since the mid-1980s, the "Street" TVs, hoping, this way, to overcome the contradiction between the principle of open access and the limitation of this access on TV by subscription", which excludes the social sectors.

As part of the associative board of the *Canal Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro*, there are 166 (one hundred and sixty six) organizations, being 68 (sixty eight) of them active participants.

As its documents show, the Rio de Janeiro's Community TV developed as main preoccupation the communicational democracy. It intends to be a center to attract and diffuse audiovisual production directed to the construction of citizenship, which can't find space for diffusion in conventional media. Therefore, the initial strategy, which characterized the channel's programming, was to serve as a type of arena to diffuse audiovisual production of educational-communal character.

³² Volunteer work is allowed – just to collaborate in activities - , but this hasn't been working out because "only unemployed people show up", and the channel's staff don't feel right about using a labor force that is in reality expecting to be hired – which wouldn't happen -, in addition to having to provide at least transportation and food.

³³ This and the following citations were obtained from an interview granted to the author on July 18, 2001.

³⁴ In reference to the discrimination to access as a result of the prices charged from the subscriptions, which makes it prohibitive for the poorer.

The access to the programming frame is granted to all associated organizations, which have the same rights to show their audiovisual production, independently from the financial contributions as members. That is, the organizations have access to the programming frame to transmit their own programs or other productions (video, for example), that together compose the channel's regular programming. However, also being part of the programming is the exhibition of videos of independent producers, in a specific space of the programming frame called "Livre Expressão (free expression)".

To get a fixed schedule to show a program, it is mandatory for the organization to be non-governmental and non-profitable, with headquarters in Rio de Janeiro and associated to the *Associação de Entidades Canal Comunitário de TVs por Assinaturas do Rio de Janeiro* (association of organizations Community Channel of TVs by subscription of Rio de Janeiro).

According to the information given by the channel's general coordinator during the interview previously mentioned, at the time of the research's development.

Approximately 12 (twelve) organizations occupied regular spaces in the programming frame transmitting their own shows. 30 (thirty) occupied it sporadically.

Some of the programs transmitted regularly and their respective organizations are: "Debate Brasil"³⁵ (weekly interviewing program, with duration of 60 minutes, and with the debate content being the model of Brazilian development) – AEPET – Associação dos Engenheiros da Petrobrás; "Espaço Comunitário (produced by students of communication of the College *Faculdades Integradas Hélio Alonso*, independent producers or Community TVs located in hills or favelas_ - FACHA (Faculdades Integradas Hélio Alonso); "Agenda Nacional" (show of debates about the Brazilian reality from a perspective of a NGO of support of social movements in several regions of the Country) – FASE (Federação de Órgãos para Assistência Social e Educacional); "A Cidadania está no Ar" (program of interviews and debates about the social participation in cities' management) – Rio Cidadão (Movimento de Participação Cidadã); "Estácio de Sá no Ar" – (daily TV news of 15 minutes, produced by the students of Communication of Estácio de Sá, broadcasting the main facts and the city's cultural agenda) – USESA (Universidade Estácio de Sá). Most of the programs above have a weekly transmission³⁶.

The programming frame of the *Canal do Rio de Janeiro* is formatted in four segments: regular programming (members' programs); interprograms (vignette and other messages produced by the channel itself); interchange (productions by other community channels); and programming of open public access (messages of any non-member organization, non-profitable, based in Rio de Janeiro, and videos sent and/or produced by individuals, non-profitable, based in or out of Rio de Janeiro).

Besides participating in broadcasting their own programs, the members have more space in the programming, the space of interprograms.

According to Alberto López Mejía, in the programming of open public access the "access is completely open: it is not necessary to pay or to be a member. The only request is to present the tape 72 hours in advance, so that it can be monitored and included in the week's programming schedule. The prior monitoring has two objectives: a) registration of the tape in the TVCRJ archive; b) check the material based on the limitations of the

³⁵ Shown in 22 community TVs at a national level.

³⁶ Information given by Alberto López Mejía, by e-mail.

law, regarding constitutional principles (no racist, pornographic or profit-oriented content)”.

From our point of view, the space of “open public access”, such as the one instituted by *Televisão Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro*, is one important innovation because it means an opening in the programming for freedom of speech also to non-member organizations, independent producers and citizens not linked to an institution, but who have the technical qualification and interests in contributing for the development of citizenship³⁷.

This strategy and other mechanisms of participation developed by the *Televisão Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro* demonstrate its choices, historically favorable, to the principles of democracy and of pluralism as foundations for its organizational and communicational practice.

The prevailing tendency of the *Televisão Comunitária do Rio de Janeiro* has been being a channel provider of public access to programming and non-producer of contents. Lately this positioning is being re-evaluated, given that there are already propositions of production of programs by the channel itself. It is becoming a channel at the same time provider of access and producer of contents, transforming its initially designed posture.

Although it still doesn't have its regular program, the channel has been producing contents for the interprograms (vignette, clip etc). It has also produced special programs, such as the one for the inauguration of the channel. There is also a proposition of producing a TV News program.

c) Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo (City of São Paulo's Community Channel)

The *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo* remains on air for 20 hours daily. During 4 hours per day, at dawn (from 1 to 5 AM or from 2 to 6 AM), a rotating lettering with public service information (telephone numbers for specialized hospitals, night shifts etc).

The *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo*, within the parameters of the cable TV law, “has educational purpose, it belongs to the society”, says its director, Carlos Meceni³⁸. He adds: “the objective is for society to have space, to have its turn. [...] So that the society, organized in associations, may use the community channel to transmit their origin actions”.

Differently from the other channels studied in this paper, the *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo* is open to the participation, in its programming frame, to any non-governmental, non-profitable organization, not only to the members. Actually, there isn't even a system of “member organizations”, also because an association of users has never been created.

³⁷ Enough already: the Union excludes the non-unionized, the Association excludes the non-member... It doesn't make much sense for a Community TV to exclude the citizen and the social movement that are not members yet. There is a need for the creation of one Association of the Channel's Users, so it can be operated, but the law is not too rigid to the point of preventing access to the non-member to the programming.

³⁸ All quotations by Carlos Meceni, cited in this study, were obtained during interview granted to the author on July 20, 2001.

The organizations are invited to register requesting space to show their own programs in the channel through an editorial published in the *Diário Oficial do Estado de São Paulo* (official agenda of the State of São Paulo), twice a year, in January and in July. The proposals are analyzed by a jury, which evaluates the project and the pilot program. The contract for broadcasting is for 6 (six) months, renewable.

The pre-requisites to air the programs are: to be a class association, philanthropic, cultural etc; to have 2 (two) years minimum of proven practice; to have all the documentation regularized; to present a project and a pilot show suitable to the channel's aims (Carlos Meceni).

At the moment, 125 (one hundred and twenty five) organizations occupy the programming frame transmitting their own programs, according to the Executive Director. The programs may be 15, 30 or 60 minutes long. Besides the 125 programs of organizations, there are two more produced by the channel: *Em Cartaz* (Featuring) and *Comentando a Notícia* (Commenting the News).

Among the institutions that run the programs in the *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo*, are: Ministério Público (Public Ministry)³⁹; APAE⁴⁰ – Associação de Pais e Amigos dos Excepcionais (Association of parents and friends of the exceptional); UBE – União Brasileira dos Escritores (Brazilian organization of writers); AACD – Associação de Assistência à Criança Defeituosa (Association of assistance to the children with deficiency); APETESP – Associação dos Produtores Teatrais de São Paulo (Association of theatrical producers of São Paulo); OAB-SP – Ordem dos Advogados do Brasil – Seção São Paulo (Organization of Brazilian lawyers – São Paulo's chapter); Sindicato dos Jornalistas (Journalist's Union); Sindicato dos Advogados (Lawyer's Union).

The programs *Em Cartaz* (Featuring) and *Comentando a Notícia* (Commenting the News), of direct responsibility of the channel, may be considered of open access to the public. The two shows are produced live in the channel's studio, and are considered a success. With these programs, the *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo* aims to offer spaces for direct participation in programming to citizens and organizations that don't have the possibilities to produce their own shows.

Carlos Meceni clarifies that any citizen – even if not a part of any association – who wants to use the channel live to give his/her message, may do so through the two spaces mentioned. To Meceni, the show *Em Cartaz* (Featuring), which is on from 1 to 2 PM, “covers the cultural manifestations that are happening in a specific neighborhood, in the east zone for example, that no other TV channel screens. The citizen “gets here and broadcasts the quermesse (typical popular party in June), the local singer, the theater group etc. [...]. That (information) doesn't fit the open network (which operates at national level). It is like a focused TV [...] in the city of São Paulo [...] (Which) ends up being a great service of broadcasting the production in the city of São Paulo. By the end of the afternoon, from 6 to 7 PM, there is a journalistic program, *Comentando a Notícia* (Commenting the News). The person who wants to make a complaint about health, safety etc, may do so [...], he calls and comes in”.

Let's return to the matter of programs of organizations with regular spaces. As it has been said previously, the programs are produced by the organizations themselves, and are

³⁹ Program: “Trocando Idéias”(exchanging ideas)

⁴⁰ A member of TV Interação.

their entire responsibility. The direction doesn't interfere with the content, according to the director. Sometimes it just helps with imaging to assure a quality standard.

The access to the frame to air programs implies the payment of a broadcasting fee of R\$ 2,00 (two reais) per minute. The fee is the same for everyone. This way, for one weekly show of 15 minutes, the user organization will pay R\$ 30,00 (thirty reais or ten dollars)⁴¹.

According to Carlos Meceni, director of the channel, the value should not be considered a "sale of space", because it is as if it was a condominium with one expense which is divided among the users. The cost calculation for the channel sum up to around R\$ 50,000.00 (fifty thousand reais) per month, amount that would cover operational expenses, including staff – and around R\$ 5,000.00 (five thousand reais) would remain for the purchase of equipment and reserve fund⁴².

The charging of the broadcasting fee has been very criticized by the leaderships in the universe of community TV. It is perceived as "sale of space", which would reproduce the practices of commercial TV. However, the perspective given by Carlos Meceni for such fee deserves to be analyzed. After all, the charging of the fee besides being able to be perceived by another angle – as cost sharing, has demonstrated that it is a way to make viable the operation (improvements in quality of sound and image, production of programs, acquisition of equipment, payment of labor etc), and the growth of the channel.

The comments, for example, that "free" broadcasting doesn't exist and that organizations associated to a channel's user association, when paying their monthly fees, are also indirectly paying to use the channel.

Despite the validity of the argument, the sense of sharing and of equality explicit in the proposal of free use of the programming frame by the members should not be undermined, given that they all pay, and whoever wants to use the space may do so, and all of them have the right to air shows, regardless if the organization paid R\$ 10,00 or R\$ 100,00 for the monthly fee⁴³.

Given the conceptions previously discussed, we can see that the *Canal Comunitário da Cidade de São Paulo* is at the same time a provider and a producer, but with a stronger tendency of being a channel provider of space for transmission of programs by a large number and variety of organizations. In Carlos Meceni's management, the interest of the channel as a "citizen channel" is reinforced. "It is the society talking to the society", he says.

Conclusions

Normally, a lot of criticism is made regarding the fact that community TV belongs to a cable television system, which is elitist. This is not unreal, but the creation of the community channels on cable TV also represents a step towards democratization of

⁴¹ As far as TV goes and in comparison to the values charged by commercial channels, this fee is insignificant.

⁴² According to Meceni the board of director renders account to the users monthly.

⁴³ On the other hand, it is important to clarify that the adoption of mechanisms for charging, such as of São Paulo's Channel, presumes the existence of expressed policies and forms of control which assure the application of the resources with public purposes, that is, only for operation, maintenance, and investments in the channel itself.

access by non-profitable civil organizations to the means of communication as protagonists of messages and programs, as well as managers of television channels. It also facilitates citizen's access to a type of media as emitter.

This is a process which encourages social organization, experiments a form of collective management of the means of communication and allows a form of shared use of the televised programming frame.

The experiences studied characterize differences in conception and in strategies. However, they have similarities as far as purposes regarding contents, and collective and shared use of televised space by non-profitable organizations go. Together, the channels bound themselves towards airing a programming frame of social interests aiming to contribute to broaden citizenship.

Taking as basis the concepts of social participation in communication, we can observe that in the community television channels studied, very high levels of participation in the programming of these means of communication are being developed.

It is not an eventual participation, a participation controlled by the direction teams, as it happens in most part of the large media. On the contrary, the organizations obtain – under conditions legitimately defined by each community channel – spaces for transmission of programs of their own authorship, which are produced according to the line of action and political-ideological perspective of each organization.

There is participation in planning, production, transmission and reception of the contents that are aired. The process reveals that the practice in programming of the community channels happens at a high level, and the decision power on content, language, program format is in the group, the organization, and not in the technical team or the channel's administration.

The management of the three community channels has a collective character. However, the degree of social representation and the democratic practices regarding the election of board members, and the decision making process vary.

The channels present some common aspects, but have, in reality, their own specificities, making each one unique. A particularity of each channel is built upon its history, the action policies defined by the groups that compose it, the democratic experience and perspective of its leaders, the context in which it is introduced⁴⁴, the degree of interest for the public use of the means of communication, the level of consciousness and organization of social movements of the region, the type of co-relation of forces put together at the time of creation and during management of the channel, the infrastructure conditions available, the type of management and the strategy for funding, among other factors.

Finally, we must be aware that community TV in Brazil is in process of construction. There isn't one single model, nor a model which is better than one other. Having the principles guaranteed, plus the goals and the practices to assure the democratic access to management and programming, in addition to the development of contents related to the interests of development of citizenship and collective control of management, all the experiences are valid and tend to be perfected gradually.

We must also mention that the channels are being organized in several Brazilian cities and becoming nationally articulated, as the creation of ABCCom – Associação Brasileira de Canais Comunitários (Brazilian association of community channels) confirms.

⁴⁴ Whether the city is large or small, whether there are strong, mobilized social organizations etc...

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