



SPECIAL REPORT

The use of the Radio and Public Television by Governments

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1. NATIONAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK: A COMMUNICATION TOOL OR PROPAGANDA?

2. CASES OF INTEREST

3. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

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“The relationship between Latin American presidents and the media is in the spotlight. The change in their relationship affects the way they “do” politics and the way citizens see their governors and institutions. The public scene is increasingly becoming the media scene”

1. NATIONAL COMMUNICATION NETWORK: A COMMUNICATION TOOL OR PROPAGANDA?

A national communication network is understood as the joint transmission of several radio and television stations of a country, **aiming to reach the highest number of citizens** of the State.

Each country’s Law sets the features of its national communication network. They generally offer speeches by the President or some Ministers concerning several interesting issues for citizens and its **transmission is compulsory**, so private stations need to join the public transmission.

Over the past years, Latin American **governments have made extensive use of public communication** networks and that has led to a change on the paradigm of political strategies when it comes to communication. The concept of “**lectern politics**” is understood as the direct communication between the President and citizens, and it is present in most of the continent’s countries regardless ideologies and doctrines. Both, the recently deceased president of Venezuela Hugo Chávez and his Colombian colleague, Juan Manuel Santos, have intensified their use of this public tool to send messages **without intermediaries**. That means they have skipped the middle step, which is the traditional means of communication.

By using the national communication network, the government aims to reach **citizens one by one** so they feel a direct communication with the president. The speech’s transmission on the radio or the television enables closer contact with citizens and boosts the message’s coverage to thousands of households.

The relationship between Latin American presidents and the media is in the spotlight. **The change in their relationship affects the way they “do” politics and the way citizens see their governors and institutions.** The public scene is increasingly becoming the media scene.

This document focuses on the debate about the **real role of this communication tool**. Does it improve the freedom of information in a country since it shows transparency regarding the government’s management? Or, is it just part of a propaganda strategy which sends partisan messages using public resources?

“When Cristina Fernández de Kirchner became President, a historic debate started in the media regarding the use of the national communication network. Is the use of this tool authoritarian considering it sends a unidirectional message which does not offer a constant exchange with the media? Or, in the other hand, is it a mechanism used by some journalists and the political opposition to delegitimize the national government?”

On the other hand, **what is the role of social networks in the new paradigm of presidential communication?** And the role of the traditional media?

We will present several cases concerning the use of the national communication network in some of the countries where our company is present.

2. CASES OF INTEREST

Argentina

In the Republic of Argentina, the national communication network is understood as the joint and compulsory broadcast of all the stations that are part of the National Radio and Television Broadcasting Services and the RAE (Argentinian Radio Broadcasting to the Outside), aiming to send a certain message, or government’s message to the widest possible audience.

Argentinian presidents have made different use of the national communication network throughout history.

Between 1976 and 1982, this tool was used intensively. For example, military men use it to communicate constitutional presidents’ overthrows, economic measures and policies that affected all citizens and to give information about the Malvinas war.

Once democracy was restored, the government of Alfonsín, he continued to use it. The most remembered cases were his speeches regarding financial issues and the announcement of

the bills of Due Obedience Law and the Full Stop Law.

However, this tradition stopped during the government of Carlos Menem who used this tool on just some occasions. His political communication strategy was based on daily contact with journalists and press conferences every two weeks.

The former president, Néstor Kirchner, only used the national communication network for special cases. He only used it twice and one of them was soon after he took office (June 4, 2003) and he asked the Nation’s Congress to remove the most questioned members of the country’s Supreme Court of Justice.

However, **when Cristina Fernández de Kirchner became President, a historic debate started in the media regarding the use of the national communication network. Is the use of this tool authoritarian considering it sends a unidirectional message which does not offer a constant exchange with the media? Or, in the other hand, is it a mechanism used by some journalists and the political opposition to delegitimize the national government?**

In May 25, 2008, President Fernández de Kirchner used, for the first time, the national communication network in Salta. From that day, **the number of broadcasts has not stopped growing. Over the last three years of her government there have been 41 national broadcasts. She has set, in a way, a new style for Argentinian communication policies.**

“Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has supported, several times, the intensive use of the national communication network. She states that if it was not used, nobody would know what is going on. She believes the government needs to tell people what the media hides”

One of her last appearances was in the Salón de los Patriotas Latinoamericanos (the Latin American Patriots Hall) of the Casa Rosada (The Government’s House). She is usually filmed from the front and side before the lectern. The images change from the President to the Audience, which is always full of national and regional authorities, trade union representatives, leaders of human rights movements and young parties’ supporters who are part of a militant group called La Cámpora.

Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has supported, several times, the intensive use of the national communication network. She states that if it was not used, nobody would know what is going on. She believes the government needs to tell people what the media hides. Once she even said that its use is not illegal since she does not use it to talk about herself.

From the Government’s point of view, this tool enables the President to directly communicate with citizens without third parties such as institutions or, even worse, **private companies of mass communication which the President calls “the fear and discouragement media”**.

As an example, on March 1, 2013, President Cristina Fernández offered her longest appearance on public stations of her last two terms: her speech lasted **3 hours, 37 minutes and 20 seconds**. She was talking to legislators on the occasion of the inauguration of the 131° period of Ordinary

Sessions of the National Congress. In contrast, her speech during the inauguration of the second period of Tecnópolis, the Technological Park, only lasted 14 minutes and 43 seconds.

On average, the President’s speeches on the national media usually last between 35 minutes and 1 hour and they have between 4 and 7 thousand words.

The basis for the use of the national communication network can be found on the 75° Article of the new Law N° 26.522 on Audiovisual Communication Media. “The Executive Power can use the public communication network for critical and exceptional situations and those of institutional interest”. With this statement comes one of the first controversies. **The law can be interpreted in many different ways**, and for example, what the government considers information of institutional relevance might not be considered the same by the opposition.

The Argentinian opposition has sent to the National Congress several projects against the use of the national communication network. **Some of them express their concerns regarding the abusive use of this tool and others propose rules to limit its use or even forbid it**. The biggest criticism by the opposition is that the national communication network has become the stronghold of the government’s communication strategy since the “official means” do not

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reach the audience as they would like it and those media more in accordance with the government do not achieve the expected adhesions.

Another controversial issue is the use of the national tool and the presidential image. Several consulting firms on public opinion say the intensive use of this communication tool can have negative consequences regarding the image of the President.

When the president did not use this communication tool between December 9, 2012 and January 10, 2013, her image evaluation stopped its drop and established between 35 and 38 positive points.

Regardless if the use of this communication tool is correct or not or if its extensive use can damage the president’s relationship with society, we can say the President has set a new paradigm regarding political communication.

It seems that, over the past months, Cristina Fernández de Kirchner has noticed that the use of social networks could have more benefits than appearing on television or radio. According to the research of the consultancy firm Digital Daya, the Argentinian President is one of the most active presidents on Twitter. As for the world ranking on presidents using Twitter, she holds the seventh position. This tool offers direct contact with her citizens since all the messages can reach the global audience. The president’s account is @CFKArgentina and has

almost 1,600,000 followers while her Facebook’s account has around 600,000 “Like”.

Both accounts offer institutional, political and personal messages. One of the posts with a higher media reaction was the **letter President Fernández wrote to Ricardo Darín**, one of the most famous actors of the country. He had asked for an explanation regarding the growth of the Kirchner’s family wealth. According to “The Real Time”, a monitoring firm of online trends, during the first three days the letter was shared 2,808 times, had 7,146 “Likes” and more than 1,800 comments. It had a total of 45,500 responses and was daily mentioned an average of 15,166 times during three days (which, according to this consultancy firm, is a very high number of mentions which can only be compared to big events”).

Argentina will hold elections in 2013. It is just a matter of time to see if this communication tool will be used to make the country’s management more transparent or if, on the contrary, and as the opposition says, they will be used to do politics with the State’s resources.

Colombia

According to the article “The Media Activism of Latin America’s Leftist Governments: Does Ideology Matter?” by political expert, Philip Kitzberger, Colombia is one of the country’s that gives greater importance to its national communication network.

“The national communication broadcaster is used to offer the latest news regarding the fight against the terrorist group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia)”

Former President Álvaro Uribe set, and Juan Manuel Santos continued, a clearly active and personal style of political communication.

The Article 32 of the Law 182 (1995) says “in order to communicate with the population, the President of the nation can use the television services at any time with no limitation”. It also establishes that “with the President’s permission, the Vice-President, Ministers and other civil servants will be allowed to use the communication tool”. The same applies for the National Congress, the Judicial branch and the controlling institutions according to the regulations of the CNTV (National Commission for Television).

The Article also establishes that whenever the Senate or the House of Representatives considers a debate on the Plenary or on any of its commissions, has public interest, they will be allowed to ask INRAVISIÓN (Radio and Television National Institute) to transmit it through the public stations once the Plenary accepts the proposal.

The Article suffered some changes in December 8, 2001, by the Constitutional Court. The limitation of the use of the national broadcaster by the President was removed, since the Court accepted that the use of this tool by the President is personal and concerns urgent issues with public interest which are related to the government’s activities.

In 2002, the agreement N°004 that regulates the Access to the Public Interest Broadcaster by all officials and the State’s bodies was signed with the National Television Authority. The beginning of the agreement states that “all public and private television channels might be previously informed by the National Commission of television and should all broadcast simultaneously the president’s speech, subject to the established sanctions”.

Through resolution 533 and as a complement to the agreement, in 2003 they also determined that “as for the programming of the Institutional Channel, broadcasts of presidential speeches and the National Congress sessions, according to what the Law establishes, will be priority issues”.

According to the newsletter of the Department of Political Science of the Universidad de los Andes in Colombia, **the president carries out a political strategy looking for direct contact with his followers** without institutional intermediaries.

In general, the national communication broadcaster is used to offer the latest news regarding the fight against the terrorist group FARC (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia). **It is also common to broadcast live dialogues with members of the Army leading this fight as well as testimonies of people who were kidnapped (amongst others).** The most

important transmission of 2012 was when President Santos announced the beginning of a new peace process with the FARC.

This tool is also used to inform on other issues such as public security, new legislation, urgent issues of general interest and changes to the State's entities.

Its use is not currently a public debate. We can affirm that it has become a "habit" for both, citizens and the media to join the broadcast.

Peru

Although there is a Law for Radio and Television (Law N° 28278) that regulates the use of national media, **there is not any specification regarding the use of the national communication network.**

The use of this communication tool varies. It is generally used for the nation's celebrations or the so called "Message to the Nation" of the President.

The government has agreed with the media regarding the broadcasting of the national celebrations. The different media do not join a pre-established station since they get divided into the different places where the celebrations are being held and they control their own broadcast. Each event is planned by the coordinators of the Protocol of the Ministry of Defense and/or the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the private media directors or producers. In general, each media is responsible for the

broadcast format. They normally invite special guests related to the topic to talk about the event.

However, as for the President's speeches or interviews, they are broadcasted by the national channel which is responsible for the contents' production. Private media play a passive role since they only join the broadcast.

The traditional format used for important announcements is the "Message to the Nation". It usually lasts between 10 and 30 minutes. The most famous message for Peruvians was, probably, the one offered by the Minister for Economy of the first government of Alan García announcing some measures to face the economic crisis. As for other presidents like Valentín Paniagua, Alejandro Toledo, García (second term) and Ollanta Humala, they would only use this public tool for situations with serious institutional implications or national emergencies.

The style of the "Message to the Nation" was modified under Humala's government. The president evaluated his first 100 days as President. Four journalists with renowned experience representing the most important media of the country (Canal 2, Canal 4, Canal 5 y Canal 9), were called to interview the President in his office. During one hour, the journalists were allowed to ask the questions previously agreed with the Peruvian Press Secretariat. This report was broadcasted by the national channel

“En Perú, la utilización de esta herramienta comunicacional es variada. Generalmente se emplean para cubrir las Fiestas Patrias o emitir los denominados mensajes a la Nación del presidente”

and had a huge impact on public opinion.

There is currently no public debate regarding the use of the official media for these purposes. The debate is focused on scheduled programming, the sign and the implementation of a Directory of the State's Media.

Ecuador

The only law regulating the use of the national communication network in Ecuador is the Law of 1975 on Radio and Television broadcasting passed in April of that year by the dictatorial government of Guillermo Rodríguez Lara.

The 5° section of this law forces all media to broadcast the President's messages as well as the messages from other members of his Office. Information announcements and emergency messages from the Government and its members, the National Security Council, province Governors, Majors in military areas and Health authorities also have to be broadcasted by all channels.

There is currently a draft bill for a Communication Law which makes some specifications on this issue on its Article 78 saying that “audiovisual media are forced to provide for free the following information social services for the general interest”:

- Broadcast (nationally or locally) all the messages of national interest whenever the nation's president or the

president of the national Assembly consider it necessary.

Other members of the government are allowed to use it for 5 minutes every week (non-cumulative). These broadcasts are used exclusively to inform about issues regarding their competence when it is necessary and in the public interest (...).

- When there is a situation of a state of exception (as established in the Constitution), they have to broadcast (nationally or locally) the messages of the State's President or the appointed authorities.

Although the current government proposed this draft bill, we must highlight, **it has not been discussed in the National Assembly for the last three years due to the insufficient number of votes to pass it or revoke it.**

Regarding the frequency of the broadcasts, since the beginning of the government of Rafael Correa, **there has been an average of two broadcasts per week. That means 104 in one year.** Since Mr. Correa became president, there have been more than 1,025 official transmissions (not taking into account his weekly program on Saturdays). These presidential transmissions are during the news' prime times, at night or in the morning.

Moreover, the National Assembly broadcasts every 15 days, which

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means 26 times per year. Other members of the government such as the Electoral and Judicial Minister or the Minister of Transparency and Social Control, use this tool an average of 15 times per year.

What is more, every Saturday the President chairs the “Enlaces Ciudadanos” for three hours. In this program, he offers a weekly political analysis. Although private media is not obliged to join the broadcast, there are around 100 radio stations and television (not taking into account the state’s media), that voluntarily broadcast the analysis. The objective is to spread messages as well as the government’s management in a direct way without third parties (private media). Together with this team, Mr. Correa visits different cities and small towns (some of them have never been visited before by a member of the government) and meets local authorities and social groups. According to the CIESPAL (Center of Advanced Studies in Communication for Latin America) President Correa has great communication skills since, in these meetings, he uses common terminology such as “pelucones”, “partidocracia” and “prensa corrupta” (Spanish slang). Thanks to this strategy, the society (what the president calls “los mandantes”) feels the government thinks about them; which is usually translated into votes.

During an interview in Madrid, Mr. Correa said that **the weight of the votes for the Latin-American governments is way more important than the media**

opinion, whom he accused of acting according to commercial interests. It obviously caused immediate reactions and the Inter American Press Association said that in Ecuador the government has a hostile attitude towards the media.

As for the format of the national media, when it comes to the Government broadcasts they are usually reports. They offer data to contrast the information provided by the opposition or the media (which is also considered an adversary). The broadcasts of other branches of the State’s power are usually speeches in which the main authority talks to the Nation.

In general, the transmissions last between three and five minutes. However, every 10th of August the President offers an annual evaluation of this activities and it is broadcasted by the national channel for three or four hours.

Regarding the context, the government uses this tool to offer a report on its activities to the Nation. However, the opposition says that lately, the government is using this more frequently to answer those sectors that are critical of the government’s management. For example, the target of one of the last transmissions was to respond to an opposing legislator who said in a TV program that when Correa visited Loja (a city) he did not have breakfast in the popular market but in a hotel. For this reason, the speech was focused on denying this information by showing pictures of the President having breakfast in such market.

“The Mexican communication system has usually used the president’s voice to set the public agenda. According to the journalist of the newspaper Excelsior, Ivonne Melgar, “in Mexico, political communication is very closed-minded and the presidential style is basically dealing directly with the television and radio stations, with businessmen and those responsible for public relationships of all the media”

These communication strategies have sparked a controversial debate not only in Ecuador but also in other Latin American countries. The majority of Ecuador’s citizens are affected by this strategy since, as they say, the normal scheduled programming has to stop in order to offer a sort of “propaganda” of the government. In general, people think that there is an information overload and it does not make sense using this tool to deny or confirm certain information.

Mexico

In January the 8th of 1960, the Federal Law on Radio and Television was passed and later published on the Official Gazette of January the 19th.

According to the reformed Article 62 of this law, all the national radio stations and televisions are forced to join the broadcast of important information for the State, following the criteria of the Ministry of the Interior.

National broadcasting was used twice 2011; however, in 2012 it was used three times. Both the “New Year’s message of the President” and the “President’s report” were speeches were the President addresses the citizens.

It is worth mentioning that every Sunday, from 10 to 11, there is a program called “La Hora Nacional” (the National hour) which talks about political, social and cultural issues. According to the program’s website, “from the

beginning, the program aimed to reinforce the communication of the federal government with society and boost the national integration through the language, the culture, traditions and cultural expressions. Over the years, this first objective has extended and now covers other areas like the orientation of public services and campaigns of social and cultural interest (among others). The first 30 minutes of the program offer the message of the federal government on national issues. The other 30 minutes are for all the federation’s entities to send their messages and is broadcasted on local channels.

The Mexican communication system has usually used the president’s voice to set the public agenda. According to the journalist of the newspaper Excelsior, Ivonne Melgar, “in Mexico, political communication is very closed-minded and the presidential style is basically dealing directly with the television and radio stations, with businessmen and those responsible for public relationships of all the media”. Moreover, she says that on a daily basis, the only resource of information is the direct contact with the president during public events and, when there are not any important events, there is not any briefing or appointed person to give details.

As for the content, we must highlight that the scheme followed has been lately an emergency scheme. It was widely used during the boom of the influenza pandemic which harshly affected parts of Mexico.

“In Spain there is only one annual event that can be considered similar to a national broadcast since most TV stations stop their scheduled programming to offer it. It is the “King’s Christmas speech”

In 2012, there was great controversy regarding the use of this tool for electoral purposes. The Mexican Federal Electoral Institute (IFE) had to step in to solve the dispute regarding the broadcast of the presidential debate for the elections that year.

On one hand, TV stations, under Article 70 of the Federal Code of Institutions and Electoral Processes (COFIPE) which says that the broadcast of the debate can be joined, for free, by other TV and radio stations, but they refused to do it. They stated that the word “can” implies a free decision of the broadcast companies to join (or not) the transmission.

On the other hand, groups of university students requested on social networks that the debates were broadcasted by the national stations.

The decision supported the negative view of the media. The IFE was against broadcasting the presidential debate saying that the law does not clearly establish as an obligation broadcasting the event. Therefore, it was not possible for the Institute to promote something that did not appear in the law; which dismissed the students’ request.

Spain

In Spain, the Law on audiovisual media is the Law on Audiovisual Communication Services (2010). However, it does **not include any article regarding the compulsory broadcast of national programs.**

Neither the president or the ministers use it for this purpose.

In Spain there is only one annual event that can be considered similar to a national broadcast since most TV stations stop their scheduled programming to offer it. It is the “King’s Christmas speech”.

We must bear in mind that the media stations are completely free to join the broadcast (it is voluntary). For example, the public TV station of the Basque Country broadcasted the king’s speech for the first time in 2009. On the other hand, in 2011 the TV station “Cuatro” decided it would not join the broadcast.

Every year, the “Christmas Message” is broadcasted at 21h on 24 December. It is usually a 15-minute speech where the King addresses all Spaniards and talks about political, economic and social issues always using a conciliatory and nonpartisan tone. The objective of the speech is to look back over the year and talk about the most important issues regarding the following year.

According to the website www.protocoloparatodos.com, there are some non-verbal symbols and attitudes that have been constantly repeated on King’s Juan Carlos speeches since 1975 until 2012.

For example, during the first years, the King always appeared in a familiar environment surrounded by Christmas decorations. However, in 1979, the Spanish flag took the place of the royal family. The strength of the speech and the image

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are exclusively focused on the King. The rest of the family is only represented by pictures and within the content of the speech.

The King always uses classical colors for his suits and combines white and blue shirts.

Another tradition repeated over the years, is the king's position seated on a chair, legs crossed and folded hands. He seats in front of the camera and talks to Spaniards in a direct way inspiring proximity and trust.

An important aspect that has changed over the years is the reading of the message. Sometimes, King Juan Carlos had the written message but did not use it; on other occasions he read it. However, since 1990, the speech became freer and he started to leave aside the papers and use his hands to reinforce the message.

For Spain, 2012 was a year of crisis and it was clearly reflected in the King's speech (which was defined as austere). King Juan Carlos addressed Spaniards from his office, standing in front of his working desk due to the surgery he had undergone. This time, the text was more concise with just 1,089 words (451 less than the previous year) and it was focused on the economic situation, the strength of Spain and the political and social assertion.

Compared to the previous year, in 2012 the audience dropped to 6,921,000 (in 2011 it was 7,165,000). Over the

past 15 years, there has been a considerable drop on the audience. In 1998 there were 8,971,000 viewers and in 2000 9,140,000 (the record audience in this period). In 2012, 25 TV stations broadcasted the speech while in 2011 it was 30.

In order to counteract this decrease, the Royal House had to adapt to new technologies with the objective of approaching Spanish citizens and keeping critics away. Nowadays, Spaniards can watch the institutional activities of the Kings and Princes on YouTube as well as all the Christmas speeches since 1975.

Panama

The Law N° 24 of June 30, 1999 regulates the radio and TV stations' public services.

According to Article 21 of this Law, all public TV and radio services providers are obliged to “broadcast for free and preferably (...) those Government newsletters related to security, national defense, measures to face or solve public disasters and those informing citizens about events that could affect free movement (including natural disasters)”.

The Panamanian Communication Secretary, Luis Camacho, said that the weekly message of President Ricardo Martinelli's would be broadcasted by a national radio or TV station and would be compulsory for all the media.

However, in Panama the official station is not usually used.

Mostly it is used to talk about serious institutional issues or political and social emergencies. It is usually used to broadcast the President's speeches.

In 2011 there was a single national broadcast and in 2012 there were two. President Martinelli used this tool to make some statements regarding the case of corruption and bribes payments he was involved into, and also to order the suspension of the extraordinary sessions of the Congress that were politically dividing the country.

Brazil

In Brazil, the government is allowed to use the public space of national stations whenever it deems appropriate to do so.

Over the past years, it has been used in order to announce some economic measures (regarding the currency and the fight against inflation) or to promote health campaigns (diseases control and vaccine policies).

We must highlight here that politicians (especially those in the opposition) and society are responsible for observing if the government is misusing this communication tool by, for example, using it for electoral purposes (which is forbidden by the Law 12.458/2011 and controlled by the Supreme Electoral Court:

“Informing the population through the radio or television

by the Head of the Executive Power, does not mean it is elections propaganda; especially when there is not any mention of the candidacy, elections or comparisons with the previous government (Election Propaganda, Supreme Electoral Court).

According to a research carried out by the Center for the Implementation of Public Policies, Brazil is one of the few countries of the region where it exists a **specific prohibition of using the national broadcast three months before the elections.**

During her government, Dilma Rouseff has used this tool on just a few occasions, and when she has used it, it has been a speech to address Brazilians directly so they feel she is talking individually to each one of them.

The broadcast's duration varies depending on the importance of the issue, but the average is 20 minutes. It is usually broadcasted during the TV prime time, that means between 20pm and 23 pm, and on the radio between 6am and 10am or between 12 and 16pm.

Whether the national broadcasting is used or not, is not a priority on the public agenda. However, some parties in the opposition have recently expressed their concerns. For example, the Brazilian Social Democracy Party (PSDB) has

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announced that it will require the President’s indictment for having used the state’s infrastructure of resources for political proselytism of his party (PT).

On Independence Day, President Rousseff presented in the national media a program that reduced fees for industry and the population in general. She defined it as “a step forward on the development model”. However, she used that same speech to criticize the privatizations carried out during the government of Henrique Cardoso (1995-2002). The Supreme Electoral Court will be the one judging this specific case.

Moreover, President Rousseff has a weekly program on the radio called “Breakfast with the President” where she talks directly to citizens as her predecessor (Luiz Inacio “Lula” da Silva) used to do. On the first program, she said that she wanted it to be a meeting point for her and Brazilian society. “I love talking on the radio because it allows me to be in the more distant places”.

It is worth mentioning that all that concerns the national broadcast is framed on the Brazilian legislation on communication of 1963. Over the past weeks, it became public, that Dilma’s party (PT) was preparing a document to discuss in the Congress a new framework to regulate social communication.

In the final resolution of the 5th Congress of the Party, it is

highlighted that “all institutional reforms are not completed without a deep democratization on communication. The media convergence requires new measures to open their access, break monopolies and guarantee a real diversity on contents”.

Pursuing more transparency regarding the government’s management, the “blog do Planalto” (<http://blog.planalto.gov.br>) was launched. The blog is used by the President to Talk about her daily activities and inform citizens 24h. This innovation has changed the Brazilian political communication since the media are now following the president’s activities through the blog. That means, “they hunt the news” exclusively produced by the Communication Secretary of the government.

Venezuela

In 2004, and after several reforms, Venezuela passed the Law on Social Responsibility on Radio and Television (RESORTE), which regulates the radio spectrum spaces given to the communication media and its use by the country’s government.

Regarding national broadcasting, the law is complemented with the Telecommunications Organic Law (of 2002) which gives the government control over the transmission of important messages.

The National Assembly reformed in 2010 the Law RESORTE to establish new regulations concerning the internet contents

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and to reinforce the presence and control of the State regarding the telecommunications sector which is now providing a “public service”.

As it has happened in other countries in the region, over the past years there has been a debate regarding the use of official broadcasts by the former president of Venezuela, Hugo Chávez.

According to the political expert Ángel Oropeza, the “**communicational hegemony**” of the government is not an option but an essential obligation and a **key element for the viability of the dominating “chavista model”**.

On the other hand, for Liliana González Urdaneta, “the new legislation on communication in Venezuela opens an interesting opportunity for the citizens to become social controllers instead of the media”. She also says that “the same right to freedom of information the media executives are asking for themselves, has been denied to Venezuelan citizens for many years affected by a system that has allowed the private sector to exercise its hegemony regarding the exploitation of audiovisual media”.

Some journalists and media executives believe that the government authorities have tried to isolate the private media by deterring them from entering in official events, state’s entities and public institutions.

The key point is that the government accuses the private media of having supported the coup against President Chávez as well as sponsoring a general strike led by the opposition in 2002 which aimed to force the president to relinquish.

In 2001, Hugo Chávez said: “The media is the enemy of the revolution”. This statement is essential to understand the relationship between the government and the media.

Chavez used simple, plain and direct language for his speeches. He usually quoted Latin-American heroes such as Bolívar, San Martín, Fidel Castro or Juan Domingo Perón as well as theorists related to the Marxism such as Friedrich Engels, Alan Woods, Georgi Pléjanov and Mahatma Gandhi.

The opposition accused him of presenting himself as a “messianic leader and savior of the Nation, without whom Venezuela would be drifting rudderless”. That is why they do not consider it a coincidence that the main slogan of the Bolivarian revolution is “the people governs with Chávez”.

According to Cecilia Caione, journalist of the newspaper El Nacional, “**there are some press conferences where the private media is not invited**. The questions are ruffled and, coincidence or not, most of the time, the journalists asking the questions belong to the friendly or the official media”.

“In 2001, Hugo Chávez said: “The media is the enemy of the revolution”. This statement is essential to understand the relationship between the government and the media”

“The different governments of the country have always had a classical relationship with the media. However, we must bear in mind that President Sebastián Piñera used a national broadcast to transmit the “event of the century”: the rescue of the thirty-seven miners who had been trapped for 70 days at 700 meters deep”

In Venezuela, the president was the only spokesperson. The program “Aló presidente” was probably the TV program broadcasted by the public media with the highest national and regional influence. Every week, the program had more than 10million viewers. The President usually gave a speech during more than two hours and interacted with the audience. Presidential announcements regarding important decisions were often offered in this space.

The journalist Modesto Guerrero says that the Bolivarian revolution would not have had the same dynamic without the program “Aló Presidente” and it would not have had the same distinctive character. This program established a media reference and It is actually a media itself. The rating obtained by this program has no precedent in Latin America”.

Chávez holds the record of use of the national channels during his government. According to the consultancy firm AGB Nielsen, since Chávez became president in 1999, the Venezuelan scheduled programming has been replaced by national broadcasts more than 1,500 times, which is the equivalent to 1,000 hours of broadcasting.

Chile

Under the dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet as well as with precedent governments, national broadcasts were compulsory in Chile. After the presidential elections of 1989 and the restoration of democracy, it became voluntary that radio and television stations were invited to join official broadcasts.

Carlos Cáceres Contreras, the Ministry of the Interior in that time, conducted the first national broadcast and acknowledged the victory of Patricio Aylwin.

Although national broadcasts are voluntary for the media, during election campaigns things are different: all media outlets are forced to simultaneously broadcast the electoral propaganda of the political parties.

The different governments of the country have always had a classical relationship with the media. However, we must bear in mind that President Sebastián Piñera used a national broadcast to transmit the “event of the century”: the rescue of the thirty-seven miners who had been trapped for 70 days at 700 meters deep.

Country	Legislation	Numbe of national broadcasts	Broadcasts
	Law "RESORTE"	98	Issues the Executive power considers interesting for the nation.
	Law 26,522	22	Depending on the Executive Power although the law establishes its use for severe and exceptional situations or when there is a institutional interest.
	No	5	Economic measures and natural disasters
	Law 182	4	Fighting terrorism
	Law 12,458	3	The implementation of certain economic measures or to promote health campaigns and tragedies.
	Federal Law on Radio and Television	3	Important issues for the Nation according to the judgement of the Government's Secretariat
	No	2	The Nation's message, and national celebrations.
	Law 28,278	1	Corruption cases and sever institutional issues
	No	1	The King's Christmas message
	Supreme Decree N°256-A	No information	Answer to critics to the government, management and activities reports.

3. CONCLUSIONS AND PERSPECTIVES

National broadcasts have become a tool for communication strategies that Latin-American presidents have frequently used over the years.

Several factors have changed the paradigm of traditional political communication. Some of these factors are: the crisis of political parties, the end of the two-party systems in several countries, new political proposals with strong and personal leaderships, changes in regional economies, the transformation of communication by the media into political actors, **the lack of confidence in the democratic institutions and the development of social networks.**

The communication act starts with a sender (usually a public authority) who spreads a message to be received by a receiver (in this case, citizens). There are several intermediaries along the process. These intermediaries have historically been the massive communication media. **Nowadays, its role is being discussed by most mandataries in Latin America, who prefer the direct communication with the voters.**

Based on a survey carried out among presidents and vice-presidents in Latin America by the UN Program for development, the perception of the media is the following:

- **The media represent a counter-power for the Head**

of the States since they tend to influence public opinion.

- **The media express the interests of economic groups.** Therefore, they represent a danger to the governments since they are not under any power.
- **The multimedia are usually responsible for setting the issues in the public agenda;** issues that are usually uncomfortable for the government.

During the XXI century, the communication scheme of the Heads of States has notably changed. Nowadays it is very common that the Press Secretariat of the governments spreads governmental messages which are useful for the presidents (personal blogs, websites, or personal profiles on the social networks). With the new communication paradigm in Latin America, the role of the traditional journalism is limited.

According to the former spokesperson of Evo Morales, Álex Contreras, **“today the idea is to impose the presidential agenda against the agenda of the media.** Most journalists do not need to attend a presidential act since it is being broadcasted by state stations. Their only task is to work on the repercussion of a certain statement”.

Regarding the number of national broadcasts in each country from 2011 until December 2012, it can be noted that Venezuela and

Argentina (respectively) are the countries with a highest use of this communication tool. The only country from which it was impossible to obtain precise data for the period 2011-2012 was Ecuador.

Among Latin American leaders, there are **three common characteristics** regarding their speeches on national broadcasts.

- They all have a **common enemy, usually the media.**
- They all use a **basic and popular language.**
- There is a **direct relationship with citizens, without intermediaries.**

As it can be observed, these **presidents have become the voice of their own governments.** They have become the “content producers”, and prefer talking on a radio or television program

rather than facing a press conference with journalists.

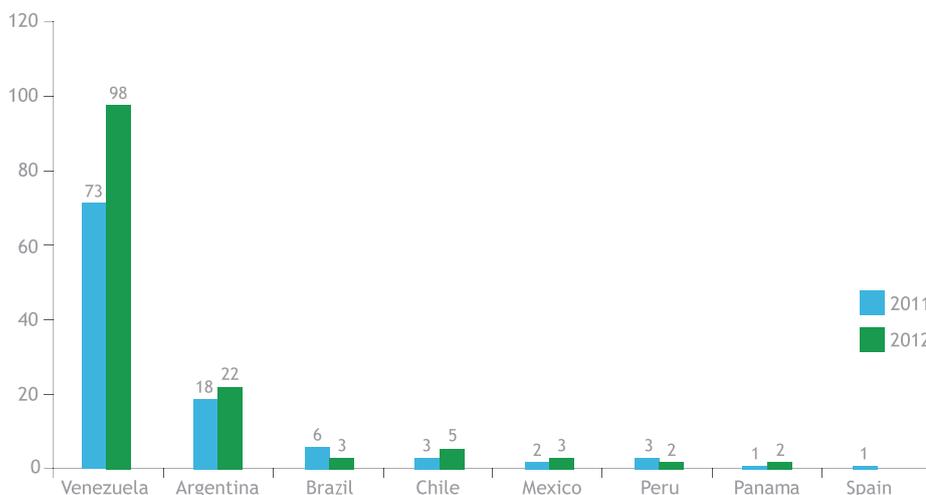
It could be considered reckless to call into question whether a government elected democratically is allowed or not to spread its management through national broadcasts. The Executive power has the right and the obligation to inform the society about its actions and report its management.

It is possible that Latin American leaders have cultural or ideological reasons to use national broadcasts as a direct and effective tool to send a presidential message. **However, they all have a tense relationship with the massive media** and accuse them of representing economic interests and threatening the popular will.

There are advantages and disadvantages regarding these communication strategies. Some of the advantages are that the governments can use this tool to personally offer “their truth”. The surprise element typical of press conferences is, in such way, avoided.

On the other hand, in national broadcasts we can see the presidents actually working. In this way, the leaders create in their minds a strong personalization of the power and they feel directly connected to their voters.

As for the disadvantages, national broadcasts are a unidirectional tool which does not allow counter arguments. Moreover, in most of



them there is not any written message, which can sometimes force leaders to improvise and they are then likely to make mistakes.

Leaders need a justification to use this communication tool. **Critics are usually focused on the “real interest” for its use and on the mixture of government acts with official propaganda.** It is very common to see government events like works’ inaugurations, agreements with other countries, etc. broadcasted as official propaganda during the presidential campaigns as part of the proselyte strategy.

Another controversial issue is the average time presidents use for their transmissions.

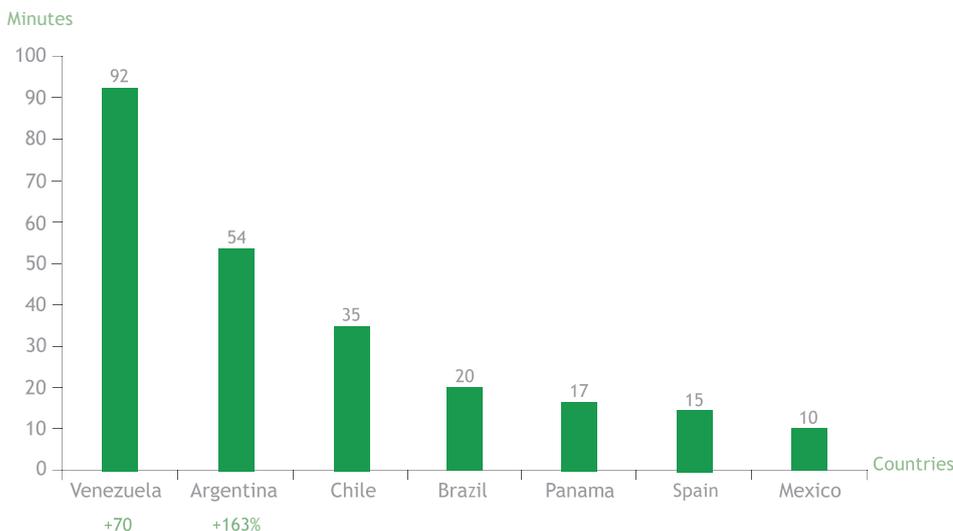
We can observed that in Venezuela and Argentina, broadcasts usually last more than the average. Comparing those countries where the duration is longer, we observe that Venezuela is over Argentina (70%) and Chile (163%).

On the other hand, the Internet has also influenced the communication strategies. Before the internet, leaders depended on publishers to appear in the media. The social networks offer now the opportunity for the leaders to create their own contents and spread them. Via Twitter and Facebook, the authorities talk directly to those involved and not with the media. However, the media has not adopted a passive role. They use those messages and analyze their repercussions.

New technologies offer the leaders not only a tool to communicate with citizens but also an opportunity to spread their messages and their repercussion since thousands of users can share these messages with other users. It is very likely that in the near future, this kind of messages will reach a wider audience than national broadcasts.

There are several possible scenarios:

In case the Law on Audiovisual Communication Services was completely applied in Argentina, the use of national broadcasts could be limited. Article 75 is very clear: the Executive power can use the national tool for severe or exceptional situations as well as for situations of institutional relevance. With time, we will see if it implies any changes on the government’s communication strategy.



As for the rest of the Latin American countries that appear in this document, we do not expect a reduction on the number of transmissions. What is more, it is very likely that they will intensify its use. Like this, the government events will be public for the whole society without any intermediaries.

As for the rest of the world, the tendency is that in the event of an emergency or a disaster, the public authorities ask the media to broadcast these contents. Regarding the frequency of the transmissions there is not any legislation. In the end, each government decides how it wants to communicate.

There is no doubt traditional media will still have a role regarding the government's agenda. Governments still prefer to interact on TV since it offers a bilateral relationship with the viewer, more demanding in terms of image and oration.

So far, the use of this tool has not had any electoral repercussions. However, we cannot rule out that possibility. **This efficient communication strategy could become very tiring for voters and negatively affect the president's image.**

An analysis on the use of national broadcasts is necessary to decide what type of government we want and what kind of national communication is the most appropriate.

These communication techniques are valid for a defined context and a specific political space. It is essential that it continues its development in order to become a real republican tool instead of bare political propaganda.

The main challenge of communication for 2013 will be to find the balance when broadcasting the messages avoiding to focus on the mean instead of the content (the most common mistake).

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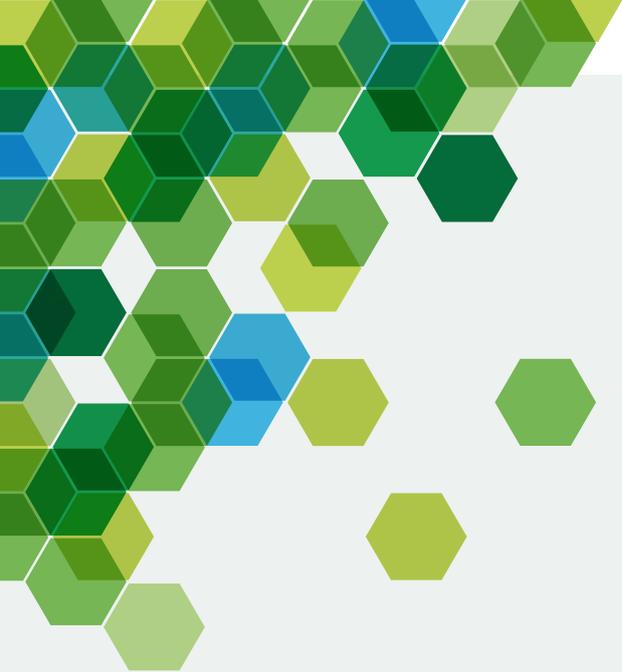
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