COMMUNITY MEDIA AND CIVIL SOCIETY:
LESSONS FROM THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

BY

RICH POTTER

DISSERTATION

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Doctoral Committee:

      Professor Angharad N. Valdivia, Chair
      Research Professor Emeritus Clifford Christians
      Professor Robert W. McChesney
      Professor Daniel Schiller

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explores the role of community media in democratic civil society governance through an examination of participatory communications under socialist administrations in Latin America, with a primary focus on the Bolivarian government of Venezuela. In so doing, it seeks to establish a theoretical framework that will facilitate publicly supported democratic media systems capable of displacing hegemonic commercial and state models. One major axis of investigation is the utility of public sphere theory for the structuration of participatory media institutions that function within a system of civil society governance.

The work opens by identifying three overlapping discursive modes within which community media has been theorized since its emergence in the late 1960s. It then recognizes a shift within the literature toward a more explicit engagement with notions of civil society and the public sphere. I argue that the benefits of this developing perspective will be augmented by a more nuanced understanding of social governance in terms of a multiplicity of interpenetrated meaning- and decision-making public spheres.

I then trace the theory and practice of participatory media in relation to socialist administrations in Cuba (1959 – 1989), Chile (1970 - 1973), Nicaragua (1979 - 1990), and Venezuela (1998 – present). This historical progression illustrates a weakness in Marxist conceptions of civil society that led to an over-reliance on the state-party apparatus and concomitant limitations on the incorporation of participatory media practice. It also demonstrates that this debility has been increasingly addressed by a shift toward a Gramscian perspective of civil society governance as the goal of socialist organization.

The bulk of the dissertation tracks the above patterns as they have played out in Venezuela both before and after the establishment of a Bolivarian Republic in 1998. I demonstrate that a burgeoning community and alternative media movement emerged in a dialectical relationship with the Bolivarian movement. I then argue that the Bolivarian administration's institution of community media according to a liberal regulatory framework facilitated explosive growth within the sector that has been followed by a

period of relative stagnation due largely to the lack of a consistent and transparent funding model. This section concludes with a review of attempts to restructure the legal framework governing the sector, with a specific focus on the efforts of community media practitioners to more firmly incorporate civil society into the decision-making processes of resource provision and content production within a broader institutional framework for civil governance known as the commune system. Particular attention is paid to the relationship between the movement and the state during a prolonged attempt to formulate and pass a Law of Popular Communication.

This work concludes by contextualizing the Bolivarian community media experience within the broader theoretical considerations outlined in the initial chapters. In so doing, I employ the Bolivarian vision for civil governance over a publicly funded media system in order to better illustrate a dual-type, interpenetrated public sphere model that might facilitate the structuration of democratic media systems outside of the context of socialist state governments.

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Introduction: Toward a Participatory Democratic Media System

When people think of a socialist answer they think of bureaucracy and censorship, and so far, on the evidence, they are right. Yet I am convinced that the only way in which the communications service can be made adequate to the kind of democracy I want to live in, what I would define as an educative and a participating democracy, is through the idea of a public system. I have no doubts about this, I have gone over it again and again, until I can see no other way through. It *is* a plain matter of money, and the amounts of capital involved are so large that you have a straight choice. The existing alternatives are these, and as I see them, there are no others. You can have control by a minority of very rich men whose interest is a communications service which *is* profitable, which will sell—control of the kind we now know. Or, on the other hand some form of public ownership. Now I have watched, and whenever I say this people go away. But I do not think we have got to rest with the socialist solution—the definition of a public system—that first occurred. I think the principle that is important is a quite simple one, but a principle so difficult to conceive in this society, in a way, that one almost hesitates to put *it* forward. It is this: that where the means of communication are too expensive to be owned by those who are using them, that is to say, all the big communication services, television, broadcasting, and all the big papers, they should as means be held in trust by the society for use by the people directly concerned in their production. This is a system which I have tried to describe in detail, as yet inadequate detail, elsewhere. At the moment, I can only describe what seems to me to be the principle. We have to work out a system in which there is a reliance on public money, but where this reliance does not bring with it any centralized control of the real contributors and producers. I think that it is possible to conceive such a system although all the blocks in our mind are against it. The means must be held in trust, and leased to the people using them, who would constitute independent professional companies and themselves provide the services. The amount of detailed planning that has to be done on this idea is enormous. All I can urge is the principle. I want objections to it, I want criticism of it, but you can be quite sure that in discussion here or anywhere else I shall be firm and even rude about one thing: that this is the choice, these are the existing alternatives, and there is no point in trying to evade these facts. It is either the system we have now, or it is a system of this new public kind.... It is the business of a political party to bring all this together, to give it focus and to go over every aspect of it in quite practical terms, so that there might be some real prospect of a program of change. I believe that this issue is now at the center of change of any kind, and that a radical or socialist party which neglects it is simply not living in our actual world.
- Raymond Williams, The Existing Alternatives in Communications, 1962

All too little has changed since the above passage was written over a half century ago. One can only imagine that were he still alive, Williams would be yet firmer and ruder in his insistence that there is no point in trying to evade these facts: that our media system continues to be controlled by a minority of very rich men (they are, indeed, mostly men) whose interest is in profit and capital accumulation; that the mention of a socialist system of media continues to trigger fears of bureaucracy and censorship which are backed by historical evidence; that the political economy of the media is increasingly central to the

prospect of progressive social change; that the basic principle for a democratic alternative is that the means of communication must be held publicly yet free from centralized control.

This is not to say that no advances have been made. Critical accounts of the existing capitalist system have proliferated, with contributions from across a vast, interdisciplinary, and still expanding field of communications research. Among the fruits of these critical accounts is a more thorough analysis of existing political economic structures, as well as a deeper awareness of the relationship between those structures and the intersecting axes of social identity that determines the possibilities (or lack thereof) for what Williams refers to as "an educative and a participating democracy". Meanwhile, media reform has become not only a concern of many civil society organizations but the motivating issue of a movement unto itself. If we ask, however, how much has been achieved in the way of a concrete "program of change" that would lead to a viable alternative for the structuration of a democratic media system, we must acknowledge that the amount of detailed planning yet to be accomplished remains nearly as enormous as when Williams called plainly for it to be undertaken.

Where in the vast field of communications research can we find a solid basis for this detailed planning? Critical accounts point to what must be changed, but they all too rarely suggest specific policies and actions for effecting that change. The subfield of community media studies, however, offers a literature that is directly engaged with actual "on-the-ground" attempts to practice a radically democratic form of media production and distribution. Since its emergence as a recognized mode of media production in the late 1960s, community media has been marked by its emphasis on access, participation, and (to a lesser extent) self-management. In recent decades, however, community media theorists have rarely sought to extend these principles as the basis for the type of publicly funded but privately held national media system that Williams had in mind. Rather, community media is often assumed to be inherently localized, if not marginal. This has not, however, always been the case.

In the 1970s and into the 80s, community media (also known as alternative and participatory media) was frequently envisioned as the necessary compliment to macro-level policies that would

establish democratic public media systems at the national level. This was especially the case in Latin America, where the desire to replace capitalist media systems dominated by content from the United States, in conjunction with the obvious flaws of the centralized socialist model instituted in Cuba, led theorists to pursue alternative approaches. Much of this work was conducted in relation to the movement for a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO) that developed within the Non-Aligned Movement. Socialist administrations in Chile and Nicaragua provided opportunities to experiment with and study these alternatives.

With the decline of the NWICO movement in the mid-1980s and the seeming inevitability of neoliberal policies in the 90s, the incorporation of participatory media into macro-level policy frameworks diminished considerably. Instead, community media was most commonly framed in terms of development, where the emphasis was generally on empowering individuals and groups at the local level, as opposed to changing the structure of national and international media systems, or even achieving consistent modes of alternative content production. There was, during this period, a decided lack of political economic analysis, with one result being a tacit acceptance that funding for participatory development communications would be provided as grants for specific projects, generally from non- or inter-governmental organizations. The question of long-term sustainability went largely unaddressed.

Following the turn of the millennium, community media studies shifted its frame from development toward civil society media, partly in response to the emphasis on "independent" media that accompanied the upsurge in "anti-globalization" protests in the global North. Concomitantly, community media has increasingly been considered within the context of public sphere theory, especially in terms of counterpublics. This recontextualization has opened up new possibilities for engaging community media as the basis for expansive democratic media systems, but theorists have yet to fully engage them.

This dissertation attempts to do so by examining the role of community media in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, which was established upon the institution of a new national constitution following the election of Hugo Chávez to the presidency of that country in 1998. In 2005, Chávez

publicly affirmed that his Bolivarian revolution was socialist in nature. He explicitly referred to a socialism for the twenty-first century in which decentralized democratic participation is prioritized above the authority of a centralized state-party apparatus. In this context, the Bolivarian state has offered considerable support to Venezuela's alternative and community media movement, with the explicit goal of creating a national system of community media. One goal of this text is to narrate a history of this movement and its relationship to the Bolivarian state. In so doing, it will highlight issues of particular importance, including funding, institutional structure, and autonomy.

Another goal of the present text is to contextualize the Venezuelan experience within the broader history of participatory media and socialism in Latin America. This will allow us to identify long term trends in Latin American socialist media theory and identify aspects of the Bolivarian experience that are distinct from previous examples. I hope to make clear that over the last fifty or so years socialist communications theory in Latin America has steadily shifted away from centralized, vanguardist approaches and toward a participatory ethos that is not only in line with but results from a dialectical relationship with the work of community media theorists and practitioners over the same time frame. Illustrating this point clearly will require recognizing the shift toward a Gramscian perspective on the role of civil society within socialist movements and systems of governance. We will explore, in other words, the similarities between this Gramscian socialist perspective and the shift within community media studies toward theorizing participatory media as a component of a truly democratic civil society.

A final goal of this work is to draw out lessons from the Bolivarian experience with community media that might be applied elsewhere, including countries where state support is much less than in the Venezuelan case or absent altogether. In other words, I seek to extract from the socialist framework an understanding of the structural basis for a participatory and democratic civil society that will lead to organizational models for community media which can be applied, even if only in a partial manner, within the context of liberal media policies and capitalist economic systems. These organizational models must be practicable within the contemporary liberal framework of civil society while simultaneously

suggesting and leading toward the development of a more integrated, participatory, and sustainable system. In that sense, they must be inherently scalable.

The development of scalable organizational models that will position community media as the basis for a democratic media system requires a more nuanced conception of the public sphere than the public / counterpublic model that currently informs community media studies. One component of the present work is therefore the description of dual-type, modular, and interpenetrated framework for conceptualizing the role of public sphere communication within a democratic society. Central to this framework is the distinction between meaning- and decision-making public spheres, the interaction of which is determinative of the democratic nature of social communications. The articulation of this framework, which is only partially realized in the present text, draws on Bolivarian attempts to structure a democratic system for channeling public funds for participatory media through an apparatus of civil society governance. Our analysis of these efforts will reveal that they already contemplate an interpenetrated framework of meaning- and decision-making public spheres, although these are of course not theorized in such terms.

Scope and Methodology

Methodologically, much of this work proceeds from historical analysis. My discussion of participatory media under twentieth century socialist administrations in Latin America, as well the development of community media studies generally, will draw on secondary literature. So too will my account of the development of alternative and community media in Venezuela prior to and during the Bolivarian revolution led by Hugo Chávez. Much of this secondary literature is unavailable in english translation.

While the body of academic work focused on community media in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela continues to grow, it is as of yet insufficient to allow for a thorough and nuanced understanding of the relationship between the alternative and community media movement and the state, between policy

and practice, and between Bolivarian community media and the participatory media initiatives of previous Latin American socialist movements. This work does not wholly fill that void, but it attempts to address the above points by supplementing secondary literature with knowledge acquired during eight months of field research in Venezuela during 2009 and 2011.

I chose to focus my field research on community television for three reasons. First, because the significant growth of the Venezuelan community media sector since the Bolivarian revolution made a comprehensive approach daunting, if not impossible. By concentrating on a single medium, I was able to more closely follow individual narrative threads within the context of a broader historical tapestry. I was also able to more directly link policy decisions to practical outcomes and vice versa. Second, my professional background in video production enabled a more ready grasp of the aesthetic, technical, and organizational considerations facing community television producers. Additionally, linking my academic research to my personal passions facilitated a level of engagement that insured the work against the sometimes tedious and often frustrating process of conducting field research.

My third reason for focusing on community television is perhaps the most important. In terms of the resources required, whether measured by technology or human labor, television is by far a more demanding medium than print or radio, which are also among the most prominent media in the Venezuelan community media sector. As such, television production and distribution impels a more explicit engagement with the daunting issue of resource allocation and sustainability. In the Venezuelan context, in which most community media practitioners come from working and/or impoverished sectors, these exigencies have led to a heightened awareness of the need for state support and the effects of state policy on civil governance and daily practice. My hope, which I believe to have been borne out by the research process, was that a focus on community television would lay bare the importance of structural and organizational considerations for the sustainability of participatory democratic media production.

While my focus has been on television, I have endeavored to present my findings within the context of Bolivarian community media more generally. Even had I not specifically intended it, this

would have been difficult to escape. As the following chapters will make clear, the history of community television in Venezuela is intimately bound up in a broader history of participatory media, such that the former cannot be told independently of the latter. In this context, while certain technical requirements are particular to the medium of television or pair it closely with radio broadcasting, Bolivarian community television producers view themselves as members of a social movement that unites all formats of community media. It therefore makes little sense to discuss their lobbying efforts or state policies on community television in isolation. Thus, while my focus on community television has brought certain issues into greater relief and allowed for a more concise historical narration, the present work nonetheless offers a relatively comprehensive and general overview of the history of community media in Venezuela and its development in relation to the Bolivarian administration.

At the outset of this field research, my hope was to make use of my professional background in video production in order to develop volunteer working relationships with multiple Venezuelan community television stations and thus base my findings on ample participant observation. This course proved difficult and only partially successful. Though I was able to develop friendly relationships with community television practitioners, the type of working relationship that I had in mind developed in few cases and even then only weakly. My conclusion is that there were two principal causes for this difficulty.

First, the ideological commitments and historical perspective of many members of the Bolivarian community media sector are such that they viewed my presence with considerable circumspection and occasionally outright hostility. Many believed that, as an inquisitive United States citizen with a stated intention of investigating their organizational structures and production methods, I might be operating in a clandestine manner on behalf of the US Central Intelligence Agency. Given the duplicitous history of US initiatives across Latin America and Venezuela's highly polarized political climate, these suspicions were hardly baseless. They were expressed even where I was received amicably and given largely unobstructed access to the operations of community television stations. At other sites they contributed to significant restrictions on my access and limited cooperation on the part of certain practitioners. In one case, which I

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had initially believed to be my best prospect for a warm and collaborative relationship, such suspicions led to my dismissal under pretenses that I learned only later to be false.

Beyond this obstacle, I felt that my participation in the work of Venezuelan community television stations was limited by their organizational structure. As will be discussed at some length below, Venezuelan community media outlets continue to be shaped by limited access to resources. One result is that, especially in the case of television where production requires greater amounts of time and costly equipment than in the case of radio and print outlets, community media outlets are largely maintained by a core group of committed practitioners who have developed systems of operation, often informal, that are not easily adaptable to the ready inclusion of a trained and experienced outsider. They are, rather, set up to offer basic training to inexperienced community members who might work their way into the core group over a period of years, or to facilitate the production of content by small community groups operating semi-autonomously. Thus, even in those cases where I was welcomed and provided with relatively unobstructed access, opportunities for contributing my labor to content production were limited.

This is not to say that participant observation is not a methodological basis for the research presented here. On several occasions I was invited to operate a camera, contribute photographs, assist in editing, or appear as a guest on television programs. Additionally, I was presented with two unexpected opportunities to participate in the Bolivarian process of community media policy formation. In July of 2009 I was allowed to participate in the first National Congress of Bolivarian Community Media, held in San Francisco, in the state of Zulia. To the best of my knowledge, I was the only non-Venezuelan participant in that event. As will be discussed below, this conference was an early step in a long process by which the Bolivarian alternative and community media movement sought to institute a new legal framework for the community media sector. I participated in one of two working groups focused on policy proposals related to the question of sustainability.

Upon my return to Venezuela in 2011, this process had advanced considerably, such that the National Assembly had begun to facilitate the final consolidation of the movement's various proposals

into a single draft bill. In keeping with the government's commitment to increasing popular participation in the legislative process, the Assembly sponsored a series of regional conferences designed to refine existing proposals and generate new ideas. I was able to attend four of these conferences and participate in working groups focused on sustainability and participatory democracy. While my own opinions, to the limited extent that I offered them, were respectfully taken into consideration, these conferences were of course most fruitful for me in that they provided an invaluable opportunity to understand the priorities of community media practitioners and to gauge popular reactions to a variety of policy proposals.

While my research plan had always contemplated informal and unstructured interviews, restricted opportunities for participant observation at the level of media production led me to rely more heavily on this methodology. During the course of my visits to various community television stations, I sought to conduct informal interviews with both core practitioners and participating community members, but the great majority of the interviews I conducted belong to the former category. These interviews ranged from a single brief and unrecorded session to multiple sessions totaling as many as seven hours of recorded audio. Through them, I gained invaluable historical information and anecdotes that illustrated the context and outcomes of the theoretical and policy considerations which motivated my investigation. Many of these interviews are cited below, but all of them contributed to the comprehensive background understanding that has informed my findings and conclusions.

Chapter Structure

The initial chapter of this work offers a historical overview of the subfield of community media studies that sets up the theoretical considerations to be addressed in the conclusion. In tracing the roots of the practice and theorization of community media, we will identify three discursive modes by which participatory media has been understood and communicated since the 1960s. Though there is considerable overlap between these three discursive modes, their development and application were shaped by historical, geographic, and political specificities that led to significant differences of perspective. While

one of these modes, which I refer to as "counterhegemonic", is perhaps best suited for the political economic perspective that has guided this work, we will see that none of them has been wholly suitable for the type of systemic analysis and planning in which I am interested. As signaled above, this approach requires a more explicit engagement with the notion of civil society governance and the structure of a democratic public sphere. In chapter one we will see that over the last decade or so community media theorists have begun to address these issues with greater clarity, but that significant work remains. The chapter thus concludes with an attempt to sketch the outlines of that work.

Chapter two begins with a general discussion of Marxist perspectives on revolution, communication, and the role of civil society in a socialist society. In this we will be guided by Gouldner's (1980) distinction between Scientific and Critical Marxisms, as well as his identification of civil society as a particular blind spot even for the latter category. This will lead us to recognize the importance of Gramsci's call for socialist revolution driven by an organized civil society movement and the aspiration for a system of democratic civil governance. This Gramscian notion of a "civil state" will thus contextualize our subsequent analysis of the role of participatory media in relation to three Latin American socialist administrations during the latter half of the twentieth century: Cuba (1959 - present), Chile (1970 - 73), and Nicaragua (1978 – 1990). We will see that the historical record demonstrates that participatory media has been one expression of a general turn within Latin American socialist thought toward social movements representing a multiplicity of popular identities (as opposed to a more narrow emphasis on workers) and a minimization of the role played by the state in a socialist participatory democracy. We will also see, however, that the particular contexts of the socialist administrations under consideration prevented a robust implementation of participatory media at a systemic level.

The final three chapters of this work address the particularities of participatory media in Venezuela within the theoretical and historical context described above. Chapter three explores the development of the alternative and community media movement in Venezuela prior to the election of Chávez in 1998. On the one hand it parallels the general development of participatory media in Latin

America, while on the other it has been significantly shaped by the particularities of Venezuela's political and economic history. Most importantly, we will see that a failure to incorporate popular civil society governance into Venezuela's corporatist version of liberal representative democracy, especially in the face of long term economic crisis, opened space for more radically progressive political movements, generally, and for the radicalization of the alternative and community media movement, specifically. While many accounts of community media in Venezuela take the election of Chávez as their point of departure, our analysis will demonstrate that the emergence of state support for the sector was the result of a social movement rooted in decades of increasingly concerted action that produced a dialectical interaction with the Bolivarian political movement as it emerged in the 90s.

Chapter four examines the period following the election of Chávez. We will trace the continually dialectical interchange between civil society actors and the state by focusing on decisive moments, including the explicit inclusion of community media in the 2000 Law of Telecommunications, the adoption of a concomitant set of regulations in 2001, and the role of community media during and after the attempted coup of 2002. We will also describe an important tension between two factions of the alternative and community media movement, one of which adopted a more liberal approach and the other of which demonstrated a more radical propensity. This chapter concludes with a discussion of how the legal legitimation of community media according to the liberal approach, in conjunction with state resource provision, facilitated the explosive growth of the sector.

Chapter five opens with an examination of the shortcomings of the institutionalized liberal approach that led to stagnation within the community media sector, both in terms of the growth of officially recognized outlets and in the productive capacity of those that had already been recognized. The principal focus of this discussion concerns the lack of a consistent and transparent mechanism for the funding of community media outlets. One effect of this situation has been that the amount and quality of community media content, as well as the level of community participation in its production and distribution, have been severely curtailed. Even during the best of times, the unpredictability of state

funding has made it very difficult for community outlets to maintain consistent operational patterns, much less to execute plans for growth. In worse moments, even some of the most active and dedicated outlets have seen their operations grind to a halt. Another effect of the discrepancy between the liberal regulatory model adopted in 2001 and the actual practice of state resource provision has been the exposure of Bolivarian community media outlets to charges of dependency and bias.

Chapter five demonstrates how the above deficiencies have led the Bolivarian alternative and community media movement to push for a restructuration of the legal framework governing the sector. Throughout this process, community media practitioners have sought to more firmly incorporate civil society governance into the decision-making processes of resource provision and content production. We will examine how resulting proposals have been tailored to a more general Bolivarian impulse toward civil society governance that is very much in line with the previously discussed reorientation of socialist thought and organization in Latin America. The most significant of these proposals, the ultimately unsuccessful 2011 draft bill for a Law of Popular Communication, will be discussed in considerable detail in order to describe how it was meant to fit into a broader institutional framework for civil governance, known as the commune system, that has been most conspicuously manifested in the creation of "communal councils" charged with allocating public funds according to the collective desires of local community members.

Our detailed analysis of the 2011 draft bill and its relation to the commune system will provide the basis for our concluding discussion, in which we will attempt to contextualize the Bolivarian community media experience within the theoretical considerations that we will have set up in chapters one and two. We will, in other words, employ the Bolivarian vision for civil governance over a publicly funded media system in order to better illustrate a dual-type, interpenetrated public sphere model. In actuality, our conclusion is but a starting point for the development of this theoretical structure and its application for the structuration of the type of democratic media system called for by Raymond Williams over half a century ago. My hope is that the principles expressed herein can begin to guide civil society

organization and activity in support of this goal far beyond the context of socialist state governments, including in such contexts where state support is restricted to traditional liberal models of alternative media or is even more minimal.

Like Williams, I readily admit that my attempt to describe the workings of such a system in detail is "as yet inadequate". Nonetheless, I believe it to represent an advance that is in line with the best of existing scholarship in the subfield of community media studies. I also believe it capable, at least in a future iteration, of shifting the locus of that subfield from its unjustly peripheral status within the larger field of critical communications research. Most importantly, I consider it a contribution to the detailed planning that Williams rightly identified as necessary to defining and constructing a viable system of truly democratic media that is subject neither to the consolidated control of market players nor to the centralized control of the state, but to the decision-making capacity of an empowered and active civil society.

Chapter 1: Community Media Studies, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere

Alternative, participatory, and community-oriented media production has expanded consistently since the late 1940s, although a related body of scholarly work only began to emerge in the 1970s. By the end of that decade the basic principles of community media - access, participation, and self-management - had been well articulated, yet scholars have since been unable to construct a shared theoretical framework within which to apply them. As a result, practical and (especially) policy recommendations have remained tentative.

Howley (2010) has aptly noted two factors that have principally contributed to the "theoretical underdevelopment common to community media studies". One is varying contexts - "the particular and distinctive use of various technologies in disparate geographic and cultural settings" (15). Beyond technology, geography, and culture, however, differing political economic contexts have produced one of the most significant cleavages within the subfield. One trajectory of community media studies emerged from within development communications theory, where the primary focus has been on post-colonial society in the global South. Here community media was caught up in considerations of economic growth models, transnational information flows, (neo)imperialism, and socialist revolution. Scholarship focused on alternative and community media in the global North, on the other hand, was more commonly situated within considerations of liberal representative democracy and identity politics. This is not to say that research and practice within these two contexts were not mutually influential; they most certainly were. Nonetheless, as I hope to indicate below, contextual differences made it more difficult for scholars to pin down the shared theoretical concerns that united them.

Howley's second factor is "a lack of definitional precision" (*ibid.*). Probably no other subfield of communications research has had as much difficulty in defining its object of inquiry as community media studies. Discussion has primarily revolved around three potential descriptors for the category of media in question: participatory, alternative, and community. None of these has been deemed wholly sufficient. White (1994) describes the concept of participation as "kaleidoscopic[,] … fragile and elusive" (16), and

Gumucio (2001) notes that participatory communication "lacks an accurate definition that could contribute to a better understanding of the notion" (8). Howley (2002) and Carpentier et al. (2003) refer respectively to community media as a "notoriously vague" (12) and "highly elusive" (51) term. Atton (2002) confesses that the phrase "alternative media" can have "no meaningful definition" (9) and notes that Abel (1997, cited in Atton) has found it "so elastic as to be devoid of virtually any significance" (14). Downing (2001) finds the very notion of community to be "fuzzy" (39) and that of alternative media to be "almost oxymoronic ... [since e]verything, at some point, is alternative to something else". He therefore tags on the "extra designation *radical*" yet notes that "even here we need to make some preliminary qualifications" (ix, original emphasis). A long list of similar citations could be built. Some scholars have floated alternative terms, such as "community communication" (Schulman 1992), "citizens' media" (Rodriguez 2001), and "rhizomatic media" (Carpentier et al. 2003), and several have posited that since no definitional terminology can be adequate, the simultaneous employment of a multiplicity of perspectives is in order (cf. Dervin & Huesca 1999, Servaes 1999, Carpentier et al. 2007).

Rather than jumping into this morass, we should note that the debate over what exactly community (or alternative, participatory, etc.) media *is* has partially obscured a more fruitful discussion about what community media *does* - or, at least, *should do*. Toward this end, we will attempt to accomplish three goals in this chapter. First, we will trace the history of community media studies through three distinct but overlapping modes of theorizing media production outside of dominant systems. Second, we will show that over the previous decade or so scholars have begun to reconcile these three discursive modes by increasingly situating community media studies within the framework of civil society and the public sphere. This is a welcome and promising shift in emphasis, but much remains to be worked out. Our third goal, therefore, is to sketch a path forward by suggesting the fundamental elements for a heterarchic public sphere theory of participatory media.

Three Early Community Radio Stations and Three Modes of Community Media Discourse

Academic histories of community media generally trace its emergence to radio stations that appeared in the late 1940s and early 1950s: Radio Sutatenza in Colombia, miners' radio in Bolivia, and Pacifica Radio in California.[1] Beyond serving as chronological entry points, these experiences provide a helpful heuristic schema for three overlapping but distinct modes of thinking about community media that would later become visible in the scholarly literature. When José Salcedo, a Roman Catholic priest, founded Radio Sutatenza in 1947, his primary goal was to broadcast instructional material to the peasants of his rural parish. Sutatenza subsequently grew into a national network that produced and broadcast not only educational material, but also news and cultural programming. Although community participation decreased as the network expanded in scope, Radio Sutatenza sought to maintain the concept of adult education that had inspired it and which emphasized "the need to help people to understand their own responsibility for improvement, to recognize their own potential for progress, and to know the value of their own resources" (Gumucio 2001, 31).[2] For our heuristic purposes, Radio Sutatenza therefore represents community media as a means of fostering *participatory development*. In this mode of thinking, the impulse for community media often comes from outside the community (in this case, the church) and the goals (at least in the short- to mid-term) generally relate to improving quality of life considerations within a pre-existent institutional framework.

The loose network of radio stations that began in Catavi in 1949 and eventually grew to 26 stations across the Bolivian highlands resulted from a quite distinct set of concerns. Here the primary goal was to unify and strengthen the social power of the miners' unions. The radio stations were funded by the

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1 The overlapping nature of alternative and community media makes historical treatment problematic. 18th century pamphleteering, 19th century labor union presses, and early 20th century amateur radio operators, among many other examples, certainly merit consideration within a historical approach to alternative media (cf. Armstrong 1981, 33-40; Downing 2001, 143-157), and there is validity to investigating the history of local newspapers from a community perspective (cf. Janowitz 1967 [1952]). As our interest here is in tracking the theoretical development of what would become community media studies, beginning with the post-WWII period is sufficient.

2 For more on Radio Sutatenza, see Torres (1961), Musto (1969), Ahmed & Coombs (1975), Pareja (1982), Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada (1998), and Gumucio (2001, 41-46).

mineworkers themselves, who donated a percentage of their salary, and they were "permanently open to participation" by workers and residents of "nearby peasant communities … whenever people needed to express themselves on any issue affecting their lives" (Gumucio 2001, 34). The miners' stations were endogenous organizations, entirely owned and managed by the communities that they served. [3] Among their primary functions were training local journalists and reporting political and other news from the perspective of the workers and peasants. This placed them at odds with the country's elite political establishment and, especially during periods of military domination of the state, confrontations often became violent. During these crises the stations would link together in networked broadcasts, with the physical premises "defended to the death by the workers…. Some of the stations were destroyed six or seven times by the army in their lifetime" (33, 35). Within our heuristic schema, Bolivian miners' radio represents community media as a means of fostering *counter-hegemonic liberation*.[4] In this mode of thinking, community media is properly an endogenous activity whose organizational structure enables sustainable, democratic self-management wherein all power rests with the community. While this may ultimately serve the same set of quality of life considerations emphasized within the participatory development model, the means of achieving them are much more radical in nature and involve not only a redistribution of power within society, but a total restructuring of communicative (and other) institutions. [5]

Though distinct, the two previous examples both represent interventions within a rural population of impoverished and largely illiterate peasants and laborers. It should come as no surprise therefore that the founders of Pacifica radio, which arose during California's post-WWII population and economic

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3   Radio Pío XII in Llallagua, was established by "a group of Catholic priests" in the 1950s and eventually "moved so close to the miners' community, that it joined the network of union radio stations" (Gumucio 2001, 15).

4   For more on Bolivian miners' radio, see Schmucler & Encinas (1982), Gumucio (1982, 1983, 1989), CIMCA (1989), Kuncar Camacho (1989), O'Connor (1990, 2004), Huesca (1995, 1996), Camacho (2000) and Herrera Miller (2006).

5   The difference between the development and the counter-hegemonic modes is illustrated by the 1960 evaluation of Radio Sutatenza conducted by Camilo Torres, a priest and sociologist. He found Sutatenza to be "demagogic and harmful for the peasants[,] … arguing that the campaigns of Radio Sutatenza against communism incited hate and violence" (Gumucio 2001, 31; see Torres 1961). Torres' support for liberation theology and Marxism eventually led him to join the National Liberation Army [*Ejercito de Liberación Nacional* / ELN], one of Colombia's guerrilla militias.

booms, operated according to a quite different set of considerations. In 1949, when KPFA began broadcasting, the United States was in the throes of the Cold War and the beginning of the second Red Scare. Pacifica's founders, some of them conscientious objectors during the war and "committed to a Quaker variety of pacifism" (Downing 2001, 325), were inspired to act by an increasingly militant climate of indirect and overt media censorship that would reach its apotheosis (or nadir) in the form of McCarthyism. The station's "committed First Amendment liberalism" (330) was a reaction to political constraints manifested not only by State officials, but also by "the intrusive, repetitious and in other ways offensive commercialism common in American radio". Lewis Hill, who was principal among the founders, "believed radio and press should not be run by entrepreneurs motivated by profits, but by journalists and artists whose motives would be the most objective and enlightening programming possible" (Stebbins 1969, cited in Downing 2001, 326). Thus, although the station was funded by its listeners and adopted an "experimental policy of paying all members [i.e. workers] equally and of having majority votes on programming" (330), the project's goals were less about representing the experiences and knowledge of a specific community via their direct participation than airing a set of views not otherwise available to the general population. These views centered on "peace, social justice, promotion of the labor movement and support of the arts" (Stebbins, cited in Downing 2001, 326), but the station's commitment to liberal plurality meant that prominent conservative figures of the era were also given airtime. While community access was always prioritized, in its early days, at least, Pacifica's vision was arguably as close to the European public service broadcasting model as it was to that of community media. Later on – partly as a result of a commitment to providing access to all – the station's programming took a more radical turn (330-343). [6]

In any case, for the purposes of our tripartite heuristic, KPFA represents community media as a means of fostering *alternative discourse within a liberal representative democracy*. In this mode of

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6 For more on Pacifica, see Armstrong (1981, 74-76), Land (1999), Lasar (2000), Dunaway (2005), and Rennie (2006, 63-65).

thinking, community media is primarily concerned with ensuring that a particular range of repressed and/or minority viewpoints are available within a society's political and cultural discourse. Media production in this mode may or may not be organized in order to maximize the participation of a specific community. Moreover, to the extent that a specific community is represented or addressed, it is more likely to be understood as a community of interest than of geography. [7]

To be clear, each of these three modes of conceptualizing community media - participatory development, counter-hegemonic liberation, and alternative discourse within a liberal representative democracy - encompasses a range of possibilities that are only thinly represented by the above examples. Moreover, there is a good deal of overlap between them. This is why they have remained constituents of community media studies even as their co-presence has been a cause of continual theoretical confusion. As we shall see, the emphasis of one or another of these modes by practitioners and researchers has had less to do with the particular medium under discussion, the internal organizational model employed, or the specific content produced than with the political economic context, on the one hand, and the desired political outcome, on the other.

The "Golden Era" of Community Media Experimentation

Community media (and related) initiatives remained relatively scarce during the two decades that followed the establishment of the community radio initiatives discussed above. A slow acceleration of activity, however, led to a relative boom period in the 1970s. During the 1950s and 60s, at least in the wealthier countries of the North, growth was most visible in the underground and alternative press. Alternative periodicals that appeared in the 1950s in the United States hewed to the more traditional journalistic model – in terms of both content, organization, and financing - of the pre-war era alternative press. In the more overtly politicized climate of North America and Europe during the 1960s and 70s,

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7 To the extent that production within this mode is organized according to hierarchical and/or professional divisions of labor, it falls further outside of the definition of *community* media altogether and becomes more properly an instance of merely *alternative* media. This is one of the primary tensions leading to the definitional paralysis of the subfield discussed above. Again, the heuristic offered here is designed to move us away from such strict definitional boundaries and toward a theoretical framework predicated on functional possibilities.

however, titles and organizational/financing models multiplied rapidly.[8] In the UK, the Federation of Writer Workers' and Community Publishers formed in 1976 "to co-ordinate and encourage the growing numbers of organizations publishing work written by working class people" (Lewis 1984, 104). Around the same time, as photocopying technology became more widespread, the punk fanzine spread throughout the US and UK (Atton 2002, 57).

Small-scale alternative press activity in the post-colonial states of the South is much less evident. This may be due in part to lower literacy levels and access to resources, though it is probable that many publications were not well preserved or documented; production certainly occurred in relation to minority political movements and parties. Mattelart (1983) has cautioned that "[a]lthough there is a relative absence of historical work on the workers' press in … peripheral countries, it should not be too rapidly deduced that this history does not exist" (35).[9] In Chile during the early 1970s, journalism students from at least two public universities began collaborative community journalism projects with workers, peasants, and impoverished urban residents (Mattelart 1971, 8; Henfrey & Sorj 1977, 157).

As for radio, commercially motivated pirate broadcasters in Scandinavia and the UK broke some ground in the 1950s and 60s, and politically motivated pirates forced regulatory changes in Italy and France during the 70s (Rennie 2006, 79-81). While community radio in the UK was largely sidelined in favor of local public-service and commercial models, community-oriented radio workshops and recording studios made use of the local stations to distribute their productions.[10] Italian Supreme Court decisions in 1974 and 1976 led to a largely deregulated environment, which gave Italy the (by far) highest radio station density in the world as of 1979, though only one-quarter of the stations were run as non-profits and those exhibited various degrees of community involvement. Sweden's public service broadcasting

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8   For histories of the alternative press in the North, see Glessing (1970), Lewis (1972), Woodsworth (1972), Spiers (1974), Watson (1979), Armstrong (1981), Kessler (1984), Lewis (1984, 103-106), Kruchkow & Johnson (1986), Fountain (1988), Kunoff (1988), Dickinson (1997), and McMillian (2011). Guides and directories include Woodsworth (1972), Peattie (1975), Case (1984), and Kunoff (1988).

9   For example, on the workers press in Mexico up to 1970, see Bringas & Mascareño (1979).

10 Proposals for community radio in the UK appeared as early as 1965, but the eventual implementation of independent local radio in the 1970s (carried out partly in response to the pirates) followed a commercial model (Stoller 2010, 155-56; Beaud 1980, 5). See also Partridge (1982) and Hind & Mosco (1985).

authority created a Neighborhood Radio Committee that began renting transmission time to local groups on 16 different stations in 1979. Unlicensed "free radio" stations began to appear in Belgium in 1978, many of them "set up by informal militant groups contesting local issues connected with the environment". In 1979, after "the authorities seemed prepared to tolerate the illegality", stations geared toward music and "socio-cultural animation" began to appear (Lewis 95-108). [11]

The history of community radio in Australia follows a timeframe similar to the European pattern, with alternative stations emerging in the 1960s and organized community radio advocacy in the 1970s leading the broadcasting regulator to create new "special purpose" licensing categories in 1978, including "[f]or community groups intending to provide programmes serving a defined community area" (Fist & Fist 1984, 62; see also Rennie 100-101). In North America, Pacifica grew to comprise a network of five stations spread across the country and non-affiliated stations following the Pacifica model began to appear as early as 1962. [12] In the 1970s civic organizations such as churches began making use of extremely low-power transmitters for very local broadcasting and in 1975 a group of fifteen larger stations formed the National Federation of Community Broadcasters (NFCB) (65-66). [13] Government supported expansion in Canada helped set the stage for the founding of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (*Asociación Mondial de Radios Comunitarias* / AMARC) at a 1982 conference in Montreal.

In Latin America, the Radio Sutatenza model was implemented in Mexico in 1965, with the Radio Huayacocotla network. Radio Quillabamba began broadcasting in Peru in 1969, though it didn't adopt a popular education model until almost a decade later (Gumucio 2001, 36-43). Both of those projects evolved under the auspices of the Catholic Church. In the Philippines, Radio DYLA - established

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11 On local radio experimentation in Europe, see also Beaud (1980, 87-148; 1981, 4-6). On radio in Italy, see Richeri (1983).

12 Pacifica was partially funded by the Ford Foundation's Fund for Adult Education (Rennie 65). The Fund for Adult Education also sponsored the San Bernadino Valley Project (1952-56), which incorporated radio programming as part of an attempt to make "community development an experience in liberal adult education for those who participated" (Groombridge 1972, 193; see also Johnson 1958). The role of adult education as a catalyst for community media in the North deserves greater attention from community media studies scholars (see note 15 for several examples in relation to television).

13 On the history of community radio in the US, see Walker (2001).

in 1967 by the Visayas-Mindanao Confederation of Trade Unions – organized a group of "Concerned Citizens for Good Government" in 1978 in order to partner with the local community to solve "urban problems" (Braid & Clavel 1984, 222-232). [14]

The emergence of community television in the North is commonly traced to George Stoney's work on Canada's Fogo Island in the late 1960s and his subsequent founding of the Alternative Media Center (AMC) in New York. [15] During the 1970s, Stoney's work influenced the spread of community-oriented and public access television throughout North America, and spurred experimentation with local and access television across Western Europe (Lewis 2006; 17-18, 21). In the United States, a 1974 Federal Communications Commission (FCC) decision "mandated that larger cable operators provide public, educational, and governmental (PEG) access channels, equipment, and facilities to the communities they served". These rules were struck down by the US Supreme Court in 1979, but municipalities continued to negotiate public access provisions in their contracts with cable franchisees (Stein 2001, 301-302). Community television in Canada was catalyzed by the National Film Board's *Challenge for Change* program (in which Stoney participated), as well as its French language counterpart in Quebec, *Societé Nouvelle* (Lewis 1978, 7-8). Federal and regional government funding was available throughout the 1970s and a national public access mandate was maintained until 1997 (Frederiksen 1972,

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14 To be sure, during these decades clandestine radio broadcasting was employed across the globe by a variety of underground, revolutionary, and counter-revolutionary groups whose perspectives ranged across the political spectrum. These, however, were principally propaganda enterprises and evinced little of the dialogic and participatory ethos that is fundamental to the counter-hegemonic liberation mode described above. They rarely advocated regulatory changes that would foster participatory models, as was the case in Italy and France. For a thorough history of clandestine broadcasting, see Soley & Nichols (1987). As will be discussed in the following chapter, Sandinista radio practices in Nicaragua shifted from a guerilla strategy in the late 1970s, during the uprising, towards more participatory models in the 1980s, under the newly consolidated government.

15 For discussions of the Fogo Island experience, see Gwyn (1972) and Boyle (1999). While Stoney's work has been identified as the catalyst for community television (see Teicher 1984, Lewis 2006, Rennie 2006), Groombridge (189-212) points to several earlier examples. They include Iowa State College's early 1950s program "The Whole Town's Talking" (see Siepmann 1952, 62-69; Groombridge 1957); a collaborative French agricultural extension initiative called *Télé Promotion Rurale* that began in 1966 (see Council of Europe 1968); an Irish agricultural development project called *Telefis Feirme* (Television Farm); the Metroplex Assembly project launched in 1958 by the Civic Education Center of Washington University in St. Louis (see Johnson 1965); the use of public television by Town Meeting Inc. (see Magnuson 1970); and *Canción de la Raza*, an entertainment-education telenovela produced and broadcast by KCET in Los Angeles during 1968 and 69 (see Mendelsohn 1969).

54-55; Sénécal 1981; Rennie 70).[16]

The European trials of the 1970s did not lead to strong regulatory protection for community television, partly out of a fear that they would open a "back door" for the commercialization of the public service broadcasting sector.[17] In the UK, where experiments began in 1972, most of the initiatives had been shuttered by 1979 (Rennie 86).[18] Of the six cable TV experiments planned in France, "only one … actually emerged and this ended when central government funding was not renewed in 1976".[19] Experiments in the Netherlands and Switzerland also largely failed, though local television survived in Belgium into the early 1980s, and even longer in Denmark (Lewis 1984, 94; Rennie 85). Experiments were also conducted in Sweden (1979) and Germany (1984) (83). In Australia, the Film and Television Board of the Australia Council established a total of 12 community-oriented video access centers beginning in 1974, though all failed to achieve sustained video content production (Fist & Fist 73-78; Rennie 108-111).

During the 1960s and 70s, some Latin American countries, such as Bolivia and Chile, entrusted television broadcasting to their major universities, but funding issues and competition from commercial broadcasters prevented the development of significantly participatory structures (Gumucio 2001, 16). In Mexico, an initiative beginning in 1971 employed broadcast television as part of a popular education campaign directed toward rural farmers (Berrigan 1981, 23). In 1974, UNESCO and the University of the West Indies Extra-Mural Department collaborated to form the Trinidad and Tobago Television Workshop, which trained young people and produced educational, community-oriented programming that was

16 On the history of public access in North America, see Price & Morris (1971), Anderson (1975, 77-92), Berrigan (1977b), Lewis (1978, 4-11), Engelman (1990), Goldberg (1990), Kellner (1990, 207-14; 1992), Stein (2001), Halleck (2002), and Rennie (2006, 47-76). Community-oriented use of video was not limited to cable distribution, of course. In addition to those listed in the previous note, a wide array of examples are discussed in Shamberg (1971), Frederiksen (1972) and Anderson (1975).

17 On Western European initiatives, see Berrigan (1977b), Beaud (1980, 11-83 & 150-172; 1981, 7-10), Jankowski et al. (1992), and Rennie (2006, 82-95). On television in Italy, see Richeri (1983).

18 On the "local television" experiments in the UK, specifically, see Lewis (1978), Bibby et al. (1979), Beaud (1980, 23-40), Nigg & Wade (1980), and Rushton (1994, 1997).

19 Following the model used by radio broadcasters, at least one unlicensed French "free television station" attempted to broadcast in 1981, with the result that the first telecast was "a live police raid" (Soley & Nichols 111).

broadcast on the commercially operated, state-owned network over the course of at least a decade (Laird 1984). In 1975, India's Satellite Instructional Television Experiment (SITE) initiated the Kheda project, an important early attempt to incorporate participatory television production into rural development (Berrigan 1981, 35-38; Voigt & Jain 1984, 131; Agrawal 1994). Generally, however, as television broadcasting systems in post-colonial regions were highly centralized and/or much less robust than in wealthier Northern countries, and as cable systems were not yet deployed, opportunities for community access were nonexistent. Participatory development projects therefore sometimes focused on the use of portable video technologies for non-broadcast playback, with early examples taking place in Tanzania (1971), Peru (1975), Brazil (1978) and Mexico (1978).[20]

The purpose of the preceding summary is to sketch a rough timeline of the accelerating global emergence of community media during the 1960s and 70s, not to provide a thorough accounting of the many initiatives which took place in every region. Significant community media, such as theater, have been left out altogether. Even for those listed, crucial contextual differences and practical nuances have been glossed over. We will explore some of these in more detail below. For the moment, the point is that while some seeds were planted in the 1940s and 50s, the "golden era" of community media experimentation occurred in the 1960s and, especially, 70s, as citizens, churches, aid agencies, non-governmental organizations, and/or governments began working together to explore the potential of participatory models for local media production.

Two Primarily Southern Modes of Community Media Discourse: Participatory Development and Counter-Hegemonic Liberation

Not surprisingly, the emergence of community media studies scholarship was effectively coterminous with the golden era of accelerating community media experimentation. The political

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20 The Tanzanian project is described in Berrigan (1981, 23-24) and Kinyanjui (1984, 21-22). The Peruvian and Mexican examples are discussed in Gumucio (2001, 44-51) and the Brazilian in Encalada (1984, 167-170). Berrigan also mentions the incorporation of video within development initiatives in Gambia, Guatemala, India, the Philippines, and Sri Lanka, all during the 1970s (24).

economic context in which those early initiatives took place tended to reinforce one or another of the three modes of thinking about community media outlined earlier, with the most significant determinant in this respect being the division between the post-colonial global South and the wealthier North (referred to in that era as the "third" and "first" worlds)[21]. The general tendency of the time was for theorists, researchers, and practitioners focused on the global South to think within the modes of participatory development and counter-hegemonic liberation. Within the global North, community media was often understood as alternative discourse within a liberal representative democracy. Again, this is not to say that these three modes are mutually exclusive; we will address the overlaps below. Still, tracking this tripartite heuristic will be helpful in making sense of the concerns that would later preoccupy researchers and partially obstruct a more productive theoretical framework.

In the South, sustained scholarly concern for the organization and practice of community media arose in the wake of a broad shift in economic development theory. Following WWII, the dominant model of economic development assumed a process of "modernization" in which impoverished Southern nations, with the right mix of foreign loans and investment, were meant to "catch up" to the industrial and technological levels of Northern states. In the face of the modernization paradigm's mounting failures, a structural counter-model gained prominence, especially among Latin American economists inspired by Raul Prebisch's (1950) work as Director of the United Nation's Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC).[22] This model held that global trade flows, rather than raising Southern economies to parity, served to keep them in a perpetually underdeveloped and dependent relationship to the North.[23] Dependency theory, as it came to be known, motivated calls for a New International Economic Order (NIEO) in which, among other objectives, global commodity flows would be rebalanced

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21 The terminology used to refer to this divide remains problematic; I will employ the contemporary terms with the usual caveats.
22 Hans Singer's (1949) work on trade flows was instrumental in the development of Prebisch's work (see Toye and Toye 2003).
23 See Furtado (1956, 1964), Prebisch (1959), Bhagwati (1966), Sunkel (1969), dos Santos (1970, 1971, 1978 [1968]), Frank (1971 [1967], 1979), Hettne (1978, 1982), and Cardoso & Faletto (1979 [1969]).

vis-a-vis manufactured goods in order to improve the standing of "underdeveloped" countries. [24]

As this debate played out in the field of macro-economic development, a parallel progression was occurring within the field of development communications, where theory and practice in the post-WWII period were also dominated by a modernization paradigm. Initiatives within this framework have been classified as "top-down" and focused on capital intensive technology in order to maximize economic efficiency according to the liberal model. The modernization paradigm also assumed a transmission model of communication and carried eurocentric assumptions regarding culture and the dominance of positivistic science.[25] Here, too, scholars developed a critique of modernization, and here, too, the principal activity occurred within Latin America, as theorists drew heavily on economic dependency theory in order to advance the thesis of cultural imperialism which held that the aesthetic and ethical values (or lack thereof) of Northern society were increasingly foisted on Southern society via an imbalanced global flow of commoditized information and entertainment products. [26] Following the pattern established with the NIEO, these ideas spurred calls for a New World Information and Communications Order (NWICO) under which information flows would be rebalanced to the benefit of "underdeveloped" countries, largely via greater access to telecommunications and media technologies (see Masmoudi 1979). The principal forum for debate regarding NWICO was the United Nations Education, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), whose publication of the so-called MacBride report (International Commission for the Study of Communication Problems 1980) offered validation for many NWICO arguments (see Hamelink 1980) and arguably represented the movement's high point.

Ultimately, neither the NIEO nor the NWICO proposals bore much fruit within the higher circles

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24 This set of proposals first came together at a 1973 conference of the Non Aligned Movement (NAM) held in Algiers and was principally debated within the United Nations (see Bhagwati 1977, Murphy 1984).

25 The classic texts of the modernization paradigm of development communications include those by Lerner (1958), Rostow (1990 [1960]), Rogers (2003 [1962]) and Schramm (1964).

26 See Pasquali (1964), Schiller (1992 [1969], 1976), Beltrán (1970, 1976), Dorfman & Mattelart (1975 [1971]), Montes (1971; Wacquez 1971), Avaria (1972), Schiller & Smythe (1972), Mattelart (1973a, 1973b, 1980 [1974]), Dorfman & Jofré (1974), Garretón Merino (1974), Reyes Matta (1974), Hamelink (1977, 1981, 1983), Reyes Matta & Somavía (1977), Burton (1978), Mattelart & Polan (1978), Li (1979), Beltran S. & Fox de Cardona (1980), Dorfman (1980, 1983), and Pavlič & Hamelink (1985).

of international policy-making, having been quashed by Northern opposition, principally from the United States.[27] They did, however, leave a lasting mark on development theory and practice, having cemented the concept of participation as a crucial component of any intervention. [28] This occurred as development communications scholars complemented dependency theory's macro approach to media structures with a newfound valorization of dialogic interpersonal communication culled especially from the radical pedagogical theory of the Brazilian educator Paulo Freire (1967, 1970, 2000 [1970], 1983 [1971]). Freire drew on Marxian and Christian theory, as well as continental philosophy (e.g. Buber), in order to formulate a model of education as a dialogue within which both student and teacher benefit from the sharing and mutual construction of knowledge. In an explicit rejection of the transmission model of communication that served as a foundational assumption of the modernization paradigm, Freire sought *conscientização* (conscientization) as an interplay of action and critical reflection that leads to an individual's greater understanding of his or her historical, political, and cultural context (see Richards et al. 2001). Although Freire's formative experiences took place in the context of rural literacy and agricultural campaigns, and although he "never really linked his analysis to the use of a particular media, it is implicit in his writings that communication, in order to be effective, has to be participatory, dialogic, and reciprocal" (Thomas 1994, 51).

In this climate, even the celebrated founders of the modernization paradigm were forced to acknowledge the shortcomings of their framework and make space for scholars pursuing research within

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27 "US President Ronald Reagan unilaterally declared the death of the NIEO at the Cancun Summit on International Development Issues in 1981" (Sneyd, n.d.). A few years after the release of the MacBride Report, both the United States and the United Kingdom withdrew from UNESCO, taking their substantial dues with them (Preston et al. 1989). Prodded by its corporate constituents, the US government successfully shifted the site of international communications policy making from UNESCO to the ITU and then to commercial fora like the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trades (GATT) and the World Trade Organization (WTO) (Hills 1998). By the mid-1990s, the neoliberal "Washington Consensus" held full sway, with NIEO and NWICO widely seen as footnotes of Cold War politics.

28 By 1973, even Robert McNamara, then serving as president of the World Bank, was showcasing participation as the cornerstone of the Bank's 'new directions' policy (Ascroft 1994, 248; Ascroft & Masilela 1994, 267; White 1994, 21). McNamara - having earned a MBA from Harvard, analyzed US bomber efficiency during the firebombing of Japan, risen to president of the Ford Motor Corporation, and served as US Secretary of Defense until 1968 – was a somewhat unlikely proponent of participatory development.

the new perspective (see Lerner & Schramm 1976, Rogers 1976, 1980). These and other scholars, however, resisted comprehensive changes. At worst, participation was incorporated rhetorically, but neither integrally nor practically.[29] Even where participatory concepts were more fundamentally integrated, scholarship often remained ensconced within an academic worldview that continued to view development as a controlled progression toward an order established by the liberal democracies of the North. Such work staked out the theoretical ground that belongs to the *participatory development* mode of discourse and allowed for a broad range of practical instantiation, as will be discussed further below.

Meanwhile, scholars that were more invested in the Marxian underpinning of dependency theory began to investigate, theorize, and instigate radical changes to the structure of media systems in order to guarantee the incorporation of dialogic citizen participation. Some participated in and/or were inspired by the 1970 democratic victory of a socialist administration in Chile and/or the 1979 military victory of a socialist revolution in Nicaragua.[30] The ultimate goal of this *counter-hegemonic liberation* mode of theorization was a complete replacement of top-down commercial and/or authoritarian (or paternalistic) state media structures with participatory forms. This goal, it was argued, could not be achieved through tactical interventions at the local level if these were not executed within a coherent framework of macro-level structural change. Aguirre (1981) provides a succinct example of this logic:

> Although finished designs can't be effected, it is possible and even necessary, to define the
> guidelines of new macro- and micro-social models to inspire practices, even small scale,
> that embody popular power and its alternative expression. It would be a fiction to expect
> that the day after the revolution a mechanical liberation of popular expression will take
> place. (23-4, my translation)[31]

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29 As Ascroft & Masilela (1994) forthrightly noted, "[t]he problem is that the dominant paradigm did not pass
    away: it merely went underground where it is alive and kicking.... How else are we to explain the fact that in the
    1983 edition of the *Diffusion of Innovations*, Rogers' definition of a change agent has remained as defiantly top-
    down as ever – 'an individual who influences clients' innovation decisions in a direction deemed desirable by a
    change agency' (29)?" (275).

30 See Lavin Cerda (1971), Mattelart (1980 [1974], 1986), Mattelart & Siegelaub (1979, 1983), Rothschuh (1980,
    1983), Simspon Grinberg (1981), Gumucio (1983), Läpple-Wagenhals (1984), Mattelart & Rothschuh
    Villanueva (1985).

31 "*Aunque no puedan efectuarse diseños acabados, si es posible y aun necesario, definir los lineamientos de
    nuevos modelos macro y microsociales para inspirar las prácticas, auque sea en pequeña escala, que
    corporicen el poder popular y su expresión alternativa. Sería una ficción esperar que al día siguiente de la
    revolución se efectúe una liberación mecánica de la expresión popular.*"

Scholars working within the counter-hegemonic mode did provide some broad guidelines, notably calls for legal frameworks that "would guarantee the right to communicate for political, social, and cultural organizations at the corresponding level, whether national or local" in conjunction with "norms that would assure financing of communication activity based on the representativeness of different organizations, either through access to state-owned media or subsidies to privately-owned media" (Portales 1981, 73; my translation). [32] For reasons that will be discussed further below, the counter-hegemonic mode fell out of favor before any more detailed programs could be articulated, much less agreed upon.

In a spectrum anchored on one end by the modernization paradigm (where dialogic participation was almost entirely absent) and on the other by counter-hegemonic liberation (where dialogic participation was theoretically omnipresent), the participatory development mode occupied a central position. However, within the narrower confines of the newly emergent participatory paradigm of development communications (from which modernization was discarded), these two modes represented opposite ends of a spectrum. The tension between them therefore played out within the NWICO debates, in which all sides professed at least some commitment to a more participatory framework. UNESCO, as the primary forum for these discussions, had become a key sponsor and publisher of participatory communications research (see Berrigan 1977a, 1977b, 1981; Díaz Bordenave 1977, O'Sullivan-Ryan 1980). Amidst the fraught Cold War politics of the period, overt support for the counter-hegemonic interpretation of participation would open UNESCO to accusations of encouraging totalitarian communism, thus imperiling its attempts to remain impartial by advocating for a free *and* balanced flow of communication at the international level. [33] As a result, UNESCO's publications evince a certain

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32 "q*ue garantice la vigencia del derecho a la comunicación para las organizaciones políticas, sociales y culturales a nivel nacional o local, según corresponda*"; "n*ormas que aseguren el financiamiento de la actividad comunicativa en función de la representatividad de las distintas organizaciones, sea mediante el acceso a los medios de propiedad estatal, sea mediante el subsidio a medios de propiedad privada*"

33 During the NWICO debates, the United States and its allies insisted upon a "free flow" of information, which the NAM countries interpreted as code for a commodified, free trade approach. The NAM countries, meanwhile, argued for a "balanced flow", which the US and its allies interpreted as code for authoritarian state regulation in the communist vein. Thus, UNESCO's endorsement of a "free *and* balanced flow" was an attempt to split the

ambivalence that resolves itself with an inclination toward the less radical path. For instance, in the second chapter of Berrigan's (1981) discussion of "The Role of Community Media in Development", she reviews the definitions "accepted" at a 1977 UNESCO-sponsored conference held in Belgrade and entitled "Self-Management, Access and Participation".[34] Here, "self-management is the most advanced form of participation[,] … [where] the public exercises the power of decision-making within communication enterprises, and is fully involved in the formulation of communication policies and plans." She then acknowledges that this definition "gives a clear picture of a demand for radical reforms in the management of communications systems," but is compelled to immediately point out that "the range is so extensive and far-reaching that it would be over-optimistic to expect that such a total reorganization could come about in the short term" (19). Her first chapter, meanwhile, has a subsection entitled "Access and Participation" but leaves out self-management altogether, noting that "even though day-to-day participation in decision-making may be the ideal, the practicalities of setting up such a system are overwhelming…. Rather, the feasibility of introducing some method of horizontal participation has occupied most attention" (10).

This tension between the development and counter-hegemonic modes is unresolved within the early literature of community media studies produced in relation to the global South. Dervin and Huesca (1999) have argued that it can be traced to profound and perhaps irreconcilable conceptual differences:

> Taken together, horizontality, intersubjectivity, knowing by being-in-the-world, and dialogue as praxis-manifested constitute the pieces of one perspective on communication drawn from the Latin American tradition. At the same time, another contradictory perspective existed, one focusing on the necessity of structural changes to eliminate dependencies and make participation possible. In one sense, these two avenues - structural versus process - in the development of ideas about alternative communication seem entirely complimentary - structural change, it is assumed, makes participatory processes possible. At a deeper level, however, we suggest they become contradictory because they imply different but undiscussed ontological and epistemological assumptions and emphases. The structural avenue, even when it starts off with epistemological assumptions (e.g., diversity in perspectives), ends up privileging ontology and often setting epistemology aside. In contrast, the process avenue usually takes ontology out of the

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middle.

34 Though published in 1981, the text gives a completion date of May 1979.

question and focuses on epistemology. (175)

Indeed, as we shall see further below, later scholars placed an even greater emphasis on "process" at the expense of "structure". We will see, however, that the breach is not irreparable, and that a reincorporation of structural logic will ultimately expand possibilities for implementing the participatory process. Before arriving at that argument, however, an examination of the early literature as it related to Northern initiatives is in order.

A Northern Mode of Community Media Discourse: Alternative Discourse Within a Liberal Representative Democracy

Academic appreciation of Northern community media initiatives was partially shaped by the participatory development mode of community media discourse. UNESCO encouraged this perspective by commissioning a 1977 report on "Some Western Models of Community Media" (Berrigan 1977) and a 1984 "study of community media in the urban context" (Lewis 1984) that included sections on Australia, Europe, Japan, and North America, in addition to various Southern regions. Meanwhile, prominent US-based advocates for more participatory models were inspired by the MacBride report to author the 1981 "Willow Declaration" in which they pledged "to struggle for democratization of communications within our communities, our places of work, and our political institutions" (Halleck 2002, 92-96). [35] Also, from 1968 until the late 1970s, UNESCO worked with the International Association for Media and Communications Research (IAMCR) to bring Northern and Southern scholars into contact. [36] Nonetheless, Lewis recalls that a 1978 seminar held in Quito, Ecuador "showed that Latin American scholars were far ahead of their European colleagues at this time", and it was not until 1982 that the IAMCR officially

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35 The "Willow Declaration" was signed by "a group of artists, educators, researchers, film and video producers, electronic technicians, social scientists, and writers" in August 1981.

36 Following UNESCO's 1968 adoption of "a new strategy for promoting communication research and policy," it commissioned IAMCR Vice President James Halloran to author a working paper and organize a meeting on Mass Media and Society. UNESCO then funded panels to coincide with IAMCR conferences in 1972 ("Communication and Development") and 1974 ("Mass Communication and Social Consciousness in a Changing World"), as well as a workshop on "Communication and Community" at the 1976 conference. These and other IAMCR conferences led to UNESCO funded publications throughout the 1970s (Nordenstreng 2008; Lewis 2010, 831).

formed a Community Communications Section (Lewis 2010, 831). Some Northern scholars and activists working in other contexts, however, had already been drawing on the development mode of thinking about community media. Groombridge (1957, 1972), situated his advocacy for television as a medium of adult education within a broader vision of participatory democracy, and he saw "participatory programming" as one component of community development.[37] Canada's Challenge for Change program positioned community media as a tool for development, as did Stoney's work in New York, and this perspective was reflected in calls for action and how-to manuals produced by activists and practitioners across North America (see Frederiksen 1972, 54-55; Zelmer 1973, 108-110; Anderson 1975, 11-13, 31-34, 40-44, 48-50).

The counter-hegemonic mode, on the other hand, received scant serious attention from Northern scholars. Downing's (1984) impressive work, which focused on "prefigurative" organizational structures, was to some extent an exception, but it stood rather alone. During the 1970s, some community media activists did occasionally invoke the counter-hegemonic mode in their calls for a macro-level restructuring of societal communication systems. Generally, however, this was limited to a brief vision statement and – unlike in the oppositional and revolutionary Latin American contexts – the understanding that such a vision would not be achieved anytime soon was at least implicit. For example, Frederiksen's "video dedication" states that "[i]t is becoming increasingly evident that *man's survival rests upon* the establishment of a non-commercial communications system that provides equal access to all information sources" (original emphasis), but immediately goes on to state that "[t]oward this end, we must each *begin the process* of freeing the information channels in our community" (my emphasis). Further below he identifies his work as part of "[t]he alternate counter-culture video movement" (n.p.), which was less concerned with establishing a new hegemonic system than creating space for itself within the existing order. In this sense, therefore, Frederiksen's work – like much of the early Northern literature regarding

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37 In fact, Groombridge's work (see 1972, 187 - 212) suggests that the field of adult education in the United States had advanced considerably toward a dialogic model of communication, including the use of radio and television, before Freire made his contributions.

community media - fits more properly into a mode of thinking about community media as alternative discourse within a liberal representative democracy. This mode is largely peculiar to the North for at least two interrelated factors.

First, the North's greater wealth and rates of literacy had, by the "golden era" of community media experimentation, led to a more robust alternative press tradition than in the South. As noted above, the rapid expansion of the alternative and underground press in the increasingly contentious political climate of the 1950s and 60s catalyzed and shaped that experimentation. Most academic observers, however, viewed this expansion as merely another stage in a long history of alternative media that differed from dominant forms in their scope, reach, and impact, but not in their structure or fundamental relation to their audience (see Glessing 1970, Lewis 1972, Armstrong 1981, and Kessler 1984). To be sure, many underground periodicals did fit that bill, but this perspective lumped more community-oriented media into the same mix, overlooking their much more explicit focus on fostering new forms of social interaction and community participation (as were emphasized in the participatory development mode). At the same time, it assumed that alternative media would forever remain just that – alternative – and that their only role was to condition dominant forms of media and patterns of behavior. While this might effect a steady and continual shift in terms of societal patterns of thought and behavior, it would not affect the structure of the media system itself (as was emphasized in the counter-hegemonic mode). Armstrong's formulation exemplifies this perspective:

> The relationship of alternative media to the dominant society is, of course, two-way. Not only do ideas introduced by alternative media modify society, they are also themselves modified in the course of being absorbed by mainstream culture. *In effect, the mass media, through which the public is introduced directly to those ideas, use the alternative media for research and development*.... Something happens to all ideas, trends, and styles that emerge from the alternative media. Taken from their original context and sweetened by the merchandisers of mass culture, alternative values and concepts are changed even as they change society. Thus, once far-out expressions of cultural radicalism … which received early and exhaustive attention in the underground media have been thoroughly absorbed into mainstream culture, stripped of their challenging context, and marketed as accoutrements of the good life (25-6; my emphasis).

Here alternative media are cast in the role of a perpetual handmaiden within an extant hegemonic media

system.

Activists in the late 1960s and early 1970s began using radio and video in an analogous manner and often saw themselves as peers of the underground press, even as they incorporated more community-oriented elements. In this regard, video became the basis for "guerrilla television" (Shamberg 1971) and Pacifica radio opened a "Third World Department" in 1975 (Downing 2001, 337). Also indicative of this conflation of alternative and community media is Anderson's guide to "grass roots television", which lists the use of video in support of radical political groups like the American Indian Movement (AIM) alongside examples of "neighborhood-based television" like the Washington, D.C. Community Video Center and South Bronx Cable (31-38). This conflation is especially evident where proponents of community media identified with the counter-culture youth movement of the era. For instance, Frederiksen's guide to community access video includes examples such as the recording of a peace march and a university library "nude-in" (36-38), a detailed suggestion for financing community access television with "video porn for fun and profit" (32), casual references to "long-hairs, freaks, and dopers" (36), psychedelic illustrations, and cartoons in the style of Robert Crumb. The confluence of public access activism and counter-cultural attitudes enabled critics to paint public access with a broad brush. As Kellner (1990) recounts:

> When progressive public access television became widespread and popular in Austin, [TX,] it was subjected to political counterattacks. The establishment daily newspaper, the Austin American-Statesman, published frequent denunciations of public access television, claiming that it was controlled by the "lunatic" fringe of "socialists, atheists, and radicals" and that it was not representative of the community as a whole (an interesting claim given that many conservative church groups, business groups, and political groups also make use of access). In 1983 these criticisms were repeated in editorials and articles … in the more liberal monthly magazines... (210-11). [38]

Halleck concurs, noting that public access television in the US was generally mentioned in the

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38 Some twenty years earlier Pacifica Radio had faced similar criticism, with the station manager ultimately appearing before the US Senate Internal Security Subcommittee. When "asked why three [Communist Party] members had been allowed to broadcast, the station manager pointed out that in the same month, KPFA had also given the microphone to a Los Angeles broker, an academic from the Center for the Study of Democratic Institutions, a Unitarian minister, the former chair of a Democratic Party club, a public relations specialist, the president of the Los Angeles Chapter of the American Federation of Scientists, and, not least, Casper Weinberger, then chair of the Central California Republican Party committee" (Downing 2001, 330).

mainstream media only in relation to "'kinky' sex programs and the use of the medium by skinhead racists" (97), thus reinforcing the mainstream public conception of community media as a marginalized space for the expression of fringe lifestyles and unworthy ideas.

The second factor to influence the emergence of alterity as a mode of thinking about community media in the North was government policy. In a general sense, the policy frameworks employed in Europe and the US – though distinct – had much to do with the historical tradition of alternative presses and the sharp rise in "underground" and counter-cultural media in the post-WWII era. While the adoption of the liberal free press model meant that overt censorship of alternative ideas was much less common than in many Southern nations, the privileging of commercial and public service models meant that minority views often had to seek alternative outlets. Policy decisions (or non-decisions) taken during the 1970s in relation to the use of radio and television technology as specifically community media tended to reinforce that precedent, as politicians and regulators weakly endorsed community media even as they marginalized it in relation to commercial and/or public service broadcasting. This, in turn, largely shaped the public and academic understanding of community media's role in society. The pattern is exemplified by the British and US cases.

Local radio broadcasting in the UK, which had adopted a modified version of the continental public service model, was ostensibly the prerogative of the BBC, though it had largely neglected its responsibilities in this regard throughout the post-war period (Lewis 1984, 101-2). During the 1960s, partly in reaction to "the growing commercial lobby", the BBC made a concerted and indeed successful attempt to improve it's local programming, but the stations "remained part of the BBC machine, lacking the genuine independence of a community station". Meanwhile, the "first documented use of the phrase 'community radio' in the UK" appeared in 1965 as part of a proposal for "250 not-for-profit local stations, financed partly by local government and partly from BBC licence fees". A community radio lobby formed over the following years to support this proposal. Nonetheless, the election of a conservative government in 1970 led to Independent Local Radio (ILR), which was approved in 1972 and implemented according

to a commercial model. The community radio lobby adopted a "tone … [that] was overwhelmingly one of doctrinal hostility to ILR" with the result that "in political circles at least a 'community radio activist' came to mean effectively someone from the loose coalition of interest which was the 'radical left' in the seventies" (Stoller 155). Thus marginalized, community radio could be mentioned favorably but vaguely in subsequent government studies, such as the crucial "Annan Report" (Report of the Committee on the Future of Broadcasting 1977) which, instead of calling for a new "specific third tier of radio", merely suggested a new type of authority that would "break out of the present mould of financing broadcasting, and encourag[e] the growth of co-operative and other joint forms of financing to stimulate a direct involvement by the community in its own broadcasting services" (cited in Stoller 156; see also Freedman 2001). That suggestion was not enacted and non-profit community radio would not appear in the UK for another quarter century (Stoller 313-335).

The US experience was a mirror image of the UK process: whereas community radio in the UK had been marginalized by the introduction of commercial radio into a public service framework, community radio in the US was marginalized by the introduction of public service radio into a commercial framework. As mentioned above, the NFCB had formed in 1975, signaling the consolidation of a grass roots movement. Following the passage of the Public Broadcasting Act in 1967 and the establishment of National Public Radio in 1970, however, "[a] financing structure was implemented whereby stations could apply for money from the public purse if they could prove that they met certain criteria", which generally involved greater funding, more staff, increased broadcasting hours, and gearing content toward obtaining higher ratings (Rennie 66). At the same time, the new public stations complained that small ten-watt stations – cheaper to set up and thus favored by unfunded community groups – were taking up valuable spectrum of which they could make more efficient use. Somewhat counterintuitively:

> the NFCB joined the campaign *against* small community stations in the name of spectrum
> efficiency … [and t]he FCC ruled that they would no longer award licenses to stations of
> ten watts or less.... The requirements enforced upon the community stations brought about

a type of professionalism that pushed out many of the more radical radio announcers (67, original emphasis).

As in the UK, regulators gave enough ground to partially satiate the desire for locally responsive radio without embracing the participatory ethos of self-management that distinguishes community from local public service and commercial radio. In so doing, they cast community radio as volunteer run and necessarily amateurish, in contrast to the "professionalism" of commercial and public service radio. The result in both cases was to push community radio proponents to the fringes of an officially sanctioned discourse.

A parallel tendency is evident in the discourse surrounding community television in the US and UK. In the US, the trustees of the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation commissioned an independent citizens' group, the Sloan Commission on Cable Communications, to assess "the possibilities, both positive and negative, of cable television" in order to facilitate policy recommendations for the FCC (Sloan Commission on Cable Communications 1971, vii). The Sloan Commission's final report, published in 1971, called for at least one public access channel on each cable system to be devoted "exclusively to public discussions at the grass roots level", especially "within well-defined neighborhoods with ethnic problems [where] these channels would hopefully enable the groups therein to speak gratis to each other, to the inner city, and to the general public" (Levin 1973, 356). Meanwhile, in an attached commentary reviewing experiences in New York City ("the one metropolitan area where formal public access channels have been in operation"), the following was included among the "tentative hypotheses":

> Public access channels will not be used, generally, to reach the viewing public at large. If a large, distributed audience is desired, public access channels are ineffective.... Because public access channels will not reach broad audiences in the near future, they are not adequate substitutes for conventional television; *they are not yet adequate as a forum for the presentation of competing views on controversial issues*.... Public channels will be used, often, as a kind of closed-circuit *medium for internal communication* within already established organizations, neighborhoods, and interest groups (Price & Morris 1971, 237; my emphasis).

While this dour assessment was evidently meant to motivate calls for nourishing public channels with "promotional forces within the community and for technical assistance and talent to assist in the

preparation of programs" in order to overcome "production barriers and difficulties in developing a viewer constituency [that] are often as great as difficulties in obtaining access", one must assume that it also blunted the impact of those suggestions and ultimately contributed to the realization of the commentary's final prediction – that "without general use, the shape of the public access channel may be skewed and the impetus for their maintenance diminished" (ibid.). Thus, prominent academics advocating public access at the highest levels of US policy-making were nonetheless simultaneously casting it as a marginal tool, necessary only in problematic communities and unsuitable for effective democratic deliberation.[39] In any case, public access was sufficiently marginalized as to be entirely excluded from Shapiro's (1976) volume on "Media Access: Your Rights to Express Your Views on Radio and Television" and in 1992 Halleck could still lament that its potential for democratic transformation was "neither recognized by the public nor acknowledged by most communication theorists" (Halleck 97). [40] Devine, meanwhile, concluded in 1995 that "communication academics have marginalized access TV as nothing but an amateurish, illusory, and ineffective attempt to democratize the media" (cited in Rodriguez 2001, 12).

As in the US, early discussion of community television in the UK was closely related to commercial cable television expansion. Most observers, including private interests hoping to enter the market, expected that critical decisions would be taken in 1976, when the BBC Charter and the Independent Television Act (governing commercial broadcasting) were due to expire and could thus be modified. Commercial cable operators and other private interests were hoping for greater profit

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39 The authors of the commentary were Monroe Price and Charles Morris. Price served as Deputy Director of the Sloan Commission while a law professor at UCLA and would go on to become Director of the University of Pennsylvania's Center for Global Communication Studies and the Stanhope Centre for Communications Policy Research in London. Morris had served as Research Director of the Center for Analysis of Public Issues in Princeton, NJ.

40 Shapiro declares in the first sentence of his preface that "[t]his book focuses upon one key aspect of broadcasting law: namely, those rules which require a broadcaster to provide air time to concerned citizens for self-expression" (vii). The absence of any discussion of cable access, therefore, can be defended on the grounds of academic specificity. The more general point, however, is that mainstream academic discussion of access in the mid-1970s was still hyper-focused on the application of the "fairness doctrine" and related regulations within a media apparatus organized according to the liberal model.

opportunities in the television sector and they had good reason to be optimistic after a Conservative victory in the 1970 election. The new government dissolved the Annan Committee, which had been appointed by the previous Labour government to develop policy proposals for both radio and television, and began "giving indications that it would allocate the remaining fourth TV channel without benefit of a government enquiry" (Lewis 1978, 13). In this context, Greenwich Cablevision, a relatively small company, "successfully lobbied the Minister of Posts and Telecommunications to allow programs of local origination on its cable system, which until then had been limited to relaying existing broadcast service" (Rennie 83). The government announced that it would be willing to license additional cable operators to do the same on an "experimental" basis.

The licenses were to be granted with certain conditions, including that no public money would be provided; that the applicant companies be wholly British-owned; that fees be paid to cover the Ministry's oversight costs; that programming be local, appealing to the local community, and of high quality; and that no advertising, sponsorship, or film screenings would be permitted. While the major cable companies were caught by surprise and unhappy with the licensing terms, especially the lack of opportunity for revenue generation, "they presumably calculated that they could not afford to stay out". Thus, among the five eventual licensees were Rediffusion and British Relay, (which controlled 50 and 16 percent, respectively, of the 9,000 cable systems in the UK as of 1972/73), as well as EMI, the music label and electronics manufacturer, which financed its station "as a research and development project" (Lewis 12-14; Beaud 1980, 25). As a Rediffusion representative made clear at the time, the participation of the cable companies - which had organized as the Cable Television Association (CTA) and released a set of proposals in 1973 - was primarily a first step in what they hoped would be an advance toward expanding their business model into retransmission, "special interest channels", and "box office" (i.e. premium channels or pay per view):

> The experimenters applied [for the local licenses] because community television is certainly one of the services that cable, by its essentially localised structure and availability of channels, is better able to supply than the ether. The other reason was to set a precedent

– the first time that someone other than the broadcasters was entrusted with communicating with people in their homes.... We don't want any closed experiments. We don't want permission simply to do this sort of service in this town, and to be told that permission to continue the service or to expand is a matter of Government decision as a later date. If cable operators and programme providers are to invest money to find answers, they will only be encouraged to do so on an open-ended basis knowing that they have the freedom to develop thereafter. (Standing Conference on Broadcasting: 'Cable: An Examination of the Social and Political Implications of Cable TV', 1973, cited in Lewis 17)

The CTA's vision did not, however, come to pass.

After a new Labour administration was elected in 1974 it swiftly reconstituted the Annan Committee and extended the BBC license for three years, damping the enthusiasm of the cable companies, which would now have to wait until 1979 for any further openings. Though the Annan Committee, which was "impressed by what it had seen so far of the cable stations," persuaded the Ministry to allow caption advertising, it was not sufficient to keep any but the EMI owned station on air as of early 1976 (18). Later that year the EMI station was transferred to local ownership and began employing a mixed funding model including private and public foundations, local donations, and rental and advertising revenues (52-53). In that same year a sixth station began operating in a newly developed suburb of London. The local development corporation, "feeling that the new town's lack of its own communications was the main obstacle to the birth of a local life", had successfully petitioned the government for a three year license (which prohibited advertising) and agreed to finance the station in conjunction with the Post Office. By 1980, however, this station had ceased transmitting video, and by 1984 the erstwhile EMI station had also ceased operating, leaving Britain once again without local programming (Lewis 1978, 64-70; 1984, 94; Beaud 1980, 34-40).

One result of the cable access experiments' failure was to taint community television with the opportunism of commercial interest. As Rennie points out, the British school of critical cultural studies, with its Marxist underpinnings, was especially fearful of the potential for community media to serve as a trojan horse for the privatization of the public service structure. Murdock, for example, argued that:

[f]rom the point of view of the companies involved, then, the present cable experiments

fulfil [sic] two principal functions. Firstly, they act as public relations exercises aimed at establishing the present operators as capable of running a domestic television station responsibly, and persuading the government to allow cable to precede [sic] on a commercial basis. Secondly, they provide convenient opportunities for electronics manufacturers to develop and test 'hardware' facilities. They are, in fact, one component in these companies' overall 'Research and Development' programs." (in Bibby et al. 1979, cited in Rennie 85)

Garnham (1990) agreed and also saw "community participation [as] a myth promoted by industry to sell Portapaks to 'video freaks'" (cited in Rennie 84). In making his case for a "re-evaluation of public service", he argued that observers on "the Left" remained:

> trapped within a free press model inherited from the nineteenth century....[,] have concentrated their critique on the question of the coercive or hegemonic nature of state power....[, and have] tended to fall back either on idealist formulations of free communications given no organizational substance or material support, or on a technological utopianism which sees the expansion of channels of communication as inherently desirable because pluralistic. Both positions are linked to some version, both political and artistic, of free expression, for example, the long debate and campaigns around [an additional BBC channel], *the touching faith in cable access, Left support for 'free' or 'community' radio, and so on*. (1986, 40; my emphasis)

Once again, the swing in government policy between commercial and public service models led observers to cast community media not as a robust model in its own right, but rather as a subservient and ineffectual alternative to dominant forms.

Community Media Theory in the 1990s: Dismissing Counter-hegemony and Debating Participation

sBy the end of the 1980s the golden era of experimentation was definitively over, zealous excitement had diminished, and the three modes of community media discourse had congealed into stable (though still overlapping) forms. Then, over a decade beginning in 1993, there was a veritable explosion in academic publications related to community media, including multiple edited volumes. Significantly, the vast majority of this work fit squarely within the participatory development mode, focused primarily on experiences in the global South, and comprised a sustained and collective reflection on what had been accomplished by the participatory paradigm of development communication over the previous decades. [41]

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41 See Lewis (1993), White & Nair (1993), Huesca & Dervin (1994), Moemeka (1994, 2000), White et al. (1994), Huesca (1996, 2003), Servaes et al. (1996), Dervin & Huesca (1997), Sreberny-Mohammadi and Mohammad (1997), Fraser & Restrepo-Estrada (1998), Jacobson & Servaes (1999), Servaes (1999), Tehranian (1999), White

What came to the fore was a realization that, despite several decades of work, researchers and practitioners had yet to truly come to terms with some very fundamental questions: What exactly was meant by "participation" and how should the theoretical construct be translated into frameworks of policy and practice?

As Thomas (1994) noted, participatory communication "calls for a fuller involvement of people in their own development, but not (and this is seldom pointed out) the total involvement of all people in every aspect of human development" (49). Thus, while all could agree that more participation in development communications was desirable, there was little agreement regarding the specificities of who was meant to participate in which processes, to what degree, and toward which ends. In the most general sense, researchers sought to use dialogic communication in order to identify and achieve development goals that may have little to do with media systems, much less popular production of media texts (cf. Ascroft and Masilela 1994, Cohen 1996, Schoen 1996). For instance, dialogic interventions might be used in order to evaluate and prioritize needs in relation to health care, education, agriculture, or natural resource management (cf. Wijayaratna & Valdez 1996, Barton 1997, Macleod 2003, Minkler & Wallerstein 2003).[42] Other researchers, however, sought to tie participation more directly to media production. Here, too, a range of possibilities exists. On the one hand, participation might be employed in the service of traditional propaganda campaigns. In this scenario, a representative group from the intended audience would be consulted, much like a marketing focus group, and their feedback would enable professionals to better tailor the messaging of the campaign (cf. Mody 1991, Nair & White 1994, Storey 1999, Mandel 2002). On the other hand, participatory communication can be interpreted to mean that

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(1999), Boafo (2000), Braman et al. (2000), Wilkins (2000), Gumucio (2001), Melkote & Steeves (2001), Richards et al. (2001), Rodriguez (2001), Shepherd & Rothenbuhler (2001), Waisbord (2001), Carpentier et al. (2003), Couldry & Curran (2003), and Mody (2003).

42 In this vein, dialogic participation has long and increasingly been emphasized as the basis for urban planning and generalized community development in the United States (cf. Arnstein 1969, Johnson 1987, Forester 1988, Kretzman & McKnight 1993, Green et al. 2000, Okubo 2000). Significantly, these academic fields seem to have focused hardly at all on the specific role of participatory media. Likewise, the subfield of international development communications seems to have drawn hardly at all on the Northern urban planning and community development literature.

media texts should be produced not by professionals, but by members of the same groups whose identities would be represented and determined by those texts (cf. Deza 1994, Kasoma 1994, Huesca 1996, Stuart and Bery 1996). This, of course, is the interpretation of participatory development communications that bears most directly on the field of community media studies.

Even at this level of specificity, where grassroots media production is the desired goal of participatory development communications, a range of theoretical interpretation and practical implementation remains. We can sketch the poles of this spectrum in the following manner. At one end, the primary goal of participatory production is the empowerment of participants. Through the process of creating content based on their own experiences and knowledge, participants gain self-esteem and begin to form a different conception of the power relations inherent in their lifeworld, along the lines of Freire's *conscientização*. To the extent that they have gained a greater appreciation for the media production process, they are better equipped to interpret the media messages that they encounter on a daily basis. Development interventions based on this goal need not be long term; once the participants' eyes have been opened, so to speak, they return to and bring this new perspective to bear on their previous role in the community. At the opposite end of the spectrum, the primary goal of participatory production is to construct a media production apparatus that will continue to represent the community. Here, too, individual participants will be empowered, but the goal is not simply to carry the new perspective into their previous lives. Rather, participatory production should have a long-term and sustainable impact on the flow of information and production of meaning within the community. Towards this end, it should include distribution networks that ensure the media content is accessible by all members of the community and, perhaps, beyond.

This spectrum returns us to the discursive distinction between participatory development and counter-hegemony. The point here is that during this decade of intensified publication the counter-hegemonic mode is conspicuously absent. Most of the work produced in this period emphasized the use of participatory media production for empowerment and the achievement of development goals unrelated

to the functioning of the media system. The disappearance of the counter-hegemonic mode is partially explained by changes in the global political economic context. Many observers interpreted the end of the Cold War as the death knell of socialist ideology itself. Whatever the ultimate truth of that conjecture, the subsequent and seemingly untempered reign of the "Washington Consensus" on economic development, which spurred a global wave of telecommunications privatization and channeled development funding toward market-oriented approaches, certainly placed constraints on practitioners and shaped the academic discourse.

That said, however, the subfield of community media studies (which during this period was more recognizable as that of "participatory development communications") was also responding to important shifts within the larger field of communications research. As we have seen, the participatory paradigm arose from within dependency theory, which viewed modernization as a Northern attempt to cement its dominance over global communication flows. Dependency theorists argued that this resulted in a form of cultural imperialism in which Northern (capitalist) ideology was foisted upon Southern populations through news and entertainment content. During the 1980s, however, cultural analysis within the field of communications research – influenced by the prevailing academic winds – veered away from political economic concerns and macro-level structural analysis. In this context, scholars argued that the cultural imperialism thesis actually relied on the same assumption of a transmission model of communication that had been criticized when deployed by modernization theory. Indeed, research from the increasingly robust subfield of audience studies compounded these doubts by demonstrating that the same text might be received quite differently in distinct social contexts. [43] With its theoretical headsail thus torn, and facing the post-Cold War headwinds of neoliberal political economics, the counter-hegemonic mode lost momentum and was left behind.

This shift had significant implications for the progression of community media theory. Dervin & Huesca make this clear through a series of articles that tracks the progression of "meta-theoretic

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[43] See Liebes & Katz (1986, 1990), Straubhaar (1991), Golding & Harris (1997), and Aillón Valverde (2002).

assumptions" in participatory development communications and outlines a diachronic movement from positivism – which posits a fixed, continuous, and fully knowable reality – toward postmodernism – which posits "chaotic reality, chaotic knowing, and no possible universal standard of judgment" (1999, 193).[44]   While acknowledging that "those who attempt to use postmodern ideas in development communication contexts either fail to realize them fully or assume that the ideas cannot be used [because they] are in fact contradictory to the very ideas of participation and development" (196), they nonetheless emphasize the importance of postmodernism in provoking a reconceptualization of human subjectivity and the role of power (197). They thus call for postmodernism to be incorporated into a "communitarian position that formally incorporates both order and chaos as ontological and epistemological assumptions" (199). They hope this move will encompass "all prior perspectives" in order to respond to the:

> explicit recognition that we need to be attending to the in-between, to mediations, to spaces between order and chaos, structure and individual, product and process ... [and] to see the in-between as the time-space where humans collectively and individually use a variety of communicating strategies for making and unmaking order (e.g., structure, community, facts, agreement, self) and chaos (e.g., diversity, conflict, cacophony, spontaneity, uniqueness) (201).

As Dervin & Huesca recognize, this impulse to resolve the theoretical debate by acknowledging the usefulness of the whole spectrum of perspectives and allowing them to simultaneously coexist, so to speak, was shared by Servaes, who had been arguing for a "multiplicity in one world" model for some time (see 1989, 1996, 1999). The problem with his approach, however, is that it does not actually resolve the tension in a way that provides a normative basis for structuring policy or designing community media initiatives. Dervin and Huesca's conclusion that "[w]hat [Servaes] ended up with is essentially a cultural relativity approach" (195) seems apt in the light of his claim that "[t]here is no universal model for development. Each society must develop its own development strategy" (Servaes 1996, 84). Dervin and Huesca, however, get us no further with their "privileging of process". They claim that " *by focusing on the process* by which humans individually and collectively make and unmake both order and chaos, *a basis for systematic study* can begin to emerge out of what has been a dysfunctional ricochet ... between

44 See also Huesca & Dervin (1994) and Dervin & Huesca (1997).

order and chaos" (200, my emphasis). As noted earlier, however, their treatment of the tension between "process" and "structure" runs parallel to my heuristic dichotomy between the participatory development and counter-hegemonic modes. They emphasize process, therefore, at the expense of structure, thus reinforcing the shift away from not only the counter-hegemonic mode, but also the political economic analysis that can help elucidate the types of structures that best facilitate democratic and participatory processes. Without sufficiently addressing structure, they are left with a weak call to respect the "principle of diversity and maximal multiplicity" (202) that merely echoes what they classified as cultural relativity in Servaes' approach.

Rodriguez's (2001) widely influential conception of "citizen's media" largely reproduced this error, even as it advanced community media studies one crucial step forward. She begins with a similar analysis of the theoretical landscape, noting that "the potential of … Dervin and Huesca's theoretical proposals is unquestionable" before offering her "own different attempt to break the boundaries of binary thinking" (16). That attempt also leans heavily on what can be categorized as postmodernism. She draws on Mouffe and McClure's feminist "theory of radical democracy", which explicitly rejects the liberal understanding of an essential citizen that is passively subordinate to power. Instead, they posit a citizen whose multiple subjectivities are constituted by her "historical location" and are enacted "on a day-to-day basis, through [her] participation in everyday political practices" (18-19). Following Foucault, they view power as not merely something wielded from above, but something that can also be created and shared through the process of empowerment. Thus, for Rodriguez:

> referring to "citizens' media" implies first that a collectivity is *enacting* its citizenship by actively intervening and transforming the established mediascape; second, that these media are contesting social codes, legitimized identities, and institutionalized social relations; and third, that those communication practices are empowering the community involved, to the point where these transformations and changes are possible. (20, original emphasis)

This is a crucial step because it begins to re-situate the *process* of community media within societal structures, even if those structures are only articulated as "social codes, legitimized identities, and

institutionalized social relations", without explicit reference to the political economic apparatuses that sustain them.[45] As with Servaes and Dervin & Huesca, lacking from Rodriguez's notion of citizens' media is a normative framework that will facilitate the *sustained* growth of the radical democracy and empowered citizenship for which she calls. Instead, she claims that "what makes citizens' media fascinating is how they stir power in kaleidoscopic movements *which fade soon after they emerge*, like movements in a dance toward empowerment" (21, my emphasis).

As she makes quite clear, Rodriguez's emphasis on the ephemerality of citizen's media is a direct response to the often harsh judgments of scholars who "study alternative media in terms of their success or their failure in balancing the power equation between [trans-national communications corporations] and powerless communities [with the result that] alternative media are frequently declared a failure" (11). She points out that defining "alternative media by what they were not, instead of by what they were … entrapped these analyses in oppositional thinking and binary categories" (13). Moreover, their:

> understanding of how democracy is built emerges from thinking about political actions and social movements as linear, continuous, and conscious processes toward a common goal. As a result, citizens' media – with their often fragmented and improvised nature – are dismissed for not having enough political potential to contribute significantly to the construction of democracy. (22)

The majority of the scholars she cites in this regard emerged during the NWICO debates and her rejection of their "binary" analyses is one of the clearest rejections of the counter-hegemonic mode to appear in the literature. Rather than faulting citizens' media for having "such short life cycles that they appear and disappear leaving – what at first glance seems to be – no signature, no accomplishments, no successes", she celebrates "a multitude of small forces that surface and burst like bubbles in a swamp," signaling that the swamp is alive in the same way that democratic communication is "a live creature that contracts and expands with its own very vital rhythms" (*ibid.*). This is well and good – if community media has not yet

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45 Rodriguez does state – in a footnote – that "academic and activist efforts for more democratic communication should maintain multiple fronts, such as political-economy explorations of the cultural industries" (23), but the implication that political-economic structural analysis is only appropriate for dominant media systems unwittingly reinforces the binary between "mainstream media and … alternative media" that she means to overcome with her substitution of the term "citizens' media" (20).

succeeded in significantly displacing, much less replacing, the hegemony of top-down and increasingly commercial systems, it certainly lives on and continues to empower individuals, communities, and social movements. But must it simply be left to its own vital rhythms? To fend for itself in the face of attacks from authoritarian politicians and profit hungry capitalists? Can scholars not seek a normative framework that would nourish and nurture this "live creature"? That would help it to build a stable theoretical home, buttressed by stable policies, where it might grow and multiply?

For all its value, Rodriguez's theoretical framework pushes her into the same relativism that marks Servaes and Dervin & Huesca's frameworks:

> Addressing our obsession for clinging to our theorizing the construction of democracy as a unified and straight-line project, McClure challenges us to let go of these prefabricated notions and to learn to capture the political action as a historical claim. A claim has a location in time and space. A claim is relevant only within a historical context and for a situated subject, and it cannot be transferred to a different positioning.... As opposed to the "platform" or the "social project," claims are not static; they are in constant flux, following the movements of a changing social subject. (*ibid.*)

The problem here is that any attempt to theorize democracy is preemptively reduced to a dogmatic and top-down "platform", leaving no possibility for the construction of a normative framework for democratic decision-making. Rodriguez (continuing to cite McClure) insists that this "marks the opening of a new politics", but this is only described as a shift from addressing rights claims made to the state to "addressing such claims to each other, and to each 'other', whoever and wherever they may be" (22-23). No mention whatsoever is made of a process that would allow for the adjudication of those claims, and it is hard to see how that could be accomplished without some normative democratic framework.

What Rodriguez fails to concede is that such a framework does not necessarily posit a singular and static end state that can only be reached via a unilinear course. While this may aptly describe a certain vision of "scientific" socialism that served (or was assumed to serve) as a more or less implicit backdrop to discussions of community media within the counter-hegemonic mode, that particular error should not preclude all other attempts to articulate a vision for a robust and radically democratic system of participatory media production and circulation that would be capable of displacing and even replacing the

currently hegemonic model. At this point in the history of community media studies, however, the rejection of the counter-hegemonic mode had severely constrained the space available for such a discussion. Significantly, however, while Rodriguez's advocacy of citizens' media had, in many ways, continued this trend, it also signaled promising new avenues for advancing community media studies.

Integrating the Three Modes of Community Media Discourse: Civil Society and the Public Sphere

The accelerated "globalization" of the 1990s and 2000s impelled communications researchers – across the field - to grapple with the ever more significant and ubiquitous ramifications of transnational data networks and media flows. It also reinforced the importance of integrating perspectives from seemingly disparate geopolitical and cultural contexts. To a great extent, participatory communications researchers had been ahead of the curve in this regard. The NWICO movement of the 1970s and early 80s had engaged many of these issues and UNESCO had fostered a global perspective in its publications. For the better part of the next two decades, however, no such broadly comparative studies appeared. [46] Rather, the works that appeared during the boom period discussed in the previous section collectively exhibit a somewhat myopic focus on participatory development communications in the South, especially Latin America, South Asia, and Africa. The geographic breadth of Rodriguez's case examples – which she drew from Nicaragua, Colombia, Catalonia, and the United States – serves as a precursor to the resurgence of what might be termed "comparative internationalism" within community media studies during the following decade.

Rennie's (2006) "global introduction" to community media focused primarily on Europe, North America, and Australia before addressing "the deployment of community media as a development strategy in both First and Third World Countries" (11). Howley (2005) employed "community media as a lens to examine the dialectical (if uneven) process between global forces and conditions and the everyday lived experience of local communities" and dealt entirely with case examples from the United States,

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46 For example, in 1993 UNESCO published another volume edited by Lewis in which the only case examples not drawn from the South deal with Aboriginal broadcasting in Australia and the alternative press in Belarus. Four of the remaining six are from Latin America and the Caribbean.

Canada, and Australia. His subsequent edited volume (2010), meanwhile, presents work from New Zealand, Slovenia, Hungary, and Macedonia, as well as North America, Latin America, Africa, and Western Europe. In a similar manner, Fuller's (2007) collection of "International Perspectives" on community media highlights Israeli, Basque, Turkish, Kazakh, Thai, and Singaporian initiatives alongside those from South Asia, North America, and Western Europe, not to mention Brazil and Ghana.

This period also witnessed an intensified effort on the part of community media scholars to track and theorize the relationship between participatory media and digital networking, paying particular attention to the exponential increase in "virtual communities".[47] Of particular interest at the international level were new methods for networking global activism that made use of the Internet and came to the fore in the late 1990s with the Zapatista movement in Mexico and the protests against the 1999 World Trade Organization (WTO) Ministerial Conference in Seattle.[48] These movements grew symbiotically with new efforts to reshape global information flows – such as that formed around the People's Communication Charter (PCC) (cf. Hamelink 2007) – which picked up the baton that NWICO had carried some decades before.

The expanded scope of community media studies, both in terms of geography and media, sparked a renewed engagement with the alternative and counter-hegemonic modes of theorization. For instance, Howley's fresh look at the role and potential of community radio, public access television, and online virtual communities in the North could not rely on an outmoded notion of alternative media as merely counter-cultural and/or subservient. He acknowledges this by noting that:

...the phrase "alternative media," which all too often serves as a "catch-all" that embraces

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47 This trajectory, of course, intersects with the long history of research regarding Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in development, "e-government", and civic participation, as well as a vast amount of sociological research regarding "virtual communities". For recent work situated within community media studies, see Ford & Gil (2001), Pigg (2001), Atton (2002, 133-152), Hollander (2002), Gumucio (2003), Howley (2005, 72-82, 226-257), Laudeman (2005), Erble & Günnel (2006), Rennie (2006, 163-84), Stewart & Pileggi (2007), Fuchs (2010), Goodwin (2010), Guglietti (2010), Sienkiewicz (2010), and Meinrath & Pickard (2010).

48 On the Zapatista employment of the Internet, see Ronfeldt et al. (1998), Ford & Gil (2001), Ronfeldt & Arquilla (2001), Halleck (2002, 333-342), Darling (2007, 2008), Jeffries (2010) and Van Laer & Van Aelst (2010). On the role of Indymedia in Seattle and beyond, see Halleck (2002, 415-432), Downing (2003), Pickard (2003, 2006a, 2006b, 2008), Wall (2003), Lopez & Roig (2006), and Fontes (2010).

a variety of media forms and practices – some participatory in nature, others not, that may or may not have very much relevance to geographically situated communities – confounds the study of participatory communication models like those associated with community media. (2005, 4)

In a like manner, Rennie's (2003) analysis of community television policy in Australia argued for "a shift from seeing community media as oppositional and marginal to new notions of community-based media that are empowering and generative in nature" (49). If the long debate over the "proper" role of participation in development communications had not produced a conclusive answer, it had, at least, served to cement participation as the factor that distinguishes community from merely alternative (i.e. not mainstream) media in whichever context, including the North. The alternative mode, which had previously induced media theorists to largely overlook community media, therefore needed an overhaul. Meanwhile, the renewed attention to global information flows, alongside the rise of transnationally networked social movements, returned a sense of urgency to the types of policy considerations that were prominent in the counter-hegemonic mode but downplayed or even discounted in the 1990s and early 00s. This is especially evident in the concern for "public philosophies" that motivated Rennie's (2006) analysis of the historical role of government policy in determining the different emphases and outcomes of community media initiatives in Australia, Europe, and North America.

The point here is not that the alternative and counter-hegemonic modes have returned to some rightful place alongside the development mode and returned community media studies to an integral wholeness. As I have tried to make clear, these modes always overlapped and existed in tension with each other. Neither singly nor in tandem do they form a sufficient framework for the theoretical analysis of community media's potential for democratic communication. The point, rather, is that community media studies is only now coming into its own precisely because it is working its way beyond the constraints of the three modes while keeping their central concerns intact.

In 2003 Jankowski noted that "the main deficiency in community media research is the paucity of theoretical grounding and model building" (11). Howley (2005) agreed, arguing that the "engaging and

richly detailed case studies [of the previous decades] often fail to situate community media in the context of contemporary cultural theory, or within the wider contours of our rapidly changing communication environment" (5). The urge to better situate community media has been fundamental to the promise shown by community media studies scholarship over the previous decade. In this regard, Rodriguez's theorization, despite the shortcomings noted above, was instrumental. If her construct of "citizens' media" prioritized personal and local empowerment at the expense of structural and policy considerations, her emphasis on citizenship nonetheless situated community media firmly within the framework of public participation within a democratic society. This, of course, had never been absent from the alternative, counter-hegemonic, and participatory modes, but it had not been the primary axis of theorization for quite some time.

Howley picked up this thread when he noted that, "by treating community members as citizens, not as consumers, community media foster a greater awareness of the interdependent nature of social relations and shared environments both locally and globally" (268). He attempted to theorize this interdependence by utilizing Stuart Hall's notion of "articulation", which "refers at once to 'speaking' or 'uttering' as well as to a 'connection' or 'linkage' between disparate elements[,] ... offers a way to conceptualize community as a unity of differences[,] … [and serves as] an organizing strategy for progressive social change" (6). While Howley's case studies valuably trace a range of strategic and tactical uses of community media to articulate varying levels of community, the concept remains thin and he ultimately fails to present articulation as a robust and actionable theoretical framework, much less a replicable model for organizing and growing community media.

Rennie successfully integrates the notions of citizenship and articulation by situating community media within the theoretical framework of civil society. This maneuver advances community media studies in two important ways. First, it provides a framework within which to integrate the varying concerns of the three modes of community media discourse. Participation is inherent in the concept of civil society, which Rennie sees as "something that is associational and nonprofit, *generated for itself and*

by itself rather than for or by the state or the market.... Community media should therefore be seen as a means to the maintenance and extension of civil society *by civil society itself*" (35-36, my emphasis). In this context, community media can accommodate alterity but need not be defined by it. As Rennie points out:

> community media as a whole has attracted much less attention than has one of its components – alternative, or radical, media … [but this does] not account for the large amount of community media that is *not* radical or social-change focused … Using the notion of civil society expands the field to encompass all community media. (36)

Additionally, because civil society "requires a relationship with the state in order to exist", the framework impels a consideration of "the positive role that the state can play towards the development of community media" (37) in terms of regulation and policy, thus engaging one of the primary concerns of the counter-hegemonic mode. The theoretical frame of civil society, therefore, is robust enough to successfully integrate the three overlapping but disparate modes of discourse. It does this not by specifically defining just what community media *is* – in fact, it actually opens up a great deal of space for a multiplicity of community media forms – but instead begins to clearly stake out what community media *does*.

Rennie's introduction of civil society also points to the importance of public sphere theory for community media studies. "The public sphere," she points out, "is implicit within the notion of civil society, as only an understanding of communication within public space can link civil society to democratic theory". While her subsequent discussion is frustratingly brief, she does note that "[c]ommunity media, being a media that is produced by civil society groups, has a unique relationship to the types of citizen participation that occur through civil society engagement" (34). The conclusion to be drawn here is that only a system of community media can facilitate the public communication necessary for the democratic functioning of civil society. We might hang Howley's terminology on Rennie's framework and say that the proper role of community media is to serve as an *articulating mechanism* of civil society itself. Whereas Howley's conceit only allows us to name this role, public sphere theory provides an adequate framework for modeling its mechanics.

The Public Sphere in Community Media Studies: 1) Counterpublics

Noting the long wait for a complete English version of *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere* (which appeared in 1989), Lewis (2006) has lamented that "anglophone ignorance for so many years of Habermas's seminal work on the public sphere was a serious loss to the study of community media" (21). Indeed, only in recent years have community media scholars begun anything resembling a systematic engagement with public sphere theory, and much work remains to be done. We must note, however, that Habermas's ideas were not entirely inaccessible in English prior to 1989, as a translation of his encyclopedia entry on the public sphere was available as early as 1974 and reprinted five years later in an anthology that would have been familiar to many scholars interested in community media (Habermas 1979). Surprisingly, however, instead of buttressing calls for community media, this article seems only to have informed Garnham's (1986) argument in favor of public service broadcasting over and against community media. We discussed Garnham above, in the context of the alternative mode, noting his quick dismissal of community media. Here we will explore his insistence on "the public service model of broadcasting as an embodiment of the principles of the Public Sphere" (45).

In relation to the "fundamental contradiction between the economic and the political at the level of their value systems and of the social relations which those value systems require and support" (46), Garnham argues that:

> [t]he great strength of the public service model … is the way it (a) presupposes and then tries to develop in practice a set of social relations which are distinctly political rather than economic, and (b) at the same time attempts to insulate itself from control by the state as opposed to, and this is often forgotten, political control. (45)

The problem here is not the postulation of a divide between the political and the economic, but the failure to see that within the category of the political there is a further distinction to be made, between the state and civil society. Garnham alludes to this when he rightly recognizes that political control is not – as his conservative interlocutors would have it – necessarily state control, but he never articulates the role of a civil society that exists apart from *both* the market and the state. His supposed dichotomy is, in fact, a

trichotomy, and his failure to recognize this crucial point muddies his discussion of "mediation within the Public Sphere and … knowledge-broking within the [public service] system" (49). For, while he is right to point out that to the degree which political communication "is forced to channel itself via commercial media … [it] becomes the politics of consumerism" (48), he is unable to articulate the structural model of a public service system that would prevent the same political communication from becoming – as free-market proponents fear – the politics of statism. His solution revolves – as it should – around the notion of public accountability and he suggests a familiar set of controls: "a structure of Freedom of Information, and so on[;] ... better trained journalists[; and] a public service structure of provision" (49). Aside from noting the circularity of arguing that an accountable public service system requires a *public service structure* of provision, we might ask who should train the journalists and according to what criteria? Or who will structure and ensure the freedom of information? If the State is to be entrusted with these functions, Garnham has merely pushed the question of public accountability to a different level without clarifying the mechanism for its assurance.

Garnham seems to recognize this, as he immediately notes that "the function of information search and exposition … needs a public accountability structure of its own" (*ibid.*). His proposed solution is quite telling:

> ...much greater direct access needs to be given to independent fields of social expertise.... Perhaps bodies such as the Medical Research Council, the Economic and Social Research Council, Greenpeace, Social Audit, and one could list many others, should have *regular access to broadcasting* and print channels and *employ their own journalists* to clarify current issues for the general public as a background to more informed political debate.... (*ibid.*, my emphasis)

The call here is for (the established sector of) civil society to have greater access and participation. A similar tendency is manifest in his call for "the debate function" of public service journalism "to be more highly politicized" (50). His proposal in this regard is for:

> political parties and other major organized social movements having access to the screen *on their own terms* … Here one might envisage a situation where any group that could obtain membership of over a certain size would be eligible for *regular access* to air time and national newspaper space. (*ibid.*, my emphasis)

Here also he suggests increasing access and participation for (the established sector of) civil society. Garnham's ethos, therefore, clearly has something in common with that of community media advocates, but equally clear is the barrier between them. Garnham (echoing Lippmann) would limit the participation of civil society according to standards of expertise, professionalism, and legitimacy, whereas community media advocates (echoing Dewey) would afford participation to individuals whose "legitimacy" is determined primarily by their membership in a particular community, not an established civil society organization. Moreover, community media often seek to grant legitimacy to marginalized individuals and communities that might not otherwise qualify for access and participation; Garnham's modifications to public service broadcasting would not necessarily accomplish that goal.

At issue here, in a general sense, is how best to structure a media system so as to maximize the participation of civil society within a democratic public sphere. Garnham's emphasis on the public service model is tied to his insistence on a single, overarching and universal public sphere. Clearly, he felt that community media could never be robust enough to facilitate decision-making at that level. Surprisingly, this view has, up till now, been largely shared by community media theorists who have engaged public sphere theory. Here we can discern the influence of the alternative mode of community media discourse over and above the counter-hegemonic mode. As we have seen, within the counter-hegemonic mode scholars posited community media as the basis for a national democratic media system that would replace commercial and state models. While they did not employ public sphere terminology, the implicit argument was that community media could indeed structure a universal public sphere. By the time public sphere theory was being incorporated into community media studies, however, the counter-hegemonic mode had been backgrounded. Thus, where public sphere theory has been engaged, scholars have drawn on the alternative mode and cast community media as the basis for only a supplemental or resistant "counterpublic".

The notion of counterpublics emerged from a critique of Habermas's presentation of the transformation of the public sphere, which many scholars read as a "lament for the disappearance of a

bourgeois public" (Downing 2001, 29). They felt that Habermas had presented the seventeenth and eighteenth century public sphere in an idealized manner, overlooking, *inter alia*, the degree to which participation in the formation of public opinion was severely restricted to white, propertied men. Critics such as Fraser (1992) argued that Habermas had facilely indulged "the bourgeois public's claim to be *the* public" and neglected to acknowledge that "virtually contemporaneous with the bourgeois public there arose a host of competing counterpublics, including nationalist publics, popular peasant publics, elite women's publics, and working-class publics" (116, original emphasis). Contrary to Habermas's schema, in which rational debate within a unified public sphere led to formation of a single public opinion, "counterpublics contested the exclusionary norms of the bourgeois public, elaborating alternative styles of political behavior and alternative norms of public speech" (*ibid.*, see also Ryan 1992, Negt & Kluge 1993).

Community media scholars have found this conception abundantly useful. Downing, for example, noted that Fraser's conception of counterpublics had been implicit in his previous work on the use of media in political activism, which involved "not only the notion of two types of public sphere, alternative and official, but also the variety of such spheres in and around social movements" (29). Atton (2002) picked up the same thread and argued that:

> [a]n alternative public sphere would seem an appropriate theoretical foundation [for alternative media] in its formulation of a nexus of institutions that work together without parliamentary influence, to enable the public to address and debate political and social issues independently of the state. (35)

Halleck (2002) referenced Negt & Kluge's presentation of the proletarian public sphere and claimed that public access television activists in the US "are struggling to create a public sphere for those otherwise excluded from discourse" (90). Howley (2007) stated that "community media serve as a resource for subaltern counterpublics to articulate their interests and concerns" (345).

The historical accuracy of this framing is unassailable. In our contemporary society, community media have, indeed, offered an avenue for the formation and representation of counterpublics. There is,

however, a danger in presenting community media in this way. As indicated above, it echoes and invites repeating the errors of the alternative mode. If community media are cast as *merely* the media of counterpublics, then they will forever remain in an oppositional role, as easy to dismiss now and in the future as they were in the 1970s and 80s. Even more importantly, to the degree that we believe that community media maximize the democratic ideals of access, participation, and self-management, accepting them as eternally oppositional requires that we permanently cede the dominant space of public discourse to media systems that foreclose democratic opportunities. We can avoid this dead-end by honoring the counter-hegemonic mode's insistence on community media as the basis for not merely one or more counterpublics, but a robust and maximally democratic public sphere that is inclusive of all communities.

The Public Sphere in Community Media Studies: 2) Multi-publics

Though public sphere theory and the counterpublic frame have appeared with greater frequency in community media studies, they have been detached from any coherent model of mediation within the public sphere. This comes as no surprise, since the structure of the public sphere remains under intense debate within the field at large. As we have seen, Habermas's original formulation was criticized for positing a single and unitary public sphere. Theorists readily took up the notion of counterpublics to counteract this flaw. This move suggested a model in which one dominant (i.e. bourgeois) public sphere was the central node around which orbited a fixed number of counterpublics. It also opened up a series of questions: What constitutes a counterpublic? Is it bounded? Autonomous? Via which mechanisms do counterpublics interact with and influence each other and/or the dominant public sphere? One need not ponder these questions too deeply to realize that a static model of autonomous counterpublics is inadequate to a true description of social reality.

Noting this shortcoming, Garnham (1993) offered an alternative:

> ...a series of autonomous public spheres is not sufficient. There must be a single public sphere, even if we might want to conceive of this single public sphere as made up of a

series of subsidiary public spheres, each organized around its own political structure, media system, and set of norms and interests. (371)

Here we have shifted from an atomic model, with multiple satellite spheres orbiting a much more massive nuclear sphere, to what might be called a molecular model, in which multiple public spheres, though still discrete, are no longer autonomous but linked in a "series" to form a larger whole. Within this molecular formation (to indulge the analogy) some spheres will have greater atomic masses than others and one particularly massive sphere might (over)determine the entire molecular structure. As we have seen, Garnham's preference was for the determinant sphere to be organized around a public service media system. He viewed community media as, at best, components of especially subsidiary public spheres, or, at worst, vehicles which might help establish a commercial media system as the organizing framework for the determinant sphere.

Rennie (2006), however, argues that "the thinking behind public service broadcasting (and content requirements) in broadcasting policy" is dependent on an outmoded conception of "[t]he public interest … [as] something highly valued, a collective good that is seen as more important than other legitimate demands and interests" (172). In its place, she advocates a "new public interest" that:

> involves embracing a range of possible publics that may conflict with or contradict each other. There is no claim to what the "good" is, only a striving for it; more players and more ideas means a greater chance that some kind of progress will emerge … The difference between this idea of media democracy and the more cautious, regulated idea of the (old) public interest in broadcasting policy is clear: policy approaches that seek to uphold the new public interest are important for community broadcasting as they admit the existence of multiple publics – something that has always been a feature of the community media rationale. (172-73)

With this conceptualization, Rennie makes two important moves. First, she drops the idea of one particularly massive and determinative public sphere. These are not "counterpublics", because there is not necessarily a dominant public for them to counter. Rather, we have a fluid structure of multiple publics that "may conflict" but, presumedly, might also reinforce one another, or simply not interact at all. They might do any or all of these things at different times, with different other publics, in constant reorganization. We should note, however, that for the moment the logic of that (re)organization, including

the nature of their "boundedness", remains undefined.

Rennie's second move is to shift the locus of the claim on the "good". She argues that "[t]here is no claim to what the 'good' is", but this is misleading. She makes clear that the "good", according to the new public interest, is to be found in "the commons". It is "about protecting the spaces where openness exists and creating new spaces for that to occur" (172). Her argument, therefore, is not that there is no normative framework for policy making, but rather that the normative framework has shifted from a public service model which limits access (to professionals/experts) in order to produce a certain type of content (circumscribed by a pre-defined, dominant notion of the "good"), to a commons model that expands access (to the wider citizenry) in order to produce a multiplicity of content (expressing an uncircumscribed variety of "goods"). Both of these, of course, are counterposed to the commercial model, which also claims to expand access, but does so only to the degree that the content produced can be successfully commodified.

The choice among these three models depends on a basic normative evaluation: the degree to which they maximize the effective participation of civil society in a democratic public sphere. The limitations of the public service and commercial models have been widely discussed and are well known. The assumed limitation of the community media model has been its marginality. On the one hand, it has been seen as necessarily amateurish and unable to produce a quality of content that might have significant impact. On the other hand, it has been seen as necessarily local and unable to scale up to a reach that might facilitate debate and decision-making at supra-local levels. Neither of these limitations are real, though they have often been accepted by community media scholars working within the development and alternative modes. Theorization within the counter-hegemonic mode did not accept these limits, but was unable to offer a viable model for surpassing them. In the absence of such a model, and because the counter-hegemonic mode was often associated with nationalist, socialist, and other political projects that clung to the same outmoded notion of the "public good" that informed the public service model, it was easy for critics (if not also the theorists themselves) to assume that state intervention would go beyond the

construction of regulatory frameworks and disinterested resource provision and into politicized influence over content. The result was that only with great difficulty could counter-hegemonic theorization detach itself from an over-emphasis on the role of the state.

The challenge, therefore, is to construct a model for a *system* of community media production and circulation that fulfills the following conditions: it must maximize access, participation, and self-management for civil society actors; it must be shielded from the politicized influence of government officials; it must be shielded from the commodification of information and entertainment; it must achieve the scale and quality suitable to the facilitation of democratic decision-making at all levels of society. Public sphere theory provides a potential framework for the construction of such a model, but not in its current state. The following section proposes a modified public sphere framework that will better facilitate the task at hand.

Toward a Heterarchic Public Sphere Theory

We have reviewed Garnham's gesture toward a "molecular" model of multiple public spheres and differentiated it from Rennie's suggestion of a more fluid structure, noting the different conceptions of the "public good" implicit in each. Keane (1998) has also noted that the dominance of "a single, spatially integrated public sphere within a nation-state framework … and its corresponding vision of a territorially bounded republic of citizens striving to live up to their definition of the public good" has become "obsolete". In its place, he argues, "a complex mosaic of differently sized, overlapping and interconnected public spheres" has developed (169). Keane refers to this as "modularization". Braman (1996) has applied a similar logic to her conception of "interpenetrated" public spheres, in which "the relationship between the parts and the whole may be understood as mutually constitutive" (22). This logic of *interpenetrated modularity* is the beginning of a model that can not only accurately map the current configuration of multiple public spheres, but can also guide us toward a model for a robust and scalable community media system.

As Keane points out, the logic of interpenetrated modularity "does not mean that the boundaries among variously sized public spheres are obliterated completely" (187). In this regard, he offers three "*idealtypish*" categories – macro, meso, and micro – that correspond to global/regional, national, and sub-state public spheres. What is unclear, however, is how these conceptual categories can help us to understand the interactive logic of public spheres. Yes, it is true that some spheres are smaller in scope than the state, but so what? Does that category of public sphere have a distinct set of characteristics that can help us understand their functioning? Keane offers little in the way of an answer. To illustrate the point, we can take one of his examples, in which he notes that:

> … micro-public spheres are today a vital feature of all social movements … [which] normally comprise low-profile networks of small groups, organizations, initiatives, local contacts and friendships submerged in the everyday life patterns of civil society.... Such public spheres as the discussion circle, the publishing house, the church, the clinic and a political chat over a drink with friends or acquaintances are the sites in which citizens question the pseudo-imperatives of reality and counter them with alternative experiences of time, space, and interpersonal relations. (172)

Social movements are not, however, merely local. One would be hard pressed to argue that the labor or suffragist movements of the nineteenth and early twentieth century were not transnational, and it would be ludicrous to argue that contemporary social movements are not so. The question then, is whether a local church group discussing a protest is different than an online forum involving activists from multiple nations discussing the same protest. According to Keane's tripartite, one is micro and the other presumably macro, but this tells us very little about their role in the wider social movement. To be sure, Keane speaks of "[m]acro-publics of hundreds of millions of citizens [that] are the (unintended) consequence of the international concentration of mass media firms previously owned and operated at the territorial nation-state level" (176), so he might argue that the online forum is not a macro-sphere at all, but that merely begs the question of what type of sphere it actually is. If it is a micro-sphere due to the number of participants (but not their physical location), then we can no longer define micro-spheres as sub-state or local.

The employment of size or scope as the defining feature of various categories of public spheres is

commonplace. Many pages have been devoted to teasing out the relative characteristics of the national and trans-national public spheres (cf. Sparks 1998, Crack 2008). In community media studies, local public spheres were discussed as early as 1992 (Hollander & Stappers). In recent years the concept has been employed with greater frequency, but it remains imprecise and tied to the notion of counterpublics. [49] Lewis, however, has applied the term in a provocative manner:

> Eleven different organizations form the association which owns the [radio] station. The station here is providing civil society with a local public sphere that on closer inspection, as we follow the account of the three organizations involved in Tandem training, can more accurately be described as the intersection of several local public spheres. (2006, 32)

Reinterpreting this claim in the vocabulary I have developed above, we can view the station as a) the *articulating mechanism* between (at least) eleven different civil society organizations and b) a primary structural component of the *modular interpenetration* of several local spheres. The task for community media studies is to build on this type of analysis through a continued dialectic of empirical and theoretical research.

In order to do so, we will have to shift our conception of the basic units of analysis. Categorizing public spheres based on their scope or reach is perhaps important but certainly not sufficient. We must also specify the structural logic that underpins the modular interpenetration of public spheres categorized according to these units. We will elaborate this argument in the concluding section of this work, but here we will introduce several key components. First, we need to be more precise about the relationship between the notions of "community" and "public sphere". As mentioned above, debate regarding the definition of community, including the relative importance of communities of place and interest, has generated a wide body of literature. We should view communities of place as a specific type of community of interest in which mutual interests are determined by aspects of shared proximity. We should also recognize that any particular community may participate in multiple public spheres and that the scope of those spheres *may* (but need not) correspond to the scope of the community. We should

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49 See Fraley (2007), Howley (2007), Schiller (2007), Barker-Plummer & Kidd (2010), Ndlela (2010), Parlette (2010), and Vatikiotis (2010).

further recognize that there are moments when a community may want to explicitly delimit the scope of a public sphere to include only members of the community. Finally, and most importantly, although Keane is correct that size-based boundaries remain useful as a heuristic device, we must conceptualize public spheres as *inherently fluid and scalable* in terms of their scope. Only a scalable unit of analysis will allow us to articulate the structural logic of modular interpenetration. Moreover, the scope of a public sphere must be defined in terms of the outcomes associated with the debate it facilitates. In other words, scope is a measure of those who will be affected by a particular set of outcomes, rather than formal or even informal inclusion as a member of a defined or imagined community.[50] Thus, distinct issues will correspond to distinctly bounded public spheres, and it may even be the case that the boundary fluctuates as a result of the ongoing discussion of those issues.

Second, we must further refine our unit of analysis by recognizing two fundamental categories of public spheres. Fraser (1992) first articulated this distinction in terms of "weak" and "strong" spheres. Whereas both of these types facilitate opinion formation, only the latter also facilitates the adoption of binding decisions. I employ her distinction but change the names, partly to avoid the importation of value judgments that "weak" and "strong" might imply, but also to focus on the primary communicative role carried out by each. Thus, I exchange the term "weak" for *meaning-making*, and "strong" for *decision-making*. Fraser's primary example of a decision-making sphere is the national level sovereign parliament, and she reminds us that empowering such parliamentary bodies to translate public opinion (as expressed and contested in meaning-making spheres) into authoritative decisions was a "democratic advance over earlier political arrangements" (134). Indeed, the degree of accountability between meaning-making and decision-making public spheres is a significant measure of democracy, yet public sphere research in communications research has largely ignored the important distinction between these two types.[51] This

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50 Fraser has previously endorsed this conception, which she refers to as the "all-affected principle", but now prefers the alternative "all-subjected principle" which "holds that what turns a collection of people into fellow members of a public is … their joint subjection to a structure of governance that set the ground rules for their interaction" (2009, 95-6). I explore this distinction in chapter five.
51 Writing from the field of International Relations, Brunkhorst (2002) has discussed the role of weak and strong publics at the transnational level.

oversight is especially surprising in relation to community media studies since, as Fraser points out, "[o]ne set of [related] questions concerns the possible proliferation of strong [i.e. decision-making] publics in the form of self-managing institutions" (135). For community media researchers, the primary questions might be: How do self-managed media outlets respond to and inform the meaning-making public spheres within which they operate? How do varying degrees or structures of self-management (i.e. alternative forms of decision-making spheres) change this dialectic? It's not that these questions haven't been asked in different forms, but the time has come to engage them within a public sphere framework that places a premium on the crucial difference between meaning-making and decision-making spheres and allows the relationship between them to be described in terms of interpenetrated modularity.

Third, we must articulate the structural logic of interpenetrated modularity in terms of *heterarchy*, which is as "a fundamental organizational principle of complex systems" (Crumley 2005). Crumley has provided the best general purpose definition by contrasting hierarchies, "the elements of which are ranked relative to one another", to heterarchies, "the elements of which are unranked, or possess the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways, depending on systemic requirements". Heterarchy, in fact, "is the more general category"; hierarchy is just a particular type of heterarchy (2008, 469-70). While the term has been employed in fields as diverse as evolutionary biology, neuroscience, computer science, archaeology, sociology, and management, it has found surprisingly little currency in communications research outside of network analysis. Yet the value of an organizational logic that permits elements to be ranked in various and fluid orders is clearly of particular use in describing the interpenetrated modularity of public spheres. Rather than seeing public spheres as unitary elements arrayed according to the fixed ranks of hierarchies (e.g. micro, meso, and macro), we can understand them to be fuzzy modules existing in a constant state of fluidity in which emerging and receding networks of meaning- and decision-making public spheres function within a continually changing nexus. In this framework, the participatory structure of community media is not restricted to local and small scale organization, nor are participatory media outlets relegated to articulating only local civil society organizations.

We will further develop a heterarchic public sphere theory as the basis for a participatory media system in the conclusion. In order to do so, it will be helpful to draw on historical cases in which community media have been deployed as part of an attempt to construct such a system. Here the alternative and development modes of discourse are of less help than the counter-hegemonic. Especially helpful will be an examination of the counter-hegemonic mode in precisely those cases where it was construed as the potential basis for state media policy. A particularly useful set of such cases can be created from socialist administrations that rose to power in Latin America during the second half of the twentieth century: Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. None of these countries were or have so far been successful in constructing a community media system that could significantly displace, much less replace, commercial, public service, or state-controlled systems. Nonetheless, an analysis of their efforts reveals evidence of a general progression from state-centric, hierarchical models toward a more decentralized, heterarchical system that offers valuable insight for theorizing community media outside of socialist contexts. We will therefore turn our attention to such an analysis in the following chapters.

Chapter 2: Participatory Communication and the Civil State in 20ᵗʰ Century Latin American Socialism

As we have seen, recent work in community media studies suggests that community media be seen as an articulating mechanism for civil society. In this context, community media might surpass its oft assumed limitations as a marginal means of micro-level empowerment. It might become, instead, the basis for a robust media system powerful enough to displace conventional commercial and state models. Achieving this goal will require the formulation of a scaleable organizational logic. In the previous chapter I suggested that this logic might usefully draw on a heterarchic public sphere theory, which I will develop further in the conclusion. Though innovative, this approach is not without precedent. In Venezuela, for over a decade now, community media practitioners and government officials have been working to create organizational and funding models that will nurture and sustain a community media sector capable of facilitating a broader system of participatory governance. This is just one of many projects endorsed under the rubric of "Socialism of the 21st Century".

Though the term is attributable to Heinz Dieterich (cf. 2007), 21st Century Socialism is less a discrete political economic philosophy than it is a rhetorical tag for a political orientation that has developed within and alongside grassroots social movements, especially in Latin America, over the previous three decades. Indeed, as I hope to illustrate in this chapter with particular reference to communications theory, 21st Century Socialism in Latin America can be usefully understood as the product of a continuous reinterpretation of socialist theory and practice that takes Cuba's revolutionary process as its primary (though sometimes implicit) point of reference. Two other crucial points of reference that will be discussed in this chapter are the socialist administrations that were established in Chile (1970 - 73) and Nicaragua (1979 - 90). In order to make sense of this progression, it will be useful to invoke Gouldner's (1980) distinction between Scientific and Critical interpretations of Marxism. If, as Gouldner argues, the Cuban revolution is exemplary of Critical Marxism, then we can view 21st Century Socialism as a Neo-Critical Marxism that attempts to account for certain theoretical blind spots which

weighed heavily on "actually existing socialism" in the 20th century. Primary among these is the role of civil society within a mediated public sphere.

Ideology and Civil Society in Scientific and Critical Marxisms

Gouldner's analysis of Marxist theory derives from the "nuclear contradiction" that "generates and recurrently reproduces (at least) two boundaried subsystems of elaborated theory" (8) that he calls Scientific Marxism and Critical Marxism. For our present purposes, the following summaries should provide a sufficient point of entry: Scientific Marxism is precisely that which constructs itself in the vein of the natural sciences, deducing a set of ineluctable laws that determine social history. It was presented by Marx and Engels as historical materialism, a unique contribution to political economy in which political and cultural facets of human society (the superstructure) are overdetermined by the mode of production and other material economic conditions (the base and infrastructure). Critical Marxism, on the other hand, views itself not as a science but a philosophical critique. It posits a dialectic political economy in which political and cultural facets both determine and are determined by the mode of production and other material economic conditions. Gouldner is careful to stress that both of these are valid interpretations of a central set of contradictions that remained unresolved within Marx's corpus. At the same time, however, he finds that Marx and Engels tended to emphasize Scientific Marxism and suppress Critical Marxism in the presentation of their own work.

Crucially, these distinct orientations produce counterposed perspectives on the nature of proletarian revolution. Scientific Marxism foresees a definite and immutable path toward the collapse of capitalism in which the bourgeois mode of production must necessarily increase in productivity until material scarcity is eradicated. Only at that point can the proletariat successfully rise up and take control of the means of production. As a result of this determinism, Scientific Marxists are prone to counsel patience, arguing that attempts at revolution are premature and doomed to failure if they outpace the inexorable march of history. Critical Marxism, however, "pursues a policy of active interventionism,

organizing instruments such as the Party 'vanguard' or military forces that facilitate intervention" (59) into both the economic order and the march of history. This distinction hinges on the role of ideology. From the Scientific Marxist perspective, ideology is framed as "false ideology", a symptom of class oppression. Critical Marxists are more apt to believe that the proletariat, if endowed with the proper ideological perspective, can wrest the means of production away from the bourgeoisie and initiate a period of socialist transformation that will lead to utopian communism. Thus, ideology also has a positive role to play. In addition to the Russian case, where Lenin explicitly endorsed the concept of the party as a vanguard, Gouldner identifies Cuban Marxism as "converging" (51) with Critical Marxism, precisely because of the emphasis placed on a voluntarism inspired by the ideological commitment of a vanguard group. Indeed, the Critical Marxist commitment to class consciousness and ideological education remains central to the communications policies of each of the Latin American socialist administrations under consideration here.

We will be primarily interested, however, in reviewing how the Critical notion of vanguardism relates to the concept of civil society. As with ideology, Scientific Marxism views civil society in negative terms. This results from Marx's historical analysis of the rise of the bourgeoisie from within the feudal state, in which he views civil society as a corruption of society's "natural bonds" (357) that serves instrumentally as a "transmission belt for ruling-class values" (346). From this emphatically historical materialist perspective, Marx and Engels called for a takeover of the state, which would become entirely representative of the proletariat and would thus no longer have any use for a manipulative civil society. Rather, civil society would be subsumed within the socialist state. As Gouldner has it:

> when the bourgeoisie is overthrown and replaced by the working class, the latter are now defined as the new proprietary class. The state is then seen as the proletariat's 'executive committee,' as the agency of the majority class in society and, thus, as not needing to exploit the majority. The state then presumably loses its partisan political character and becomes a fully public realm devoid of its own special exploitative interests.... In effect, the Marxist theory of the state and of the ruling class, here interwoven, had misled Marxist politics by profoundly underestimating the dangers to human emancipation inherent in the state bureaucracy and its capacity to be a new ruling class. (345)

As evidenced by the Soviet example, these dangers are in no way diminished by pairing a Critical Marxist emphasis on vanguardist ideology with a Scientific Marxist suppression of civil society.

Certain of Marx's writings, however, contradict the above analysis. Gouldner points to his journalistic histories, such as *The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, where the struggle to explain actual events using his theoretical framework leads Marx to acknowledge that civil society is not always merely a tool of the ruling class (302-3).[52] Moreover, Marx's own professional work as a journalist and some of his earliest writings demonstrate his recognition of the value of a free and robust press that can check the power of the state.[53] Nonetheless, one would be hard pressed to argue that Marx articulates anything resembling a vision for the structuration of an autonomous civil sector in a socialist society. Gouldner concludes his analysis by situating this lacuna as the central task of contemporary Marxist theorization:

> In socialist, no less than capitalist societies, then, a central and increasingly urgent problem is how may persons avoid dependence on the state; how may patterns of mutual and self-help – and of the self-management that is part of this – be strengthened; how may society resist the enveloping superintendence by the state? From a Marxist standpoint, the growing question is how may civil society be fortified, so that Marxism's own liberative aspirations can be realized? (371)

Gramsci, of course, had already made significant contributions to this project. Just as the Critical Marxist notion of vanguardism had imbued the concept of ideology with a positive significance, Gramsci expanded the Marxist perspective on civil society to also include a positive orientation. "Civil society, in Gramsci's thinking, is the realm in which the existing social order is grounded; and it can also be the realm in which a new social order can be founded" (Cox 1999, 4). Gramsci is able to simultaneously maintain both of these propositions in relation to the interdependent concept of hegemony. In Gramsci's view, for a ruling class to establish hegemonic power, it must gain control over the juridico-politico apparatus of the state, but it must also succeed in winning consent within civil society.[54] "The site of

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52 See also Cox (1999, 6).
53 See Marx (1975, 1977).
54 "The acquisition of a hegemonic position in civil society is ultimately more important to the ruling classes than the acquisition of control over the juridico-political apparatus of government. The latter, it is true, allows the dominant interest groups in a society to impose their will by force should it prove necessary, but if it were their

hegemony is civil society; in other words, civil society is the arena wherein the ruling class extends and reinforces its power by non-violent means" (Buttigieg 1995, 26). Once in power, the ruling class tends to manipulate civil society in a "top-down" manner. This is precisely the understanding of civil society that leads to its rejection within Scientific Marxism. At the same time, however, the space created in civil society can also be used to propagate, from the "bottom-up", a counter-hegemonic ideology. This is the understanding of civil society that is neglected by Scientific Marxism, but embraced by Critical Marxism.

The Gramscian notion of "bottom-up", counter-hegemonic ideological work, however, should not be confused with the Leninist conception of vanguardism. Lenin cast vanguardism as agitational work to be carried out as ideological preparation for a revolutionary takeover of the state. Gramsci referred to this as a "war of maneuver" and opposed it as a revolutionary strategy. He proposed, instead, a "war of position", which:

> is a strategy for the long-term construction of self-conscious social groups into a concerted emancipatory bloc within society. It is only when the war of position has built up a combination of organized social forces strong enough to challenge the dominant power in society that political authority in the state can be effectively challenged and replaced. (Cox 16)[55]

Clearly, then, within Critical Marxism there are at least two paths to revolution. The first relies on an ideological call to revolutionary action, whereas the second relies on an ideological call to civic action. Both stress the importance of communicating ideology, but only the latter is explicitly concerned with constructing a counter-hegemonic bloc within civil society. As a result, the first path – the war of maneuver – can easily bend back around to the Scientific Marxist framework in which civil society is subsumed by the socialist state. Such was the case in the Soviet context. The second path – the war of

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only source of power, they would be rendered defenseless by a coup d'etat. Hegemony, by contrast, insures the dominant groups against the consequences of a coup d'etat and, in all likelihood, even prevents a successful coup d'etat from occurring in the first place." (Buttigieg 1995, 30-1)

55 "Revolutionary activity, for Gramsci, has little or nothing to do with inciting people to rebel; instead, it consists in a painstaking process of disseminating and instilling an alternative *forma mentis* by means of cultural preparation (i.e., intellectual development and education) on a mass scale, critical and theoretical elaboration, and thoroughgoing organization. These kinds of activities can only be carried out in civil society; indeed, at one and the same time, they require the creation of, and help to extend, new spaces in civil society beyond the reach of the governmental, administrative, and juridical apparatuses of the state." (Buttigieg 14)

position – necessarily avoids this framework. In fact, it is meant to lead to just the opposite scenario, in which the state (i.e. political society) is subsumed by an ever expanding civil society: "The society without a state, which Gramsci calls regulated society, comes from the enlarging of civil society and, therefore, of the moment of hegemony, until it eliminates all the space which is occupied by political society" (Bobbio 1988, 94).

While the subsumption of the state by civil society is Gramsci's ideal, this is not what occurred in the Latin American cases examples reviewed below. We must therefore discuss, as a final point, Gramsci's vision for the relationship between civil society and a *socialist* state in the period prior to the stateless, "regulated" society. In this situation, Gramsci's preference was for a "civil state" that is legitimated by the same civil society that it (at least in part) nurtures. [56] In other words, Gramsci "suggests that the State should rest upon the support of an active, self-conscious and variegated civil society and should, in turn, sustain and promote the development of the constructive forces in that society" (Cox 7). The party, meanwhile, "must always seek to carry out its function in civil society, even if, or when, it accedes to government power" (Buttigieg 29). Here, then, we can begin to situate the media, which Gramsci recognized as "the most dynamic part of the ideological structure" of a ruling class (Buttigieg 26), within the Critical Marxist framework.

In the previous chapter we identified community media as an articulating mechanism of civil society. Community media, in other words, *is* the media of civil society. As such, it is precisely the type of "constructive force" that should be sustained and promoted by a civil state. A commercial media system would only correspond, at best, to the "top down" version of civil society employed by the liberal capitalist state. The Scientific Marxist impulse to see civil society subsumed by the state, meanwhile, leads to an authoritarian, state-controlled media system. Even where a socialist state aspires to become a civil state, however, it can not implement a community media system outside of a robust theoretical

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56 I have adapted the term 'civil state' from Cox, who has expressed the same concept by using the term 'civic state', which he credits to Sakamoto (11).

framework that describes its essential features. Such a framework did not exist at the time of the Cuban revolution; while examples of participatory media existed in Latin America (e.g. miners' radio in Bolivia and Radio Sutatenza in Colombia), concerted theoretical development did not begin until the late sixties. This theoretical development occurred, therefore, in a dialectical engagement with the socialist experiences discussed below and we can make use of them to trace its evolution.

Revolutionary Cuba (1959 – 1989): Vanguardism and a Tightly Tethered Civil Society

During the 1950s, Fidel Castro spoke positively of the long history of liberal political thought and portrayed the Cuban republic in the period prior to Batista's coup as a happy incarnation of its ideals, with a thriving public sphere anchored in a free civil society. [57] At some point along the way, however, Cuba's revolutionary leaders came to view the liberal framework of civil society from the Scientific Marxist perspective, as the corrupted conveyor of a capitalist ruling class ideology. In particular, they feared that business interests, in conjunction with the Central Intelligence Agency, would manipulate civil society institutions in order to manufacture an oppositional movement and facilitate a coup, just as the young Ernesto "Che" Guevara had witnessed in Guatemala in 1953 (Kinzer 2006, 206; McChesney 2006). Thus, in the years following the revolutionary victory in 1959, the Cuban government not only nationalized the vast majority of the economy but also severely restricted the space available for autonomous civil society organization and expression.

Civil society was not extinguished, however. It was reformed within a hegemonic apparatus that comprises both the state and a particularly Cuban form of civil society, where the latter does not accord

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57 "Let me tell you a story: Once upon a time there was a Republic. It had its Constitution, its laws, its freedoms, its President, its Congress and its Courts of Law. Everyone could assemble, associate, speak and write with complete freedom. The people were not satisfied with the government, but they had the power to elect a new one and it was only a few days before they could do so. Public opinion was respected and obeyed, and all shared problems were freely discussed. There were political parties, radio and television debates, public meetings, and the whole nation throbbed with enthusiasm. This people had suffered greatly and if it was unhappy, it longed to be happy and had a right to be happy. It had been deceived many times and it looked upon the past with real horror. This people innocently believed that such a past could not return; they were proud of their love of freedom and were convinced that freedom would be respected as a sacred right. They felt confident in the certainty that no one would dare commit the crime of attempting against their democratic institutions. They wanted change, improvement, advancement and they saw all this at hand. They had hope in the future." (Castro 1998, 98)

with the liberal model of independence from the state. Indeed, Cuban civil society during the several decades following the revolution existed only with the sanction of the state, and at least one Cuban academic has identified "Cuban political practices of [the 1960s] with the Marxist theory of merging civil and political societies" (Dilla 1987, cited in Roman 1999, 65). Nonetheless, civil society was not entirely subsumed by the state, as per the Scientific Marxist vision adopted in the USSR. To be sure, the two are tightly tethered, but:

> ...Cuban civil society has never been absorbed by the state, as happened in many other socialist countries, but interacts with it in a creative, if not always equal, dynamic. This continuous partnership also contrasts starkly with representative democracy, in which … civil society and the state are seen to be separate entities.... [and] has produced a deep interaction between the state and civil society that blurs the distinction between the two... (Lambie 2010, 147)

The primary components of this state-sanctioned civil society have been the "mass organizations", including the Cuban Communist Party (*Partido Comunista de Cuba* / PCC), the Workers' Central Union of Cuba (*Central de Trajabadores de Cuba* / CTC), The National Association of Small Farmers (*Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños* / ANAP), the Federation of Cuban Women (*Federación de Mujeres Cubanos* / FMC), the Federation of University Students (*Federación de Estudiantes Universitarios* / FEU), the Committees for the Defense of the Revolution (*Comités para la Defensa de la Revolución* / CDR), and the Young Communist League (*Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas* / UJC). There are also "smaller professional and interest-specific associations that represent other sectors of society" (152).[58]

While the roots of the PCC and the CTC extend to the pre-revolutionary era, Cuba's civil society organizations were largely created and molded by the revolutionary leadership during the 1960s. That decade also saw two attempts to establish systems of popular local government, including the creation of Coordination, Delivery and Inspection Committees (*Juntas de Coordinación, Ejecución e Inspección* /

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58 Those in the media sector include the Union of Cuban Journalists (*Unión de Periodistas de Cuba* / UPEC), the National Union of Cuban Writers and Artists (*Unión Nacional de Escritores y Artistas de Cuba /* UNEAC), the Central Institute of Radio and Television (*Instituto Central de Radio y Televisión* / ICRT), and the Cuban Institute of Cinema Arts (*Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* / ICAIC).

JUCEI) in 1961, and their replacement in 1966 by a system known as Local Power (*Poder Local*) (153). Across all of these initiatives, however, participation was primarily framed as voluntaristic contribution to the revolutionary project, so that "[a]ctive participation came at the level of implementing goals, not setting them" (154). Moreover, the leadership's failure to institutionalize the participatory system proved drastically counterproductive. During the late 60s, the Local Power system, always of a "transitional and provisional nature", became "an administrative unit with few real powers", while important mass organizations like the CDR and the FMC grew increasingly weaker, and "the CTC practically ceased functioning" (Roman 1999, 68; see also Bresnahan 1985, 311). At the same time, the national government suffered from "intense bureaucratic centralization" and an "invasion by the Party into state administrative spheres [that] weakened not only the capacity of the Party to exercise its political leadership role, but also the very efficacy of the administrative body" (Dilla, cited in Roman 68).

This fledgling system was put to the test in 1970 as the leadership called for an unprecedented sugar harvest of 10 million tons in an attempt to overcome a dire shortage of hard currency. Resources were shifted toward the effort and the people were asked to maximize their voluntary labor. The effort failed, having produced only 8.5 million tons. Worse yet, the massive redirection of resources had proved wasteful and left other sectors of society significantly weakened, inspiring widespread resentment amongst the population. These events prompted Castro to publicly admit failure, drastically reform economic policy, and initiate the institutionalization of the participatory system. Throughout 1970 he called for the revitalization of the mass organizations, the separation of the PCC from the administrative functions of the state, and the decentralization of those functions (69-71). The fortification and institutionalization process lasted six years and culminated with the adoption of a new constitution and a new system of governance known as the Organs of Popular Power (*Organos de Poder Popular* / OPP).

The OPP, however, represented only a partial decentralization, since it was instituted according to "the Leninist concept of dual subordination [under which g]eneral regulations would come from the center but the administration from the local level" (71). Within this framework, "norms, procedures, and

methods were still to be set on a national level" (73) and "centralization and paternalism" (96) remained significant issues. The PCC, meanwhile, remained ensconced within the administrative functions of the government (91) and has, ever since, proven to be consistently over-represented in the elected assemblies.[59] In this context, and for a host of reasons, including "bureaucratic inefficiency, diffidence, lack of authority of delegates … [and] a shortage of resources" (Lambie 168), the system has been most useful as a means of providing information to and generating feedback from the population, but is "not always as effective at the stage of implementation and action" (*ibid*.). The mass organizations, meanwhile, continued to operate within the boundaries imposed by the state and often in the service of state policy. Thus, real input into the decision-making process remained minimal, as in the 1960s, but the system itself became more stable.

Cuba's "partnership" between the state and a state-sanctioned civil society thus manifests only a weak variant of the Gramscian civil state. Though the state and civil society are not entirely merged, the boundaries are blurred significantly by the role of the PCC; and while the mass organizations retain greater autonomy, they follow the lead of the state and party, and not vice versa as Gramsci would have it. This is not to say that the Cuban system has no space for participation, but the final balance between the autonomy of civic organization and centralized direction is tilted heavily toward the latter, with the result that participation generally manifests as mobilization. As we have seen, Cuba's adherence to the vanguardist model persisted even as its leadership acknowledged the need for greater popular participation in decision-making. One reason for the persistence of centralized authority, especially in relation to foreign and national policy, has been the precariousness of the revolutionary state in the face of US aggression and recurring economic crisis. Another contributing factor that must be considered, however, is the range of options presented by Marxist theory itself. These causal factors do not work in isolation, but are dialectically enjoined, as can be illustrated with reference to the intense debate over

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59 Between 60 and 75 percent of municipal representatives belong to the party and the percentage is close to 100 at the provincial and national levels (Lambie 167, Roman 94, Domínguez 1982).

Cuba's political economic structure that was conducted during the 1960s.

On one side of this debate were those who favored the Soviet model of a highly technocratic system of centralized planning and state execution in which there was little need for civil society. Guevara himself championed the opposite position, which proposed channelling "socially co-operative work and self-sacrifice" through both state-owned economic units as well as civil society institutions such as the mass organizations in order to forge "a socialist consciousness … in parallel with the creation of a socialist economy" (144). Those siding with Guevara pointed to the vital role that popular mass mobilization had played in consolidating the revolutionary victory, including the organization of voluntary labor by the CDR, as well as the national literacy campaign of 1961. Guevara's position remained decidedly vanguardist, as he made clear in his 1965 exposition of "the man and socialism in Cuba":

> The vanguard group is ideologically more advanced than the mass; the latter is acquainted with the new values, but insufficiently. While in the former a qualitative change takes place which permits them to make sacrifices as a function of their vanguard character, the latter see only the halves and must be subjected to incentives and pressure of some intensity; it is the dictatorship of the proletariat being exercised not only upon the defeated class but also individually upon the victorious class. (Guevara 1965)

At the same time, however, he signals an awareness that the classic vanguardist framework was insufficient to accommodate truly effective popular participation:

> Looking at things from a superficial standpoint, it might seem that those who speak of the submission of the individual to the State are right; with incomparable enthusiasm and discipline, the mass carries out the tasks set by the government whatever their nature: economic, cultural, defense, sports, etc. The initiative generally comes from Fidel or the high command of the revolution; it is explained to the people, who make it their own.... However, the State at times makes mistakes.... This mechanism is obviously not sufficient to ensure a sequence of sensible measures; what is missing is a more structured relationship with the mass.... We are seeking something new that will allow a perfect identification between the government and the community as a whole, adapted to the special conditions of the building of socialism and avoiding to the utmost the commonplaces of bourgeois democracy transplanted to the society in formation (such as legislative houses, for example). Some experiments have been carried out with the aim of gradually creating the institutionalization of the Revolution, but without too much hurry. We have been greatly restrained by the fear that any formal aspect might make us lose sight of the ultimate and most important revolutionary aspiration: to see man freed form alienation. (*ibid*.)

In this desire for "a more structured relationship" that would "allow a perfect identification between the government and the community as a whole" we find a gesture toward Gramsci's emphasis on the construction of a hegemonic bloc within a civil state. Indeed, although there is no direct evidence that Guevara read Gramsci, there was a definite affinity between their ideas (Kohan 1997, Massardo 1999; cited in Lambie 148). Translated versions of Gramsci's work first appeared in Latin America in 1958 and were available in Cuba during the 1960s, where they "had some influence on the intellectual debate", although "those who took up his ideas were regarded as 'heretics'" (*ibid*.).

In any case, Guevara's position had won out by 1966. Following the disastrous sugar harvest of 1970, however, Cuba became increasingly dependent on the USSR and largely adopted its more orthodox, centralized, and technocratic economic policy in which there was little concern for participation and ideological transformation. This did not mean that Cuba had entirely abandoned the goal of incorporating popular participation within the political sphere, but a desire for stability overcome the Guevarist fear that institutionalization would lead to continued alienation. Thus, even as the state moved forward with a revitalization of the mass organizations and the institutionalization of the OPP framework, debate among Cuban intellectuals was stifled and "the works of Guevara and the few copies of Gramsci were also removed from bookshop shelves, and replaced by Soviet manuals and the writings of Nikita Khruschev, Leonid Brezhnev and other luminaries of 'scientific socialism'" (Lambie 158). From that point on, structural experimentation was subordinate to the exigencies of stability.

This is not to say that wider circulation of the work of Gramsci – or any other theorist – would have led to a civil state in which popular participation extended to all spheres of decision-making. The point, rather, is that the political economic situation of the 1970s induced the Cuban leadership to restrain a very real impulse toward a framework for popular participation that could move beyond the top-heavy model of party vanguardism. Had this impulse not been so inchoate, and the theoretical framework for its instantiation so incipient, other routes may have been pursued. Instead, the system was institutionalized in a form that had only begun to move beyond the prevailing Marxist Leninist model of socialist hegemony.

This pattern is especially manifest in the history of Cuba's media system, where the constraints of a vanguardist framework persisted despite repeated acknowledgement of a need for change.

Lenin's ideas circulated within Cuba during the decades prior to the revolution and Castro is known to have read Lenin at least as early as his imprisonment from 1953 to 1955 (147). Whether or not he personally embraced Lenin's theory of the vanguard at that time is not known, but the labor-oriented clandestine paper associated with his July 26 Movement was called Workers' Vanguard (*Vanguardia Obrera*), and Castro's prioritization of propaganda was made clear in letters to his collaborators:

> Our mission now, I want you to be completely convinced, is not to organize revolutionary cells in order to have more or less men available; that would be a terrible mistake. Our immediate task is to mobilize public opinion in our favor; to spread our ideas and earn the support of the masses of the people. Our revolutionary program is the most complete, our line the most clear, and we have sacrificed the most: we have the right to earn the faith of the people, without which, I repeat a thousand times, there is no possibility of revolution. (cited in Harnecker 1985, 268-9; my translation)[60]

Castro did indeed repeat himself on this point, writing in a separate letter: "I think that at this moment propaganda is vital; without propaganda there is no mass movement; and without a mass movement there is no possibility of revolution" (ibid.; my translation).[61] Propaganda remained a priority throughout the guerrilla campaign. Although the radio transmitter brought from Mexico in 1956 was lost in battle before it could be utilized (Soley & Nichols 1987, 167), Guevara reintroduced the idea of a clandestine radio station in late 1957.[62] Despite the severely limited resources at his disposal, Castro authorized five hundred dollars for the project. *Radio Rebelde* (Rebellious Radio) went on the air in February 1958, and by the time of the revolutionary victory on January 1, 1959, it had grown into "the most sophisticated clandestine radio operation in the history of the western Hemisphere," with "a network of 48 domestic

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60 "*Nuestra misión ahora, quiero que se convenzan completamente, no es organizar células revolucionarias para poder disponer de más o menos hombres; eso sería un error funesto. La tarea nuestra ahora de inmediato es movilizar a nuestro favor la opinión pública; divulgar muestras ideas y ganarnos el respaldo de las masas del pueblo. Nuestro programa revolucionario es el más completo, nuestra línea la más clara, nuestra historia la más sacrificada: tenemos derecho a ganarnos la fe del pueblo. sin la cual, lo repito mi veces, no hay revolución posible.*"

61 "*Considero que en estos momentos la propaganda es vital; sin propaganda no hay movimiento de masas; y sin movimiento de masas no hay revolución posible.*"

62 During the campaign Guevara also oversaw the publication of "a primitive mimeograph newspaper, *El Cubano Libre*, which was distributed in the guerilla zone" (Soley & Nichols 1987, 169).

transmitters linked to several foreign stations [that] could be heard easily throughout the entire Caribbean" (163).

The prioritization of vanguardist propaganda notwithstanding, it does not appear that Castro was planning a state-controlled media system during these years. In interviews with North American journalists during the guerrilla campaign he "repeatedly promised to end 'arbitrary censorship and systematic corruption' and to restore 'full and untrammeled freedom of public information for all communication media'". He repeated those assertions upon his victorious arrival in Havana (Nichols 1979, 85) and again during a 1959 speech before the United Nations (Carty 1978 np). Indeed, until mid-1960 "the media had considerable latitude to criticize the revolutionary government" (Nichols 1982c, 5). Criticism increased precipitously after agrarian reforms were announced in May 1959, however, and relations with commercial media outlets grew more tense. Then, in March 1960 US President Eisenhower approved a "powerful propaganda campaign" to influence the Cuban people and "essentially the same CIA team that had successfully overthrown the Arbenz government in Guatemala in 1954 went to work in planning a similar demise for the Castro government" (Soley & Nichols 177). As Guevara's warning proved prescient, "Castro felt that an adversary press was not functional to the process and, in late 1960, by intimidation, expropriation and economic pressures, he had closed most of the privately owned printed media and gained complete government ownership of the broadcasting media" (Nichols 1982c, 5). Of the six newspapers that remained in February of 1961, five were either government-owned or operated by government supporters, and "[a]ll previously independent magazines, publishing houses and film companies were then controlled by the government or had disappeared entirely". Nonetheless, bookstores remained free to import and sell all manner of texts, Cuban writers remained unrestricted, and debates over the proper direction for the socialist government were conducted in literary journals, the cinema, and – to a more limited degree – among competing newspapers (Nichols 1979, 87). Over the course of the decade, however, the press would be increasingly consolidated and the space for intellectual debate further restricted.

During this period the government became increasingly committed to the Marxist-Leninist model of a vanguard press. In a 1965 interview Castro stated that "under the present circumstances journalism can have [no] function more important than that of contributing to the political and revolutionary goals of our country. We have a goal, a program, an objective to fulfill, and that objective essentially controls the activity of the journalists" (Nichols 1982c, 24). In that same year, the newspapers of Castro's 26th of July Movement and the pre-revolutionary communist party were consolidated and converted into *Granma*,[63] the official newspaper of the Central Committee of the newly reconstituted PCC, and vanguardist rhetoric was employed to justify the continued consolidation of government control over the media. For example:

> a very popular periodical, Cuba Socialista, which carried news of the party and analysis of political, economic and social conditions, was terminated in 1967. Officials said that Cubans did not have sufficient political education to appreciate the monthly and that debate on the subjects it covered should be postponed. (Nichols 1979, 89)

In 1974, Ernesto Vera Méndez, then serving as President of the Union of Cuban Journalists (*Unión de Perodistas de Cuba* / UPEC), wrote that the role of the Cuban press as an "...organizer of the masses [was] demonstrated by Lenin when he founded and encouraged the newspaper 'Iskra" in the preparatory stage of the October Revolution" (Vera Méndez 1974, 9; my translation). [64]

When the mass media were accounted for within the post-1970 institutionalization of Cuba's hegemonic system, their role in the articulation of civil and political society was cast as secondary. For example, in 1975, the First Congress of the PCC adopted a resolution which declared the mass media to be an: "*organic part* of the complex of institutions responsible for the moral, aesthetic, and political-ideological education of the population" whose mission was " *to complement* the process of direct communication with the masses, which is realized through the structure of the Party, the State, the Union of Communist Youth, and the social and mass organizations" (cited in Goutman 1979, 49; my emphasis

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63 The newspaper was named after the boat that brought Castro's guerrilla force from Mexico to Cuba in 1956.

64 "*...organizadora de las masas [fue] demostrado por Lenin al fundar y alentar el periódico 'Iskra' en la etapa preparatoria de la Revolución de Octubre....*"; Vera Méndez had a long career at the forefront of Cuba's press system, beginning in 1955 with his work for clandestine newspapers aligned with Castro's rebel movement. He was director of two prominent dailies from 1960 to 1965, when he became the founding director of *Granma*, the official newspaper of the Communist Party of Cuba and from then on one of only two nationally distributed dailies on the island. His tenure as President of Cuba's Union of Journalists lasted from 1966 until 1987.

and translation).[65] Some observers viewed this "supplanting of the mass media by the mass organizations as the principal means of mass communication" as "the revolutionary breakthrough in communication practice in Cuba" (Bresnahan 1985, 285), and indeed it might have been if, in actual practice, the mass organizations had truly facilitated a multi-directional, deliberative process by which civil society shaped the political decision-making process. As we have seen, however, this was not the case, and once this shortcoming is acknowledged, it becomes impossible to endorse celebratory pronouncements of a new transmission mechanism, such as the following:

> ...talking about the media in Cuba is almost an indiscretion. Because political organization there allows for communication to be exercised in all of the tasks assumed by the population whether as a means of subsistence or in support of the revolutionary process proper. Is there any more effective and complete center of information than the [CDR] that, organized by the neighbors on each block, take care of everything from the distribution of elements necessary for domestic life to the discussion of tasks belonging to the construction of socialism, regarding literature, sport, the attitude of *compañeros* in shared work, etcetera? School, factory assemblies, the mass organizations, in the end … are all *transmitters* of information and political education. (Goutman 1979, 35-6; my emphasis and translation)[66]

Even if the mass organizations had succeeded in comprising a vibrant, deliberative, and directive civil society, there would still be a crucial need for the media to help coordinate their activity. As we have noted, community media outlets have the potential to serve as this articulating mechanism of civil society. The vanguardist framework adopted by the Cuban system, however, does not easily accommodate such a system. In fact, it has led Cuba's leaders to misinterpret this lack of articulation as a lack of criticism.

In a speech to Cuba's artists and intellectuals in June 1961, Castro famously asked: "What are the rights of revolutionary or non-revolutionary writers and artists? Within the Revolution, everything;

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65 "*...los medios de difusión masiva pasan a formar parte orgánica del complejo de instituciones responsabilizadas con la educación político-ideológica, moral y estética de la población y asumen la misión de complementar el proceso de comunicación directa con las masas, que se realiza a través de la estructura del Partido, del Estado, de la Unión de Jóvenes Comunistas. y de las organizaciones de masas y sociales.*"

66 "*... hablar de medios de comunicación en Cuba es casi una ligereza. Porque allí la organización política permite que la comunicación se ejerza en todas las tareas que la población asume ya como medio de subsistencia, ya como apoyo al proceso revolucionario propiamente dicho. ¿Hay algún centro de información más completo y eficaz que los comités de defensa de la Revolución que, organizados por los vecinos de cada manzana, se ocupan desde la distribución de los elementos necesarios para la vida doméstica hasta la discusión de las tareas propias a la construcción del socialismo, en los temas de la literatura, el deporte, la actitud de los compañeros en la tarea ·común, etcétera? La escuela, las asambleas de fábrica, la organización, finalmente, de los organismos de masa ... son todos órganos transmisores de información y educación política.*"

against the Revolution, no rights at all" (Castro 1961). While interpretation of this speech is debatable, Castro clearly did not mean to prohibit all forms of criticism, as he made clear in a 1965 interview with a US journalist:

> There is very little criticism in the Cuban press. An enemy of Socialism cannot write in our newspapers – but we don't deny it, and we don't go around proclaiming a hypothetical freedom of the press where it actually doesn't exist, the way you people do. Furthermore, I admit that our press is deficient in this respect. I don't believe that this lack of criticism is a healthy thing. Rather, criticism is a very useful and positive instrument, and I think that all of us must learn to make use of it... (Nichols 1982c, 24)

This was hardly an isolated statement. Cuba's leadership would continue to recognize this deficiency and call for its amelioration. Speaking after the failed sugar harvest of 1970, Castro:

> ...maintained that the failure, in part, was due to an inbreeding of ideas. For the past few years, he had been hearing nothing but his own echo within his inner circle of advisers.... He called on the masses to criticize government inefficiency (although not revolutionary goals) and to propose solutions to domestic problems and suggested that the press should be one of the channels for this new public dialogue. (Nichols 1979, 89)

In his main report to the Second Congress of the PCC in 1980, Castro noted that "[o]ne of the factors that contributed to a certain degree of laxity in socioeconomic activity was that frequently people were not as critical and self-critical as necessary" and he urged UPEC to "redouble its commitment to constructive criticism of the revolution". During that same year, in a speech to UPEC's Fourth Congress, Raúl Castro had called on journalists to "...delve deeper into basic problems and place greater emphasis on questions that really define the progress being made in the construction of socialism.... Criticism within our ranks is a political duty and social responsibility".[67]

These comments were only reflections of a document produced in 1979 by the Ninth Joint Session of the Party's Central Committee, titled "Concerning the Strengthening of the Exercise of Criticism in the Mass Media". Among its main points were that "[c]riticism is a constitutionally guaranteed right for all citizens", that "effective criticism should be fraternal in spirit, constructive in

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67 Fidel Castro's brother Raúl commanded the eastern front during the guerrilla campaign and served as Minister of the Revolutionary Armed Forces from 1959 to 2008. In 1980 he was a member of the Central Committee of the PCC, Second Secretary of its Politburo, and First Vice President of the Cuban Council of State, the National Assembly, and the Council of Ministers.

objectives, and precise in target," and that the "mere process of criticism is educational for the masses and stimulated public participation in solving problems" (Nichols 1982b 102-3). Nonetheless, over a quarter of a century later, Raúl Castro would find himself once again calling – in 2006 – "for more self-criticism and open discussion in the state-run media" (Lambie 199) and – in 2011 – for a more professional press to help root out corruption (Ravsberg 2012).

The obvious question, it would seem, is why the lack of criticism within the press has not been rectified throughout all these decades. Cuban leaders have emphasized the "professionalism" of the press and critiqued its rhetorical style,[68] but the answer lies in a fundamental structural problem. Cuba's vanguardist framework casts the press as a mechanism for articulating an *a priori* ideologically correct leadership to the *a priori* ideologically immature masses. So long as it remains structured as a mechanism for this type of top-down transmission, the press will be unable to generate the self-conscious criticism that the leadership continues to request and that the people doubtlessly want. That reflexivity would have to be generated through a process of open dialogue within a more autonomous civil society than has existed in revolutionary Cuba (cf. Sakamoto 1997, 208). As we have seen, however, Cuba's leadership rejected an autonomous civil society as necessarily liberal, bourgeois, and corrupted. This dilemma lies at the heart of Cuba's media problem and it remains unsolved.

One significant obstacle has been the degree to which Cuba's unions restrict access to the media. All professional print journalists, for example, must belong to UPEC and:

> [t]hose who violate union policies can lose their accreditation and, thus, their right to publish. The unions also have less overt methods of controlling their membership, such as the power to select the writers who will be published by the major publishing houses, publication of journalism or literary reviews that criticize deviations from policy, regular evaluations of writers' work as a basis for pay raises, and the responsibility for ideological and technical training of their members. (Nichols 1982c, 15)

Here, then, is an example of how Cuba's hegemonic system, in which civil society organizations are tightly tethered to the state, has severely restricted the degree to which citizens can participate in civic

68 For instance, the 1979 PCC Central Committee document stated that "[j]ournalistic style should be less mechanical and more creative" and "[t]he use of humor as a creative tool for making media messages more readable and convincing was specifically mentioned" (Nichols 1982b 103).

activity. Some attempts have been made to mitigate these restrictions in the media sector. For example, UPEC established a Voluntary Correspondents' Movement within which, by 1974, over 15,000 workers and members of the mass organizations had participated. Ostensibly, this was to allow non-professionals to express their own perspective. At the same time, since many of the volunteers were participants in the mass organizations, there was some potential for further articulation of state-sanctioned civil society (Vera Méndez 11). These volunteers, however, were reported to have been "recruited, indoctrinated and trained to collect and write articles for the provincial and national media" (Nichols 1982c, 18), implying that they still had to pass through a double filter of ideological orientation and editorial review. Not surprisingly, therefore, one observer has characterized the output as consisting chiefly of "dull propaganda, rather than objective news articles" (Carty, np). Here again, participation was largely limited to voluntaristic service to the goals of the revolutionary project. In any case, the volunteer contribution seems to have never reached more than a small fraction of the items published, with one content analysis of four major print publications finding that it represented only 0.4 percent in 1970, 1.5 percent in 1975, and 1.3 percent in 1980 (Nichols 1982b, 93).[69]

Letters and other forms of feedback represent another channel of public participation in Cuba's media system. Though letters-to-the-editor had previously been published in Cuban magazines, they began to appear in newspapers only in 1974. As a complement to the incipient popular power system,[70] *Granma* "launched a 'consumer action' column used to force bureaucrats to account for their mistakes and inefficiency and to relay reader concerns to the government" (Nichols 1979, 93).[71] *Juventud Rebelde* later followed suit and, in a similar vein, the national radio system broadcast a "weekly program titled 'Criticism of Radio and Television' in which audience members are encouraged to write or call in with

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69 The publications were *Granma*, *Juventud Rebelde* (see following note), *Verde Olivo* (Olive Green, the magazine of the Cuban armed forces), and *Bohemia,* a non-specialized cultural magazine.
70 Although the Popular Power system was instituted nationwide in 1976, a pilot program was set up in 1974 in Matanzas province.
71 The column itself invited letters "soliciting specific information, offering suggestions for journalistic assignments, to make known some fact or outstanding event, or to demand some information or answer on diverse subjects of general interest" (Rodriguez 1978, 56).

their comments on programming on Cuban broadcasting". The public definitely took advantage of the opportunity, with some media receiving "as many as 1,000 letters per week" (Nichols 1982, 17),[72] although as a percentage of total content, citizen feedback remained minimal. In 1975 they made up only 0.7 percent of total items in *Granma,* though by 1980 the figures stood at 2.7 percent in *Juventud Rebelde* and 2.1 percent in *Vanguardia*, the official PCC daily for the province of Santa Clara.[73]

In the case of *Granma*, at least, these columns were subject to an editorial filter, as "[t]he letters were rarely produced verbatim, but rather were excerpted, explained, or reported by an editor, who usually gave the writer's name and address." Multiple letters on similar subjects were often treated with a single reply (Rodriguez 1978, 53). Nonetheless, the letters played a truly critical role, as "some readers actually [did] make complaints, protests, and demands" (54), while "[e]ditors usually responded by consulting the appropriate authorities, printing their recommendations, and doing some investigative reporting of their own" (57). One content analysis of letters referenced in *Granma* between 1974 and 1976 found that 36 percent could be classified as negative, 10 percent positive, and 54 percent "neither positive nor negative, but rather of an information or service/favor-demanding nature". Negative criticism was sometimes directed against the behavior of fellows citizens, or the newspaper itself, but more often addressed the functioning of "the state, its bureaucracies, and the national economic system" (62). For example, relatively common themes included "irregularities or deficiencies in pricing", "availability of services" such as mass transit or garbage collection, or the quality of state-produced bread and ice cream (57-8). Grander ideological themes, however, such as revolutionary ideals, were never addressed. Also conspicuously absent from the column were references to important internal political issues, such as the deployment of the Cuban military to Angola or the project for a new constitution (60). In 1980 the

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72 The editor of *Juventud* Rebelde reported that "his paper receives 800-900 letters per week and part of the reason for the daily's expansion from four to six pages [was] to handle the influx of letters" (Nichols 1979, 93).
73 Citizen feedback, in the study cited, was defined as "[l]etters-to-the-editor, essays, and so forth written by readers, ordinary citizens, and others desiring to comment on public matters" (Nichols 1982b 101). As discussed below, by 1980 *Granma* had ceased running the letters column, which had been transferred to the the regional party newspapers. In 1970, 75, and 80, citizen feedback as a percentage of total items for *Verde Olivo* stood at 3.2, 1.2, and 3.9 (respectively) and for *Bohemia* at 1.1, 3.8, and 3.4.

feedback mechanism was geographically decentralized, with the column moving from *Granma* to the provincial dailies. On one hand, this shift can be interpreted as contributing to greater efficiency and efficacy, since much of the feedback already pertained to more local matters and was therefore better handled by the regional press. On the other hand, one observer suggested that "by handling a complaint in the fragmented environment of the municipality, the government prevents a snowball effect of complaints that might occur if it appeared in the national media" (Nichols 1982b, 102).

Ultimately, outside of providing another channel for government officials to gauge public opinion, this type of feedback did little to increase participation in decision-making. In fact, it sometimes provided yet another platform for vanguardism, as:

> [e]ditors and official respondents [were] quick to use those opportunities easily identifiable as constructive criticism not only to moralize to the readership but also to use revolutionary rhetoric to encourage specific policies and behaviors. Thus, the column [could] be useful to the regime as an instrument of transmission for "revolutionary themes" and values to be internalized... (59)

Meanwhile, although on occasion a letter was sent in the name of a local CDR, the columns did not enable Cuban civil society organizations to collectively respond to the issues raised. In fact, they can be interpreted to have had an opposite effect, as they were to some extent "treated by the reading public ... as *an alternative to social action and demand making from both the personal and collective levels*" (63; my emphasis). Also, as suggested above, geographical decentralization further reduced the potential for coordinated civil action.[74] Thus, while the letters columns may have created a limited avenue for reflexivity, there was no increase in autonomy for Cuban civil society.

Another form of increased decentralization within the print media during this period may also have been an attempt to respond to appeals by Cuban leaders for increased criticism. This effort involved the diversification of content producers, as "major sectors" of Cuba's hegemonic system "gained

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74 Meanwhile, the Cuban broadcasting sector, which since the revolution had been more tightly controlled than any other, became even more centralized. Studios for the national broadcasters (five radio and two television) had long been located in Havana, where the majority of programming for the regional radio networks was also produced. In 1978, a "third television channel which was centered in an eastern province and carried regional programming was consolidated into the national networks" (Nichols 1982c, 6).

control of their own media" or "upgraded the media they previously controlled". This resulted in the publication of over 50 magazines and journals, each "governed by a specific sector of the Cuban government or by one of the mass organizations". Cuba's state-sanctioned civil society thus had a means of expression free from direct supervision that allowed "greater latitude to comment on political issues" from the perspective of their constituents. These publications were nonetheless restricted by the same tight tethers between civil society and the state, so that "party ideological planners and central government officials ha[d] coordinating powers and considerable influence on matters of policy" (Nichols 1982c, 6-7).

Although academic attention has been scant, there is little to suggest that the broad contours of the Cuban media system have changed drastically over the last three decades. Despite the popular stereotype, the system is not a uni-central fount of hagiographic lies. The Cuban people have access to reliable information about internal developments and external affairs. There have been acts of overt state censorship and space for debate and criticism is restricted, especially in the broadcast media. State-controlled cinema production, on the other hand, has generally provided significant leeway for cultural and political critique. What has been largely absent, however, has been a mechanism for autonomous coordination between civil society groups. As will be reviewed below, there are indications that new opportunities for this type of activity may have begun to develop in the period following the collapse of the Soviet Union, when Cuba's economic structure was once again thrown into disarray. Before reviewing these changes, however, we will examine two other Latin American approaches toward the organization of a socialist media system.

Chile's Popular Unity Government (1970 – 73): Vanguardism and Participatory Communication within a Liberal Civil Society Framework

The circumstances in which Chile's Popular Unity (*Unidad Popular* / UP) administration rose to power in 1970 are in several important respects diametrically opposed to the Cuban experience. Whereas

Cuba's post-colonial political history was marked by overt US intervention, significant corruption, and multiple coups, by 1970 Chile's multi-party democratic tradition was among the most robust and longest standing in Latin America. Whereas Cuban socialism emerged from the military victory of a popular egalitarian nationalist guerrilla movement over a widely detested military tyrant, Chile's socialist administration resulted from the union of multiple leftist parties behind a prominent career politician who won a three-candidate presidential election with a bare plurality of the popular vote. Thus, whereas the Cuban revolutionary leadership was able to consolidate all political and economic power with the backing of a majority of the population, the UP's hold on executive power was severely restricted by its minority position in the congress, a lack of sympathy from key members of both the judiciary and the military, and outright opposition from a powerful bourgeoisie. An understanding of this radically distinct context is critical to any discussion of the communications policy of the short lived UP government, which was overthrown by a brutal military coup in September 1973.

The Chilean left had practiced a coalitional form of electoral politics for decades. Since the early 1950s, the primary powers had been the Communist Party (*Partido Comunista* / PC) and the Socialist Party (*Partido Socialista* / PS). The Soviet-oriented PC generally adhered to the orthodox Marxist "stages of history" theory, although adapted to the Chilean context (Casals 2010, 50). PC leaders, therefore, were inclined to form coalitions with centrist parties, so long as they represented a "progressive, anti-oligarchic, anti-imperialist, and anti-feudal" bourgeoisie (44, my translation).[75] The PS, on the other hand, generally opposed building coalitions with centrist parties representing the bourgeoisie. Both of the leftist parties, however, envisioned a pacific "Chilean road to socialism" that adhered to the institutional framework of liberal representative democracy as a "legitimate and feasible way toward the structural modification of the social order in the socialist perspective" (58).[76]

Castro's victory in Cuba had provided a new paradigm for socialist revolution in Latin America,

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75 All quotes from Casals are my translation.; "*progresista, antioligárquica, antiimperialista y antifeudal*"
76 "*...un camino legítimo y factible de modificación estructural del orden social en la perspectiva del socialismo.*"

however, and new tensions developed within the Chilean left during the 1960s. A significant portion of the PS was enticed by the idea of armed rebellion and a contingent of radical students eventually separated from the party in 1964. The following year they formed the Revolutionary Left Movement (*Movimiento de Izquierda Revolucionaria* / MIR) around a Marxist-Leninist ideology inspired by the Cuban experience. Meanwhile, the radicalized climate of the late 1960s also led younger members of the then-governing centrist Christian Democratic Party (*Democracia Cristiana* / DC) to split off and form, in 1969, the Popular Unitary Action Movement (*Movimiento de Acción Popular Unitario* / MAPU). It was in this radicalized climate that the UP – which included the PS, PC, and MAPU, along with the more moderate Radical and Social Democratic Parties, but not the MIR [77] – endorsed Allende, a multiple-term Senator and leader of the PS, as its candidate for the 1970 presidential election.

Allende won a tight three-way race with only a plurality of the popular vote, less than two percentage points ahead of his closest challenger, Jorge Allesandri of the conservative National Party (*Partido Nacional* / PN).[78] According to Chile's 1925 constitution, if no presidential candidate received a majority of the popular vote, the contest was to be decided by a vote in congress. Traditionally, ratification of the leading candidate in cases such as these had been a mere formality and the 1970 result was not without precedent; it was more or less the inverse of the 1958 election, in which Alessandri had won a five-way race with under a third of the popular vote, less than three percentage points ahead of Allende.[79] Nonetheless, the outcome of the 1970 congressional vote was very much up in the air as a result of the radicalized climate of Chilean politics.

Both the PN and the DC had long been suspicious of the Chilean left's links with the Soviet Union, and those suspicions were now compounded by support on the left for the Cuban revolution. The

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77 Allende's nephew, Andrés Pascal Allende, was an early leader in the MIR, which did not officially join the UP but supported Allende's administration despite its criticism of the reformist path.

78 Different sources provide slightly varying results. Allende is generally credited with between 36.2 and 36.6 percent of the popular vote, Allesandri with between 34.9 and 35.2 percent, and Radomiro Tomic of the DC with between 27.8 and 28.2 percent (see Francis 1973, Needler 1977).

79 Allende had been a founding member of one section of the PS in 1937. He had run unsuccessfully for president in 1952, 1956, 1960, and 1964. He had served in the lower house of the Chilean Congress from 1937-41 and in the Senate since 1945, including as President of the Senate from 1966-69.

US government, meanwhile, which had long been wary of Allende, had actively intervened during and after the election in an attempt to keep him out of power. This intervention included not only pressuring the Chilean Congress to select Alessandri, but also covert support for a botched military coup that led to the kidnapping and murder of General René Schneider, Chile's highest ranking military officer. These schemes backfired, as Schneider's murder led a horrified Chilean Congress to refuse to undermine the constitutional order by selecting Alessandri over Allende. The DC also sought to guarantee that order, however, by making its ratification of Allende contingent upon his agreement to a "Constitutional Guarantees Pact" that "limited government interference in the legal framework surrounding political parties, the educational system, the 'free press,' and the armed forces" (Aguilera & Fredes 2003, 73). In essence, the DC sought to respect the electoral decision while ensuring that the UP would not take Chile down the Cuban path of single party, authoritarian hegemony.

The Constitutional Guarantees Pact actually comprised two laws, the first of which, The Statute of Democratic Guarantees (Law 17.398), "guaranteed the right of all individuals and political parties to publish newspapers and magazines and operate radio stations", required congressional approval for the expropriation of any existing media, and barred "any discrimination by state-owned companies in imports, licensing, or the distribution of papers, ink or printing equipment" (Catalán 1988, 51). The second piece of legislation was a television law, the basis for which had been proposed earlier in 1970 by the DC. In its final form, this law formalized the sector's existing structure by granting broadcast licenses to the executive branch of the national government as well as the University of Chile and the Catholic Universities of Santiago and Valparaíso.[80] It specified that 40 percent of government funding for

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80 By the time television was introduced to Chile in the early 1960s, the development of radio had left policy makers leery of commercialized mass culture. At the same time, intensifying power struggles between the various parties made the state an undesirable administrator of television operations. "Hence, by exclusion rather than any specific policy, television was assigned to the universities", which were the only public institutions "considered free from political manipulation and commercial exploitation". Television was expected to follow in the tradition of extension education in the arts and music but, unable to produce sufficient programming, the universities began selling advertising space and showing cheap imported material, primarily from the US. After winning the presidency in 1966, the DC shifted media power away from the conservative parties via a series of actions that included the creation of a national television station (Catalán 1988, 47-9).

television would go to the national station and 20 percent to each of the university stations and, as an additional source of financing, it allowed for up to six minutes of advertising per hour. The law also guaranteed airtime to the established political parties in proportion to the votes they had received in the previous parliamentary election. Additionally, the law institutionalized governance of the television sector. First, it established a National Television Council, composed of representatives from the presidency, the congress, and the Supreme Court, as well as the presidents of and employees from each of the stations, to oversee the system. Second, it declared that station presidents would be appointed by the Chilean President and ratified by the Senate. Third, it mandated oversight of the university station by University Corporations composed of university officials and advisors (50). In a related move, in January of 1971, the opposition controlled congress enacted a series of constitutional reforms, one of which "gave both the government and the universities the right to set up and operate television channels," thus making it "possible for the opposition to set up new channels in any university" (53). Taken together, these measures ensured that UP influence within the television sector would be checked at all levels.

The broad result of these legal maneuvers was to guarantee the preservation of a pluralist and autonomous civil society according to a liberal framework. While television had been institutionalized as a special case, it was nonetheless partially opened to commercial operation. For the remainder of the media system the Constitutional Guarantees meant a continuance of the primarily commercial orientation that was implicit in the 1925 constitution, which constructed freedom of expression not:

> as a *right* in itself but as a *freedom of the individual* to manifest his or her own thought. There is a basic difference. As long as it is not a right, there is no application to a group…. The notion of freedom means that everybody can exercise it but without having the social and economic conditions that would make it possible. (Mera & Ruiz 1990, 25)

As a result, the *practice* of freedom of expression had been restricted to the "hegemonic sector … [that] had the wealth to buy and maintain a medium of communication … [and] present its own political and cultural values in a favorable light" (*ibid.*). This critique, which aligns with Marx's critique of civil society as a transmission belt for bourgeois values, was widely shared amongst supporters of the UP. Mattelart,

for example, declared in no uncertain terms that "the freedom of press in a bourgeois society is only the freedom of property" (1971, 128). Allende himself had invoked the same critique when, in a speech to the Senate following his defeat in the 1964 presidential election, he recognized that "[t]he tremendous strength of the mass media in the hands of powerful national and international economic sectors hinders the electoral struggle of the popular movements, even when they are a majority" (Catalán 52). Indeed, throughout the late 1960s, as Latin American communications researchers extended the arguments of economic dependency theory to the media, the Chilean left had increasingly incorporated the issue into its platforms and rhetoric (*ibid.*).[81]

Despite this explicit critique of the commercial media, however, and despite the more general trend of radicalism on the Chilean left and within Allende's own PS, the constitutional guarantees were probably not solely nor even predominately responsible for the maintenance of Chile's institutional framework under the UP. Given the UP's weak hold on state power and the obvious evidence of plots against the administration, Allende was all too aware that maintaining legitimacy was essential to any hope of further advance. In fact, the opposition continuously warned of the supposed threat to a "free press" that was represented by UP policies and Allende went out of his way to avoid playing into this trap.

As we have seen though, Allende had long been committed to a "Chilean road to socialism" that passed through the institutional structures of liberal political theory. His support for a pluralist media sector was therefore anchored in a long term political strategy that ran much deeper than a mere defensive reaction to oppositional attacks. He sought to reassure doubters on this point:

> I want to insist that Chile is not a socialist country, and my government is not a socialist government. Neither, as the press likes to say, is it a Marxist government. I am a Marxist, that's something else. But the government is made up of Marxists, laymen, and Christians. This is a popular, democratic, national revolutionary government which is anti-imperialist. There is genuine democracy here. There is incredible freedom here, particularly freedom of the press and freedom of speech. (Allende 1973, np)

He also candidly disavowed any intention to emulate the Cuban path even as he lauded it:

81 On dependency theory and communication studies, see chapter 1.

> The revolution that we want to carry out, without social cost and according to our history, is very different from the heroically and dramatically thriving Cuban revolution that I know deeply, because I've been in Cuba more than ten times and because I have the right to say that I was a friend of Che Guevara, I'm a friend of Fidel Castro, which doesn't imply that I separate and distinguish the cuban reality, fighting against a standing and brutal Batista dictatorship of yesterday, and the Chilean reality that didn't combat a dictatorship but a regime and a system, a revolution that reached power with arms in hand and a revolution that we're going to carry out via legal channels according to our commitment to the people. (Lihn 1971, 31)[82]

Allende thus rejected the Scientific Marxist implication that civil society was *necessarily* bourgeois and must be subsumed by the state. Rather, he remained confident that a political movement could overcome the structural constraints of the liberal framework in order to organize and mobilize a popular social movement that, once it reached critical mass, would ultimately restructure that framework and remove the obstacles to a socialist system. He reiterated this point on the first anniversary of his election: "…one has to be aware of what Chilean life is and of the path that is authentically ours, which is the path of pluralism, democracy, and freedom, the path that opens the doors of socialism" (Allende 2000, 123-4). In this sense, his position was closer to that of Gramsci, who advocated for the construction of a counter-hegemonic civil society movement that would ultimately subsume the state. For Allende, UP control of the executive branch was one more tool available for this larger task. We can therefore see Allende's conception of executive power as converging with the Gramscian notion of a civil state apparatus whose role is to facilitate popular organization within a relatively autonomous civil society.

Within this broad conceptualization, however, the UP's constituent parties were never able to agree on a unified framework for communications policy. The PC, for its part, was most interested in the greater circulation of so-called "high culture," which it considered to belong to a "universal patrimony." In opposition to this viewpoint, some sectors of the PS, joined by the MAPU, argued that the goal should

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82 All quotations from Lihn are my translation.; "*Es muy distinta la revolución que queremos hacer, nosotros, sin costo social y de acuerdo con nuestra historia, a la heroica y dramáticamente pujante revolución cubana que yo conozco a fondo, porque he estado más de diez veces en Cuba y porque sí tengo el derecho a decir que fui amigo del Che Guevara, soy amigo de Fidel Castro, lo cual no implíca que separe y distinga la realidad cubana luchando contra una dictadura enhiesta y brutal de ayer de Batista, y la realidad chilena que no combatió contra una dictadura sino contra un régimen y un sistema, una revolución que alcanzó el poder con las armas en la mano y una revolución que vamos a hacer por los cauces legales de acuerdo con el compromiso del pueblo.*"

be to nurture an existent popular counter-culture. Additionally, more militant members of the PS, along with the MIR, advocated for a new, alternative culture that emphasized active participation and would transform the Chilean populace into militant and creative revolutionaries (Catalán et. al. 1987, 35-7). Each of these three positions can be seen as a distinct interpretation of the relationship between the state and civil society. In the first, the role of the state was to elevate the masses to a higher cultural position, thus reconstructing civil society according to preconceived notions. In the second, the role of the state was to shape the cultural energy of the masses, thus forming and channeling an existent but limited civil society. In the third, the role of the state was to organize opportunities for the masses to express and evolve their own culture, thus nurturing and expanding an incipient civil society. The latter strategy held the greatest potential for instantiating an effective civil state according to the Gramscian counter-hegemonic framework.[83]

Each of the three strategies found some expression in UP communications policy, which can been usefully understood as an interaction of four modalities (37-38). A first and largely indirect modality hinged on UP economic policy (including fixed prices, import restrictions, differentiated tariff structures, etc.), which impelled private enterprises within the media sector to adopt a "conservative and cautious attitude that definitively slowed any impulse toward renovation and expansion" (*ibid.*; my translation).[84] Also, because other sectors of the economy were similarly affected, decreased advertising revenues further constrained commercial media operations (Schiller & Smythe 1972, 39). A second modality concerned the continuation and intensification of the previous (DC) government's support for popular cultural organizations, resulting in a notable increase in their output, "although with highly accentuated

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83 Subercaseaux (2003) has interpreted UP cultural policy as a "policy of extension" (*política extensionista*) that, on one hand, sought to integrate a bourgeois, middle class culture with not only the popular but also the subaltern cultures of the society, and, on the other hand, sought to create "a New Popular Culture that would gradually acquire a hegemonic character" (*una Nueva Cultura Popular, que debía adquirir gradualmente un carácter hegemónico*) (270). This schema generally concords with that offered by Catalán et. al. and reenforces our view of the UP as moving toward the instantiation of a civil state. By more precisely identifying the various tendencies and also linking them to specific parties, however, the tripartite schema that we have borrowed from Catalan et. al. facilitates a more nuanced analysis.
84 All quotations from Catalán et al. are my translation.; "*una actitud conservadora y cautelosa que en definitiva frenó todo impulso a su renovación y expansión*"

politico-militant connotations" (Catalán et. al. 37). [85] The third modality involved the acquisition of private companies, including the country's largest publishing house, a record label, and the telecommunications monopoly, which were then operated as state enterprises (37). The final modality resulted from a set of legal initiatives and institutional redefinitions that, given the disparate perspectives of the UP's various constituents, produced "not only a legislative impasse but a high degree of operative incoherence" as each faction used whatever influence it could muster to direct individual government entities according to their own theoretical position (38). [86]

The latter two of these modalities are nicely illustrated by the UP acquisition of Editorial Zig Zag, the massive publishing entity that had dominated the Chilean magazine sector, publishing 40 titles with a total monthly circulation of over 5 million. Zig Zag's catalog included *Selecciones del Reader's Digest* (the spanish-language version of *Reader's Digest*), *Telguía* (the Chilean *TV Guide)*, and a host of others that imitated the style of US magazines. [87] It also held a near monopoly on cinema fan magazines and photo-romances (Schiller & Smythe 38). [88] Zig Zag was owned by a Chilean investment group linked to the DC, but following the 1970 elections a workers' strike and pressure from the UP led the principal shareholder to sell (*ibid.;* "El Fin de Zig Zag" 1971; Mattelart 1980 [1974], 4; Subercaseaux 2003, 271). Thus, in February 1971, the government "obtained the physical properties and the rights to certain magazines, Zig-Zag's big debt, and a labor force of about 1,000 workers". Zig-Zag, meanwhile, remained a legal entity with rights to some of its magazines, which were from then on "printed under contract by the new government publishing house" (Schiller & Smythe 38). Under this arrangement, "[t]he [DC] continue[d] to control all North American comics published in Chile (between 650,000 and 750,000 copies per month)" (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 94). The new state run company was named Quimantú. [89]

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85 "*aunque con connotaciones político-militantes muy acentuadas*"
86 "*no sólo un impasse legislativo sino también un alto grado de incoherencia operativa*"
87 The company's name, Zig Zag, was taken from the "widely sold local imitation of Life magazine" (Schiller & Smythe 38) that had for decades been the enterprise's flagship title.
88 The term "photo-romance" refers to adult-themed pulp fiction magazines whose panel layout resembles a comic strip but makes use of photos, as opposed to drawings.
89 The name was derived from the Mapuche indigenous language (kim: to know, antu: sun) and suggests the "idea of a state protective of cultural patrimony" (*la idea de un Estado protector del patrimonio cultural*)

Despite acquiring the rights to *Selecciones del Reader's Digest* and *Visión*, a transposed American magazine (International Organization of Journalists 1974b, 61), Quimantú took on a much different editorial policy than its precursor.

Whereas Zig-Zag had focused primarily on magazines, Quimantú drastically expanded its book publishing operations, which were structured according to three fundamental objectives (Catalán et. al. 45). The first of these – the massive growth of book consumption – was decisively attained. By 1972, Quimantú was publishing in one month the amount of books that Zig-Zag had published in a year, a rate four times greater than Chile's *total* output prior to the UP. Prices, meanwhile, were considerably reduced, as a result of both the high volume and Quimantú's ability to operate at a loss (see below). In fact, a portion of the production was distributed without cost (Subercaseaux 2003, 281). Of the remainder, some 70 percent were sold through an innovative and "profound transformation of the traditional book marketing system" in which, alongside the usual bookstores, distribution took place through "a vast network" that included "newspaper kiosks and even non-commercial sites such as labor unions, neighborhood councils, cultural organizations, etc." and was thus accessible by almost all social sectors (Catalán et. al. 45). A vast increase in book consumption was thus made possible by several factors, including favorable economic conditions (reduced prices, high employment, and a relative scarcity of other consumer goods), the incorporation of new social actors within the cultural sphere, and a political project that emphasized the social value of knowledge among all classes (Subercaseaux 2003, 283).

Quimantú's second objective was "the diffusion of a national and universal literary heritage", which responded to the cultural strategy advanced by the PC and was especially evident in a collection called "Quimantú For Everyone" (*Quimantú para todos)* in which great works of national and world literature were printed in runs of up to 50,000 copies. In roughly two and a half years, 44 titles and over one million copies were produced within this series. Authors included Gorki, García Lorca, Chekov, Neruda, and Rojas (a Chilean novelist), among others. In a similar vein, Quimantú also published

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(Subercaseaux 2003, 272).

"Minibooks" (*Minilibros*), a series of pocket books printed in runs of 50,000 to 80,000 copies whose 55 titles amounted to 3,660,000 total copies in circulation and included authors from Europe (23), the US (12), the USSR (8), and Latin America (12). Other collections focused on more experimental authors and children's literature (Catalán et. al. 45-6; Subercaseaux 2003).

Additional collections addressed Quimantú's third objective, which was to promulgate socialist theory and political thought. "Open Path" (*Camino Abierto*) and "Popular Education Notebooks" *(Cuadernos de Educación Popular)* were "explicitly designed to promote the classic works of Marxism and the political thought of the Chilean Left" (which had the added effect of producing "disputes and polemics" among Quimantú workers aligned with the various parties of the UP coalition). Meanwhile, "We the Chileans" *(Nosotros los Chilenos)* encompassed works of a "historical-testimonial nature [and] sought the most outstanding expressions of what might be called the national popular identity of Chilean society" (Catalán et. al. 46).

We can see, therefore, that Quimantú's book division predominately catered to the PC tendency of promoting high culture, although "We the Chileans" coincided more with the PS/MAPU inclination to engage with an existent popular counterculture. Within the magazine publishing division, however, the latter was prioritized. In this medium, Quimantú sought to "substitute a group outlook for the prevailing individualistic one," to respect and promote indigenous capabilities at the expense of foreign styles, and to avoid "superman heroics and similar escapist means of handling social problems" (Schiller & Smythe 39). These goals found form in magazines known as *las contra* (as in *counter*-culture or *counter*-hegemonic), "which maintained the classic comic book format but attempted to emit a cultural message that was not angry but in solidarity with the process of transformations put forth by the [UP]". One new title was:

> *Cabrochico*, a new comic book intended to compete with the Disney product…. The first issue carried an updated version of the old Puss'n'Boots fairy tale, only in this rendition the castle which the cat delivers to his master is returned to the peasants who work its land.

Other examples include *Firme*, "a weekly comic book [offering] simple explanations of the complex social changes occurring in the country"; *Paloma*, a women's magazine; and two new journals directed toward young workers and "youth who are neither political nor organized" (Catalán et. al. 46).

Almost entirely unrepresented by Quimantú's output, however, is the PS/MIR emphasis on popular participation. Outside of one small and short-lived youth journalism initiative that will be discussed below, this tendency was only expressed to the extent that Quimantú books were incorporated into literacy campaigns, both government sponsored and otherwise, which sought to address Chile's illiteracy rates of 10 percent in urban areas and 16 percent nationally (Catalán 1988, 45). Though inspired by the Cuban experience, Chilean literacy educators were also able to draw on Paulo Freire's radical participatory pedagogy, which he had been developing and publishing in Chile following his forced exile from Brazil in 1964. The following anecdote, related by a 40 year-old MAPU activist and full-time trade union organizer, nicely illustrates the potential of these programs in combination with Quimantú's editorial policy:

> All this time I'd had no connection with any political party. Then I came into contact with some young people working in a literacy programme. They were using the methods of Paulo Freire, which include the raising of political awareness. One day I heard Freire speak, and we got into a debate – I felt he was overlooking things which were important to factory workers. Later we came to know one another, and this got me reading seriously. Marx, especially. It wasn't easy, but what gripped me was how it explained my own experience. The reading was a real struggle though. Some nights I'd sleep only two or three hours, I'd read and read, and even so I might cover only twenty pages – I was determined to take it all in. I'd left school at twelve, you see, and although I'd learnt to read and write I was functionally illiterate. Like most Chileans I'd had nothing to read. (Henfrey & Sorj 1977, 41)

Not all Chilean workers, of course, had the benefit of conversing with Freire himself. Moreover, Quimantú seems to have not coordinated its content and distribution in close relation to the literacy campaigns, much less Freirian pedagogical theories.

Despite the successful increase in the production, distribution, and consumption of reading material, especially amongst Chile's popular classes, Quimantú's history illustrates some of the deficiencies in UP communications policy. First, we must recognize that Quimantú, once it had ramped

up book publication in 1972, failed to recoup its costs. The payroll had increased from less than 1,000 workers in 1971 to around 1,600 in 1973 and the company relied on private sector loans, preferential credit from Chile's state-owned Production Development Corporation (*Corporación de Fomento de la Producción* / CORFO), and discounted prices on imported paper (Subercaseaux 2003; 272, 276). Of course, as the minutes of a 1972 Quimantú workers' assembly state, "[i]t's not always bad if a business loses money if other objectives, such as reaching a great mass of readers, are achieved" (272), [90] but the question becomes whether that objective deserves the priority assigned to it, since the resources required for operating at a loss might be directed toward some other social need. The resources devoted to Quimantú represented "a valuation of the book product as a medium superior to other media" based on "an enlightenment vision of culture that emphasizes it as high culture" (275). As such, the decision reflected a prioritization of the PC's cultural policy. Sustaining this policy required:

> ...channeling the greatest cultural efforts of the government and of the intellectuals that supported it, at the expense of having channeled them in less erudite intellectual activities, or in areas that were probably also decisive for the dispute that was being carried out (like the media, fundamentally TV, which at that time had recently become widespread). (*ibid.*)[91]

The PC strategy thus reveals itself as a particular type of vanguardism that not only embodies a top-down transmission model, but also incorporates a bourgeois understanding of "proper" culture. Prominent intellectuals aligned with the PS duly rejected this "paternalist attitude" which supposed "a culture ready to be packaged, labeled, and distributed" that only needed to be "placed within the reach of the masses" (in an essay entitled For the Creation of a Popular and National Culture [*Por la Creación de una Cultura Popular y Nacional*], cited in Lihn 28-9). The most important result in relation to our present analysis, however, was that:

> ...rather than serving as a channel for new cultural and creative spaces of civil society , [the policy] proposed to satisfy *necessities predefined by the state and the parties* , effecting

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90 All quotations from Subercaseaux are my translation.; "[*n]o siempre es malo que una empresa tenga pérdidas si se están cumpliendo otros objetivos, como es llegar a una gran masa de lectores*"

91 " *...canalizando los mayores esfuerzos culturales del gobierno y de los intelectuales que lo apoyaban, en desmedro de haberlos canalizado en actividades no cultas de la vida intelectual, o en áreas que probablemente también eran decisivas para la disputa que se estaba llevando a cabo (como los medios de comunicación, fundamentalmente la por entonces recien masificada T.V.).* "

a redistribution of the cultural capital that society already possessed. (*ibid.*; my emphasis)[92]

The degree to which printed content was or was not bourgeois was less consequential than the constraining effect that the policy had on the autonomous evolution of civil society. In sum, the PC strategy offered little for those seeking a civil state.

The approach backed by members of the PS and the MAPU sought to make use of existent forms of popular culture within political communication strategies. This was perhaps most successful in the music sector, where already during the 1960s Chile's "New Song" movement had begun to merge traditional Chilean folk styles with elements of international pop music and progressive political themes. The UP administration found several ways to support this genre. Most generally, UP economic policy increased the spending power of the popular classes, making more resources available for attending concerts and purchasing recorded music. More specifically, the government expanded on existing cultural policy to foment the recording industry. The importation of records had previously been restricted through foreign exchange controls and executive policy had been coordinated with RCA Victor, one of two major domestically located record manufacturers. The UP administration, however, bought out RCA and reorganized the company as Radio and Television Industries (*Industrías de Radio y Televisión* / IRT). This new company continued to produce records for other labels, even as the IRT label itself achieved considerable success. In 1971, 2,859,000 records were sold in Chile. In 1972, 3,250,000 were sold on the IRT label alone, with 6,307,000 sold in total (Catalán et. al. 41-44). An additional element of support for Chile's domestic music industry came in the form of a 1971 law which stipulated that in most live musical performances, whether presented directly or broadcast, at least 85 percent of the performers that "express themselves in the spanish language" must be Chilean, and that these performers must include a Chilean folklore group or soloists accompanied by harp, guitar, or accordion (Ministerio del Trabajo y Previsión Social 1971).[93]

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92 "*...más que servir de cauce a los nuevos espacios culturales y creativos de la sociedad civil, [la política] se propone satisfacer necesidades predefinidas desde el Estado y los partidos, llevando a cabo una redistribución del capital cultural que ya poseía la sociedad.*"

93 Foreign musical acts were exempted from the law. The law also mandated the inclusion of Chilean folklore

Chilean folklore music and the New Song movement were not, however, the only genres to benefit during this period. Record sales of North American pop music, romantic ballads, and other popular music (*boleros*, *rancheras*, *cumbias*, *ritmos tropicales*, etc.), also rose dramatically (Catalán et. al. 43-4). Meanwhile, although the UP further restricted record imports (from US $35,900 in 1970 to a mere US $2,200 in 1972), commercial importers switched to cassettes, importing almost three times as many (in terms of monetary value) in 1971 as they had records in 1970 (42). Thus, even in a sector where UP policy seemingly had considerable success, state support of "revolutionary" content in the commercial market produced only mixed results.

In other sectors, the results of the PS/MAPU strategy were even less encouraging. To a great extent, this strategy called for beating the opposition at its own game, on its home turf, by merging vanguardist ideology with popular cultural forms and inserting the resulting texts into a media apparatus that remained largely determined by the liberal framework of a commercial civil society. In other words, the belief was that socialist ideas could compete and win in a commercial marketplace (Portales 1983, 64). Ultimately, this strategy proved unsuccessful. This occurred in part because the opposition made use of legal constraints and underhanded tactics to retain and even augment its dominance in the commercial sphere. The strategy also failed, however, because the Chilean people were often not compelled by the types of vanguardist content made available.

These results are partially illustrated by events in the Chilean television sector, which had recently moved out of its experimental phase to become a significant force in the Chilean public sphere. [94] As discussed above, regulation of the television sector comprised a major part of the Constitutional Guarantees Pact and the opposition was quick to leverage the constraints it had put in place. Of Chile's

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music and dance in public school music curricula, and directed tax revenues toward the construction and maintenance of a headquarters (*sede social*) for the Professional Union of Folklore Musicians and Guitarists of Chile (*Sindicato Profesional de Folkloristas y Guitarristas de Chile*).

94 Thanks in part to the DC government's subsidization of domestically assembled televisions, the number of sets in use had risen from 56,000 in 1966 to 300,000 in 1969 (Catalán 49). By mid-1971 the number had climbed to 500,000, with national broadcasts reaching 30 percent of Chilean families and up to 60 percent of urban populations (Schiller & Smythe 36).

four television channels, only the state-operated Channel 7 had a national reach, but the crucial competition for viewers took place in Santiago, where the dominant station was the Catholic University's Channel 13, which as of June 1971 had a 56 percent share of the metro audience. [95] Its market dominance depended on content produced in the US (primarily by ABC), which accounted for some 45 percent of total programming and 96 percent of series and films, including *Bonanza*, *Mission Impossible*, and *The Dean Martin Show.*

In December 1971, however, pro-UP candidates won the station's union elections and by 1972 its news department was reported to have "had a leftist orientation", with its commentaries generally supporting the UP (Schiller & Smythe 37). As a result, the Student Federation of the Catholic University, controlled by the DC, accused the news department of bias and university officials called elections for a new board of directors. The election produced a divided board, with three members supporting the UP and three opposed. Thanks to the 1970 television law, university administrators were able to break the tie by appointing a priest as the station's director, with the result that, "[i]nstead of acting as a mediator between the two sides, [he] fired the news director and shifted the orientation of the channel towards the opposition" (Catalán 53). The station then began receiving technical aid and financial assistance from the US (Fagen 61).

The constraints of the Constitutional Guarantees Pact enabled other opposition actions, including congressional rejection of the budget for the government operated National Television Channel and a proposal, based on the constitutional reform, to expand the number of university stations (Catalán 53). The University of Chile's Channel 9, meanwhile, became the site of the most heated and prolonged battle in the television sector. Considered to be the only channel offering access to the left prior to the UP government (International Organization of Journalists 1974b, 54), Channel 9 was favored by the Chilean working class (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 143) and its director and employees supported the UP. Anti-UP

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95 Of Chile's four television stations, only three served Santiago. The fourth was operated by the Catholic University of Valparaíso.

university administrators, however, sought to gain control of the station. When this failed, the administrators began broadcasting illegally on channel 6. "Litigation followed between the public services, the courts, the Association of Journalists and the Ministry of Justice." The National Council of Television, which had been created as a result of the 1970 television law and "in which the opposition held a majority, suspended Channel 9 and recognized Channel 6 as the legal university channel" (Catalán 54). Meanwhile, however, the workers of Channel 9, "supported by the working class of the whole country", refused to abandon their positions and resisted the decision from January through August 1973, when an "order by the Court of Appeal authorised the use of force to dislodge them" (Mattelart 1980, 143; see also Aguirre 1979, 260).

These examples show that the legal constraints of the liberal framework produced tangible and negative results for the UP, and more could be provided in relation to other media. It is far from clear, however, that UP content would have prevailed had it not been for the opposition's exploitation of these constraints. Even in 1970, prior to the campaign against it, Channel 9 only garnered some 10 percent of viewers, compared to 50 percent for Channel 13. Meanwhile, as the UP began to consolidate control over the National Television Channel, Channel 7, it saw its audience share drop from 40 to 30 percent between 1970 and 1971, with the lost 10 percent shifting to Channel 13.

> In absolute terms, audience distribution in 1971 was more or less as follows: Channel 13, 720,000 viewers; Channel 7, 350,000; Channel 9, 120,000. Channel 13 won this competition by buying in [sic] the greatest number of imported programmes, generally North American.... For example, when *The High Chaparral* was shown, it snapped up 84% of the television audience; *Bonanza* attracted 76%, *Combat* 74%, *The FBI* 72%, *Johnny Quest* 69%. The only occasions on which the pro-government stations obtained majority audiences were when they showed programmes such as *Mod Squad* (62%) and *Simplemente Maria* (80%). (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 96)[96]

Similar results appear in relation to the aforementioned, ideologically alternative magazine and comic book titles that Quimantú introduced. Although the state-owned publishing house had a

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96 *Simplemente María* was a *telenovela* that has been remade multiple times in different Latin American countries. Although the first version appeared in Argentina in 1967, the reference here is most likely to the 1969 Peruvian version that found considerable success across the hemisphere. Brazilian and Venezuelan versions were produced in 1970 and 1972, respectively.

competitive advantage in the form of imported paper at subsidized prices (International Organization of Journalists 1974b, 61), its new titles did not always find success. In early 1973, Quimantú "decided to close down its children's weekly, its popular news magazine and several comics that it had tried to redesign." Circulation of the children's weekly, which had been at 300,000 when it began in March 1971, had dropped to just 35,000 (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 143) and "standard North American comic books far outsold" the UP alternatives (Fagen 63). Contemporary observers noted that one "major difficulty" in the comic book sector was that the Chilean audience was "conditioned to regard the fare of commercial publishers as simple recreation" whereas Quimantú's "offerings, in contrast, are likely to be viewed with suspicion as propaganda" (Schiller & Smythe 39). Whether or not this particular distinction was entirely justified, it signals an important weakness in the PS/MAPU strategy. Mattelart offered the clearest contemporary account of the deficiencies of this approach:

> Having adopted the bourgeois genres, [the UP] then set about the reorientation of their contents, while remaining with these traditional forms of leisure... The first problem is that the adoption of the genre, with the intention of subverting it from within, generally results in a simple inversion of the signs of the bourgeois message and in the adoption of the ruling class's unilateral notion of politics. In the place of the manicheism of the forces of reaction we are presented with the manicheism of the progressive forces.... In every case there is a rearrangement of the ingredients, but no real alteration of meaning.
>   Even when this sectarian and sloganistic notion of politics is abandoned, however, and there is a genuine attempt to introduce 'implicit content' into the established genres, another kind of problem arises. The implicit content of bourgeois messages refers to a mode of life and an organisation of social relations which everyone lives every day. That of the left's messages, however, inevitably refers to a superstructural project which is not rooted in everyday life. (1980 [1974], 104-5)

Mattelart's argument, in other words, was that in order for media content to become widely accepted by Chile's popular classes, its production would have to be organically linked to the lived experience of those classes. This could not be achieved by simply swapping out content while largely maintaining both form and, most crucially, the organizational context of production.

This same pattern manifested in the predominant UP approach to print journalism, arguably the most important field of mediated political debate in Chile during Allende's administration. Professional journalism, according to the norms of objectivity popularized in the US, became standard in Chile

between 1930 and 1950 (Mera & Ruiz 34). For the Chilean left, however, the ideal of an objective press was a facade that only served to legitimate the bourgeois institutional order (cf. Mattelart 1971, 1980 [1974], 37-40; Revolutionary Left Movement 1979 [1971]; Biedma 1973; Taufic 1973; Garretón Merino 1974). The mainstream media "in the big cities between 1940 and 1973", whether "prestige or populist", was considered "both selective and stereotyped" as a result of the following types of misrepresentations:

> Working-class people and their problems are under-represented. They are present either as solely politicized actors or as subjects of 'mass culture'; that is, as semi-delinquents or characters of 'real life' melodrama. In the prestige press, they assume the roles of communist agitators. Women, too, are under-represented. They are present either as sexual objects or mothers or as characters for melodrama, crimes of passion, etc. Similarly, youth, ethnic minorities, intellectual, creative workers are seldom featured and are depicted in negative stereotypes when they are present. (Mera & Ruíz 35)

Following Allende's election, however, "the pretense of journalistic objectivity [was] gradually replaced by open association and identification with political parties" (Schiller & Smythe 38). On one hand, this devalued the press, as facts and rational arguments, on both sides, were often obscured by prejudice. On the other hand, it enriched the national debate, as Chileans were better situated "to consider and discuss issues free of what is regarded as a spurious classlessness and to judge therefore the merits of an argument on its relationship to social transformation" (61).

In general, however, the approach did not work in the UP's favor. To a great extent, this was due to the structural imbalance caused by private ownership and commercial operation that allowed opposition voices to enjoy much greater reach than those sympathetic to the UP. Tabloid style papers utilized a "biting, strident, and insolent" tone to disparage UP politicians and generate public alarm regarding supposed threats to state institutions (including freedom of the press) and grave shortages of food items. They also provoked fears of violent repression from the left and, in some cases, called for a military coup. The "serious" right wing press, meanwhile, made use of "prudent" editorials, "cryptic" messages, and "an affective neutrality" in order to treat the same themes (Dooner 1989, 81).

Exemplary of these tendencies were the papers controlled by the El Mercurio Company, which

was, in 1970, Chile's dominant media conglomerate. It was also one of over 60 enterprises controlled by the A. Edwards Bank, which was aligned with the conservative PN. The company not only controlled seven provincial newspapers and accounted for some 50 percent of Chile's total newspaper circulation, it also controlled one of the country's most extensive national radio networks and one of the largest publishing houses (Mattelart 1980 [1974] 4, Schiller & Smythe 38). El Mercurio, the firm's flagship Santiago daily, had been founded in 1827 and acquired in the 1920s by Agustin Edwards Ross, "one of the biggest bankers and entrepreneurs in Chile." It was then inherited by Agustin Edwards Jr., who grew it into Chile's most important and prestigious national paper by maintaining an "avoidance of any kind of critical attitude toward [the] state on which it [was] dependent" (31, 33). El Mercurio held the exclusive rights to the services of the major international press agencies (AP, UPI, Reuters, AFP, and The New York Times), all of whose teleprinters were housed on its premises, meaning that "[t]he news provided by these agencies therefore passed through a double process of filtration before reaching the reader – in New York or Europe, and in Santiago. Of 120,000 words received by the teleprinter, only 9,000 reached the public" (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 4).

As a result of UP economic policies, however, advertising revenue at El Mercurio fell by 50 percent (Schiller & Smythe 38).[97] This, combined with a government mandated increase in journalists' wages, had by 1972 brought the paper close to its credit limit (Kornbluh 2003, 91). El Mercurio, however, was able to count on financial support from the US government. Funding from the US, which was channeled through the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), also found its way to other oppositional media outlets (including radio stations, individual radio journalists, television programs on at least three broadcasting channels, and the CD newspaper *La Prensa)* and totaled as much as eight million dollars

97 Schiller & Smythe explain the correlation as follows: "...the government's successful effort to redistribute income has channeled a heavy stream of purchasing power into the lower and (especially) the middle classes. Consequently, demand for consumer goods is high and the sellers have little need to advertise their supplies. Also, the preceding government's law limiting public service advertising by the government has reduced revenues still further. As the rapid nationalization of industry has confirmed the private sector's fears, investors have opted for luxury spending and Swiss bank accounts. As a leading executive in the private mass media put it, 'Advertising is an investment and investment is falling off.' Besides, the nationalization of many industries has also had the effect of cutting back their advertising budgets" (37).

(Drago 2003, 114; Aguilera & Fredes 73, 74, 80).[98] El Mercurio, however, received the lion's share, and was viewed by the CIA as one of the main private-sector organizations that had "set as their objective creation of conflict and confrontation which will lead to some sort of military intervention" (Kornbluh 93).[99] For example, in the days before the failed coup attempt of June 29, 1973, when tanks rolled through the streets of downtown Santiago and surrounded the presidential palace, El Mercurio published essays which argued that in the case of internal chaos or a grave threat to the country's sovereignty, the Armed Forces had not only the right, but the obligation, to intervene (Drago 113). Moreover, "the presentation of stories and photographs in El Mercurio followed closely the US Army's Psychological Warfare Manual" (Landis 1975, cited in Fields 2007, 7). By the CIA's own admission, the US propaganda effort, focusing on El Mercurio, "played a significant role in setting the stage for the military coup of 11 September 1973" (Kornbluh 94).

This covert collaboration between the US government and Chile's oligarchy, with all its similarities to the Guatemalan coup of 1953, precisely illustrates the bourgeois dominance of liberal civil society that Marx had rejected and that had led the Cuban government to exert an authoritarian control over the press. As we have seen, however, the long tradition of a "Chilean road to socialism" rejected the Cuban model, a point on which Allende continued to insist in his speech to the First Assembly of Left Journalists in April 1971:

> ...we are given the battles within the framework of bourgeois democracy, and the laws that this bourgeois democracy has dictated.... We must note, therefore, that we have committed ourselves to the freedom of information. By this we mean that we are not looking for a news monopoly. Thus the struggle of the people's government within this framework is much more difficult than that of other nations, who, by means of insurgency or weapons, have taken power and control of the government. We are voluntarily limited, because of

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98 Fields (2007) cites the San Francisco Chronicle (12/5/75) and a figure of $4.3 million in total support to Chilean media. The $8 million figure is given by the International Organization of Journalists (1974a, 1) and Klein (2007, 66). For a thorough treatment of US support for Chile's oppositional media, see Landis (1975). For overviews of the larger US role in bringing about the 1973 coup, see Uribe (1975) and Kornbluh.

99 Duran (1976), citing the New York Times, gives a figure of $11.5 million going to El Mercurio alone; the New York Times article, however, actually reported a figure of $1.5 million. The actual amount funneled to El Mercurio appears to have been higher: $700,000 was personally authorized by President Nixon in September 1971, $300,000 by Henry Kissinger in October 1971, and another $965,000 was approved on April 11, 1972 (Aguilera & Fredes 75; Kornbluh 2003, 91-3).

previous commitments. (Allende 1983 [1971], 369)

Perhaps surprisingly, even more radical groups like the MIR, which had adopted the armed guerrilla tactics of the Cuban revolution, also refrained from calling for the nationalization of the media. Instead, they primarily professed the more mainstream PS opinion that "[o]nly a political battle, related to the general interests of the oppressed sectors – who in this moment of the Chilean process are the vanguard – will be able to advance journalistic practice towards a truly revolutionary movement" (Revolutionary Left Movement 135).[100] Where expropriation was invoked, it was cast as not the initial, but the final action of the political battle. Mattelart, for instance, also speaking before the First Assembly of Left Journalists, declared that "the absolute expropriation of the information media must be understood as the culmination of a process, and the outcome of the confrontation with the bourgeoisie" (Mattelart 1971, 3). [101]

For the Chilean left, the primary mode of this confrontation was for professional journalists to openly acknowledge the political context of their work:

> ...the demand for freedom of the press, for the individual concrete journalist, will always be abstract and perhaps even reactionary, if it is not accompanied by a growing consciousness of his condition as an intellectual worker, socially privileged, and whose social status corresponds strictly to the social relation which bourgeois society has determined for it. The newspaper workers must raise the banner of freedom as a declaration of battle against the social division of labor and challenge this social division in their own professional policy. How? By trying to permanently relate their specific practice to a global conception of society, and by lucidly and resolutely incorporating themselves into the political struggles of the oppressed sectors. (Revolutionary Left Movement 134)

Allende himself cast this approach in explicitly voluntarist and vanguardist terms:

> ...it seems justified to me to point out that objectivity, as such, cannot exist if we believe that in this bourgeois society there is and must be a confrontation between groups and sectors, between social classes.... You therefore must be the vanguard of revolutionary thought, a thought sustained and augmented by the daily struggle that we are living.... A great political consciousness is needed to raise the level of the masses and to make of every left journalist someone not only committed in his professional practice to the revolutionary tasks of the Popular Government and the people of Chile, but also someone linked with the popular masses who will take upon himself, in addition to his working

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100 Mattelart (1979) relates that the MIR's "class analysis of the role of the journalist circulated in the form of a mimeographed article" (24).

101 "*la expropiación absoluta de los medios de información debe concebirse como un punto de llegada de un proceso, y el desenlace victorioso del enfrentamiento con la burguesía*"

hours, the voluntary work of raising the political level of the immense majority of Chileans, so that they understand our determination to take these historical steps. (Allende 1983 [1971]; 367, 369)

As in other sectors of the media, then, the UP believed that vanguardist practice and content, reinforced by support from the executive branch of the state, would win the allegiance of uncommitted citizens.

In accordance with this strategy, the government ordered a 50 percent increase in journalists' salaries (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 38) and sympathetic journalists began to organize. The Association of Journalists of Chile (*Colegio de Periodistas de Chile*) had been established by law in 1956 to regulate the professional practice of journalism, with membership restricted to those with a pertinent university degree. As such, it was viewed by the left as a primary component of the institutionalized bourgeois communications apparatus and member journalists sympathetic to the UP organized themselves into internal blocs that contested its power structure (Díaz 2003). For example, in the Association's December 1971 elections, UP candidates "received 3,339 votes and the 'free press' journalists, 3,750, resulting in a [National] Council composed … of seven members of the opposition and three of the left. In the regional college of the central provinces of Santiago and O'Higgins, seven 'free press' journalists were elected and four from the left" (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 96).

Not wholly confident in their ability to transform professional journalism from within the official association, left journalists also convened the aforementioned First Assembly of Left Journalists in 1971, in part to share ideas about how to organize within their workplaces. For example, it was reported that "[a]t the newspapers El Sur of Concepción and La Mañana of Talca which belong to ultra-reactionary groups, the journalists have battled bravely and have won the right to express their own opinions in signed columns in the same paper" (Schiller & Smythe 38). Following the assembly, workers in some communication enterprises, such as the newspaper *Clarín*, organized under the Revolutionary Workers Front (*Frente de Trabajadores Revolucionarios* / FTR) and competed for administrative positions within the company unions (J.C.M. 1971, 10).[102] In his speech to the Assembly, Allende suggested "that in

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102In the case of *Clarín*, at least, these workers were initially opposed by workers aligned with the PC. As of October 1971, however, FTR members held four of the five directorial posts in *Clarín's* company union and had

journalism also, there is the possibility of cooperatives which would make the owners of the broadcast media not the businessmen, but rather all of the workers of these firms" (Allende 1983 [1971], 372). Press production workers, meanwhile, were reported to be "organizing into trade unions rather than employer-controlled company unions" and there were "long-range plans by the Socialists to establish a national union of newspaper workers and to use the dues from such an organization to publish a workers' newspaper" (Schiller & Smythe 38). These long-range plans, of course, were crushed by the coup of 1973.

The coup notwithstanding, however, the left's attempt to counter the bourgeois controlled media with a politicized professional press corps was largely a failure. From February 1972 until September 1973 there were 64 daily papers in Chile, of which 45 were aligned with the right, ten with the left, and nine self-defined as "independent" (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 143), and during the UP administration press outlets aligned with the left "never came closer than having 25 percent of the national audiences" (Mera & Ruíz 35). In Santiago, prior to the UP victory there were only three newspapers on the left, with a total circulation of 140,000 (Mattelart 1980, 4-5). During the UP administration these numbers improved to five dailies and a total circulation of 312,000. The opposition press, however, managed to grow from four dailies with a circulation of 425,000 in the pre-UP period, to six dailies with a circulation of 551,000, of which El Mercurio alone accounted for 300,000 (International Organization of Journalists 1974b, 62; Mattelart 1980 [1974]; 4, 94). Worse yet, while El Mercurio continued to represent the standard for professional objectivity, many of the papers supportive of the UP were popular tabloids that incorporated sensationalized portrayals of crime and violence (*ibid.* 48; J.C.M. 10) and exhibited elements of racism, religious intolerance, and the exploitation of sexual themes and vulgarity (Dooner). In other words, the imperatives of competing in a commercial market often overshadowed the political sympathies and intentions of the journalists.[103]

managed to form a united front with the communists (J.C.M. 10).

103As Mattelart (1980 [1974]) points out, "[w]ithout falling into the moralism characteristic of petty-bourgeois criticism of such journalism, it is true to say that the amount of space devoted by the left press to coverage of crime has the effect of portraying the people as an inexhaustible source of crime and violence. This amount of

Frustration with the left press was evident in interviews conducted during July and August of 1973 with militant labor leaders in Santiago, who were all too aware of the continuing influence of commercial concerns and bourgeois professionalism on the production and presentation of content:

> I don't think any of the left papers represent the proletariat's aspirations right now – and most of the workers think the same. I've discussed this with several left journalists. Often they admit it themselves; they're under the editor's thumb, and the censor's. They have to follow the newspaper's political line. They're dependent on certain economic interests, or a particular publicity line – in short, a whole load of things which cut them off from the working class. All these pressures castrate the content the workers can provide. And it's not only that. Most of the time the papers distort this content completely. Papers like *Clarín* (a populist left paper), for example, have a way of trivialising the serious problems facing the working class and treating them in a stupidly humorous way.... [104] The left papers seem to be trapped in a mould manufactured by the schools. Its 'Journalism', with its laws and rules. The basic problem is that journalists have to sell their journalism. It has to have impact; they need their bits of news to appear under banner headlines. That's why they're so keen on tit-bits [sic] of news, like crimes, because they are the topics which sell lots of copies. But this kind of selling doesn't interest us. (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 190-1)

> The left press goes on writing for the person who passes the newspaper kiosk and buys a paper because he's attracted by the headline or likes the tone in which the report is written. They don't really write for people who are caught up in living the process. Only those who stay outside the struggle feel themselves interpreted by what they read in these papers. (206)

> Take the front page of *Clarín*. There's never anything there that's to do with the real meaning of the revolution. It's always the same thing; nothing to do with us. They go on showing girls instead of hitting out at the bourgeoisie. (202)

This type of analysis coincided with the last of the three UP communications policy tendencies discussed earlier and attributed to more radical members of the PS, as well as the MIR, who sought to construct new, non-commercial structures for the production and distribution of media texts that were organically linked to and incorporated the active participation of the popular classes.

Although participatory communications theory continued to gain prominence and increasingly informed all socialist communications strategies, it produced very little in the way of concrete policy

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coverage inevitably means the underestimation of other events in which the people also participate, events which are a good deal more positive and, moreover, illustrative of a new kind of life" (48). Similar complaints came from students and workers (cf. J.C.M. 10).

104*Clarín* had one of the highest national circulations of any daily paper in Chile (International Organization of Journalists 1974b, 69). While it was seen to be sympathetic to the UP, the president of *Clarín*'s FTR complained that its owner was out of the country for long periods and that its management censored pieces critical of "the 'big fish' of the previous [DC] administration, including the ex-President Frei," discriminated against unionized workers, refused small advances, and did "not obey the law" (J.C.M. 10).

initiatives within the UP government. The PC's National Cultural Commission did call for an "extensive network of Centers for Popular Culture" that would incorporate "workers' theater" alongside libraries, educational programs, and art workshops (Kunzle 1983 [1973], 373), but the plan was never executed. Nonetheless, the general climate of increased support for popular culture of all forms under the UP administration led to a modest flourishing of participatory cultural initiatives, such as amateur theater groups that incorporated peasants and workers (Fagen 59), including those "under the aegis" of Chile's amalgamated central labor union (*Central Unitaria de Trabajadores de Chile* / CUT) (Kunzle 373). Another example can be found in the government's tolerance and occasional legitimation of "guerrilla muralist brigades" composed of youth activists that painted pro-UP propaganda and artwork in public spaces (Kunzle). These types of projects, however, largely relied on the voluntarism, ingenuity, and finances of artists and activists. There was no concerted policy effort on the part of the UP to scale such enterprises up to a level that might be able to displace commercial media forms.

The government did, however, directly sponsor at least one participatory journalism project. *Compañero* was a bimonthly newspaper published by *Quimantú* that contained information directed toward youth laborers (Aguirre 259). The publication itself could be displayed as a broadsheet affixed to a wall or folded into a more conventional newspaper format. The paper's staff of eight young journalists trained and provided technical assistance to small, local youth worker publications that were then distributed along with *Compañero* itself. Content was culled from the smaller papers, so that *Compañero* became "a kind of 'umbrella-paper', fed by the local [participatory] media and producing a sort of generalization of the concrete problems expressed" therein. [105] The objective of the project was "to contribute to the mobilization and participation of youth, through a process of permanent questioning about [their] daily life". [106] Tellingly, however, just as the project was starting to show results, "it was interrupted due to political differences within the [UP] related to the central question: the process of

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[105]"*una especie de "periódico-sombrilla", alimentado por los medios locales y produciendo una suerte de generalización de los problemas concretos expresados*"
[106]"*contribuir a la movilización y la participación juvenil, mediante un proceso de permanente cuestionamiento de [su] vida cotidiana*"

mobilization and its meaning" (*ibid.*, my translation).[107] That direct government support for participatory media was limited to such a tentative project, that it was oriented only toward youth (who presumably were seen to be more responsive to such experimental efforts), and that it was ultimately suspended, indicates the degree to which UP communications policy remained invested in the institutional and professionalized division of labor of the capitalist system.

Far and away, therefore, participatory communications initiatives during the UP administration were executed at the periphery or entirely outside of the official bureaucracy, where they complemented a greater movement toward "popular power" that was rooted in over half a century of "organization, struggle, and ideological development … through a revolutionary syndicalism" (256). Adopted as the goal of the more radical elements of the Chilean left, popular power referred to modes of self-organization that outpaced the official UP policy structure, especially after they gained significant momentum in the second half of 1972. One example of the relation between popular power and participatory communication occurred in the southern province of Concepción. In August of 1972, the provincial PS office convened a Syndicalist Conference whose participants resolved to create Workers Councils (*Consejos de los Trabajadores*) that would serve as the basis for a socialist system of popular governance (270). It was against this background that, during a nationwide lockout that took place two months later (and by which the opposition hoped to paralyze Chile's economy), the workers of the newspaper El Sur*,* in the provincial capital, responded by occupying their workplace. They quickly put out an alternative newspaper, El Surazo, which appeared regularly over the next two weeks. Two- thirds of the news carried in El Surazo came from "non-traditional" sources, including unions, organized factory occupations, and individual workers. Moreover, 30 percent of the items published were not written by professional journalists, but by members of popular organizations and non-journalist workers (260).

Participatory media production, however, was not usually a spontaneous reaction to particular

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107All quotations from Aguirre are my translation.; "*fue interrumpIda debido a diferencias políticas en el marco de la [UP] en cuanto a la cuestion central planteada: el proceso de movilización y su sentido*"

events on the part of media professionals, but rather the product of directed engagement between committed activists and members of the popular classes. In this sense the strategy also incorporates an element of vanguardism, but whereas the previously discussed UP strategies focused on the transmission of vanguardist content, the role of the vanguard in the participatory strategy was to enable popular groups to create their own content. The MIR had articulated this possibility when, in its critique of objectivity, it noted that "[a]s an alternative to the communication between the world of bourgeois knowledge and its assimilation by the dominated, and between the bourgeois state and the oppressed classes, we can envisage communication between the dominant sectors themselves" (Revolutionary Left Movement 134). Indeed, shantytowns organized by the MIR produced some of the first regularly distributed participatory newspapers, with the earliest appearing in February of 1972 (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 189). Some professional journalists and educators also took it upon themselves to train workers, peasants, and other non-professionals in media production. This type of intervention was planned at the University of the North (Mattelart 1971, 8; 1980 [1974], 96) and undertaken at the University of Chile's Santiago campus, where one student activist reported that:

> In journalism, much of the training was taken out of the University. Each group of students went with a teacher to a union branch or shantytown and started producing a paper with the local workers or residents, to deal with their particular problems. This taught the students that a journalist's job wasn't simply to hand news down to the people, but to get them to express themselves, through a medium which they controlled. These papers became a regular feature of dozens of local organizations, however modest. Gradually the students would reduce their contributions, until the paper was self-sufficient. This gave a tremendous boost to popular communication, creative, political and purely informative. The workers who wrote in these papers used the style of their everyday life – which also widened the students' experience and sense of language. The papers themselves became a source of important changes suggested at a popular level. For instance, in one such news-sheet a housewife in one of the shantytowns produced some completely new ideas for improving local food distribution. They were discussed in the shantytown and eventually implemented. No public official could have devised them, because they depended on a knowledge of day-to-day problems and living conditions in the locality. (Henfrey & Sorj 1977, 157)

The most advanced examples of participatory forms of communication as a component of Chilean popular power emerged within the industrial cordons (*cordones industriales*) that began to appear in mid-

1972 as militant workers occupied factories outside of any official process of expropriation. Unable to count on state protection from retaliation by factory owners and right wing militants, workers from occupied factories in close proximity created joint security zones. As these cordons stabilized, the workers began to organize forms of governance that encompassed more than just security. Outside of the industrial zones, parallel processes of popular organization emerged in response to other problems that UP supporters felt were going unaddressed by the government, including adequate distribution of food and household supplies, as well as enforcement of official price controls. Participants in these various organs of popular power not only felt as if they deserved greater support from the official leadership of the UP, they also felt that their views were not properly represented in the left press, as workers participating in the cordons made clear:

> All that pornography filling our Sunday papers should be got rid of, and a page should be given over to the workers so that they can feel that their own experience is being interpreted by the paper, and the people can get to know what the anonymous trade union leaders are thinking. We have our own ideas about what's going on – but usually they never get beyond the four walls of our meeting or union assembly. (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 204)

> It's what you'd expect, because they talk to the bourgeoisie, because there's a left bourgeoisie just as there's a right bourgeoisie. [The left] press talks to those people and not to the workers.... (205)

> The journalists prefer to talk to the top blokes, the administrators and ministers, perhaps because they know them, or because they share more or less the same level of education. Or perhaps – at least, this is my experience – because they underestimate the workers and think they're not going to understand them. Or maybe it's because they think that the workers are going to talk to them as workers do talk and therefore they'll feel uncomfortable because they live at a different level and have a different kind of education. Whatever it is, the journalists have done nothing to learn how to talk to the workers. (206)

> Once we wanted to get our criticisms of the boss and shareholders published in a left paper. It was during the invisible boycott. It wasn't just a whim of ours, but something very real. The journalists noted down our denunciations, but nothing was published. That kind of thing happens because of the context in which the left press is formed and which keeps it within the limits of the bourgeois system. There's always this unwillingness to break out of certain limits. (207)

In this context, workers began to create their own newspapers:

> It's the moment we're living through which explains why our own papers have sprung up. It's due exclusively to the fact that the working class hasn't been listened to by the official

organs of the left. What has been going on, in fact? The workers have had to create their own papers because they wanted their problems to be seen – and in the traditional press no-one listened to the workers. (i*bid.*)

Some of these papers were created by the workers themselves, but some were the result of collaborations with "militant journalists involved in teaching worker correspondents" (189). The products varied greatly, with some taking the form of "stencilled sheets, while others were printed on neighbourhood presses or even sometimes on the presses of the government newspaper (*La Nación*) after working hours" (*ibid.*). As these initiatives were consolidated they also grew in complexity. One of the worker papers, Tarea Urgente (Urgent Task), carried a price of ten *escudos* (220) and began serving "as a link between all the cordons, even though it [was] edited by only one of them" (194).

Organizations of popular power also emerged in rural areas, partly because existing peasant unions excluded important sectors of the rural population, such as temporary workers and small landholders. Thus, in 1971, rural residents began to create Peasant Councils (*Consejos Campesinos*) (Aguirre 268). Towards the middle of 1972 rural residents began to seek out support from urban organizations of popular power (269). Following these encounters, and with the encouragement of "militant officials of the agrarian institutions", some Peasant Councils began to produce popular newspapers in the form of "duplicated sheets or wall newspapers" (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 189).

The participatory newspapers of Chilean popular power as they existed in 1972 and 73 were limited in their capabilities. Much of their content does not appear to have been "news", understood as reportage of ongoing events, so much as information and exhortations designed to reinforce a reader's identification with the socialist movement (see 218-221). Nonetheless, the role of the workers' papers was "not only that of an echo chamber, but of a place for the re-elaboration of a general political matrix" (Munizaga 1985, 3).[108] The needs and desires of the organizations of popular power often went beyond what the official UP policy structure considered viable and workers saw this reflected in the left press:

Generally the traditional press want to calm down public opinion. They tone down the information a bit so it won't be too alarmist, or direct it down the middle of the road. And

108"*solo de caja de resonancia, sino de lugar de re-elaboración de una matriz política general.*"

that's not always in the workers' interests. (Mattelart 1980 [1974], 205)

> There's always this unwillingness to break out of certain limits. I don't know why – no doubt it's because of the traditional reformism of the press. And the rest of us, we believe that what the working class needs at this moment is not reformism. (207)

The participatory papers thus provided a space in which some marginalized members of Chilean society could articulate an engagement with the UP political project outside of commercialized and/or bureaucratized spheres determined by exclusive social hierarchies.

This is not to say that UP policy makers were the intended audience. The papers were not designed to produce such a direct influence. As one worker made clear, the intended audience of the participatory workers' papers was composed of the workers themselves: "It's important that there are papers like *Tarea Urgente*, whose main aim is to get the workers to know one another and to agitate, attack and guide the worker's opinions, and express what he's thinking" (203). This function of "getting the workers to know one another" was also perceived as lacking in the traditional left press:

> By following this norm of focussing on the average man, who is seen as living in the town, the left press continues to cut different sectors of workers off from each other. Without being aware of it, they divide them. They don't show the common interests shared by workers and peasants. Part of my family is peasant. They criticise me – or not so much me as the press – for underestimating the peasants just because we work in factories and live in the town. (207)

Some of the papers were created as a conscientious response to this very problem. For example, one of the papers produced by a Peasant Council, La Picana (The Cattle Prod)*,* took on the task of "linking the industrial cordons with the peasant councils in a province in the South" (221). Alongside short items from various locales that reported problems, needs, and successes (223-37), La Picana carried the following call for submissions:

> Everyone must write in La Picana. This is your paper – peasant, fisherman or worker from the city. All the poor people from the countryside and the towns must be represented here. No worker must remain out of touch with the ideas expressed here, because La Picana is the voice of the poor of the countryside and the town. Pick up your pen and write. (221)

Crucially, therefore, these media were already beginning to serve as articulating mechanisms for a new form of civil society that remained quite autonomous from a state apparatus whose support it sought and

whose policy it hoped to influence.

Participatory media during the UP administration never surpassed an embryonic stage and the initiatives, along with the larger movement toward popular power, were crushed by the brutal coup and its aftermath. We can not know, therefore, whether UP communications policy would have shifted toward providing greater support for the organizations of popular power or how their media outlets would have grown in diversity and complexity (if at all). Mattelart, however, did provide one contemporaneous vision for a Chilean participatory media system. The first step would be to organize "information cells" within factories, on farms, within community and women's organizations, and other already existent sites; in other words, they "would simply be extensions of organs of mass participation" (49). [109] Within these cells, groups would discuss the news, "which means analyzing the class enemy's ideological offensive" (50). More importantly, however, the cells should "take on the responsibility of elaborating information," thus converting "the organized masses [into] the producers of their own messages" in any media, including print, film, and TV (51). At first, members of the cells would be aided by specialists "who little by little would pass on their skills." Eventually, the cells would reach a state of self-sufficiency, at least in terms of technical capabilities. Finally, the media products would be distributed throughout society:

> Such material could serve as a basis for increasing consciousness among other groups. After being criticized by these other groups, it could return to its point of origin, thus completing a dialectical circle and giving the workers transmitting the message the possibility of synthesising criticisms made by other groups, thereby converting the material into a source of increased social awareness…. The goal of this circulation would be to provide a bridge of solidarity and genuine communication between the various sectors of the economy, from peasants to miners. Such a process would be a negation of the reformist perspective, which consists in promoting compartmentalised initiatives, campaigns and strategies limited to particular sectors, and thereby creates enclaves and heightens the divisions between the world of the worker, for example, and that of the peasant. (50)

In Mattelart's vision, a professional media apparatus would have continued to exist alongside the new participatory structures (1971, 6-7) and perhaps even distribute some of their content (1980 [1974], 50).

As to the economic structure and context of the participatory information cells, Mattelart says nothing.

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[109] Mattelart presented these ideas in a more rudimentary form in his address to the First National Assembly of Left Journalists (1971, 8).

The questions of how they would sustain themselves financially and if / how the work performed within them would be remunerated are simply not addressed.

What is clear, however, is that participatory media initiatives during the UP period broke new conceptual ground regarding the role of the media in a socialist system. There are several important points to note. First, Chile's popular power movement took advantage of the space provided by the UP's commitment to maintaining the pluralist order of liberal representative democracy. Thus, while UP policy makers were concerned with maintaining legitimacy in relation to debates that revolved around "free speech" in a primarily commercial context, militant activists were able to exploit the open ground of civil society in order to advance a media system oriented toward access, participation, and self-management. Second, participatory media emerged within an autonomous civil society that understood itself to be at odds with the dominant civil society of the institutionalized liberal order. To be sure, this emergent civil society looked to the state for support and legitimation. It also grew out of Marxist and syndicalist traditions that focused primarily on the rights of workers and thus maintained a somewhat myopically economistic perspective, as evidenced by the overt emphasis on participatory media as workers' papers. Nonetheless, the popular power movement also included marginalized rural populations and shantytown residents, and participatory media initiatives had begun to take on the task of articulating these sectors with workers' organizations. Third, participatory media were, by and large, not a product of specific UP policies. In the construction of popular power, generally, and participatory media, specifically, radicalized sectors of the population forged ahead of official policy. This dynamic would not have been possible in Cuba, where a consolidated party/state apparatus was cast as the vanguard of a tightly tethered and state-sanctioned civil society.

Sandinista Nicaragua (1979-1990): Participatory Media and the Quest for Democratic Hegemony

The military victory of Nicaragua's Sandinista National Liberation Front (*Frente Sandinista de Liberación Nacional* / FSLN) in 1979 created a new context for the structuration of a socialist

participatory communication system. On the surface, revolutionary Nicaragua appeared quite similar to revolutionary Cuba. Both small nations were economically dependent on an agricultural sector organized around large landholders, both had experienced US military intervention, and both had been governed by a reviled dictatorship that was politically dependent on the US. Both revolutionary movements, meanwhile, had formed around a nationalist ideology anchored by the mythification of an anti-imperialist hero[110] and both had come to embrace Marxist-Leninist vanguardism. Both also saw broad, cross-class alliances break down soon after military victory was achieved. Moreover, once in power, both revolutionary governments set about constructing a hegemonic system based on the interrelation of the state, the party, and the mass organizations. Indeed, at least one observer has treated the Cuban and Nicaraguan mass organizations as if they were identical (Bresnahan 1985).

A closer look at the relationship between the revolutionary state and civil society, however, must take into account important differences between the Cuban and Nicaraguan context. Whereas Cuba's revolutionary leaders ultimately nationalized nearly the entire economy, the Sandinistas remained committed to a mixed economy in which capital accumulation continued to play a significant role. And whereas the Cuban revolution had entirely dissolved liberal, bourgeois civil society, Sandinista leaders remained committed to a pluralist system, including multi-party elections and a commercial press, even as they sought to institutionalize participatory models of democratic practice (Serra 1991, 73). Additionally, whereas the Cuban government has viewed foreign non-governmental organizations with extreme distrust, the Sandinistas recognized them as a potentially beneficial source of resources and created dedicated government ministries and civil society organizations in order to manage their contributions (MacDonald 1997). In sum, whereas the Cuban revolutionary state relied primarily on the establishment of authoritarian hegemony, the Sandinista state tended toward the construction of a democratic hegemony that gave considerable space and some support to an autonomous civil society based on socialist ideals

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110Whereas Castro had invoked José Martí, FSLN leaders (as the name of the movement indicates) drew inspiration from Augusto Cesar Sandino, who led a rebel army against US marines from 1927 to 1933 and was later murdered by the Nicaraguan National Guard (see Black 1981, 15-27).

(Brown 1990). In this sense, the Sandinista project moved further toward the instantiation of a Gramscian civil state than either the Cuban or the Chilean administrations discussed above. This is particularly evident in the increased autonomy afforded to Sandinistan mass organizations vis-a-vis their Cuban counterparts.

While Cuba's mass organizations were largely the product of state initiatives undertaken after the revolutionary victory, many of Nicaragua's mass organizations were rooted in pre-revolutionary civil society movements that were, at least initially, not affiliated with the FSLN. For instance, the Rural Workers' Association (*Asociación de Trabajadores del Campo* / ATC) and the Civil Defense Committees (*Comites de Defensa Civil* / CDC) derived in part from organizations sponsored by the Catholic church (Brown 48; Bresnahan 287-8). The 'Luisa Amanda Espinoza' Association of Nicaraguan Women (*Asociacion de Mujeres Nicaraguenses 'Luisa Amanda Espinoza'* / AMNLAE), on the other hand, could trace its roots to middle class housewives that began to organize as "mothers clubs" in 1977 (Brown 48).[111] Having thus emerged from independent civil society organizations, these mass organizations were more inclined than their Cuban counterparts to situate themselves as autonomous representatives of their constituent populations. Indeed, as the FSLN began to consolidate the new Nicaraguan state, its leaders urged the mass organizations to make use of "internal criticism, public criticism and the utilization of all the methods of communication, including the staging of demonstrations to demand the measures required to guarantee that your plans are heard" (cited in Serra 1991, 62). On various occasions the mass organizations did just that. One oft discussed example occurred in 1980-81 when the ATC and the Sandinista Workers' Federation (Central Sandinista de Trabajadores / CST) joined with other labor groups in a series of strikes and workplace occupations to force state controls on decapitalization and private enterprise (*ibid.*).

This is not to say that Nicaragua's mass organizations were not tethered to the Sandinista state / party system. Directors of the mass organizations were frequently affiliated with the FSLN, which meant

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111Luisa Amanda Espinoza was the first woman to die in combat during the Sandinista uprising.

that the organizations often simply carried out state policy in a manner similar to the Cuban experience (60). Moreover, their collective autonomy declined as the Sandinista project evolved. One cause for this decline was institutional. The mass organizations had been directly represented in Nicaragua's Council of State until 1984, after which point representation was determined by the election of political parties and the mass organizations lost an important channel of influence over state policy (59). Perhaps more significantly, however, as the war against the *contras* intensified and economic crisis deepened in the mid-1980s, the mass organizations increasingly found themselves competing for scarce resources and further subordinated to a party and state focused on emergency measures (65). As the war abated in the late 1980s, however, the FSLN made a concerted effort to revitalize the mass organizations and augment opportunities for popular participation. Thus, in the final years before the FSLN lost power in the 1990 election, the mass organizations displayed signs of renewed autonomy (65- 71). The Sandinista impulse toward democratic hegemony was less absolute than vacillating (Brown 41).

Even during those periods when the mass organizations were most tightly tethered to the FSLN and the Nicraguan state, however, they maintained a degree of autonomy that was unparalleled by their Cuban counterparts. Exemplary in this respect was the National Union of Farmers and Ranchers (*Unión Nacional de Agricultores y Ganaderos* / UNAG), which was formed in 1981 by independent small- and medium-scale farmers who felt insufficiently represented by the ATC and its focus on wage laborers. Through their organization into "peasant assemblies" UNAG's constituents "helped attain recognition of the right to land in the July 1981 Agricultural Reform Law", thus modifying the FSLN's emphasis on state ownership (*ibid.*). By 1984, however, when the contra war was in full swing, UNAG came to recognize that "its isolation from the peasantry was leading to gains by the right wing". As a result, UNAG's leadership pushed for greater independence from the FSLN and "gained greater influence over state land reform policies" (MacDonald 1997, 56) in an effort to win over the rural population. Here, then, was a case where counterrevolutionary pressure, rather than reenforcing state-directed verticalization, led to greater autonomy for one sector of Sandinista-aligned civil society. In later years, UNAG's continued

insistence on autonomy led to specific opportunities for popular participation, as evidenced by the results of its increased leadership role in an integrated rural development program called *Sandino Vive* (Sandino Lives). Prior to the program's reorganization in 1989, "peasants had little knowledge of the program and were almost entirely excluded from decision-making." After UNAG assumed a leadership role, however, it was "led into a position of partial confrontation with the state on the terrain of civil society" with one result being new avenues for popular participation in the program (129-131). [112] It would be hard to imagine a Cuban mass organization maintaining this type of contentious relationship with the state / party apparatus.

The vacillation between authoritarian and democratic hegemony, with the latter characterized by a turn toward a Gramscian civil state, was tightly bound up with Sandinista communications policy, which also vacillated between two competing logics. Mattelart (1986) identified these as:

> ...on the one hand, the well-developed system for the socialization of agitation and propaganda ideas and its related journalism practice from the socialist countries, and on the other, the abundant but unsystematic development of ideas, studies and experiments from a wide range of groups in Latin America, Europe, and North America [since 1970]. (27)

The former of these was a "logic of war, and of propaganda and censorship" (16) that still bore a heavy imprint of Leninist vanguardism. The latter was "an alternative project" (17) that sought to construct "popular hegemony" (24) by drawing on dialogic and participatory theories. These logics played out within a pluralist system that included an antagonistic commercial press, making Chile's socialist project under the UP "[t]he only historical situation with some similarity to that of Nicaragua" (19). Indeed, as had been the case with the UP, the Sandinistas had no unified communications policy. Various media outlets and initiatives were assigned to or sponsored by a wide array of government institutions, mass organizations, and the FSLN itself. Also similar to the Chilean experience were Sandinista attempts to create a vanguardist press and to harness popular forms and genres in order to compete against the

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112Following the 1989 reorganization, control of the program was shared between UNAG and the Augosto C. Sandino Foundation (*Fundación Augusto C. Sandino* / FACS), which represented Nicaraguan mass organizations and trade unions with foreign NGOs.

offerings of commercial outlets, both explicitly oppositional and otherwise. There were, however, at least two significant differences between the UP and the Sandinista periods.

While vanguardism, freedom of the press, and state censorship were highly charged nodes within the Chilean media context, the militarized climate of Sandinista Nicaragua generated even greater intensity around these issues. The UP had gained executive power through the polls; the Sandinistas had won it under arms. This meant that FSLN media initiatives during the guerilla period were conceived primarily in relation to their propaganda value, as had been the case in Cuba, and such tendencies carried over into the hegemonic project. Thus, Radio Sandino went from a clandestine network to a party-controlled station with national reach (see Soley & Nichols 231-8). Similarly, the Leonel Rugama Brigade, a photography and film unit set up in April 1979 to provide international publicity to the FSLN, gave rise to the Nicaraguan Institute of Cinema (*Instituto Nicaragüense de Cinema* / INCINE), which came to rely on its Cuban counterpart for funding, technical expertise, and theoretical guidance (Buchsbaum 2003). Other examples of vanguardist, state- and party-controlled outlets could be listed. Significantly, their tendencies toward propaganda were exacerbated by the exigencies of the contra war and the economic crises of the mid- and late-1980s, as well as the antagonism of stridently oppositional media outlets, some of which were broadcasting from outside Nicaragua (see Valdivia 1991). The war, in particular, was also invoked to justify the imposition of a state of emergency and state censorship of oppositional media outlets, the most infamous example of which was the La Prensa newspaper. [113] As a result of the militarized context, therefore, Sandinista communications policy experienced a strong pull toward authoritarian hegemony.

At the same time, however, the relatively mature state of participatory media theory and practice provided opportunities for establishing democratic hegemony that had not been available to the Cuban and Chilean governments during the 1960s and early 70s, as Mattelart made clear:

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[113]The role of La Prensa has been central to discussions of freedom of the press in Nicaragua; see Nichols (1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988), Kriesberg (1983), Rothschuh Villanueva (1983), Wheelock (1984), Chamorro (1985), Ulibarri (1985), Kunzle (1986), Chamorro Cardenal (1987), Kornbluh (1987), Diaz Arbelaez (1988), Valdivia (1991), Jones (2002), Leiken (2003), Darling (2008).

If the Nicaraguans find themselves in some respects on the same road as that once taken by certain sectors of the Chilean revolution, they do not begin from the same starting point. An important body of studies, research and individual and collective experiences on all these questions in Latin America and elsewhere has accumulated since 1970. In one way or another, the theoretical and practical advances in the domains of the international imbalance of information flow, popular communication, alternative culture, and horizontal communication, among others, are being reinvested in Nicaragua today. Even if the transplant is not always a harmonious one. (19)

The participatory impulse found its way into the Sandinista milieu along a number of different avenues.

One of the earliest and most significant was the collaboration between the FSLN and those sectors of the Catholic church whose emphasis on liberation theology inspired their solidarity with marginalized sectors of Nicaraguan society. "Especially important was [the Center for Educational and Agricultural Promotion / *Centro de Educación Promocional Agrária*] CEPA, an NGO established by the Jesuits in 1969 to combine religious training and conscientisation" according to a Freirian dialogic framework. CEPA moved closer to the FSLN throughout the 1970s and some of its members were instrumental in establishing the ATC. Through CEPA and other Christian organizations, the liberation theology movement played a crucial role in establishing popular education as a basis for popular participation in the Sandinista project.

FSLN guerillas had also stressed the importance of participatory education as a component of their struggle against Somoza. Sandino's "commitment to literacy as a tool for liberation" inspired Carlos Fonseca, a founding member of the FSLN, to instruct his comrades to teach not only military skills but also literacy to their peasant recruits,. This attitude informed FSLN political education during the 1970s and Fonseca's instruction to "also teach them to read" was adopted as the slogan for the 1979 Literacy Crusade, which was the first national project initiated by the revolutionary government (Barndt 1985, 320-2). In planning for the Crusade, the Sandinistas "consulted the literacy experience of many other countries and drew theoretical inspiration from the approach developed by … Freire", whose methodologies they adapted "to fit their own historical context and political objectives". Freire himself travelled to Nicaragua and was one of the "many internationalists consulted" (326).

Following the Literacy Crusade, the theory and methodology that came to be known as the New Education was woven into the fabric of Sandinista democratic hegemony. A Vice-Ministry of Adult Education was established and "continued to be a program of 'strategic priority'" (334). Moreover, "most state institutions and mass organizations established popular education departments within their structures" (339). CEPA, the Jesuit organization, remained active in these efforts and, in 1983, collaborated with the Ministry of Agricultural Development and Agrarian Reform (*Ministerio de Desarrollo Agropecuario y Reforma Agraria* / MIDINRA) in "setting up the first 'Methodological School,' which provided systematic training in popular education methodology" for over twenty other organizations (341). Meanwhile, those who had taught during the Crusade "set up learning groups called Popular Education Collectives (CEPs) and selected outstanding new literates to coordinate them" (*ibid.*). By 1983, 19,100 CEPs had been created and the role they played went beyond even the expanded boundaries of the New Education (Serra 1991, 52). The CEPs became "daily assemblies where the plans and problems of the Revolution [were] discussed" (Barndt 334) and thus began to serve as nodes of a burgeoning civil society.

Where Sandinista civil society was informed by the New Education it was often accompanied by other participatory cultural forms. Theater, for instance, has been employed as part of the guerillas political education process during the 1970s:

> Borrowing from Augusto Boal and other proponents of the New Popular Theater in Latin America, university students, including the future minister of Agriculture Jaime Wheelock, taught basic theater techniques to peasants as a way of generating self confidence and presenting grievances. (Ryan 1996, 260)

Following the revolutionary victory, professional theater workers continued to employ the technique in rural areas and the use of "sociodramas" was "encouraged by the Ministry of Culture, the ASTC (Association of Sandinista Cultural Workers) and other organizations" (261).

Exemplary of the linkage between the New Education and participatory communication in the construction of Sandinistan civil society was an experience which took place in the rural municipality of

Belén. In 1980, members of an agricultural cooperative joined with CEPs and a small women's collective to create a music and theater group called Frente Sur (Southern Front), which played a major role in the Peasant Theater movement of the 1980s and also launched Los Baldeomares, a popular traditional musical group. Frente Sur also became a founding member of the Movement for Peasant Artistic and Theatric Expression (*Movimiento de Expresión Campesina Artística y Teatral* / MECATE), which was supported by the ATC. In 1986, in response to the expressed needs of the community, the emphasis of the *Frente Sur* project shifted from cultural to agricultural production. In 1989, Cantera (Quarry), a group specializing in popular education that had branched off from CEPA, began working within the Belén project (Cantera 1992, 17-19).

One testimony to the autonomy of the civil society nurtured by the Sandinista emphasis on the New Education is that the Belén project continued to function even after the FSLN was voted out of office in 1990 (*ibid.*). Further evidence can be drawn from the experience of the Nixtayolero Theater Collective, whose members "spent several months living in different peasant communities in order to become more familiar with popular traditions, customs, language, and myths, and to discover the primary concerns of the population at the moment". The actors then returned to their workshop "to distill this reality to its essence, which then became the central theme of a play". Tellingly, when the collective performed in Cuba "it was criticized for tending to concentrate on the problems that emerged in the course of the struggle to transform society" (Dore 419-20). Although the Sandinista project continued to vacillate between authoritarian and democratic hegemony, sectors of its civil society had clearly created a more autonomous space for cultural and political development than had been achieved in Cuba.

Fertilized as it was by the New Education, Sandinista civil society provided fecund ground for the emergence of participatory media. Gramsci, with his emphasis on education as the basis of ideological transition and hegemonic construction, provided a theoretical framework for this project. Thus, Guillermo Rothschuh, one of Nicaragua's foremost journalists and communications theorists, suggested that Gramsci's perspective should apply not only to the institutional educational apparatus, "but fundamentally

as a method, form and content, in order to drive the circulation of ideological discourse" (cited in Ryan 1996, 42).[114] Tomás Borge, a founding member of the FSLN, invoked Gramsci in his closing speech to the First Seminar on Participatory Radio, held in 1984 at the newly established Communication Studies and Training Center (*Centro de Estudios y Capacitación en Comunicación*) on the campus of the Jesuit administered Central American University (*Universidad Centroamericana*) in Managua:[115]

> It has been fruitless for theoreticians to try to agree on which communication instrument has priority. However, what still seems to predominate … is the thesis that the school is the fundamental means of communication. Antonio Gramsci said this... Later it was given impetus by Louis Althusser who gave the school priority followed by social organizations, religion, the print media, audiovisual media, and, almost at the end, radio.
> This ranking, in my opinion – and it is almost a sacrilege to contradict Gramsci – has ceased to be valid in global terms.... For this reason ... the few means of communication which we have at our disposal in direct competition with the enemy's communication media, should be converted into an important complement to the school...
> This is why on other occasions we have emphasized the revolutionary need to further horizontal communication. (Borge 1986, 110)

Nonetheless, despite Borge's assurance that "[w]e are in a position to go beyond the level of artisan communication" (110), there was no unified Sandinista approach to communications policy, much less to the institution of a participatory media system. Government ministries, mass organizations, and other civil society groups tended to engage in isolated initiatives that manifested a wide variety of approaches.

Though he referenced Gramsci and not Lenin, Borge's speech retains the FSLN emphasis on vanguardism and manifests a persistent ambiguity regarding the nature of participatory media in a socialist system. He says, for example, "that the role of the transmitter in our society is to share the revolutionary ideological message by sending it to the receivers who by virtue of their social condition are disposed to receive it", though he goes on to declare that "[o]ne must go to the masses to learn from the masses and to teach the masses" (111). Perhaps most indicative of his middle-ground position are the examples of participatory media that he said "must become the rule rather than the exception" (110): Cara

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114Rothschuh founded the Media Bureau (*Dirección General de Medios de Comunicación*) of the Ministry of Culture (*Ministerio de Cultura*) in 1979, served as the dean of the School of Journalism at Managua's Central American University in the mid-1980s, and founded the Center for Communications Research (*Centro de Investigación de la Comunicación / CINCO*) in 1990.

115In the Sandinista government, Borge served as a member of the National Directorate (*Dirección Nacional*) and head of the Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerio del Interior*).

al Pueblo (Face the People), a television program that aired on the state operated SSTV network which featured high ranking FSLN leaders traveling to popular neighborhoods and responding to questions in open assemblies; and Contacto 6-20, a radio program broadcast nationally on a station administered by the Ministry of Communication that invited listeners to call in with criticism and commentary. [116] While these programs undeniably offered an outlet for citizen concerns and proved to be extremely popular, [117] they restricted participation to the same feedback model discussed above in relation to Cuban newspapers. Cara al Pueblo, for instance, positioned FSLN leaders as supremely knowledgeable and powerful, thus projecting the state and party as superior to civil society and potentially undermining the construction of a civil state. Meanwhile, although the format of Contacto 6-20 was copied by some state-operated radio broadcasters who felt the program encouraged "open, direct participation" and "active responsibility for problems in the country", other radio administrators found its form of participation to be "too passive and individualistic" to "encourage horizontal communication in the community and a more authentic cultural expression" (White 1990, 13).

More radical forms of participatory media were often significantly influenced by the many theorists, activists, and practitioners who came to Nicaragua in order to work in solidarity with the Sandinista project. Two examples, in particular, benefitted substantially from the wide body of theory and practical experience that had been developed during the 1970s and early 80s. The Timoteo Velásquez Popular Video Workshop (*Taller Popular de Video Timoteo Velásquez*) and the regional stations of the People's Radio Corporation (*Corporación de Radiodifusión del Pueblo* / CORADEP) exemplify the advances that the Sandinista project was able to achieve in the direction of a participatory media system. They also illustrate the considerable obstacles that remained along the path.

The Video Workshop grew out of a 1981 Super 8 film workshop that was set up as one among many media components of the Economic Literacy Campaign that was administrated by the Ministry of

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116On Cara al Pueblo, see Jonas & Dixon (1984) and Halleck (1986, 119). On Contacto 6-20, see "Radio 'Contacto 6-20' -- A Hot Line For Criticism" (1986) and White (1990, 13).

117Contacto 6-20 originally aired in 1983 and for more than six years "had the highest audience rating of any medium in the country" (White 1990, 13).

Planning (*Ministerio de Planificación* / MIPLAN) (Ryan 1996, 156). Some funding ($22,000) came from MIPLAN itself, while the bulk ($44,000) was provided by the United Nations Development Program. Alfonso Gumucio, a Bolivian filmmaker, communications theorist, and activist, was brought in to design and lead the workshop. His plan was to provide the participants with "a theoretical overview of the history of creating a popular and political cinema in Latin America" (165), train them in the basics of filmmaking, and allow them to gain experience on a collaborative project that could be used in the economic literacy campaign. Afterwards, the newly trained filmmakers would not only continue to produce cinema, but would replicate the workshop for other participants.

Gumucio had written about the "Third Cinema", a revolutionary cinema praxis that was closely associated with Latin America during the 1960s and 70s, and he was familiar with the Bolivian miners' radio stations and the participatory media debates that had swirled around the NWICO project. In essence, he sought to merge these threads through "a technological transfer to the hands of the workers organized on a class platform" (Gumucio 1983, 28).[118] Gumucio had previously studied in Paris with Jean Rouch, who had conducted super 8 workshops in Mozambique in 1978, and Rouch's workshops served as a model for the Nicaraguan workshop.[119] Gumucio was convinced that Super 8 was preferable to video, especially for the Nicaraguan context, because "it was easier to learn how to use; it was lightweight and portable; [and] the post-production techniques were mechanical and required much less complicated, non-electronic equipment" (Ryan 157). Super 8 could also be projected to a larger audience than would be able to view video on the television screens available in Nicaragua at that time, especially since "the anticipated audiences for the workshop's films were other workers in a non-broadcast setting" (159).

Invitations were extended to the government ministries and the mass organizations asking for participants. At the outset, representatives from the CST, ATC, CDC, Sandinista Youth (*Juventud Sandinista* / JS), MIPLAN, Ministry of the Interior (*Ministerio del Interior* / MINT), and INCINE were

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118 *"una transferencia tecnológica a manos de los trabajadores organizados sobre una plataforma clasista."*
119 After gaining its independence from Portugal in 1975, Mozambique was led by a socialist government until 1986. For discussion of Mozambican communications policy during this period, see Casullo (1982) and Mattelart (1982).

present.[120] By the end of the twelve week workshop, however, only five participants remained - three from the CST, one from the ATC, and one from MINT. The group produced several documentary shorts as well as the final collaborative project, Cooperative Sandino, which combined documentary footage with re-enactments in order to portray "a variety of problems that Nicaragua would have to deal with in the post-revolutionary period" (164). Gumucio played a significant role in conceptualizing and editing the final film, which was screened at a closing ceremony but not distributed widely. The group went on to make a few shorts in the following months, and they used these and other films to facilitate discussions with workers about what they had learned in the workshop. Nonetheless, "[d]espite continued assistance from foreign filmmakers, the costs of developing and the arrangements needed to ship the negative outside the country proved prohibitive" (166).[121] The group was forced to cease production within a few months.

The following year, however, two foreign independent filmmakers (one of whom had worked in Chile during the UP period), along with three graduates of the Super 8 workshop, began collaborating with the CST and ATC in order to create a video production group comprised of workers.[122] A Dutch organization provided funding for video equipment and two years of "training and further specialization", and "the CST and ATC agreed to pay the basic salaries of the video collective".[123] With the addition of three new participants from the ATC, the Timoteo Velásquez Popular Video Workshop was born. The project began with eight weeks of training in all aspects of video production, thus enabling them to perform multiple roles and make collective decisions regarding content and form. "Before becoming

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120 Significantly, in the planning stages of the workshop, INCINE's Director "said that INCINE should have all of the cameras, including the super 8, and that the workers would be able to borrow them when needed. Gumucio refused" (Ryan 208, n43). This anecdote nicely illustrates INCINE's inclination towards professionalization and the still marginal state of the participatory perspective within the Sandinista media apparatus.

121 Funding for Rouch's Mozambique workshops had provided for a laboratory on site.

122 The filmmakers, Jan Kees De Rooy and Wolf Tirado, were in Nicaragua filming documentaries for their own production company, Tercer Cine. Tirado had worked in Chile and Kees De Rooy "had produced films on Third World issues for a progressive Dutch television station". While they recalled approaching the mass organizations with the idea of forming a production group, members of the Super 8 workshop reported that they had initially proposed the idea to the filmmakers (Ryan 167).

123 "Each of the members received a salary equivalent to other activists and organizers within the unions (roughly $20/month) along with basic food supplies and gas for their vehicles, a valuable commodity during this period" (Ryan 172).

videomakers[,] group members had worked in a variety of occupations including those of a receptionist, secretary, union organizer, and veterinarian" (168), and as such they brought a working-class mentality to the "more than 150 documentaries, vignettes, co-productions, and video letters with foreign solidarity groups" (173) that they produced from 1982 to 1987.

The members of the Workshop generated most of the ideas for the videos themselves, although there was a "general understanding" with leaders of the CST and ATC that the themes would relate "to the role of industrial and agricultural workers in the revolution" (172-3). Since the videomakers were of the working class and had been instructed in the mode of popular video, their productions tended to focus on workers, peasants, and their families, not party and organizational leaders. Also, since "generally at least half of the [Workshop's] members were women at any one time", many of the videos were "devoted to women" or represented female perspectives (186). The videos thus presented a variety of voices, including criticism and suggestions related to government and party policy. Nonetheless. the Workshop's first priority, "as it was for the mass organizations, was the defense and support of the revolution" (202). As a result, the videos did not "represent the full spectrum of public opinion" and some of the videos produced "in later years uncritically toe[d] the official Sandinista line" (203). [124]

The Workshop provided training, equipment, and financial support to members of Nicaragua's working class that would not otherwise have had access to video production technology. Ryan classifies their output as community video inasmuch as they present "a community speaking to itself" (192) and views not only the members of the Workshop, but also the "agricultural and factory workers interviewed within their videos" as Gramscian "organic intellectuals because they also act as 'permanent persuaders' in a way that would not be possible in their own lives" (193). Without denying these conclusions, we must recognize the limitations of the workshop as a community media organization in relation to the fundamental goals of participation, access, and self-management. While these were available to members of the Workshop, there do not seem to have been structured avenues of entry for the members of the large

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[124]Ryan (173-98) offers detailed descriptions and analysis of multiple videos produced by the workshop.

community represented by the CST and ATC. At the very least, opportunities for training and sustained participation would have been limited to residents of Managua, where the workshop was located, but it also appears that it would have depended on the ability to obtain a salary from the mass organizations. In this sense, the Workshop is less a community media organization than a highly autonomous in-house video production unit that, because of the background of its members and its conscientious focus on methodology and content, was uniquely capable of producing popular forms of video.

In many ways, the limitations of the Workshop were a product of the structural constraints within which it operated. The group's autonomy was, in a certain sense, a double-edged sword, since it partially resulted from the fact that, despite their rhetoric, leaders of the mass organizations did not fully appreciate the theoretical framework and/or practical potential of participatory media. A spokesperson for the CST later remarked that:

> this was not understood in its magnitude by the principal directors of the CST who gave priority to direct work with the workers and viewed the project as less than secondary because they saw that the financing had come, that someone was teaching, but they didn't look any further. (cited in Ryan 201)

This meant that, for their own projects, CST leaders "preferred to work with professionals or outside groups rather than they [sic] worker group they had created" (*ibid.*). In this environment, there would have been little hope of expanding the Workshop, either to take on additional salaried members or to replicate the group in locations outside of Managua. The members themselves certainly lacked the wherewithal to do so, as significant deficiencies of resources were already impacting their own efforts.

Distribution was especially affected by the lack of resources. The original plan was to screen the Workshop's productions at local "work centers" (c*entros de trabajo*) attached to the mass organizations and facilitate post-screening discussions with workers.[125] In practice, however:

> work-site screenings were a limited success reaching only about 1200 workers connected with the CST in Managua. Because of the difficulties in traveling, often times due to shortages of gas, they were rarely able to travel far from Managua... (199)

[125] In 1982, some members of the Workshop had gained experience with this format when they participated in a "mobile cinema" program, sponsored by INCINE, in which they screened foreign films (including treatments of US interventions in Cuba and Chile) and facilitated post-screening discussions (Ryan 198, 217 n135).

When Workshop members could not travel, betamax tapes were sometimes sent to the work centers, but it became apparent that workers were not readily inclined to attend screenings. Their free time was already reduced due to demands for increased production resulting from the national economic plans and, especially in the north where the contra war was most intense, the need to participate in voluntary defense activities. Moreover, as workers and their families were already exposed to revolutionary themes through other activities and media outlets, the videos failed to attract audiences that "often preferred watching imported telenovelas and police dramas on their home televisions" (*ibid.*).

An alternative means of distribution had begun to develop at the final screening of the original Super 8 workshop, where members met the head of SSTV. This contact eventually led SSTV to broadcast a series of short (nine to fifteen minute) documentaries produced by the Workshop in 1983. [126] Following this, SSTV agreed to show Workshop videos twice monthly, although the group had campaigned for a weekly time slot. The collaboration with SSTV was not without difficulties, however. As with the mass organizations, Workshop members felt as if they were perceived as unprofessional and discriminated against. This, they believed, led to their inability to obtain a guaranteed and consistent time slot. Instead, their work was "[h]aphazardly scheduled in the midst of ... commercial imported programs" and "never presented with a special introduction as a series by and for the workers" (192). As a result, their work was not as well received as it might have been, since audiences judged it against the standards of commercial content.

Although SSTV was owned and operated by the state, it generated revenue by charging for broadcast time. While some of the video groups attached to government ministries may have been able to work out special arrangements, the Workshop had "very few high level contacts even within the CST and ATC to argue on their behalf". Thus, as the economic crisis worsened the Workshop became increasingly unable to cover the cost of television placement and by 1986 had altogether ceased broadcasting their

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126The series, called "Asalto al Cielo*"* (Assault on the Sky) was "commissioned" in celebration of May Day, though Ryan does not specify by who. Also unclear is whether the series was comprised of six or nine videos, though Ryan's account (184-198) seems to indicate that the original plan was for six and that nine were ultimately produced during a single month.

productions. This was just one of several serious setbacks that occurred within a short period. Funding from the CST and ATC, which were also dealing with the economic crisis, was cut off, and "a personality conflict ... caused the collective to split back into two groups, one aligned with the ATC, the other with the CST". Without institutional support, both groups turned to a commercial model and, although they found some work with "organizations within Nicaragua and foreign television", it was "hardly enough to support all the members" (200).

The dissolution of the Workshop underscores the degree to which participatory media must ultimately rely on a stable institutional framework for not only funding, but also growth and integration with civil society. In Sandinista Nicaragua, the most extensive and successful such framework was developed within the radio sector as CORADEP began to shift its state-owned network of eighteen regional stations toward the format of community media. While exemplifying the extent of Sandinista success in creating space for popular participation in the articulation of civil society, the project also illustrates the difficult balance between stability and autonomy that continually exacerbated the tension between authoritarian and democratic hegemony.

As the FSLN-led revolution swept aside the dictatorship in 1979, the rebels took control over nineteen radio stations that had either been owned by the Somozas or their close allies. [127] While some of the previous personnel remained in place, in other cases youthful revolutionaries with little or no experience set to work learning how to operate the low-power, antiquated transmitters, which broadcast with 1, 3, 5, or 10 kilowatts on the AM band. [128] For the first couple of years following the victory, while the Sandinista government was largely concerned with the centralized, national media outlets located in Managua, the new operators of the regional stations improvised, struggling to keep the equipment

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127 Unless otherwise noted, information regarding the regional CORADEP stations has been drawn from White (1990) and Crabtree (1996). While the broad contours of both accounts match up, there are some discrepancies in the details that do not affect the summary presented here. Crabtree's research was more thorough and her unpublished doctoral dissertation (1992) offers an extended analysis. The stations are also discussed in Lewis & Booth (1990).

128 "In some cases, equipment had seen 30 years of service. Radio Xalteva in Granada, for example, was using the first radio transmitter in the country, approximately 60 years old" (Crabtree 1996, 227). For a discussion of problems associated with integrating previous personnel with new, ideologically motivated workers, see p226.

working and broadcasting a mix of music and information that borrowed from the vanguardist, propagandistic style employed by FSLN media efforts during the insurrection.

In April 1981, a governmental decree brought all of the regional stations under the direction of the newly created CORADEP. Although CORADEP was administered by the Ministry of Communications (itself dependent on the Ministry of the President), the legal and administrative structure of the stations was relatively autonomous when compared to national, state-operated stations. CORADEP's central office began providing support and coordination for the regional stations, including funding for salaries, equipment, and training. It conducted an assessment of the stations performance and found that the propagandistic content was alienating all but the staunchest FSLN supporters. These finding catalyzed a period of professionalization during which the CORADEP stations reformed themselves in an effort to compete with private broadcasters. Stations began to broadcast more international pop and rock at the expense of revolutionary and folk songs; a national news department was created in 1983 and tasked with the production of a flagship news program and development of news production at the regional stations; [129] and all programming underwent a process of regionalization, so that content was more tailored to the concerns of audiences in relation to issues such as agriculture and health. Despite this push toward professionalization, news remained "more slanted to the FSLN" (White 1990, 13), and, though greater emphasis was placed on selling advertising, most of the time was sold to government ministries and other Sandinista organizations for public service and other propaganda campaigns.

A key element of the professionalization process was an increased emphasis on training. In 1983 CORADEP opened its national Center for Education and Training (*Centro de Educación y Capacitación* / CECAP) with a dedicated staff and capacity for 60 trainees at any one time. As a result of multiple influences, CECAP's staff became the guiding force behind CORADEP's shift toward a more

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129While carriage of the national program was voluntary, Crabtree (1996) found that it was broadcast at least once per day at all of the stations she visited. Local and regional news production was also voluntary, and "[t]he amount of news produced by a given station depended upon the staffing resources available and on the availability of alternative news sources in the area" (225).

participatory model. One impetus for this shift was the general emphasis on participation within the Sandinista process. CORADEP's staff wanted to promote the type of popular participation that had marked the Literacy Crusade and defined the success of shows like Contacto 6-20. Contact with communications researchers and activists, however, convinced them that the regional stations could advance even further toward a community media model. Rothschuh, who coordinated the First Seminar on Participatory Radio for station directors in 1984, was one crucial guide, as were international figures, such as Mattelart, who spent a month in Nicaragua in early 1985 as an expert consultant with financial support from UNESCO (Crabtree 227; Mattelart & Rothschuh 1985, 7). Especially important in this regard was the Latin American Association of Educational Radio (*Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica* / ALER), which helped CECAP create a customized series of courses in participatory radio.[130] From 1986 to 88 over 600 workers attended courses at CECAP. Moreover, these national courses were "closely coordinated with continued on-site training in the stations in close co-operation with station directors" (White 1990, 13). Most of the stations also created training committees to evaluate and develop the skills of workers.

Throughout this period, the administration and practice of the regional stations began to change. From 1984 to 86 many stations enlisted the help of sociologists and other specialists to conduct audience analyses and re-evaluate programming. The staff of two stations in the north took their analyses even further by splitting up into groups of five or six, each of which lived in a different rural community for two months. Staff members immersed themselves in the daily lives of the peasants, learning about their rhythms and tastes. They also incorporated the people into the production and evaluation of content. This immersive strategy was reported to CORADEP's central office and shared with other regional stations, some of which applied it in modified form.

In sum, these analyses led to important changes. Generally, programming was scheduled to fit the

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130ALER was formed in 1972 by eighteen educational radio stations belonging to the Catholic Church, soon thereafter began advocating for popular radio (*radio popular*), and remains active. See White (1983) and www.aler.org

predominant daily rhythm of the audience. In rural areas, for example, the broadcast day began earlier, with traditional folk music that was appreciated by agricultural workers preparing for work. In urban areas, on the other hand, contemporary pop music was scheduled for the after-school hours. More importantly, however, the analyses led to new forms of participation. The rural stations began to oblige the many listeners who wanted to hear recordings of local musicians. They also discovered the popularity of local storytelling traditions and began to invite listeners to record "their versions of legends, their memories of historical events in the region, their humorous stories and jokes, etc." (14). Some of these were dramatized and followed by open discussions of the story. One station solicited recipes for traditional medicines, submitted them for review by health professionals in Managua, and then incorporated them into fictionalized vignettes in order to pass on the information to a population that could not afford pharmaceuticals. In these and other ways, listening populations began to hear their own customs and voices reflected in the content of the regional stations.

The most significant mode of popular participation, however, not only preceded the analyses described above, but emerged outside of CORADEP. During the insurrection, the ATC had published a clandestine newsletter called El Machete (The Machete).[131] Following the Sandinista victory, El Machete became the most important newspaper for rural workers, reaching a monthly circulation of 10,000. In 1982, the ATC's leaders decided to institute a Movement of Worker Reporters (*Movimiento de Reporteros Obreros*). The ATC's National Team of Propaganda began offering workshops in basic communication to its members and El Machete began running their stories in a dedicated column. As more and more workers were trained as reporters, the flow of submissions overwhelmed El Machete and a separate newsletter was created to distribute them all.[132] In 1983 the FSLN offered its support to the program, the name of which was changed to Movement of Popular Correspondents (*Movimiento de Corresponsales*

131Unless otherwise indicated, my account of the Movement of Popular Correspondents is drawn from Rodriguez (2001, 65-82), which itself is a version of Rodriguez (1994).

132"...from April 1982 to the following April, *El Machete* published 151 articles written by *reporteros obreros*.... Later, the flow of articles submitted had risen to between 200 and 400 every month, with *El Machete* publishing only 10% of them" (Rodriguez 2001, 69).

Populares). Increased funding meant more workshops and at the First Congress of Popular Correspondents in 1987 it was reported that a total of 963 popular correspondents (PCs) had been trained between 1981 and 1986.[133] PCs ranged in age from sixteen to sixty, and "although mostly men, many women also participated" (Rodriguez 2001, 70).[134] Many of the PCs had only learned to read and write during the Literacy Crusade and on average they had a third grade level of education. All of their work was voluntary and, while some were given time off from their work duties in order to participate, many wrote their reports in their minimal free time.[135]

In 1983, "several workers' organizations" and two of the CORADEP radio stations, Radio Liberación (Liberation Radio) and Radio Segovia*,* "signed an agreement to work toward strengthening the Movement of Popular Correspondents" (75). By the late 1980s, roughly half of the regional stations were broadcasting reports from PCs (White 1990, 15). Radio Liberación, for instance, developed a network of nearly 150 PCs and "instituted a work collective which included community members". Some of the PCs learned radio production in the program and went on to become salaried workers at the station (Crabtree 1996, 229). By 1986 PCs were responsible for 30 percent of the news carried by Radio Liberación and Radio Segovia, and their contribution may have climbed as high as 40 or 50 percent by 1989.[136] PC stories, which "depicted everyday life, culture, and the successes and sorrows of isolated communities" (Rodriguez 2001, 73), helped to raise the profile of rural residents and their contributions to Nicaraguan society and the Sandinistan project. They also enabled local populations to voice their criticism of poorly

133 "In 1983, there were 116 popular correspondents. In 1984, 115 more popular correspondents were trained, and by 1985, the number had risen to 205. This same year, students from the School of Journalism (*Escuela de Periodismo*) at *Universidad Centroamericana* joined as instructors. In 1986, ATC and FSLN activists trained 166 popular correspondents in Region I alone. By 1987, 250 popular correspondents were working in Region I " (Rodriguez 2001, 70).

134 For example, of the 92 articles published in El Machete between April 1982 and April 1983 that had a byline, "22 were authored by women from isolated rural areas in northern Nicaragua" (Rodriguez 2001, 69).

135 Rodriguez (2001) offers two anecdotes to support her claim that the writing "was all done during their 'free time'" (72-3), but Crabtree (1996) states that PCs "were allowed the time to conduct their work as volunteer journalists (and other community service work) within the workplace and the community" (234).

136 "In August of 1985, PCs sent fifty-five stories to regional stations Radio Liberación and Radio Segovia. In September, they sent out seventy-five stories; in October, eighty-nine stories; and in November, 147 stories ... By 1987, each of the 205 PCs in Region I was sending an average of four stories per month..." (Rodriguez 2001, 70). Rodriguez does not explain the discrepancy between the two different figures given regarding the number of PCs in Region I during 1987 (see note 82).

managed and/or exploitative public services (White 1990, 15). Perhaps more than any of the other participatory components adopted by the CORADEP stations, the PC movement empowered marginalized populations by channeling popular voices through the media. As will be discussed below, however, these results were not unmitigated.

By 1988, "the CORADEP stations in the rural areas had top status within their communities" (Crabtree 1996, 229). In August of that year CORADEP hosted the third international assembly of the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (known as AMARC, for its French acronym), which brought representatives from over 50 nations and:

> gathered the human and information resources needed to refine the participatory model.... Workshops covered technical aspects of participation, contributing to community culture, self-financing, music, information networks, community movements, indigenous people, community correspondents, training to encourage participation and management. (*ibid.*)

More generally, the conference focused international attention on one of the most democratic impulses of the Sandinista media system and generated pledges of material support. In a certain sense, AMARC's assembly represented a high water mark for the CORADEP program.

As a result of the contra war, a US-imposed economic blockade, and a series of poor policy decisions, Nicaragua found itself in an increasingly dire economic situation. Thus, on January 1, 1989, "in order to maintain as much of the education and health budgets as possible … CORADEP was cut from the federal budget" (231). As a result of the cut, staff at CORADEP's central office were reduced to the minimal level and the prized training program was ended (White 15). The Director of Financing "described the change as going from an administrative body to a regulatory one, concerned with general policy making and external relations". CORADEP's individual stations, meanwhile, had lost their budget for salaries and operating costs. During the first months of 1989 CORADEP's international relations department tried to soften the blow by connecting the stations with international aid organizations. Nonetheless, they "were told they must become self-sufficient", which meant reductions in staff and broadcasting hours, as well as an increased reliance on advertising. As many government ministries had

also seen their budgets reduced, however, stations sought alternative means of revenue generation, including the sale of classified advertising, community-sponsored programming ("in honor of a birthday, for example") and fundraising at public events. In this manner, the CORADEP stations limped along until the FSLN was voted out of power in 1990 (Crabtree 231).

The CORADEP regional stations, in conjunction with the PC movement, illustrate the degree to which the Sandinista project of democratic hegemony was able to coordinate state and civil society resources in order to advance toward a system of participatory media. The successes of these interrelated initiatives should not be diminished. At the same time, however, at least two important caveats must be recognized. First, while the system increased channels for access and participation, "[m]any radio station personnel ... did not see much difference between writing to request a favorite song as opposed to actual participation in decision-making and management," of which there was precious little (230). Indeed:

> [s]tation directors and CORADEP administrators generally felt that participation in long-term planning and management was unrealistic given the economic conditions of those in the rural communities. Such persons had no time to volunteer. Further, while the level of sophistication among community volunteers was improving with training, that of the general population was not. (*ibid.*)

Some, of course, did believe that community self-management was a valuable ideal, and one station even managed to initiate such a process by turning a transmitter over to a small mountain community, but that project came late and was quickly derailed by the budget cuts (232). The CORADEP system had produced popular radio with a significant degree of participation, but it had not instituted a viable institutional framework for a sustainable community media system.

Even in the PC movement, where administration was ostensibly in the hands of civil society via the mass organizations, self-management and autonomy were highly compromised. To the degree that the system fell short, the failure was directly linked to the unresolved tension between authoritarian and democratic hegemony, and its exacerbation by the economic crisis and contra war. When the first two CORADEP stations agreed to begin broadcasting PC reports, the agreement they signed was brokered "under the leadership of the FSLN Regional Committee of Region I" (Rodriguez 75), which was located

in the northern part of the country. Indeed, most of the stations that ultimately participated were located in the north (White 15), where not only the military conflict, but also the anti-Sandinista propaganda barrage from radio stations inside Honduras, were most intense. Already by 1983, when the stations began broadcasting PC reports, the FSLN had surveyed two rural counties and discovered that half the population were listening to the foreign stations. Rodriguez has concluded that the FSLN already envisioned "that the Movement of Popular Correspondents could be transformed into a force to counterbalance anti-Sandinista propaganda" (76).

Following FSLN involvement in the program, PC trainees were increasingly selected for their commitment to Sandinista ideology. Moreover, while an original charter specified that a National Coordinating Committee, including representatives of the major grassroots organizations and eight PCs, would govern the PC movement, the FSLN progressively "implemented a firm policy of centralized authority over the [Movement of Popular Correspondents]" (77).[137] This impulse towards bureaucratization and centralization was also manifest in the transfer of many experienced PCs into leadership positions within either the FSLN or ATC. "Popular correspondents had to leave their rural communities behind in order to serve as press personnel for the FSLN central structures" (79). Those that did remain in their communities resented that they were increasingly asked to report back on public opinion in relation to FSLN policy. In some cases, PC reports that criticized FSLN policy and government services were directly censored by local party members. In 1988, for the same reasons that CORADEP's funding was later cut, the "government ceased subsidizing those regional structures in charge of the [PC movement] in regions I and II. Almost immediately, the [movement] began to deteriorate" (80). Though

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[137]In 1985, for example, the FSLN Regional Committee organized a Regional Press and Information Center that "consisted of the director of information and media from the FSLN Department of Press and Propaganda (DEPEP), the director of public relations from the Ministry of the Interior, the director of public relations and political action from the Sandinista Popular Army (EPS), the regional coordinator from UPN [the Association of Nicaraguan Journalists / *Unión de Periodistas de Nicaragua*], the editor of the Segovia Newscast (regional radio), the director of *Radio Segovia*, and the director of *Radio Liberación...*. The FSLN describe[d] the need for the Center: 'to confront military, economic, political and ideological aggression it is necessary to create the [Regional Press and Information Center] in order to *orient* the media in Region I" (Rodriguez 78; emphasis added by Rodriguez).

created within a mass organization and thus ostensibly a civil society initiative, the PC movement had become overly dependent on a party and state whose need for self-preservation had taken priority.

Conclusions: Lessons Learned, Changes in Cuba, and Socialism for the 21st Century

In sum, the participatory media efforts of the Sandinista project demonstrate a persistent tension between impulses toward authoritarian and democratic hegemony. In comparison with previously established socialist administrations in Cuba and Chile, however, the Sandinista project evidences an important advance in the struggle to establish a socialist civil state that might facilitate civil society leadership within a structure of democratic governance. In both Cuba and Chile, socialist policy was largely formulated in reaction to the dominance of the liberal model of civil society.

Cuba's revolutionary government, drawing on recent history and its own experience, rightly believed that the US government would manipulate civil society in order to undermine challenges to its neo-imperial ambitions. The Castro administration therefore dismantled the pre-existent liberal civil society and established an authoritarian hegemony within which socialist forms of civil society were tightly tethered to the state. As a result of its severely diminished autonomy, especially in the media sector, Cuban civil society was unable to develop avenues for self-critical reflexivity, which negatively impacted the country's ability to respond creatively to adversity.

In a distinct historical context, Chile's UP administration found itself forced to preserve the liberal framework of civil society. As a result, it adopted a communications policy oriented toward besting its political adversaries in open ideological competition. While this represented a conscious attempt to establish democratic as opposed to authoritarian hegemony, contemporary participants and observers quickly realized that the simple substitution of content was insufficient for overcoming the structural constraints of a media system designed for capital accumulation. The great benefit of maintaining open space for autonomous civil society organization, however, was that UP sympathizers were able to explore alternative structures of counter-hegemonic organization. Drawing in part on burgeoning modes of

communication theorization, Chileans began constructing participatory media collectives and networks that suggested a new direction for socialist communication policies. How this might have ultimately affected UP policy is, of course, unknown, as the administration was crushed just as the media efforts were gathering momentum.

As in Cuba and Chile, the tension between authoritarian and democratic hegemony was central to debates surrounding communications policy in Nicaragua during the 1980s. Significantly, however, the FSLN insurrection had been increasingly shaped by the concept of dialogic participation in the decade prior to its victory. As Sandinista governance took shape, it continued to be influenced by the dramatic acceleration in participatory media theorization and experimentation that had been catalyzed by the NWICO movement. The Sandinista commitment to a mixed economy and a pluralist civil society created space for experimentation regarding media production and distribution. Unlike in Chile, however, state policy and state support for civil society organizations helped nurture participatory media initiatives. Although still incipient, this gesture towards a civil state seemed to open up the possibility of an institutional framework for the systematization of a community media model that prioritized self-management alongside access and participation. War and economic crisis thwarted this potential, however, and not only because they induced a fatigued and demoralized populace to elect an alternative government. Even prior to that outcome, the FSLN's anxiety to preserve its hold on power had led the government to shape the system according to its own propagandistic goals. Rather than viewing this reversion toward authoritarianism as inherent to socialist media projects, however, we can recognize it as symptomatic of the lack of tested and replicable alternative models. For better or worse, the FSLN felt itself unable to wait on the results of a participatory tendency for which, outside of the exigencies of self preservation, its support was sincere. Despite continued research and the development of international networks of community media practitioners, the Sandinistas were unable to count on any coherent model for the construction of scalable community media systems, nor were they able to construct their own during a precarious decade in power.

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Despite the incomplete state of its central project, communications policy in Latin American socialist administrations had contributed significantly to a dialectic of theorization and experimentation within which a new conception of socialist hegemony was slowly emerging. Also extremely important in the formulation of this dialectic were the social movements that emerged in resistance to the right-wing, authoritarian military regimes that came to power across Latin America in the 1960s and 70s in countries like Brazil, Chile, and Argentina. Though acting in opposition to state power, these movements engaged the same questions regarding the role of civil society in hegemony and counter-hegemony that had proved central to theorization regarding socialist governance. By the late 1980s, Latin American socialism had been indelibly marked by these theoretical debates. Orlando Fals-Borda (1991), in a 1988 lecture, articulated the nature of this shift even as it continued to play out:

> People's power thus expressed and built up from base to top and from rim to centre - with research, conscience-training, and education for popular unity in the struggle for a full and fitting life for all classes - such power, vested in the people, acquires its own dynamics, and little by little reformulates the rules of the traditional political game, whilst calling for proper ideological definitions. There is then an advance from tactical claims to a presentation of structural exigencies, which, if the circumstances so require, might well turn out to be revolutionary; there is not, however, a fixed rule. Hence the recent appearance of movement-parties, which are less hierarchical, less vertical and more consensus-based, with a supra-party, pluralistic tendency. (25)

> Let us begin by stating that the self-proclaimed and vertical vanguards, as is obvious, have turned out to be opposed in practice to participation.... The discovery of these counterrevolutionary dangers by guiding spirits in the social movements of today has led to a redefinition of the vanguard as 'the enlightened people' exalting such leaders as deserve it by reason of their honest, disinterested and efficacious work, and for their spirit of service, and also because they maintain a respectful and symbiotic contact with the base from which they derive their authority and their very right to exist. This is how it has been understood in Nicaragua, for instance. (31)

> Of this there was a patent example at the Latin-American Socialist Congress held in Montevideo in April 1987, when those present declared: 'We believe neither in guide-parties nor in guide-States, but in guide-ideas.' An unprecedented statement, which would not have been heard five years before. (27)

Significantly, these changes were powerful enough to affect Cuba's deeply institutionalized hegemonic apparatus. One important impetus in this regard was, of course, the Sandinista project itself, with which the Cuban state had collaborated since long before the 1979 victory. Although Cuban media,

especially the cinema, had significantly shaped Sandinista media production, it was inevitable that the

prevalence of participatory theory would have a reciprocal effect on Cuban advisors and technicians who

carried it back to the island (see Mattelart 1986, 17-8). Cuba, of course, participated actively in the Non-

Aligned Movement and the NWICO debates, and Nicaragua was not the only channel through which the

rising pan-American emphasis on participatory communications reached the island.

By 1986, the effects of this broad shift were already visible at Havana's annual Festival of the

New Latin American Cinema, which now included video work and where the symbolically important first

speech of the final awards ceremony was delivered by Luis Santoro, who:

> work[ed] with small-format video not to create products, but to facilitate dialogue....
> Santoro's speech was no homage to Latin cinema, but a direct challenge to the old guard of
> Latin American film to recognize the vitality of community video. Santoro's key position
> in the ceremony was an obvious recognition by the festival committee of that vitality. The
> presence in Cuba of community video activists from all over the region was a coming
> together of a movement that is parallel to what the Cuban festival did for Latin film [in
> 1979]. (Halleck 2002, 311-12)

In Cuba, where the cinema had provided more space for criticism and artistic innovation than any other

medium, and where the film festival was an important showcase of Cuba's contributions to Latin

America's visual culture, the newfound inclusion of participatory video evidenced a significant shift. As

Halleck witnessed at the festival's meeting for television and video representatives, the Cuban officials

were:

> genuinely interested in the guerrilla video work. They took their problems quite seriously,
> taking notes and on occasion even cutting off the longwinded TV officials to allow more
> of the grassroots video producers to speak.... There is a new wind blowing at Cuban TV...
> For years visitors to Cuba would complain about the tired dogmatic forms and dull visuals
> of Cuban TV. Gonzalez [the new President of the Cuban Institute of TV and Radio] brings
> a fresh approach. He comes not with a broadcasting background, but a background in
> psychology, of working with group empowerment. [Sergio] Corielli [co-chair of the
> meeting and former film star] comes from an acting career, but he quit movie acting to
> work in street theater - forming collectives that worked in communities throughout the
> island. He brings to Cuban television a spirit of experiment and collaboration. One of the
> best examples of the new Cuban TV I saw used a highly stylized commedia dell-arte
> pantomime troupe combined with the spontaneous exuberance of a group of urban
> children in a highly conscious experimental video work combining guerilla video, street
> theater, and conceptual art. (311)

Despite this awareness of and engagement with more participatory modes of production, Cuba's media system did not undergo a radical shift. Participatory communication was, however, increasingly incorporated into Cuban civil society, beginning in the late 1980s, as part of a much broader political economic reorientation.

The Soviet Union began to diminish its material assistance to Cuba several years prior to its formal dissolution in 1991, ushering in what came to be known in Cuba as a "special period" of acute economic hardship. Cuban leaders recognized that the maintenance of socialist hegemony would require political adjustments. While authoritarian measures continued to be enacted, especially in relation to outright dissent, the special period also witnessed new openings for a more democratic civil society, as:

> the surging needs of the population, together with the lack of resources and the hardship of daily life, quickly overwhelmed the capacity of the mass organizations. Their structures and their proclivity for waiting for '' *orientaciones*'' (directions) before stepping out of the usual line of work meant that they were limited in the leadership or response they could provide to the specifics of the crisis facing individual communities. Although an important element in the fabric of Cuban society, mass organizations proved not to be the best vehicles for more proactive efforts. (Uriarte Gastón 2004, 124)

In this context, there emerged an urban "neighborhood movement" which focused attention "most particularly on horizontal networks at the community level" and included "the participation of many actors: local governments, the mass organizations, Cuban NGOs, international development organizations, institutions of higher education, and, most important, the neighbors themselves" (*ibid.*).

Throughout this process, in part due to the increased influence from outside organizations, Cuban civil society adopted participatory community development methodologies that had been increasingly employed throughout Latin America over the previous several decades. Especially important were Freirian methods of popular education that, as we have seen, formed the substrate of Sandinista participatory communication initiatives. Significantly, practitioners have spoken of the need to "Cubanize" these popular education methodologies in order to account for the high educational level of the population, as well as its "practice of being members of organizations, the clear link established between organizational and educational processes, and the widely spread idea that individual realization is

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linked to a collective project" (126). At the same time, however, the entrenched and limited understanding of participation as the execution of centrally designed projects has led some to question whether the Cuban context will allow for the participation in decision-making that is required for effective community development, much less a transition toward a civil state (*ibid*.).

Nonetheless, some evidence for the profundity of the changes sparked by the special period can be found in their codification into law. For example, in 2000 the National Assembly passed a law formalizing the role of the Popular Councils, which were founded in 1988 to give more decision-making power to local communities (Lambie 165). The Popular Councils "came into their own in the middle of the Special Period, [and] are today the institutions best poised to take good advantage of the new experience acquired at the community level" (124) by coordinating efforts between municipal assemblies, the mass organizations, and new civil society actors.

Given the Cuban government's generally tight control of the media sector, it should not be surprising that the increased space for civil society activity afforded by the special period did not translate into broad experimentation with participatory and community media. This is not to say, however, that there was no effect whatsoever. Fernandes (2006) has argued that the special period impelled Cuba's hegemonic apparatus to incorporate new social actors through a process that gave a greater public profile to "artistic public spheres", which she defines as "sites of interaction and discussion among ordinary citizens generated through the media of art and popular culture" (3). Coryat (2009) has taken up this idea and suggested that these artistic public spheres have also created space for community media initiatives that work within the parameters of the state even as they push against its limits.

One such example is Televisión Serrana (Mountain Television / TVS), a community oriented video group that began in 1993 with support from UNESCO, the Cuban government, and the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (*Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión* / ICRT). Following the initial investment period, the project has been housed within the institutional apparatus of the National Association of Small Farmers (*Asociación Nacional de Agricultores Pequeños* / ANAP), one of Cuba's

mass organizations. TVS aims to "rescue the culture of peasant communities" and "facilitate alternative communication for communities to reflect their daily lives and participate in the search for solutions to the problems that affect them" (cited in Gumucio 2001, 144).

Significantly, TVS did not grow organically from the small community of Buey Arriba, where it operates. Rather, the project was founded by a filmmaker working within the Cuban Institute of Cinema Arts (*Instituto Cubano de Arte e Industria Cinematográficos* / ICAIC) who created a coalition by aligning the "initiative's mission with the agendas of international funding organizations, Cuban governmental and nongovernmental agencies, and local organizations and communities" (Stock 2009, 79). Only after the project had been approved was the Sierra Maestra region selected as the appropriate site, for its historical significance, its continued developmental needs, and a desire to further integrate rural culture into Cuba's national imaginary (81-2).

During its first decade, TVS produced over 600 hours of video (77), largely dedicated to showcasing and celebrating the culture and inhabitants of the region, and many of the TVS productions have won national and international recognition. Moreover, TVS has succeeded in training many local residents in video production; its production team now consists "almost exclusively" of local residents. Also, through its connection with Cuba's International School for Cinema and Television (*Escuela Internacional de Cine y Televisión* / EICTV), TVS provides opportunities for student filmmakers from across the island (94). At the same time, TVS appears to have maintained a largely hierarchical internal organization, and local residents who are not part of the TVS team have limited opportunities for participating in administrative decision-making and project planning. [138] Thus, when measured against the definitional elements of community media – access, participation, and self-management – there is room for improvement. Nonetheless, the project has succeeded in its aims, as TVS productions are viewed

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138According to Stock, "[i]n 2002, the staff numbered 15 – 3 camera operators, 3 directors, 2 editors, 2 producers, 2 sound assistants, and 3 drivers who doubled as lighting specialists when shoots required illumination" (94). Gumucio (2001) notes that "[s]cripts proposed by individual members of the staff are discussed within the group, which includes all those related to production. There is no direct participation of the community at this stage" (146).

"locally through community discussions and events, regionally through festivals, nationally on television, and internationally through various networks" (102). UNESCO evaluations, meanwhile, have found the project's objectives to be "fully achieved" (98).

TVS came about during the crisis of the special period, when the Cuban state was increasingly dependent on outside assistance and open to new initiatives that would preserve its legitimacy and, thus, hegemonic position. While the project has served those ends, it has also served as a conduit for theories of participatory communication that were developed outside of Cuba. As such, "it is indicative of the new generation of Cuban videomakers who value alternative media and community ownership of communication tools, something unthinkable" prior to the special period (Gumucio 2001, 145). Thus, while TVS remains significantly constrained by the Cuban system, it has also created new possibilities for more autonomous civil society activity that intersects with democratic governance. For example, during a discussion following the presentation of TVS videos, the contamination of a local river by a coffee processing plant was mentioned. This became the basis for a documentary that "pushed for the implementation of corrective measures" (146). While such outcomes appear to be the exception rather than the norm, this example nonetheless testifies to a potential that seems to have been absent prior to Cuba's special period.

Visión Común (Common Vision / VC), a youth video collective in a small town on the Eastern part of the island, is another participatory video project that has made use of the expanded possibilities for civil society organization generated during the special period. Unlike TVS, however, VC did not begin with support from the state. Rather, it emerged upon the initiative of a group of young people who were inspired by a 2004 screening of videos made by youth from New York City (Coryat 2009; 68, 71). Despite having no access to official funding, by 2008 VC was able to hold several workshops and organize Cuba's first cinema festival devoted to "media made by and for the community" (74). Significantly, VC's growth was spurred by the participation of a young man who had trained at the Cuban Institute of Radio and Television (*Instituto Cubano de Radio y Televisión* / ICRT) but had been unable to

find work in Havana (71), and some of their first video productions were edited at the nearest Telecentro *,* one of Cuba's regional television broadcasters. [139] In other words, VC has benefited from state resources, even if the project has not been officially sanctioned or funded. The group has also begun to form partnerships with established civil society organizations, including Casa del Caribe (which promotes Caribbean culture) and the Humberto Solas International Festival of Poor Cinema (*Festival Internacional del Cine Pobre de Humberto Solas*) (74-5). As of 2009, VC was "in its infancy" (75) and it remains to be seen how far the project will be able to advance toward its goals of "produc[ing] media by and about Cobre's inhabitants, ... creat[ing] an audiovisual archive accessible to the community[,] ... [and] helping to create conditions for community-driven economic, social and cultural development" (74).

Both TVS and VC are relatively autonomous community media projects that have been able to draw on state resources in order to grow. Despite the success of TVS and the promise of VC, however, there is little evidence to suggest that they represent a national shift toward a robust system of community media or even a proliferation of similar projects (see Coryat 76). Moreover, both projects seem to be more focused on cultural representation than conscientiously pursuing a role as an articulating mechanism for civil society governance, and it remains unclear how much space their communities and the Cuban state will afford for critical voices, should they be represented. Nevertheless, the projects testify to a new era in the relationship between the state and civil society in Cuba. While civil society remains tightly tethered to the state, which continues to dominate the hegemonic apparatus, the reorganization that occurred during the special period has both granted greater autonomy to civil society and generated a robust discussion about its role within socialist governance (see Recio 1999). In 1997, for example, the official announcement of the Fifth Congress of the PCC noted that during the previous five years "our socialist civil society has undergone a process of growth". [140] This was only the second time that the PCC had officially mentioned civil society in a positive light; the first came in the Report of the Political Bureau of

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[139] Although TVS is not a broadcaster, it is formally affiliated with the Telecentro system and it seems likely that the renown of that community video project facilitated the assistance provided to VC.

[140] "*se ha desarrollado un proceso de fortalecimiento de nuestra sociedad civil socialista.*"

the Central Committee in 1996, which was "the first official text from a communist party in the tradition of real socialism to recognize and value the existence of civil society" (López 1997). [141]

The changing relationship between the state and civil society in Cuba, as well as the limited but important opportunities it has created for community media, were not necessary outcomes of the crisis of the special period. The state might have chosen to rely entirely on increased authoritarianism in order to maintain its dominance, rather than facilitating a reorganization that opened space for increased civil society participation. The emergence of the latter outcome resulted, in part, from the longstanding ethos of the Cuban revolution and its leaders, who have always – at least rhetorically – valued public participation as necessary to socialist governance. The specific adjustments to policy and practice that resulted from this critical juncture, however, were facilitated and shaped by decades of theoretical advance and practical experimentation regarding participatory communication and its crucial role in democratic governance, education, and media production. Latin America has long served as a primary locus of this dialectical advance and twentieth century Latin American socialism provided opportunities to experiment with different manners of incorporating participatory communication into counterhegemonic movements and (would be) hegemonic apparatuses of governance. All of these activities ultimately informed the continued evolution of Cuba's revolutionary project.

The interrelated lessons of twentieth century Latin American socialism and participatory communication did much more, however, than merely reorient the political ground in Cuba. Throughout the 1990s, while many observers were celebrating the collapse of the Soviet Union as a final victory for a capitalist world order, the Latin American left was beginning to coalesce around a loosely defined perspective that has come to be known as "21st century socialism" and which has influenced democratically elected, left-leaning governments across the region. While the term itself remains highly contested regarding both its origin and import, we employ it here because, as a loose constellation of

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[141] *"el primer texto oficial de un partido comunista en la tradición del socialismo real que reconoce y valora la existencia de la sociedad civil."*

ideas, the notion of 21st century socialism provides a heuristic point of transition for the history that we have traced above.

Twentieth century socialist projects in Cuba, Chile, and Nicaragua were all undertaken, both explicitly and implicitly, in relation to a what Gouldner has classified as a Critical Marxist interpretation that prioritized a vanguard party and the primacy of the state over and above civil society. As we have seen, these projects also demonstrated a resistance to that interpretation and in so doing they expanded neo-Critical Marxist interpretations by increasingly mitigating the role of the vanguard and elevating the role of civil society relative to the state. We have discussed this in terms of a general movement toward a Gramscian civil state in which governance is primarily directed by civil society. By the late 1990s, mainstream Latin American socialism had largely abandoned not only the strict Scientific, but also the Critical Marxist framework in favor of a neo-Critical position that prioritizes participatory democracy. 21st Century Socialism provides a name for this new framework that has been a primary point of reference for social movements and governments across Latin America.

Heinz Dieterich, who has claimed credit for coining the term, has summarized 21st Century Socialism as "a socialism in which the majorities have the greatest historically possible degree of decision-making power in the economic, political, cultural, and military institutions that govern their lives". Nonetheless, much of Dieterich's explication of 21st Century Socialism has focused on replacing "the regulating principle of market economy, price, by the regulating principle of socialist economy, value, understood as time inputs … necessary for the creation of a product" (Marcano & Dieterich 2007; see also Dieterich 2005, 109-181). In this sense, Dieterich's presentation remains narrowly economistic relative to those who have interpreted 21st Century Socialism as "question[ing] the preeminent role attributed to the working class [by 20th century Marxism] to the exclusion of broad segments of the population including the urban poor, the informal sector, religious communities, the indigenous, the Afro-descendent, and women" (Ellner 2012, 106). All proponents of 21st Century Socialism, however, are

agreed that its fundamental component is a maximization of democratic participation in governance. [142]

Of special interest to the present discussion is Moulian's (2000) call for 21st Century Socialism "to recuperate in a new form [Marx's] original idea of the disappearance of the state". [143] Though he does not invoke Gramsci explicitly, Moulian clearly endorses a Gramscian notion of a civil state: "The best State is that from within which the State itself can be combatted, developing the collaboration of citizens, workers, producers" (111). [144] The construction of such a state will be the result of neither revolution nor reform, but a "transformation" predicated on the creation of "socialist institutions at a realistic scale (often microsocial) inside of capitalism itself" (113). [145] 21st Century Socialism therefore requires the "fragmentation and scattering of political power" alongside "open and plural public space, compatible with a deliberative society" (123). [146] Within this context, a media sector anchored in civil society is a necessary component of any viable path forward:

> A deliberative society must be an informed society. Fundamental to this is pluralist access to the property and management of communication media, for persons, parties, or social organizations. Here a regulatory role belongs to a public, *not state*, entity that reflects social and cultural pluralities.... In order to realize this strategy it is important to nurture public discussion in local popular spaces. This can make use of communication across segmented media of reduced reach, which are easier to access and can be combined with the communicational practice of face-to-face dialogue. (132-3, my emphasis) [147]

Moulian is careful to note that these "forms of institutional arrangement" are suggested as "indexes that allow for visualizing horizons of struggle" (123) and thus not meant to be "descriptive", but his formulation should induce us to ask how the civil state of 21st century socialism might best establish a

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142 For an overview of 21st Century Socialism in Latin America, see Harnecker & Bellamy Foster (2010).

143 "*recuperar de forma nueva el ideal originario de la desestatización.*"; Significantly, Moulian is a Chilean sociologist and historian, and his conceptualization of 21st Century Socialism draws on an intimate knowledge of the history of the UP period (see Moulian 1983, 1998, 2006).

144 "*El mejor Estado es aquel desde donde se puede combatir contra el propio Estado, desarrollando la asociatividad de ciudadanos, trabajadores, productores.*"

145 "*instituciones socialistas a una escala posible (muchas veces microsocial) dentro del mismo capitalismo.*"

146 "*fragmentación y esparciemiento del poder político*"; "*espacio público abierto y plural, compatible con una sociedad deliberativa*"

147 "*Una sociedad deliberativa debe ser una sociedad informada. Por ello es básico el acceso pluralista a la propiedad y gestión de los medios de comunicación, para personas, partidos u organizaciones sociales. Aquí le corresponde un papel regulador a un ente público, no estatal, que refleje las pluralidades sociales y culturales.... Para realizar esta estrategia es importante la alimentación de la discusión pública en los espacios locales populares. Allí se puede trabajar la comunicación a través de medios de alcance reducido y segmentado, de más fácil accesibilidad, la cual se puede combinar con la práctica comunicacional del diálogo cara a cara.*"

media system regulated by and at the service of civil society. [148]

In our search for an answer to that question, we can turn to those countries that have embarked upon the construction of a 21ˢᵗ century socialist society. Most radical among them has been Venezuela, whose "Bolivarian Revolution" has been led by President Hugo Chávez since his first electoral victory in 1998. Although Chávez's first public use of the term 21ˢᵗ Century Socialism did not occur until 2005, [149] his administration's commitment to participatory democracy was already in evidence in 1999, when he convened a constituent assembly to produce a new constitution and establish the country's "Fifth Republic". Article 62 of that constitution states that "the participation of the people in the formation, execution and control of public matters is the means necessary to accomplish the protagonism (*protagonismo*) that will guarantee their complete development, both as individuals and collectively" (cited in Burbach & Piñeiro 2007). Venezuela's Fifth Republic is thus Latin America's longest standing experiment in 21ˢᵗ century socialism.

Even prior to Chávez's election Venezuela had a growing community media sector, and under the fifth republic that sector has consolidated and organized itself, seeking legitimation, support, and autonomy from the state apparatus. The following three chapters examine that history, highlighting the continuously evolving dialectic between the state and civil society, as well as the degree to which organizational, legal, and financial structures have or have not contributed to the establishment of a civil state and participatory democratic governance, both in the media sector and beyond.

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148 "*formas de arreglo institucional*"; "*indicios que permiten visualizar horizontes de lucha*"
149 Chávez used the term in January 2005, during his closing speech to the World Social Forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Wilpert 2006). He first employed the term domestically a year later, in February 2006, during a broadcast of his weekly television show (Burbach & Piñeiro 2007).

Chapter 3 – Community Media and Civil Society in Puntofijista Venezuela

Following his election to the presidency in 1998, Hugo Chávez nurtured a very public relationship with Fidel Castro and positioned Venezuela as Cuba's closest ally. Chávez's political opponents have consistently claimed that he and his Bolivarian Revolution have sought to lead Venezuela into a totalitarian communist system modeled after revolutionary Cuba. There are, indeed, some historical parallels between Chávez and Castro. Both initially framed their movements with an ideology that was more overtly nationalist than socialist, and both sought to take political control via a military uprising. Chávez, however, ultimately came to the presidency via the electoral path and the most apt comparison between his Bolivarian movement and any previous Latin American socialist project is to Allende and the UP government in Chile, not Castro.

At the time that the Allende and Chavéz administrations came to power, the political economies of both Chile and Venezuela were dominated by a single natural resource (copper and oil, respectively) whose exploitation was largely controlled by foreign interests. Both countries, meanwhile, had been widely praised as among Latin America's most stable democracies, having operated within the liberal representative framework for multiple decades. Moreover, although both Allende and Chávez came to power promising to respect pluralist civil society and private property, both administrations incited an increasingly strident opposition that complained of diminishing respect for press freedoms and predicted economic ruin due to the mismanagement of state enterprises and a lack of foreign investment. In Chile, the Allende administration had been in power for less than three years when the socialist project was crushed with a brutal military coup. In Venezuela, the Chávez administration had been in power just over three years when its opponents launched a civic-military coup. Unlike in Chile, however, the Venezuelan coup failed and Chávez was restored to power within a few days. He went on to win multiple popular elections before passing away in early 2013, just prior to being inaugurated for a third full term in office. Chávez's chosen successor, Francisco Maduro, was elected to the presidency soon after and the Bolivarian movement is now well into its second decade of state control.

For all their similarities, though, the Chilean and Venezuelan cases differ regarding much more than their duration. As suggested in the previous chapter, Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution emerged during a moment in the history of Latin American socialism when Scientific Marxism and vanguardism had been eclipsed by Critical approaches that de-emphasized the role of the state and accentuated the role of social movements. The Latin American social landscape had also been significantly altered by severe economic crisis, which led to the so-called "lost decade" of the 1980s and a subsequent wave of neoliberal reforms. These phenomena were especially significant in Venezuela, where they set the stage for Chávez's rise to power.

Understanding the role of participatory communications in Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution will therefore be greatly facilitated by an overview of the social context within which the *chavista* movement emerged. This chapter thus begins with an examination of Venezuela's political economic history during the latter part of the twentieth century and its relation to the evolving role of civil society. It then recounts the emergence of Hugo Chávez as a national figure in the early 1990s, the role of civil society within his Bolivarian movement, and the evolving policy framework within which his administration attempted to inculcate participatory governance following his election as president in 1998. Once this context has been established, we will move on to a discussion of the community media sector as it emerged in the latter half of the twentieth century and was subsequently consolidated within a framework of state support during the early years of the Chávez administration. Although there is no definitive moment of rupture, this chapter will focus on the period up until 2007, around which time Bolivarian policy initiatives began to cohere within a more unitary system of "Popular Power". That system, and attempts to integrate community media within it, will be discussed in the following chapter.

Civil Society in the Rise and Fall of Puntofijismo

Venezuela emerged from a military dictatorship in 1958 following the unification of its four major political parties in a Patriotic Junta (*Junta Patriótica*), which catalyzed resistance from business, church,

and civil society leaders (Ellner 2010, 45-8). The toppling of the dictatorship inspired a sense of national unity, "infused the rank and file of political and social organizations with a sense of empowerment[,] and brought to the fore opportunities for the achievement of ambitious popular measures and nationalist goals", including a resumption of labor organization and greater state control of the oil sector (58-9). While some prominent actors sought to channel this energy through popular mobilization, political power was quickly consolidated by leaders of three of the four political parties – the social democratic Democratic Action (*Acción Democrática* / AD), the Christian democratic Independent Political Electoral Organization Committee (*Comité de Organización Política Electoral Independiente* / COPEI), and the center left Democratic Republican Union (*Unión Republicana Democrática* / URD) – who signed a series of accords that "embraced unity from above within a corporatist framework that excluded the [Communist Party of Venezuela (*Partido Communista de Venezuela* / PCV)]". These agreements bound the three parties to form coalition governments (regardless of which party won the presidency) and support policies designed to placate important interest groups, especially the Catholic church, the business sector, and the armed forces, "which were to be consulted on decisions affecting their respective organizations" (59). The first and most infamous of these agreements, the Pact of Punto Fijo, was signed in secret and ultimately lent its name to the "pacted democracy" that it inaugurated, which has come to be known as *puntofijismo*.

Longtime AD leader Rómulo Betancourt, who was the first president elected in the *puntofijista* period, sought "to proceed with economic and social reforms and viable forms of representation of the nonprivileged, without contributing to a sense of popular empowerment that would have unleashed radicalization and scared off powerful groups" (61). This meant simultaneously appeasing the Venezuelan Federation of Chambers and Associations of Commerce and Production (*Federación de Cámaras y Asociaciones de Comercio y Producción de Venezuela* / FEDECAMERAS), which represented Venezuela's business sector, as well as the Workers' Confederation of Venezuela (*Confederación de Trabajadores de Venezuela* / CTV), the country's labor central. He accomplished this with policies that

included marginalizing the PCV and other radical leftist currents (including those within his own party), dissuading strikes and encouraging a moderate orientation toward labor contracts, and implementing a cautious economic policy that supported anemic land reform, import substitution industrialization, and greater state participation in the oil industry and other sectors while stopping short of drastically disrupting Venezuela's dependent relationship on foreign capital and technology (61-3).

Betancourt thus established the basic framework of *puntofijista* corporatist, clientelistic governance. After the URD decided to abandon the coalition government in 1962, partly in reaction to Betancourt's anti-communism, Venezuela became a de facto two party state. The PCV and URD continued to run or endorse candidates, and new leftist parties split off from AD, the PCV, and even COPEI, but none were able to significantly alter the power sharing structure of *puntofijismo,* within which AD and COPEI traded off control of the presidency and the National Assembly for several decades. The steady marginalization of popular leftist movements throughout the 1960s and 70s was accomplished, in part, by the implementation of progressive macroeconomic policies, the most salient of which came about during the administration of AD's Carlos Andrés Pérez, who took office in 1974 as oil prices were skyrocketing. Pérez nationalized the iron and petroleum industries and began investing oil revenues in heavy industry and electricity production. He also directed investment toward research designed to promote technological independence in the petroleum sector and introduced social welfare and employment programs, including legislation providing all workers with severance pay benefits (71-3). Between 1973 and 78 public spending nearly doubled, the middle class continued to grow, and the poverty level dropped to 10 percent (Buxton 2003, 115).

Pérez's policies often ran counter to the moderate wing of his own party, but they nonetheless remained within the social democratic bounds of the *puntofijista* system. When necessary, he made conciliatory gestures to FEDECAMERAS and foreign investors.[150] Especially significant in the context of

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150For example, in response to criticism from FEDECAMERAS, Pérez scaled back his proposals for labor legislation. He also provided generous terms for the nationalization of the iron and petroleum industries, leaving open the possibility for foreign investment in mixed companies and undisclosed subcontracting to foreign firms (Ellner 2010, 74).

the current discussion was Pérez's desire to refrain from:

> ...encouraging mobilizations and taking his causes directly to the people. As a loyal member of AD, he was averse to factional struggle and thus relied on technocrats and probusiness allies to fill many top government positions, rather than appointing labor and social movement followers within the party. (Ellner 2010, 76)

Stability and prosperity, in other words, continued to rely on state intervention, patronage networks, and corporatist negotiations between elites at the expense of popular participation in governance through civil society organizations.

During the 1970s, however, two alternatives to the *puntofijista* model of corporatist civil society gained prominence. By the early 1970s, some leftists (following currents in Latin American socialism discussed in the previous chapter) had grown disillusioned with the vanguardist framework and hierarchical organization of the PCV and other socialist parties. They adopted a more Gramscian approach that emphasized organizing within existent, albeit incipient, popular movements and working toward long-term goals. Especially significant was a group that came to be called *Causa R* and, in the mid-1970s, began organizing workers in Venezuela's state-owned steel industry to challenge AD control of the union. Their work was instrumental in fomenting the "new syndicalism" (*nuevo sindicalismo*) movement that stressed internal democracy and became influential in Venezuelan labor unions during the 1980s (López Maya 1995, 214-216; see also Hellinger 1996, López Maya 1997). *Causa R* also began organizing among the residents of Catia, a large sector on the east side of Caracas whose population of half a million had a history of political struggle and represented a mixture of class interests (López Maya 1995, 214). The group's efforts resulted in an organization called Pro Catia whose initiatives included petitioning for a municipal council that would be responsive to Catia's residents, winning improvements in public services and access to consumer goods, advocating for the construction of a large public park, and organizing youth sporting events (218).

Not all of the civil society initiatives that challenged the *puntofijista* framework emerged from the left. From early on in the *puntofijista* period, residents of middle- and upper-class *urbanizaciones* began

organizing neighborhood associations (*asociaciones de vecinos*) in an effort to secure and maintain public services in the face of neglect by the local government. [151] In 1971, fourteen such associations from southeastern Caracas joined together as the Federation of Urban Community Associations (*Federación de Asociaciones de Comunidades Urbanas* / FACUR). By the middle of the decade the burgeoning neighborhood movement had gained prominence and in 1978 the Fundamental Law of Municipal Governance (*Ley Orgánica de Régimen Municipal*) provided a legal framework for the new organizational model.[152] Neighborhood associations across the country began organizing in regional coordinating committees (*coordinadoras*) and the *Escuela de Vecinos de Venezuela* formed in 1980, as an affiliate of FACUR, to provide guidance and training.

Thus, even during the boom years of the Pérez presidency, frustration with *puntofijismo*, especially in relation to local service provision and intra-organizational democracy, spurred new forms of civil society organization. Criticism remained relatively muted, however, so long as the rising tide of economic prosperity continued to float most boats. Economic policy during the Pérez administration was not, however, without serious drawbacks. Despite the massive increase in revenues generated by high oil prices, Pérez had borrowed heavily on international markets and incurred a substantial foreign debt. The influx of money had generated significant growth, but it had also spurred high inflation. COPEI's Luis Herrera Campins won the 1978 presidential election by appealing to right wing critics of Pérez's developmental policies and high debt load. Upon assuming office, he scaled back state participation in the economy, reduced protectionist measures, increased interest rates, and regulated prices in an effort to slow

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[151] Urban residential neighborhoods in Venezuela are referred to as *urbanizaciones* and *barrios*. The former term generally refers to a planned residential community of professionally constructed homes in a geographically preferential area. The latter generally indicates either a mixed zone (with both commercial and residential buildings) located in a (frequently neglected) central area open to through-traffic or, most commonly, an unplanned, primarily residential community, often comprised of precariously constructed housing and located in a geographically marginal area of the city (frequently, and especially in Caracas, a steep hillside). *Barrios* are often not (or only poorly) integrated into the public service infrastructure. While *urbanizaciones* may be walled and enjoy private security guards, *barrios* are generally considered insecure. In any case, the nomenclature connotes class differences and, in cases where the geographic and architectural facets of two zones are roughly comparable, the choice of terminology may derive entirely from considerations of class (cf. Lander 1995, 140).

[152] One example of the movement's rising prominence can be found in the decision of the magazine *Resumen* to name "the neighbors" as its "persons of the year" (*personajes del año*) in 1976 (Rivero 1995, 7).

growth and cut inflation. Instead of reducing the foreign debt, however, Herrera doubled it (Ellner 2010, 78-9). This policy mix set the country up for economic disaster.

Global oil prices dropped precipitously in 1981, severely reducing state revenues. Then, following the Mexican debt crisis of 1982, international lenders tightened capital flows and demanded payment on previous loans. This spurred capital flight, a decrease in international reserves, and, in February of 1983, a sharp devaluation of the Venezuelan currency. Herrera instituted a system of currency exchange controls, but its oversight agency was corrupt from the outset and only grew more so under Herrera's AD successor, Jaime Lusinchi (83). Public spending dropped dramatically, but capital flight, inflation, and the country's high debt load all persisted. From 1983 onward, Venezuela was a country in crisis. By 1988, the rates of inflation and poverty were both around 40 percent, unemployment was nearing double figures, and real salary levels had fallen by almost one-fifth since 1983 (Buxton 113, 116, 118).[153]

The economic crisis crystallized public exasperation with the *puntofijista* system and its principal corporatist units, especially the political parties and labor unions. Discontent transcended interest groups and class divisions, and observers from a wide spectrum of Venezuelan society endorsed reforms that centered on decentralization of the government, democratization of parties and unions, and increased participation in governance, especially at the local level, through civil society initiatives. For example, business leaders endorsed *Causa R*'s work to democratize the labor movement (Ellner 2010, 84) and they joined with the CTV, the Catholic Church, and the neighborhood associations in calling for electoral reforms that included the direct election of state governors (as opposed to their appointment by the President). The neighborhood associations also pushed for changes in municipal election procedures and, in both 1983 and 88, called for presidential candidates to present programs for political reform (Ellner 1993, 6). They were thus influential in forcing Lusinchi to create, soon after his election, the Presidential

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[153]For the years 1988 and 89, Lander (1995) reports inflation rates of 29.48 and 84.46 percent, poverty rates of 46 and 62 percent, and extreme poverty rates of 14 and 30 percent, respectively. He reports unemployment dropping steadily from 13.4 to 6.9 percent from 1984 to 1988, then rising again to 9.6 percent in 1989 (97-8, 123).

Commission for the Reform of the State (*Comisión Presidencial para la Reforma del Estado* / COPRE), whose proposals echoed those coming from civil society (15; Lander 1995, 37-43; López Maya 1995, 207-8).

As evidenced by its newfound role in political advocacy, the neighborhood movement continued to grow and consolidate throughout the 1980s, with both FACUR and the *Escuela* serving, in different capacities, as national "interlocutors" (Ellner 1999, 78-82). Meanwhile, although Pro Catia dissolved in 1983, *barrio* organization continued in the form of "weak but crucial social networks, encouraged by Jesuit priests, [that] developed around vital issues of food distribution, personal security, and elementary education" that were particular to impoverished sectors (Buxton 117). Fernandes (2010) emphasizes that these barrio organizations "engaged in strikes, hijackings of public vehicles, and other protest actions that were outside the repertoire of the more advocacy-oriented neighborhood movements" (60). Nonetheless, the neighborhood movement sought to expand beyond its middle- and upper-class base by building off of these networks and forming new associations in popular *barrios*. To a certain extent, therefore, Venezuela's neighborhood associations appeared to fit into the broader Latin American phenomenon of the "new social movements" which had emerged in resistance to military dictatorships and in relation to the socialist reappraisal of civil society (Ellner 1999, 77; Ellner 1993, 23). Their rhetoric reinforced this conception by emphasizing a "democracy of citizens" that would replace the "democracy of parties" (Lander 2007, 24) and presenting the associations as "the movement of movements" (Salamanca 1987, cited in Yi Ng 14), which was precisely the terminology that *Causa R* had used to describe its own organizing vision since the early 1970s (López Maya 1995, 216).[154]

On the surface, the economic crisis of the 1980s appeared to have catalyzed the formation of a

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154In 1986, Elías Santana, a prominent leader of the *Escuela,* spoke of a "citizen movement" (*movimiento ciudadano*) that was "the sum of sectoral and partial movements" (*la suma de movimientos sectorales y parciales*), but then went on to say that "the space where they all constantly coincide on a daily basis is the community... the neighborhood... [which] has been the generator of the movement of neighborhood associations and community groups" (*el espacio donde todas coinciden constante y cotidianamente es la comunidad... el vecindario... [lo cual] ha sido el generador del movimiento de las asociaciones de vecinos y de los grupos comunitarios*) (Santana 1988, 133-4); "*el fenómeno más importante ocurrido en los últimos años de la democracia venezolana*"; "*movimiento de movimientos*"

unified, broad-based civil society that would play a decisive role in reforming – or perhaps even replacing – the *puntofijista* framework. Below the surface, however, there were significant ideological and social fault lines that would continually disrupt the search for a shared path forward. Most critics agreed on the basic outline of political reforms, but serious differences arose in relation to the economic policy that should accompany them. One current, which was "generally linked to business circles[,] drew a connection between the deepening of democracy and the reduction of centralized political power, including party control, on the one hand, and 'economic liberty' and privatization on the other" (Ellner 2010, 83-4). Another current opposed privatization and other forms of economic liberalization. Within this current, some groups, such as *Causa R*, represented working class and impoverished citizens. There were also, however, significant numbers of middle class citizens who rejected *puntofijismo* but continued to endorse state intervention in the economy, especially in relation to petroleum and other natural resources. This, along with the fact that the *puntofijista* party system (of which AD had always been the linchpin) remained in place, helps to explain why Pérez was elected to another term of office in December of 1988. Pérez campaigned on the interventionist policies that had marked his first term and Venezuelans hoped that he could accomplish the impossible task of restoring the prosperity of that era under totally different macroeconomic circumstances.

Within weeks of taking office, however, Pérez performed an about face and accepted a four billion dollar loan from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) in exchange for implementing a package of neoliberal austerity measures that adhered to the so-called "Washington consensus". Pérez's neoliberal framework included rolling back gasoline subsidies, which caused an increase in public transportation costs and prompted public protests that, on February 27, 1989, gave way to widespread looting in urban centers across the country. The government called on the armed forces to put down the uprising and, over the course of several days, hundreds, if not thousands, of Venezuelans were killed, with many more injured.[155] These events, which came to be known as the *Caracazo*, inaugurated a period of social unrest

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155The official count lists 277 killed and 1,009 wounded, but other estimates place the number of dead in the

that would shake the *puntofijista* system to its core.

The CTV, in defiance of Pérez and AD, organized a general strike on May 18, 1989 and protests in several cities in February of 1990 (Ellner 2010, 97). Meanwhile, both AD and COPEI were internally divided over whether to take the neoliberal path and, if so, how far to follow it. Some of Pérez's proposals were thus held up or blocked in the Congress, but he nonetheless pushed ahead with economic "shock therapy", drastically cutting public spending and lifting controls on interest rates, currency exchange, and consumer prices. By 1991 he had privatized the state-owned telecommunications monopoly and instituted a deregulatory framework that would gradually open the sector to competition. Restrictions on foreign investment were also lowered and a 1992 Privatization Law led to the sale of many more state firms. Pérez also implemented state and electoral reforms, some of which had been proposed by COPRE but resisted by the Lusinchi administration. Although decentralization was widely viewed as part of a necessary reform of *puntofijismo*, as carried out by the Pérez administration it served to reinforce the neoliberal direction of the country. Responsibilities that had formerly rested with the federal government, such as the administration of ports, commercial airports, and highways, were turned over to state governments that lacked the resources to manage them, leading to privatization and layoffs of union workers (92-3).

Electoral reforms passed during the Pérez administration included the direct election of state governors and the ability to select specific candidates, as opposed to party slates, in state and municipal elections. Although these did not directly reinforce the neoliberal economic framework, they were meant to bolster the administration's democratic credibility in the face of widespread outrage toward its economic policy. The plan backfired, however, as the reforms created opportunities for formerly marginalized parties. For example, in December of 1989 AD lost control of 9 state governorships, one of which went to *Causa R* (in Bolívar, where they had been organizing the steel workers since the mid-

thousands.

1970s).[156] The Movement Toward Socialism (*Movimiento al Socialismo* / MAS) was another long marginalized leftist party that gained substantially under the new system.[157] New parties also arose and the reforms played a significant role in enabling the political fragmentation that marked Venezuelan politics during the 1990s.

Despite the electoral reforms, Pérez continued to lose credibility as the country slid further into crisis. The government ran fiscal surpluses in 1990 and 91, and made timely repayment on existing debt, but the absorption of new debt and the accumulation of interest meant that the amount of outstanding debt actually increased. Moreover, although GDP growth was positive between 1990 and 93, thanks in large part to a rise in oil prices spurred by the Gulf War, inflation remained above 30 percent and income inequality grew steadily worse (Lander 1995, 96-9). Pérez managed to put down attempted military coups in February and November of 1992, but both generated significant popular support for his removal from office. In this context, the attorney general issued a report alleging that Pérez had embezzled official funds and the Senate authorized a trial against him. Pérez finally resigned in May of 1993 and was replaced by an interim president.

Cognizant of widespread disgust with the neoliberal reforms, Rafael Caldera, who had founded COPEI and won the presidency on its ticket in 1969, broke with his old party and successfully regained the presidency in 1993 at the head of a multi-party coalition (which included the MAS and the PCV) whose platform rejected the neoliberal approach and promised a return to state intervention. Caldera reinstated controls on exchange and interest rates, and resisted further privatization of the state sector. Shortly after his election, however, crisis erupted in the financial sector as the rapid growth that had resulted from Pérez's deregulation caused a series of bank failures. The government ultimately took control of 18 private banks representing 70 percent of all deposits and instituted a bailout that amounted to 12 percent of GDP in 1994. The bankers fled with as much capital as they could get out of the country,

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156For a discussion of the electoral reforms and their effect on *Causa R*, see López Maya 1995.

157The MAS, which broke from the PCV in 1971, tended to attract a more middle-class membership than *Causa R* (Ellner 2010, 83).

leading to a drop in international reserves, a devaluation of the currency, and a sharp rise in inflation, which averaged 70.8 percent in 1994 (Buxton 120; Ellner 2010, 100). With the government out of money and the country's infrastructure failing, Caldera was forced to break his promise and, in 1995, negotiate an emergency loan from the IMF. The conditions of that loan resulted in the imposition of the neoliberal "Venezuela Agenda" in 1996, which included privatization of the steel industry, laxer restrictions on foreign participation in the petroleum industry, and reforms to the social security administration (101-3). Currency exchange controls were also relaxed, leading to further devaluation and an inflation rate of 103.2 percent in 1996. By the end of that year, over 80 percent of the country was living in poverty (Buxton 121).

Amongst the general population, which blamed its suffering on neoliberal policies, the *puntofijista* system, along with the established parties, had lost all credibility. AD and COPEI candidates had supported neoliberalism in the 1993 election, AD dissenters and the MAS had joined Caldera in supporting the "Venezuela Agenda", and even some *Causa R* leaders began supporting certain neoliberal policies. *Causa R* eventually split, with the more moderate faction keeping the name and, at least in the eyes of the public, incorporating itself into the *puntofijista* framework (López Maya 2003, 84; Buxton 122). Both the CTV, which was deemed to have insufficiently resisted privatizations and, especially, social security reforms, and FEDECAMERAS, which had long supported liberalization, were also tarnished with the neoliberal brush (*ibid.*).

In sum, the period from 1989 to 1998 had shown that the *puntofijista* system was no longer viable, but that elites could find no alternative to the neoliberal economic framework, which came at a heavy cost to a majority of the population. Again and again, in their protests and electoral choices, Venezuelans demonstrated that they wanted drastic reforms to the corporatist, clientelistic, and corrupt *puntofijista* system, but not in the form of neoliberalism. In relation to this historical context and the purposes of the present discussion, one question becomes salient: Why did non-corporatist civil society – specifically the highly auspicious neighborhood movement – not generate an alternative framework of

governance or, at least, contribute more to the maintenance of political stability? The answer seems to be that the apparent unity of an emerging civil society sector under the banner of the neighborhood movement was only superficial. At a deeper level, the movement was divided over fundamental assumptions regarding the nature of civil society. The civil society movement, in other words, was unable to provide an alternative to the progressive polarization of Venezuelan society because it was caught up in that very same process.

In its official literature, the neighborhood movement predicated its autonomy on financial self sufficiency. For example, the "Neighbor's Manual: The Basic Course of Neighborhood Associations" (*Manual del Vecino: Curso Básico de Asovecinos*), produced by the *Escuela,* stated that "[t]he great majority of the associations of our country have as their sole form of financing contributions from the directors, the members that provide a regular contribution, and the occasional in-kind or cash donation" (Santana 1988, 171, my translation).[158] These donations, to be clear, came from "private enterprise, local businesses, and individuals, and many times not area residents" (Rodríguez et al. 1989, 124, my translation).[159] There is no evidence that the movement planned to change this arrangement. A section of the manual entitled "A Proposal for an Agenda and Common Plan" mentions financing only once and in that instance merely proposes "[t]o design formulas for collecting secure and periodic monetary contributions that afford [the association] autonomy in its functioning" (175, my translation).[160]

Lacking from this perspective is any recognition that the privately conferred contributions would to a great extent be dependent on the contributors' positions within a larger political economy. Autonomy in this sense encompasses freedom from *direct* political or ideological intervention, but not from the maintenance of economic standards that allow members and commercial entities to direct disposable income and profits toward the associations. It is thus hard to argue with the conclusion that, at least

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158 "*[l]a gran mayoría de las asociaciones de nuestro país tienen como única forma de financiamiento el aporte de los directivos, de los afiliados que cumplen con su aporte regular y alguna donación eventual en materiales o en efectivo.*"
159 "*empresas privadas, comercios de la zona y personas en particular, y muchas veces no habitantes de la zona*"
160 "*Una Propuesta de Agenda y Plan Común*"; "*[d]iseñar formulas de recaudación de aportes monetarios seguras y periódicas que le brinden autonomía en su funcionamiento.*"

implicitly, the movement embraced a "concept of civil society … based on the model of the market" (Lander 1996, 54). It endorsed, in other words, a classically liberal notion of civil society as the expression of private interests, themselves an outgrowth of the private commercial sector, in the public sphere.

For associations from middle- and upper-class *urbanizaciones*, which could draw on higher incomes, higher levels of education, professional expertise, and greater levels of "social capital", this conception of civil society autonomy could pass unquestioned. In the *barrios*, however, organization and activism existed in a much different matrix, with scarcer resources, more pressing problems, and a distinct set of social relations that provided additional leverage to party leaders (Rivero 1995, 6). [161] Moreover, association leaders from *urbanizaciones* and *barrios* often sharply disagreed over solutions to issues that hinged on class differences, such as gang crime and land tenure (Ellner 1999, 88-91). Middle-class leaders of the movement failed to recognize that their conception of civil society was not necessarily applicable to both contexts. Thus, the *Escuela* "attributed the stagnation of neighbourhood associations in the barrios to their excessive politicisation" (Ellner 1999, 79), when the relationship might have more properly been seen in reverse terms: the associations were reluctantly politicized in order to make whatever gains they could in the face of entrenched structural obstacles. Meanwhile, the "Neighbor's Manua*"* includes a section on "The Neighborhood Struggle" (*La Lucha Vecinal*) which offers seven anecdotes meant to illustrate creative forms of protest. The first of these relates how one association pressured a bank to ensure that the shopping center it was financing had sufficient parking spots. Another refers to a campaign to pressure authorities to remove sidewalk vendors (Santana 161-3). Such campaigns were unlikely to register with the many Venezuelans that did not own a car, could not afford to shop at

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161As one *barrio* leader noted in 1992: "...while *urbanizaciones* like Santa Mónica have been able to confront the governor's office regarding the uncontrolled proliferation of condominiums in their neighborhood, we have to depend on leaders of the local government, many of whom are our neighbors and members of political parties, to dispatch a truck with potable water up hill [sic] to the *cerro* ... it isn't a matter of dialogue but a matter of necessity ... and if that comes tied up with a vote for their party in the next election or for the member of the community they favor to win the elections in the neighborhood association, what can we do? ... they [political leaders] make us feel as if they are doing us a favor when in fact, isn't that our right?" (cited in Rivero 1995, 11 n24).

upscale shopping centers, or depended on work within an informal economy. As one Venezuelan sociologist has concluded, "[t]he model of citizenship emerging from these middle class associations [was] thus an excluding one, accounting only for a minority of the population. It cannot be extended to the other social sectors" (Lander 1996, 56).

This issue was further exacerbated by the unintended consequences of the very mechanisms of decentralization for which the movement had long advocated. Movement leaders had sought the creation of smaller units of decision-making that would allow for greater community influence, but many of the new municipalities created during the 1990s, including the three located in Caracas, ended up separating affluent from impoverished areas and only further contributed to the country's socio-economic polarization (Lander 1995, 140-1, n29; Ellner 1999, 89-90). The movement's leaders only made things worse through their preference for coordinating committees "which grouped associations of similar social backgrounds" as opposed to "city-wide federations with their multi-class constituency" (94). Moreover, due to their fear of creating a potentially easy target for co-optation the leaders resisted creating a formal, national-level organization within which the various coordinating committees might share experiences and work to overcome class and other social divisions (83). They prioritized, in other words, decentralization over integration.[162]

Beyond dividing the *urbanizaciones* from the *barrios*, the indeterminacy of the liberal notion of autonomy also led to a division within the movement's largely middle-class leadership. Since its creation, the *Escuela* had been formally affiliated with FACUR and, as mentioned previously, both organizations played a role in coordinating the movement at the national level. By the late 1980s, however, it became evident that the two groups differed in relation to the practical interpretation of autonomy. Leaders of the *Escuela* favored an absolute separation of civil society from not only political parties, but from the machinations of the state more generally. They viewed neighborhood associations:

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[162] Regardless of their ultimate effects, fears of co-optation were well founded. Both COPEI and AD had sought to gain control over the neighborhood associations since the passage of the Fundamental Law of Municipal Governance in 1978 (8). AD was especially keen to compensate for its loss of influence within the labor movement (Ellner 1999, 82).

...along the lines of 'interest groups' which refrain from participating in electoral politics or assuming functions which correspond to the state. For this reason they adamantly criticise[d] neighbourhood association leaders who run for public office.... One *Escuela* instructor pointed out that the role of civil society is to oversee state activity and thus 'it can not be an umpire and ball player in the same game.' He added that all *Escuela* instructors are independents, even though 'nothing prohibits us from belonging to a political party since it is a constitutional right'. (Ellner 1999, 81-2)

FACUR leaders, on the other hand, often belonged to political parties. During the 1980s various presidents of the association belonged to AD, "which had also heavily subsidised the organisation" (80). While the practice of accepting donations from parties was later eliminated, FACUR's presidents and board members continued to maintain membership in parties, including AD, COPEI, and MAS (85). Moreover, FACUR leaders felt that neighborhood association members should take advantage of hard won electoral and political reforms by running for local office. From this perspective, individual associations were not to endorse candidates, but they might create "electoral groups at the local- and state-levels to support prestigious neighbourhood leaders who were candidates in municipal elections" (84).

This difference, which played a principal role in the acrimonious separation of the two organizations in 1989, parallels the broader political economic debate that was increasingly consuming Venezuelan society during the period. FACUR leaders believed that the *Escuela*, by rejecting any contact with political parties and any assumption of the duties of the state, was casting its lot with the private sector. They viewed the anti-party discourse of *La Escuela* as:

...a cover for drawing close to business interests, which [it] hoped would displace the parties as props of the neighbourhood movement. One FACUR leader who accused [Elías] Santana[, the long serving Director of the *Escuela*,] of catering to business interests claimed that 'the national bourgeoisie was intent on using the neighbourhood movement as a Trojan Horse in order to wrest political power from the political parties'. (Ellner 1999, 80)[163]

163Santana was serving as president of FACUR in 1989 when he founded the National Coordinating Committee of Neighborhood Association Federations (*Coordinadora Nacional de Federaciones de Asociaciones de Vecinos* / Confevecinos), which he believed would do a better job of representing the neighborhood movement at the national level and promoting the creation of neighborhood associations in the nation's interior than FACUR, which was primarily composed of associations from Caracas. This move was met with retaliatory actions by Carmelo Moreno, Santana's successor as president of FACUR and a member of MAS, and led to the Escuela breaking away from FACUR.

To back up their accusations, they pointed out that *Escuela* courses, as well as its radio and television programs, were sponsored by business interests (81). This perspective aligns the *Escuela* model of civil society more closely with the neoliberal reform path, which would dismantle the *puntofijista* system, minimize the state, and establish the private sector as the anchor of a new political economic framework. Significantly, this is the model of civil society that *barrio* residents would have primarily associated with the neighborhood movement, since *Escuela* leaders "were more active in slum areas than the generally middle-class FACUR" (79).

Escuela leaders, meanwhile, continued to view FACUR as a "federation of political parties" long after the organization had ceased accepting donations from them (86). From the *Escuela* perspective, autonomy was lost not only by accepting funding or other forms of direct party control, but also by becoming too enmeshed in the formal system of governance. FACUR leaders, however, felt that neighborhood associations could play a much more active role in representative politics. In this sense, although they advocated for significant reforms to the *puntofijista* system, their view of civil society amounted to a variation on the corporatist model that had underpinned the old order and tended to favor organization in more affluent sectors.

In sum, the neighborhood movement, which carried the banner of Venezuelan civil society, represented two approaches to reforming the political system, each of which was grounded in the liberal framework and neither of which was truly inclusive of marginalized populations. The movement's own discourse from the 1970s through the 90s reenforced this conclusion, as "[i]ts self identification as part of 'the popular world'[,] … frequently found in the first doctrinaire or conceptual documents, progressively disappear[ed]" (Lander 1996, 62 n18). The neighborhood movement thus offered little space for the types of experiments in the organization of civil society that had been incubated for decades by leftist community organizers and, amidst the decay of the *puntofijista* system in the early 1990s, begun taking root in newly open and increasingly fertile terrain.

For example, in 1993 Aristóbulo Istúriz of *Causa R* became mayor of Libertador, the largest

municipality in Caracas, and shortly thereafter facilitated the creation of "water advisory councils" (*mesas técnicas de agua*) that were designed to channel community input into the improvement of water provision, one of the most pressing needs facing unplanned *barrios*.[164] Rather than situating civil society in opposition to the state, here the influence of civil society on governance was facilitated *by* the state in order to ensure inclusive participation regardless of economic stratification. In these and other initiatives, popular organizations continued to defend "a project of radical democracy emphasizing social justice and equality" that, although more fragmented and less visible, stood in stark contrast to "the project of liberal democracy based on economic freedom and the defense of private property" with which the middle- and upper-class neighborhood movement, and thus the hegemonic connotation of civil society, had become associated (García-Gaudilla 2007, 143).

These, then, were the multiple and contested notions of civil society at play in Venezuela during the 1990s. A majority of the population had rejected both corporatist and commercial models of civil society due to their respective associations with the failed *puntofijista* system and the intolerably painful consequences of neoliberal reform. A third model, in which the state facilitated new modes of governance in conjunction with an inclusive civil society, drew on two decades of populist experimentation but remained in embryonic form. The astonishingly rapid ascension of Hugo Chávez and his Bolivarian movement depended, to a significant degree, on the adoption and promulgation of this populist model.

The Beginning of the Bolivarian Revolution

Hugo Chávez was a young military officer when, in 1982, he and several fellow soldiers formed a clandestine organization called the Bolivarian Revolutionary Movement 200 (*Movimiento Bolivariano Revolucionario 200* / MBR-200). Their initial ideological orientation was vague and principally nationalist, but their subsequent readings and discussions on Latin American politics led them to "conclusions reflecting a leftist perspective" (López Maya 2003, 75). Over the course of the following decade, MBR-200 members dialogued with leaders of 1960s guerrilla groups and other radical leftist

164Libertador includes Catia, where *Causa R* had begun organizing in the 1970s.

parties, as well as prominent leftist intellectuals and activists. Their goal became the formation of "a civil-military alliance in order to stimulate revolutionary change" (*ibid.*).

As with the popular movements discussed previously, the events of February 1989 imbued the MBR-200 with a sense of urgency. The vulnerability of state institutions and their dependence on the repressive capacity of the armed forces had been starkly demonstrated. Officers within the MBR-200, having obeyed orders to put down the uprising, "felt shame, indignation, and a sense of having defended the wrong side" (77). The movement attracted officers with similar feelings and began collaborating more consistently with civilian leftists, including *Causa R* leaders.[165]

On the morning of February 4, 1992 Chávez led the MBR-200 and its civilian allies into a coup attempt. Although officers across the country secured many important positions, Chávez was unable to achieve his unit's goal of arresting Pérez in Caracas. By nine in the morning, Chávez had surrendered and been given permission to speak live on national television in order to ask his co-conspirators to stand down and thus prevent further bloodshed. In a brief statement, Chávez did two things that endeared him to many viewers. First, he took full responsibility for the coup attempt, displaying a sense of honor that many felt to have been long absent from Venezuelan politics. Second, he stated that the MBR-200 had failed to accomplish it's goals "for now" (*por ahora*), thus implying that the group would continue to resist. For many Venezuelans who felt impotent in the face of *puntofijista* corruption and betrayed by the imposition of neoliberal reforms, Chávez and the MBR-200 provided a dramatic expression of their frustrations and a rare burst of hope.

Chávez and his collaborators were jailed, but Rafael Caldera, Aristobulo Istúriz, and governors from prominent parties, including COPEI, all issued declarations that "attributed the coup to the errors of recent political leaders and to the desperation of poor people confronting a crisis without any easy solution" (79). The 1993 presidential elections lent credence to that analysis, as the *Causa R* candidate

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165López Maya (2003, 77-8) states that the MBR-200 was also close to leaders of the Party of the Venezuelan Revolution (*Partido de la Revolución Venezolana* / PRV), which had formed in 1966 to fight in the guerrilla movement and remained active after disarming. Distrust of the civilians by the officers, however, led to the exit of several PRV leaders and tensions with *Causa R* that lasted for many years (see also Ellner 2010, 177).

took over 20 percent of the vote and Caldera, as discussed above, won the presidency on an anti-neoliberal platform. In this climate, the MBR-200 continued to grow even as its principal leaders remained in prison (80).

Following Caldera's pardon of the MBR-200 leaders in March of 1994, the movement set about forming a national political organization based on the creation of small local groups, called "Bolivarian Circles", that were coordinated at the municipal, regional, and national levels. In and of itself, this organizational strategy was similar to many other Venezuelan political parties (*ibid.*). The circles organized local assemblies to discuss politics and develop relationships "meant to strengthen democratic attitudes and horizontal relationships" (81). As with other leftist parties, decision-making was conducted by consensus. In this manner, the MBR-200 went about elaborating a shared ideological perspective that was rooted in reverence for Simón Bolívar and other members of Venezuela's historical pantheon.

Since 1992 the MBR-200 had maintained that Venezuela's political system was irreparably corrupted and that the only nonviolent path forward was to convene a national constituent assembly that would author a new constitution. In these early years, this position was the movement's most conspicuous demonstration of its commitment to a participatory democracy rooted in an active civil society and o n this basis it declined to participate in the regional elections of 1995. In 1996 the movement produced its Bolivarian Alternative Agenda MBR-200 (*Agenda Alternativa Bolivariana MBR-200*) which:

> ...included a vague proposal to stimulate what was defined as a 'humanist self-managing economy' that was designed to promote cooperatives, small family businesses, and, in general, small and medium-sized firms as part of an effort to encourage 'solidarity'. (Parker 2005, 67)

During this period the MBR-200 was primarily finding its political legs, but it continued to emphasize the need for a radical break with *puntofijismo* and a rejection of neoliberal economic policy.

Municipal, state, and national elections were all scheduled for the end of 1998. Sensing an important opportunity to solidify its internal structure and make political gains, the MBR-200 announced in 1997 that it would participate, with Chávez as its presidential candidate. Out of a concern for protecting

its ideological coherence, the movement created a parallel structure called the "Fifth Republic Movement" (*Movimiento Quinta Republica* / MVR) that would coordinate the participation of outsiders in the campaign and serve as a buffer for the MBR-200 itself. By invoking a transition from a Fourth to a Fifth Republic, the MVR name reinforced the movement's call for a "refounding" of Venezuela's political order via a constituent assembly (López Maya 2003, 82-3). [166]

Caldera's implementation of the Venezuela Agenda, which was widely viewed as hypocritical and in any case had failed to prevent a return to economic recession in 1997 following a drop in oil prices, insured that the 1998 elections took place in a climate of extreme hostility to the *puntofijista* system, neoliberal reforms, and any party deemed to be tainted by them (83). The MVR capitalized on this by refusing to ally with traditional parties and instead creating a unified coalition of oppositional organizations known as the Patriotic Pole (*Polo Patriótico*). As a result of this strategy, Chávez won the presidency with 56 percent of the popular vote. [167] The MVR also won 8 seats (out of 54) in the Senate and 35 seats (out of 207) in the Chamber of Deputies, gaining the second greatest number of representatives in each.

Chávez and the MVR rose to power by harnessing populist anger toward *puntofijismo,* its principal parties, and neoliberal economic reforms. In their stead, they proposed a constituent assembly and a vaguely articulated vision for an alternate economic model. They had said very little about civil society, at least in concrete terms, but they had won the support of many who had been active in populist community organization over the previous decades. The country had most certainly voted for a change, but just what kind of change it was in for was still largely unknown and the entire country was waiting

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166The "V" in the MVR acronym is the Roman numeral for five and stands in for the word "fifth". This choice was partly induced, however, by a legal prohibition against the use of the name Bolívar in the registration of political organizations. In Spanish, the "V" is pronounced identically to the "B", making MVR and MBR phonetically equal. Although *chavistas* today employ the term "Fourth Republic" as a deprecating reference to the *puntofijista* era, the MBR-200 originally applied it to the period beginning with Venezuela's separation from Gran Colombia in 1830. (López Maya 2003, 82-3).

167Chávez's closest competitor, Henrique Salas Römer took 40 percent. Römer was the candidate of Project Venezuela (*Proyecto Venezuela*), an alternative party that he had founded in his home state of Carabobo, where he had served as governor until 1996. In a last-ditch attempt to defeat Chávez, both AD and COPEI had withdrawn their candidates and thrown their support to Römer in the last days of the campaign.

with baited breath to find out. In the following chapter we will examine the policies and actions of the Chávez administration's early years and we will examine how the community and alternative media sector evolved in relation to them. In preparation for that analysis, we must first review the history of Venezuelan participatory media during the *puntofijista* era.

The Emergence of Participatory Media in the 1960s and 70s

Venezuela's participatory media sector emerged in the late 1960s and grew throughout the 70s. As was the case throughout Latin America, most of the projects in this early period were either inspired by militant leftist theory or undertaken by the Catholic Church in accordance with the Liberation Theology associated with its more progressive wing. Before reviewing these projects and their place in the structure of *puntofijista* civil society, however, we should note that (although the history is not conspicuous in English language accounts) Venezuelan intellectuals and the Venezuelan government played prominent roles in the NWICO debates of the 1970s and, moreover, that concomitant attempts to incorporate NWICO principles into domestic media policy were carried out in the same period. While these discussions played out largely in academic and policy-making circles, and although the historical record does not point to any direct linkages between their participants and the meso- and micro-level practical initiatives that will be discussed below, they certainly informed the perspective of Jesuit practitioner-scholars during that period and shaped the terrain upon which a movement of community and alternative media practitioners would take root in the 1980s and 90s. As such, it is worth including them in our historical survey.

Antonio Pasquali's *Communication and Mass Culture: The Mass Production of Culture in Audiovisual Media in Underdeveloped Regions* (*Comunicación y cultura de masas: la masificación de la cultura por medios audiovisuales en las regiones subdesarrolladas*, 1964) is not only one of the very earliest but also one of the fundamental texts in the field of critical international communications research. Pasquali, whose work was deeply influenced by the Frankfurt school (Aguirre 1995), served for

many years as the Director of the National Institute for Communication Research (*Instituto Nacional de Investigación de la Comunicación* / ININCO) at the Central University of Venezuela (*Universidad Central de Venezuela* / UCV) and was hailed by Luís Ramiro Beltrán (1982) as "the outstanding figure... [of] Latin America's most important combative academic nucleus" (9). Other critical Venezuelan researchers of note during that era include Hector Mujica (The Empire of News [*El imperio de la noticia*], 1967), Marta Colomina (The Alienating Host: A study on the Audience and Effects of Radio Soap Operas in Venezuela [*El huesped alienante: un estudio sobre audiencia y efectos de las radio-telenovelas en Venezuela*], 1968), and Oswaldo Capriles (The State and the Media in Venezuela [*El estado y los medios de comunicación en Venezuela*], 1976), the latter of whom succeeded Pasquali as Director of ININCO. The work of journalist Eleazar Díaz Rangel (Underinformed Peoples [*Pueblos Subinformados*], 1967), was also well respected within the international academic community (Beltrán 1982, 9). [168]

The work of these Venezuelan intellectuals had a salient, though ultimately ephemeral, effect on the policies of the first Pérez administration. At the international level, Peréz's Minister of Information, Guido Grooscors, played a leading role in the NWICO movement, most notably by ensuring the successful completion of the First Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policy in Latin America and the Caribbean, which took place in Costa Rica in 1976 despite intense pressure from the Inter American Radio Association and the Inter American Press Association. At the second such conference, held in Bogota in 1978, the Venezuelan delegation, led once again by Grooscors, submitted proposals for national communication and cultural policies, and for UNESCO assistance in establishing them, that were ultimately adopted in the face of resistance (Beltrán 1982, 7-8). Venezuela's delegation also defended NWICO at UNESCO general assemblies in 1976 and 1978 (Escobar 2008, 22).

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[168] As will be discussed below, Pasquali has publicly opposed the communications policies of the Bolivarian Revolution on multiple occasions (cf. Coronel, Aug 5, 2005; Pasquali, Jan 24, 2007; May 2, 2007; May 27, 2007 and Jun 18, 2007; Bisbal et al. Jun 18, 2012). Colomina went on to a career as both an academic and a journalist; she was an outspoken critic of Chávez during his first presidential campaign and has since become one of the Bolivarian Revolution's fiercest critics. Rangel now wields considerable clout as Editor of *Últimas Noticias*, which has stood for decades as one of Venezuela's most respected national dailies and has consistently maintained a neutral editorial stance in the extremely polarized climate of the Bolivarian era. Rangel's own columns address a wide variety of issues, offering both praise for and criticism of the Bolivarian government.

In Venezuela's domestic policy sphere, Pérez's seemingly populist platform had fanned hopes for the inclusion of a Cultural Plan (*Plan de Cultura*) in his administration's five year plan for national development (Capriles 1996, 80; cited in Escobar 2008, 18). The most ambitious and concrete policy initiative of the period, however, was a 1975 proposal created as a joint endeavor of ININCO (with Pasquali's personal participation) and the National Cultural Commission (*Comisión National de la Cultura* / CONAC), that called for a State Radio and Television Institute (*Instituto de Radio y Televisión del Estado* / RATELVE) that would have established, as Pasquali has put it, "the figure of a radically non-government controlled public broadcasting service, to escape the double governmental and commercial manipulations" (Colonel, Aug 5, 2005).[169] The Pérez administration's initial support for the RATELVE project withered, however, in the face of opposition, much of it fomented by the commercial media sector whose support was seen as vital to Pérez's hopes for reelection (*ibid.*; Capriles 1996, 136, cited in Escobar 2008, 18). Opposition to these policies was so significant, in fact, that "pre-electoral pressures and risks" eventually led Pérez to dismiss Grooscors from his cabinet as he prepared his ultimately failed campaign

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169Filmmakers, scholars, and cinema enthusiasts had long been calling for state support for cinema production and the drafting of a proposal for a Cinema Law (*Ley de Cine*) was a principle theme of the first three National Cinema Conferences (*Encuentros de Cine Nacional*), held annually beginning in 1967 (Coordinación de Investigación y Documentación, Fundación Cinemateca Nacional, Oct 17, 2007; Capriles 1981, 161; Hernández [2005, 72] suggests that the first such conference was held in 1966). Both Pasquali and Capriles were active in this sector. Already in 1951, Pasquali – who had not yet graduated high school(!) - was a founding member of a "University Cinema Circle" (*Círculo Universitario de Cine*) whose mission was to promote academic conferences on the UCV campus (Pérez 2010, 17). In 1960 he formed part of a group that unsuccessfully proposed the creation of a Venezuelan film archive in the UCV library (19). Both Pasquali and Capriles sat on the editorial board of *Cine al Día*, which became one of Venezuela's most important film magazines upon its launch in 1967 (Coordinación de Investigación y Documentación, Fundación Cinemateca Nacional, Oct 17, 2007; Hernández 72). The state did begin to play an active role in the cinema sector during the 1970s, but policies that reflected ININCO thinking were largely absent. The first Caldera administration created a Cinema Office (*Dirección de Cine*) in 1971, under the Ministry of Economic Development (*Ministerio de Fomento*), which in 1975, under the first Pérez administration and via agreements with two public corporations (*Corpoturismo* and *Corpoindustria*), began financing cinema production (Fuenmayor 2006). In 1977 the Ministries of Economic Development and Information and Tourism (*Información y Turismo*), without the participation of the National Cultural Council (*Consejo Nacional de la Cultura* / CONAC), formed an inter-ministerial commission to oversee the funding process, which operated "with exclusively economistic criteria that neglected the cultural aspects of the cinema" (*con criterios exclusivamente economicistas que descuidan los aspectos culturales del cine*) (Izaguirre 1988; see also Hernádez 2005, 88). In 1981 the Herrera administration established a Cinematographic Development Fund (*Fondo de Fomento Cinematográfico* / Foncine), but the economic crisis of the 1980s crippled Venezuela's film production sector.

for a second term (Beltrán 1982, 9).[170]

Herrera, the winner of the 1978 election, took a page from his predecessor's playbook, paying lip service to NWICO in both a 1979 visit to UNESCO's offices and in his own five year plan (Escobar 2008, 22; Alfonzo 1982, 25). That same plan billed "Communication [sic] for participation in the development process" as one of the "basic principles" of the domestic communications policy that it expressed in only very general terms (22-23).[171] The true nature of Herrera's commitment to participation, however, did not surpass a narrow liberal interpretation of the term, as his administration's rhetoric made clear in hollow calls for "the participation of citizens *in the evaluative orientation of communicational messages*" and "the best conditions for allowing the socially organized population to have real access to communication media – *without diminishment of the rights, duties and responsibilities of their owners, editors, directors, and administrators*" (24, my emphasis).[172] The hypocritical use of seemingly progressive rhetoric to cover continued tolerance for the status quo of pro-business media policy revealed the narrow limits of populist governance within the *puntofijista* system and, not surprisingly, left Venezuelan communications researchers embittered. In any case, the failed policy initiatives of the 1970s, in conjunction with the onset of economic crisis in the early 1980s and the general decline of the NWICO movement shortly thereafter, meant that participatory media projects would continue to receive little help from the state. [173]

170"*presiones y riesgos preelectorales*"

171"*La Comunicación para la participación en el proceso de desarrollo*" [sic]; "*principios básicos*"

172"*la participación de los ciudadanos en la orientación valorativa de los mensajes comunicacionales*"; "*las mejores condiciones para que la población socialmente organizada pueda tener accesso real a los medios de comunicación - sin desmedro de los derechos, deberes y responsabilidades de sus propietarios, editores, directores y administradores*"

173Capriles (1981) succinctly articulated both this state of affairs and the deep intellectual resentment that accompanied it: "In this manner, inevitable bridges are beginning to be constructed between the still blurry model of the 'alternative' experiences and the elaborated and new model of communication policy. But these bridges are shaky, uncertain, and extremely slippery for both groups waiting on their respective shores. Things are beginning to take place as if 'policy' was merely an interminable discussion, an infinite moratorium on real transformation, a mockery or trick of power; and so, manipulating anxious researchers, playing at third-worldism, duping UNESCO, Latin American governments slap the owners of the media and the transnational information services corporations on the wrist, to better establish their respective responsibilities and commitments without acknowledging terrifying reports, evidence, allegations, assessments and investigations of all kinds that place the owners of media, advertising, and information services companies on the dock for social crimes, only interested in serving their colleagues from the big transnational advertisers" (162, my translation). (*De esa manera, empiezan a tenderse puentes inevitables entre el modelo aun desdibujado de las experiencias 'alternativas' y el modelo repujado y nuevo de la política comunicacional. Pero puentes temblorosos, equívocos*

The Catholic church, on the other hand, provided significant and systematic institutional support to both the theoretical and practical development of participatory media in Venezuela. As previously noted, much of this support has emanated from those sectors of the Church that were influenced by the Liberation Theology movement and the primary emphasis in this sector has been on the use of media for popular education. Jesuit professors associated with the Catholic University (*Universidad Católica*) in Caracas comprised one important locus of activity in this area and much of their work was carried out under the auspices of two interrelated facilities, the Gumilla Center (*Centro Gumilla*) and the Jesús María Pellín Communication Center (*Centro de Comunicación Social Jesús María Pellín*). Each published an influential journal (respectively entitled *SIC* and Communication Review: Venezuelan Studies [*Revista Comunicación: Estudios Venezolanos*]) (Capriles 1981, 165 n1). Capriles characterized the Pellín Center's use of alternative media in their work with *barrio* residents as imparting "a militant aspect of political criticism in the majority of its concrete manifestations" (*ibid.* 156).[174] Another important facility associated with the Catholic church was the Center for Service in Popular Action (*Centro al Servicio de la Acción Popular* / CESAP), in which Mario Kaplún, one of Latin America's preeminent theorists of participatory communication in the service of popular education, served as coordinator of the Division of Communication and Culture (*División de Comunicación y Cultura*) while exiled from his home country of Uruguay from 1978 to 1985.[175]

Beyond making important contributions to the academic discourse of the era, including collaborative work with ININCO, these centers conducted training programs for practitioners and

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y sumamente resbaladizos para ambos bandos a la expectativa en las riberas respectivas. Pues las cosas comienzan a suceder como si en efecto, las 'políticas' no fuesen sino una interminable discusión, una moratoria infinita a la transformación real, una burla o triquiñuela del poder; y es que, manipulando investigadores ansiosos, jugando al tercermundismo, engatusando a la UNESCO, los gobiernos latinoamericanos se daban zarpazos de cachorros con los dueños de los medios y con las transnacionales de la información, para establecer mejor sus obligaciones y compromisos respectivos a espaldas de dossiers, *pruebas, alegatos, diagnósticos aterradores e investigaciones de toda índole que ponían en el banquillo de los crímenes sociales a los empresarios de los medios, de la publicidad y de la información, sólo atentos a servir a sus congéneres de la gran empresa anunciante transnacional.*)

174"*un cariz militante de crítica política en la mayoría de sus manifestaciones concretas*"

175CESAP was established in 1965. In 1995 Rivero referred to it as "[t]he largest NGO in Venezuela" (11, n22).

facilitated practical initiatives with *barrio* residents. By the time Kaplún arrived in Venezuela, for example, the Pellí Center had already begun applying the "cassette forum" (*casete-foro*) methodology that he and his wife, Ana, among others, had developed in Uruguay (Aguirre 2005, 20). In Venezuela Kaplun elaborated a methodology for training popular communicators that was used in the Latin American Communication Workshops (*Talleres Latinoamericanos de Comunicación*), in which more than 100 educators from sixteen different countries received training over the course of four years (18, 26 n1), and he published what is arguably his most influential work, A Pedagogy of Communication: The Popular Communicator (*Una pedagogía de la Comunicación: el Comunicador Popular*, 1985) in the final year of his residency.

Another important Jesuit institution, the Faith and Happiness Movement for Integral Popular Education and Social Promotion (*Movimiento de Educación Popular Integral y Promoción Social Fe y Alegría*) has played an extensive role in the Venezuelan participatory mediascape. Established in Venezuela in 1955, *Fe y Alegría* has grown into an international federation with a presence in nineteen countries, primarily in Latin America. Within Venezuela, *Fe y Alegría* operates an extensive national network of outreach centers, schools, and other points of contact with marginalized populations. At least as early as the 1970s, many of the *Fe y Alegría* schools operated mobile sound systems (*radioparlantes*) that were used to "broadcast" informational announcements and religious content to the surrounding neighborhood. Community members, however, would often appropriate the sound systems to make announcements of their own or, especially on weekends, to operate as DJs, playing music within a format modeled on wireless radio broadcasting (Méndez 2011). Mobile sound systems thus became a familiar medium, a ready tool for political agitation and community organization, and an important element in the history of Venezuela's participatory media sector.[176]

176This is not to suggest that *Fe y Alegría* was the only source of mobile sound systems. They were doubtless employed by other institutions, especially political parties, as well as commercial operators. In Jamaica during the 1960s, for instance, the commercial use of mobile sound systems to host outdoor dance parties in impoverished urban neighborhoods was a crucial factor in the development of that country's recording industry, not to mention reggae and related musical styles. Assumedly they were put to use in a similar fashion elsewhere in the region. Even today, in Venezuela and elsewhere in Latin America, mobile sound systems mounted on

The most significant contribution that *Fe y Alegría* made to Venezuelan participatory media, however, occurred primarily in relation to broadcast radio. Father José María Vélaz, the movement's founder, established the Faith and Happiness Radiophonic Institute (*Instituto Radiofónico Fe y Alegría* / IRFA) in 1974 with "the aim of responding to illiterate adults from marginalized *barrios*" (Soto 2002, 5).[177] IRFA began by establishing offices in both Caracas and Maracaibo (Zulia), and over the years has grown to encompass thirteen broadcasting stations networked via satellite, as well as an extensive network of non-broadcast outreach units in areas without radio service (García 2008, 67). [178]

IRFA has reformulated its methodology multiple times over its decades of existence, emphasizing to differing degrees programs directed toward youth and adults in urban, rural, and indigenous populations, but always offered multiple levels of basic adult education that mixes distance learning with less regular face-to-face orientation. This orientation is generally a volunteer service provided by a member of the community in which the IRFA orientation center operates (Soto 7). The participatory nature of IRFA's educational programming is thus founded on both the interactive use of the medium by the student and the community level interaction that is integral to the process. The various methodologies employed by IRFA, moreover, have drawn to a greater or lesser extent on Freire's pedagogical theory and its emphasis on conscientization, thus imbuing the educational process with a deep socio-political component.

IRFA programming is not, however, limited to educational content, but also includes news, opinion, and entertainment content directed toward the civic and Christian values of the Fe y Alegría movement. This dual focus has allowed IRFA stations to play an even more significant role in Venezuela's

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trucks are used for political campaigns and commercial publicity (often to announce fresh produce available from the same truck). I am unaware of any historical treatment of the medium, in Venezuela or elsewhere.

177"*el fin de dar respuesta a aquellos adultos analfabetos provenientes de los barrios marginados*"

178The first Catholic educational radio station in Venezuela was *Radio Tovar,* which began broadcasting in 1961 in Tovar (Mérida) and followed the radio Sutatenza model of programming oriented toward agricultural workers and their communities. After acquiring a 10 kilowatt transmitter the station changed its name to *Radio Occidente* (Occidental Radio), but its reach remained remained relatively local and the project did not expand geographically (Cardona & Gondelles 1989). Capriles (1981) names *Radio Nacional* / FUDECO in Barquisimeto (Lara) as one of the few early "rural radio-fora" (*radio-foros agrarios*) in the country.

participatory media sector. One experience that took place during the 1970s, however, is especially

salient, as it exemplifies the complex but loose interrelation that permeated the sector. Between 1973 and

1978 a three-person team supported by CESAP carried out a literacy project in the La Vega *barrio* of

Caracas using Freirian methodology. In 1979 this experience grew into the production of a two hour

program called "Barrio People" (*Gente de Barrio*) which aired for two years on the Caracas IRFA station.

The promotors of this project would go on to study the literacy campaign undertaken by the Sandinista

government in Nicaragua, applying their experiences elsewhere in Latin America. Some of the residents

of La Vega that participated in the project, meanwhile, would go on to serve as volunteer facilitators

within a later IRFA initiative that will be discussed below (9-12).

Significantly, years earlier, in 1969 and 70, Venezuela's National Agricultural Institute (*Instituto

Agrario Nacional*) had employed a team of psychologists, social workers, and sociologists to carry out a

Freirian literacy campaign in rural areas. The group was the first in Latin America to publish pedagogical

materials, including a book titled "Communication" (*Comunicación*), "based on Freire's writings using an

anthropological focus".[179] The national government pulled its support from the program, however, after it

became worried by "[t]he significant transformations achieved within the rural population groups" (Soto

9), thus once again exemplifying the very narrow limits of populist policies under *puntofijismo*, especially

in the period in which leftist guerrilla groups remained active.[180] As with civil society more generally, the

state was hesitant, if not altogether unwilling, to countenance communicational projects that threatened to

exceed the bound of a liberal model that concentrated power in a select few corporate institutions, the two

major political parties chief among them.

The state's successful "pacification" of the guerrilla movement in the late 1960s and early 70s,

however, had the effect of channeling the energy of the Venezuelan left into "a rebirthing of the popular

cultural struggle" as "a legal relief of the lost insurrection".[181] At the same time, Venezuela's population

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179"*basado en los escritos de Freire bajo enfoque antropológico*"
180"*[l]as transformaciones significativas logradas entre los grupos campesinos*"
181"*un renacer de la lucha cultural popular*"; "*un relevo legal a la perdida insurrección*"

was over-represented by a younger generation that, having witnessed the failure of armed resistance and grown up in an increasingly bourgeois society, preferred aesthetic and moral rebellion. These trends manifested in an explosion of politicized, alternative media, much of it guided by the international currents represented in the mass media (Capriles 1981, 156). [182] On the margins of this youthful counterculture, however, the scope of participatory communications expanded in line with and influenced by the theoretical and practical trends discussed above.

The first truly participatory media project reflected in Venezuela's historical record emerged in 1968, amidst a brief but brilliant burst of documentary film production that was arguably the country's most significant contribution to the Third Cinema movement. One small group of filmmakers, calling itself *Cine Urgente* (Urgent Cinema), elaborated a precociously radical participatory methodology:

> The work was based on establishing contacts in the *barrios* … that surround Caracas … and the most burning problems, frequently a single theme, were filmed; those involved were encouraged to participate in a critical, direct, and concrete action to attack the problem; the filmed results were projected before the protagonists and neighbors and also served [to add] a new dimension of discussion and to amplify the number of those involved; the process was repeated successively as often as necessary to achieve an incorporation [of the community] in the concrete struggles so long as the problem persisted, then maintaining the relationship and arriving at an advanced stage to leave the continuation of the experiences in the hands of the collective-public protagonist itself. (Capriles 1981, 159)[183]

The last of the *Cine Urgente* documentaries was produced in 1973. Some of the projects were stunning successes, in both cinematic and political terms, while others suffered from "the vicissitudes of the production team and the hazardous life of the *barrios* [that] didn't allow for the continuity of the process

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182 During this period, youth under the age of 16 were in the majority of Venezuela's population and fond of proclaiming "Youth Power" (*Poder Joven*) in their rampant street art. "Paradigmatic" of this moment was a wholly irreverent magazine called *Reventón* that was produced young adults and helped usher in not only a more cynical and edgier era of pop culture, but a permanent shift toward informality in the linguistic habits of the nation (Capriles 1981, 157). *Reventón* is untranslatable, but is perhaps somewhat adequately rendered as The Big Blow Up.

183 "*Se trabajaba sobre el establecimiento de contactos en los barrios... que rodean a Caracas… y se filmaban los problemas mas candentes, con frecuencia un solo asunto; se estimulaba la participación de los involucrados en una acción a la vez crítica, directa y concreta para atacar el problema; los resultados filmados se proyectaban ante protagonistas y vecinos y servían a la vez para [dar] una nueva dimensión de la discusión y para ampliar el número de los interesados; sucesivamente el proceso se repetía en tanto fuese necesario para lograr una incorporación [de la comunidad] a las luchas concretas mientras perdurarse el problema, manteniendo luego la relación y llegando en una etapa avanzada a dejar en manos del protagonista colectivo-público de sí mismo, la continuación de las experiencias.*"

nor the persistence of the project itself" (160). [184] In the late 1970s two members of the original group formed the *Grupo Feminista Miércoles* (Wednesday Feminist Group), an "all-female collective" that applied the *Cine Urgente* methodology (Radstone & Kuhn 1990, 413).

As Capriles notes, the "theoretical-practical vision of an alternative communication" manifested in *Cine Urgente* was a "pioneer experience probably in all of Latin America" (160). [185] It was certainly representative of the Latin American left's theoretical turn away from Leninist, vanguardist notions of communications and toward a more Gramscian conceptualization of revolutionary media production. This shift was articulated by Jacobo Borges, a co-founder of *Cine Urgente* who, when asked in 1971 to reflect on Venezuela's unique characteristics in relation to Third Cinema, delineated four distinct types of cinema, including "agitational cinema" *(cine agitativo)*, "propagandistic cinema" *(cine propagandístico)*, "national cinema" *(cine nacional)*, and "urgent cinema" *(cine urgente)*.[186] He defined agitational cinema as trying "to respond to each manifestation of the violence of the dominant classes" and noted that the failure of such work resulted largely from the filmmakers' "scarce participation in popular struggles". [187] He saw propagandistic cinema as existing "for the politicized vanguard" and presenting "many ideas for one or a few people" (as opposed to agitational cinema, which presented "one idea for many people"). [188] National cinema, meanwhile, was still "framed within traditional structures [although] it has extremely important elements of rupture".[189] Against all of these he defined urgent cinema (the only category without a pre-existing name) as:

> Continuous cinema, created not as a verification, but as a participation in an active

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[184]"*las vicisitudes del equipo y la azarosa vida misma de los ranchos [que] no facilitaban la continuidad del proceso ni la persistencia del proyecto mismo*"

[185]"*vision teórico-práctica de una comunicación alternativa"; "experiencia pionera probablemente en toda America Latina*"

[186]King (2000, 219) identifies Borges as the founder of the group, while Radstone & Kuhn mention Jordán Josefina as a co-founder (413). Capriles (1981) does not specify founders, but lists "Jacobo Borges, Josefina Jordán, Franca Dona, Pedro Martínez, Luis Luksic, Emilio Ramos and others" (159) as members. The cinematographer Pedro Laya was one of these others (Chávez; Aug 28, 2007).

[187]"*responder a cada manifestación de la violencia de las clases dominantes*"; "*escasa participación en las luchas populares*"

[188]"*para la vanguardia politizada*"; "*muchas ideas para una o pocas personas*"; "*una idea para muchas personas*"

[189]"*enmarcadas dentro de estructuras tradicionales [aunque] tienen elementos de ruptura sumamente importantes*"

process.... Cinema made not only by militants, but also by the participants in the action, who reflect and discuss throughout the whole process, which dialectically encompasses the action itself, the act of the filming and the cinematographic visualization, until arriving at the critique of the ideas that the action itself generates. In these experiences, which are still elemental, is the kernel of a work that reformulates the categories of cinema, theater, etc., in order to become a *revolutionary cultural action*. (Borges et al., 1971, np, original emphasis, my translation)[190]

The degree to which *Cine Urgente* influenced subsequent Venezuelan participatory media initiatives, especially those in the audiovisual sector, is a question worthy of further historical research. Hernández (2005) credits it with "foment[ing] the first grassroots technical and ideological training workshops" (73).[191] Capriles (1981) suggests that groups other than the *Grupo Feminista Miércoles* applied the methodology in the late 1970s using video, although he finds the results inferior to those obtained by *Cine Urgente*.[192]

Elements of the *Cine Urgente* process can be found in some applications of a cultural event known as the *cineforo* (cinema forum) that is historically linked to Venezuela's *cineclub* (film society) movement. By the time *Cine Urgente* formed in 1968, the *cineclub* movement in Caracas was strong and it seems plausible that the filmmakers' experiences with the collective screening and discussion of films contributed to the development of their methodology.[193] What is certain, however, is that the *cineclub*

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190 "*Cine continuo, realizado no como una verificación, sino como una participación en un proceso activo.... Cine hecho no sólo por militantes, sino también por los participantes en la acción, quienes van reflexionando y discutiendo durante todo el proceso, que engloba dialécticamente la acción misma, el acto de la filmación y la visualización cinematográfica, hasta llegar a la crítica de las ideas que generan la propia acción. En estas experiencias, que aún son elementales, está el germen de un trabajo que rebasa las categorías cine, teatro, etc., para convertirse en una acción cultural revolucionaria.*"

191 "*fomenta[r] los primeros talleres de formación técnica y ideológica de grupos de base*"

192 "Later attempts, realized using portable video in recent years have succeeded neither in inserting themselves to the same degree in the social problematic nor in generating their own dynamic to contribute in confronting it, perhaps because such attempts were made by less belligerent groups, in less appropriate conjunctures, and without a political project" (Capriles 1981, 160). It seems unlikely that these comments reference the *Grupo Feminista Miércoles*, which was founded by Jordán Josefina and Franca Donda, members of the original *Cine Urgente* team, who would seemingly have brought sufficient belligerence and political orientation.; "*Ulteriores intentos, realizados en video portátil en años recientes, no han logrado insertarse de igual manera en la problemática social ni generar una dinámica propia para contribuir a enfrentarla, quizas porque tales intentos provenían de grupos del menor beligerancia, en coyunturas menos apropiadas y sin proyecto político.*"

193 If the *cineforo* model did influence *Cine Urgente*, it was probably in conjunction with the founding members' participation in an event called Image of Caracas (*Imagen de Caracas*) that Capriles (1981, 165 n4) describes as "an extremely interesting multimedia experience with 'participatory' pretensions [that combined] an *ad hoc* architectural area, gigantic movies in which the same sequence was distributed across multiple screens that surrounded the spectators, movements of actors and extras that leapt from roofs, circus acts, sounds, music,

movement played a crucial role in Venezuela's participatory mediascape by providing a framework for the creation of community media initiatives. In its initial and still most common form, the Venezuelan *cineclub* is a legally established civil society organization whose primary function is to facilitate the screening of films that would not be otherwise available. These screenings are generally followed by a discussion among the audience members concerning various aspects of the film. This two step process – a screening and then a discussion – is what has come to be known as a *cineforo* (or *videoforo*).

The very first Venezuelan *cineclub*, based on the European model, formed in Caracas in 1933 and lasted only a few years. Venezuela's second *cineclub* appeared in 1950, also in Caracas, but this time sparked national growth, with *cineclubes* forming in Maracay (Aragua) in 1954, on the UCV campus in 1958, and at the University of Zulia in Maracaibo in 1962 (Pérez 2010). The movement's growth then accelerated rapidly in the late 60s, and the *cineclub* remained a mainstay of Venezuelan culture from the 70s through the 90s.

The *cineclub* movement experienced three important and interrelated shifts during the accelerated growth period of the late 60s and early 70s. The first of these centered on the content of screenings. Until the mid-60s, *cineclubes* primarily screened critically acclaimed films from the US and Europe, often within historical retrospectives (cf. Pérez 2010, 2011). In the late 60s, however, many *cineclubes*, often newly formed, began showcasing the then booming and politically charged Latin American cinema, with a particular emphasis on Venezuelan contributions.

The second shift centered on the context of screenings. Early *cineclubes* aspired to create spaces for a distanced, intellectual, aesthetic, and sometimes elitist appreciation of the cinema. Beginning in the

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additional and continuous slide projections, etc." Officials from the Caracas municipal government sponsored the event, but apparently got cold feet upon witnessing what they had set in motion. According to Capriles, it withdrew its support, the event was closed, and the crowd dispersed. Nonetheless, the event established "the popular [communications] movement, the collective impulse, and the active spectator" (Hernández 2005, 72). *Cine Urgente* began soon afterward.; "*una interesantísima experiencia multimedia de pretensión 'participativa' [que entremezcló] recinto arquitectural ad hoc, cine gigante en que la misma secueneia se repartía en pantallas multiples que rodeaban a los espectadores, movimientos de actores y figurantes que saltaban desde los techos, circo, sonidos, música, proyecciones complementarias en diapositivas, [sic] continuas, etcetera.*"; "*el movimiento popular [de comunicaciones], el aliento colectivo, y el espectador activo*"

late 60s, however, many *cineclubes* were created or appropriated as spaces for progressive and/or revolutionary fomentation within which the *cineforo* process was viewed as a spur to social organization and action. Many of these initiatives, moreover, were undertaken in relation to broader projects and/or movements. While c*ineclubes* in the former category made use of institutional spaces, such as universities, museums, and cultural centers that relied on government support, those in the latter category sometimes acquired mobile facilities and conducted screenings in public spaces, frequently outdoors, within urban neighborhoods or rural villages whose residents might not otherwise have known about, much less sought out, the films screened.

The third shift in the *cineclub* movement centered on the scope of the *cineclubes* themselves. As early as the late 60s, and with increasing frequency throughout the 70s, *cineclubes* attracted (aspiring) filmmakers and other media practitioners looking for fellowship and support in an environment of extremely limited resources. Many *cineclubes* thus became not only centers of exhibition but also spaces for advancing cinematic and other forms of media production. This emphasis on production, however, was shaped by the shifts discussed above. Many within the *cineclub* movement focused on the creation of a sustainable and professionalized, if not wholly commercial, national cinema along the lines of those in Argentina, Brazil, or Europe. Others, however, viewed *cineclubes* as vehicles for participatory media initiatives that would function in concert with social and political movements, especially at the level of community organization.

As a result of these three broad shifts, *cineclubes* either became or contributed to the formation of some of Venezuela's earliest and historically most important participatory media initiatives. Perhaps even more importantly, however, the *cineclub* movement laid the groundwork for the community and alternative media movement that emerged in the 1980s and coalesced in the late 1990s. Of particular importance in this regard was the Venezuelan Federation of Cinematographic Cultural Centers (*Federación Venezolana de Centros de Cultura Cinematográfica* / FEVEC), which was formed "by a group of progressive artists and intellectuals" (Schiller 2009, 79) in 1974 and held its first national

conference the following year.

Retrospective accounts often associate FEVEC exclusively with the *cineclub* movement, but it is important to recognize that, at least initially, it organized a variety of entities seeking to contribute to alternative circuits of distribution and exhibition. Izaguirre, for example, described FEVEC in the early 1980s as "an organization that oversees and acts for the free circulation and exhibition of culturally oriented cinema and groups all centers of cinematographic culture, *cineclubes*, experimental film centers, film centers, and popular exhibit circuits."[194] Reflecting the tensions inherent in the three broad shifts outlined above, FEVEC's members had varying perspectives on their role as exhibitors, varying degrees of interest in cinema production, and varying attitudes toward state policy. One historical account, offered by a participant who was very active in the participatory media sector, notes that FEVEC's policies:

> permitted the coalescence of the alternative media, press, mobile sound systems, radio, *cineclubes*, film societies, independent directors, photographers, theater people, puppeteers, etc. in a country where there was no alternative and free communication movement, [although] the scope of their errors must also be recognized, particularly in relation to the commercialization of alternative, independent, and community audiovisual production. (Hernández 2005, 88)[195]

These differences led to factionalism and in-fighting that detracted from the organization's coordinating capacity.[196] Nonetheless, over the decades FEVEC directed resources to *cineclubes*, created an articulating framework for the participatory media sector, and served as a collective voice on questions of state policy. FEVEC also played a significant role in orienting CONAC's efforts to stimulate audiovisual production and exhibition, especially through its Nucleus of Cinematographic Support (*Núcleo de Apoyo*

194"*un organismo que vela y actúa por la libre circulación y exhibición cinematográfica de índole cultural y agrupa a todos los centros de cultura cinematográfica, cineclubes, centros de cine experimental, cinematecas y circuitos populares de exhibición.*"

195"*permitió el aglutinamiento de los medios alternativos, prensa, radioparlante y de señal abierta, cineclubes, cinematecas, realizadores independientes, fotógrafos, teatraras, titiriteros, etc. en un país donde no existía un movimiento de comunicación alternativa y libre, pero tarnbien se debe apreciar la dimensión de sus errores, particularmente en el plano de la comercialización de la producción audiovisual alternativa, independiente y comunitaria*"

196Hernández Castillo's informative but frustratingly organized account of the history of participatory media in Venezuela weaves multiple references to this factionalism into its descriptions without offering much in the way of detail. The most concrete references to the organizational fallout suggest the departure of the founding directors, perhaps in 1979 (87-8), and an internal evaluation that began at a national conference in 1996 and led to the cessation of operations in 1997 and ultimately the dissolution of the organization in 1998 (75, 102-3).

Cinematográfico / NAC), which was established in 1978 (82).[197] As the *cineclub* movement grew, support also came from the Foundation for Culture and the Arts (*Fundación para la Cultura y las Artes* / FUNDARTE), an institution established in 1975 by the office of the mayor of the Libertador municipality in Caracas, which "[s]tructured a cineclub training plan that facilitated the consolidation of some *cineclubes* with experience in community participation" (76).[198]

In broad terms, the overarching historical trajectory of the *cineclub* movement leads away from a relatively passive and aesthetically-oriented movement focused on spectators, and toward an actively engaged movement of cultural facilitators, policy advocates, and producers working in a diversity of media and toward a variety of goals, from the commercial to the activist.[199] This trajectory was, no doubt, the manifestation of several broad trends that occurred on a transnational level during the period, including an increase in the expression of critical and radical political perspectives, especially among young people; a growing emphasis on the use of cinema for political ends, especially in Latin America; and the spread of critical theories of communication that emphasized active audiences, dialogic interaction, and participatory production. The expansion and politicization of the *cineclub* movement, however, was also a manifestation of that broad shift, discussed above, in which the Venezuelan left turned from armed struggle and vanguardist agitation to efforts at community and sectoral organization. Many of those who made use of the *cineclubes* as a forum for political organization "were coming from a

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197 Without elaborating on the relationship, Hernández states that CONAC's cinema policy during this period "was developed in an ineffective manner that was dependent on FEVEC" (88).

198 "*[e]structuró un plan de capacitación cineclubista que facilitó la consolidación de algunos cineclubes con experiencia de participación comunitaria*"

199 Contemporary encapsulations of this trajectory are sometimes overly narrow. Marcano (2009), for example, wholly equates "*cineclubismo*" in the 1960s and 70s with "*barrio* cinema" (*cine de barrio*), although many *cineclubes* continued to operate in institutional settings and cater to relatively elitist cultural interests. On the other hand, Blanca Eekhout – a co-founder of one of Venezuela's most famous *cineclubes* in the 1990s who would become a leader of the community media movement and then a powerful Bolivarian politician – has stated that "[t]he cineclub movement started in the 1960s, but at the time it was linked to the client networks and patronage of the major political parties. In the 1980s, it moved away from that and gained a certain independence, and the cineclubs became instruments of the organized communities" (Podur, Sept 13, 2004). I know of no evidence to prove or disprove the assertion that the early *cineclubes* were under the influence of the political parties. Nonetheless, it seems certain that many *cineclubes* were operating quite independently at least as early as the late 60s, and it would be more accurate to say that some, not all, *cineclubes* in the 80s operated as instruments of the organized communities.

politically defeated left – some even from the ranks of the armed struggle; they were the ones who little by little transformed the cinema into their bastion of ideological resistance" (Marcano 2009). [200]

Important Tendencies in Participatory Media during the 1970s and 80s

Venezuela's first sustained participatory video initiative, *TV Caricuao*, exemplifies the convergence of the left's cultural turn with an expanding awareness of participatory communications. It may also be the only participatory media project from the 1970s to become an active member of the Bolivarian community media sector during the Chávez administration. To a great degree, *TV Caricuao* grew out of the varied life experiences of Jesús Blanco, who grew up in Lídice, a working class *barrio* on the outskirts of Caracas (Blanco 2011). [201] In the early 1970s a friend invited Blanco, a lifelong musician who had studied communication, to participate in "social work" (*trabajo social*) being carried out in Lídice by *Ruptura* (Rupture), which was the legally recognized political and cultural front of the outlawed Venezuelan Revolution Party (*Partido de la Revolución Venezolana* / PRV) and its associated guerrilla group, the National Liberation Armed Forces (*Fuerzas Armadas de Liberación Nacional* / FALN). In his efforts to steer adolescents away from "delinquency", Blanco designed projects that incorporated music, photography, and video, and often involved recording and presenting cultural activities in various *barrios* throughout Caracas.[202] These projects drew on Blanco's experience in the commercial television sector, where he had worked for Renny Ottolina (a very popular entertainer comparable to Ed Sullivan), first as a musician and then in a variety of production roles.[203]

Based on his efforts with *Ruptura*, Blanco was invited to work at the Simón Rodríguez Experimental University (*Universidad Experimental Simón Rodríguez / UESR*), which had been

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200 "*venían de una izquierda derrotada políticamente – algunos incluso de las filas de la lucha armada – ; fueron ellos los que poco a poco transformaron al cine en su bastión de resistencia ideológica*"
201 Unless otherwise noted, all information pertaining to *TV Caricuao* is based on interviews with Blanco.
202 One such project, entitled *Repicar de un Pueblo* (The Sounding of a People), involved the simultaneous projection on two screens of images from the festivities associated with the celebration of St. John (*San Juan*). The similarity to the cinematic portion of the *Imagen de Caracas* event described above (note 44) is probably coincidental but still noteworthy.
203 Blanco had also already produced a documentary on the history of Lídice. It was not clear in our interview if this was in relation to his work with *Ruptura*.

established earlier in the decade with significant support from the Pérez administration and the

participation of progressive members of AD, among others.[204] UESR had acquired video production

equipment, but no one on the staff had the technical capacity to make use of it until Blanco was hired.

Soon after he arrived, however, Blanco decided that he needed more space for his audiovisual work and

the university agreed to transfer him to the site of an affiliated unit, the Experimental Center for

Permanent Learning (*Centro Experimental para el Aprendizaje Permanente* / CEPAP), which was located

in Caricuao and whose focus on popular education was influenced by Freirian methodologies. One of

CEPAP's professors had initiated, and then abandoned, a project designed to emulate Sesame Street. Upon

discovering the audiovisual studio that had been meant for this project, Blanco's first impulse was to

simultaneously build on his work with *Ruptura* and address his frustrations with commercial television

by establishing an alternative television station that would make good on the medium's untapped potential

for progressive social organization.[205]

Blanco found allies for this project in the *Frente Cultural Caricuao* (Caricuao Cultural Front),

which was a coalition of local cultural groups, including *cineclubes,* writers, and musical groups, with a

leftist political orientation.[206] The *Frente* had already been hoping to make use of CEPAP's video

equipment, which included one portable and two studio cameras, and, in 1978 or 79, its members began

collaborating with Blanco on *TV Caricuao*.[207] Meetings of this initial group, which were held every

204 Simón Rodríguez is most famous for having tutored the young Simón Bolivar and today serves as an icon of pedagogical wisdom.

205 At some point, Blanco conducted research on community radio in Europe, though it was not clear if this was before or after his arrival at CEPAP. In his recollection of that research, he emphasized an awareness that most of the European projects had either become commercial ventures or dissolved after the original motivation for the project (such as protesting a proposed nuclear plant) had dissipated.

206 Julio Valdés, a founding member of *TV Caricuao*, recalled the *Taller Experimental Cinematográfico Imágenes* (Images Experimental Cinematographic Workshop), as well as three musical groups, *Madera* (Wood), *Ayer y Hoy* (Yesterday and Today), and *Cumbe* (whose name refers to a West African musical rhythm), as among the groups making up the *Frente* (Mujica 2013, 8). Blanco identified the cinema group as simply *Imagen* (Image), and he referred to *Cumbe*, which used their music as a vehicle for political ideas and continued to perform as of 2011, as belonging to the "cultural heritage of the parish" (*patrimonia de la parroquia*). Following his collaboration with *TV Caricuao*, Valdés went on to graduate from the UESR, serve as Director of CEPAP, and, in 2010, become UESR's Vice-Chancellor for Academic Affairs.

207 Blanco cited "a bad memory for dates" (*una mala memoria con las fechas*) and provided only rough periodization in our interviews. Rodner (2008, 30) and Mujica (7), each working from interviews with *TV Caricuao* founders and staff, give 1978 and 1979, respectively, as the initial year of the project. Rodner also

Wednesday, quickly grew to include 60 to 100 people, many of them students from the UESB, but also residents of not only Caricuao, but neighboring areas.

The founding members of *TV Caricuao* were intent on establishing a horizontal, non-centralized structured that would prevent any single group from establishing a dominant leadership role. They thus established coordinating councils for each of three areas – organization, production, and training – that were meant to hold equal power in relation to decisions affecting the project as a whole. They also mandated that every participating cultural group nominate a representative for each of the three councils. The structure was thus envisioned as a sort of loose federation of cultural groups that would jointly operate the television station. While the group was sincerely invested in internal democracy, the emphasis on horizontal, non-centralized leadership was also partly a reaction to fears that political parties, whether AD, COPEI, or those on the left, would attempt to infiltrate and appropriate the organization. Such fears illustrate once again the degree to which *puntofijista* civil society was dominated by the most powerful corporatist institutions.

Another motive for dividing decision-making authority between three councils was to increase efficiency by reducing the number of participants in any single discussion. As it turned out, however, coordinating the three councils proved difficult and the group would often have to meet in a full assembly in order to decide important issues. As the project progressed this cumbersome process was informally abandoned and a group of the most active participants assumed a *de facto* but unquestioned and apparently unexploited control over the project.

For the first quarter century of its existence, *TV Caricuao* possessed neither a transmitter nor a broadcasting license and did not operate as a television station in the sense of producing regular programming. It made its cameras and facilities available to community groups and also offered production workshops that accorded with CEPAP's focus on experiential learning. The content thus

states that *TV Caricuao* only began operating within the UESR facilities in 1980, but this does not seem to accord with the account Blanco provided in my interviews, which has *TV Caricuao* operating on the UESR site from the beginning.

produced was screened in *cineforos* within the community, on university campuses, and frequently at the

Aquiles Nazoa branch of the national library system.[208] Most of this content was documentary in nature.

Usually these were recordings of community events and activities, though sometimes on a fairly large

scale, as was the case with "The Bolivarian March" (*La Marcha Bolivariana*, 1983), which documented a

march that celebrated the bicentennial of the birth of Simón Bolivar by retracing his path during the

Admirable Campaign of 1813 and ended in Caracas with a concert by Alí Primera.[209] *TV Caricuao* also

occasionally facilitated narrative work, such as "On the Way: A Biographical Sketch of the Teacher Don

Simón Rodríguez" (*En el camino: Semblanza biográfica del Maestro Don Simón Rodríguez* / 1985), a

short docudrama on the life of Simón Rodríguez.[210] Not all of the productions were local. For example,

the documentary "Píritu, a Lake for Life" (*Píritu una laguna para la vida* / 1987), which won the

Humboldt Environmental Prize (Premio Ambiental Humboldt), dealt with ecological issues and their

impact on the fishing community of Nuevo Unare (Anzoátegui) (Prensa CONATEL 2012; Mujica 8).

"The Death of the Liberator" (*La Muerte del Libertador* / 1987[?]), a docudrama depicting the final days

of Bolivar's life, was produced in Canoabo, in the central state of Carabobo (*ibid.*).

"The Death of the Liberator" is interesting for two reasons. First, it included an introduction that

suggests the potential for community participation in *TV Caricuao* productions:

> Bricelda García, a university student and housewife, one fine day decided to direct a
> production of the moments of the last days of Bolívar[,] and her mother Isabel Lara, an
> Artisan [sic] and secretary of the Agricultural Technical School[,] gave her total support,
> Alba de Martínez[,] a cook at the university and longtime collaborator in all Canoaban

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208The *Aquiles Nazoa* had a reputation for attracting leftists. As Blanco recalled: "The people that were reading in that library were always very combative.... That was one of the place where the 'communists' went to work...; "*La gente que estaba leyendo en esa biblioteca siempre fue muy combativa.... Eso era uno de los lugares donde fueron a trabajar los 'comunistas'...*"

209Bolivar's march during the Admirable Campaign took him from Cúcuta, in what is now Columbia, to Caracas. Alí Primera was Venezuela's most beloved performer of the overtly political *Nueva Canción* (New Song) genre. He died in a car accident in 1985 and has been elevated to iconic status within the Bolivarian movement.

210Blanco recalled that José Ignacio Cabrujas, a celebrated stage and screenwriter who authored some of Venezuela's best and most beloved *telenovelas*, attended one or more of the group's early meetings and proposed a community produced *telenovela* project. Unfortunately, it never materialized. Separately, María de Stefano, who has been a leader of *TV Caricuao* almost as long as Blanco, told me that Colomina's critical study of Venezuelan *telenovelas* ("The Alienating Host" [1968], mentioned above), influenced the group's vision during those early years (de Stefano 2011).

cultural activity, put her sewing machine to work, her son Jesús Martínez[,] the director of the Little Devils of Canoabo and a farmer asked to be the doctor Prospero Reverendo, a young engineering student, Romel Alselmi joined the project together with Juan Flores[,] a student of food engineering, farmer, and tailor in his spare time, Edgar Henrique[,] the owner of the los Henríquez restaurant asked for the role of the parish priest[,] perhaps to cure his shyness... the role of the liberator's [sic] nephew was entrusted to Emilio Gueves[,] a hot dog vendor and owner of the town's mobile sound system, they went out to find the liberator [sic] and came across the student Antonio Migliory who[,] somewhat startled[,] accepted the responsibility... (9) [211]

Second, it appears to have been the centerpiece of a special four hour transmission that took place in Canoabo in 1987 and for which *TV Caricuao* received special permission from the state to broadcast. [212] This was most likely the first authorized transmission by a Venezuelan community television broadcaster (*ibid.*). [213]

The story of this broadcast does not end there, however, and aside from being an item of historical curiosity, it can help us understand the status of *TV Caricuao* and Venezuelan community media within *puntofijista* civil society. The temporary license granted to TV Caricuao was not accompanied by the provision of a transmitter, which was not only an expensive device of which there were relatively few in

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[211]This appears to be Mujica's transcription of a spoken introduction. It is not clear from Mujica's account why TV Caricuao facilitated this production; my assumption is that Bricelda García was a student in the UESR, perhaps in one of CEPAP's extension programs.; "*Bricelda García estudiante universitaria y ama de casa, un buen día decidió realizar el montaje de los momentos de los últimos días de Bolívar[,] y su madre Isabel Lara, Artesana y secretaria de la Escuela Técnica Agropecuaria[,] le dieron su total apoyo, Alba de Martínez[,] cocinera de la universidad y gran colaboradora de todo lo que es actividad cultural canaobera, puso andar su máquina de coser, su hijo Jesús Martínez director de los Diablitos de Canoabo y agricultor pidió ser el doctor Prospero Reverendo, un joven estudiante de ingeniería, Romel Alselmi se integró al trabajo junto a Juan Flores[,] estudiantes [sic] de ingeniería de alimentos, agricultor y sastre en sus ratos libres, Edgar Henrique[,] propietario del restaurant los Henríquez pidió el papel del párroco quizás para curar sus penas... el papel del sobrino del libertador [sic] le fue encargado a Emilio Gueves[,] vendedor de perros calientes y dueño de la miniteca del pueblo, salieron a buscar al libertador [sic] y se encontraron con el estudiante Antonio Migliory quien[,] algo asustado[,] acepto el compromiso...*"
[212]Mujica attributes the authorization to Venezuela's National Telecommunications Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones* / CONATEL), but that entity was not established until 1991, as part of the liberalization of the telecommunications sector. Assumedly, the temporary license would have been granted by the Ministry of Transportation and Communications (*Ministerio de Transporte y Comunicaciones*), which handled broadcast licensing during that period.
[213]Ávila (2008, 44) reports an interview with Ayán Vergara, a community radio practitioner in Maracaibo, who began his career in the early 1980s with unauthorized broadcasts on VHF channel 7, though the content and extent of these broadcasts is unclear. Hernández Castillo reports that in 1982 a group called "Los Tamunangueros del Oeste", apparently working with or drawn from various *cineclubes*, used "recycled" technology to make an unauthorized television broadcast on UHF channel 14 in Barquisimeto (Lara) as part of a larger "Cinematographic Cultural Identity and Audiovisual Education" (*Identidad Cultural Cinematográfica y Educación Audiovisual*) project called "Memory of the Waters" (*Memoria de Las Aguas*) (100).

Venezuela, but also one whose operation required significant technical knowledge. TV Caricuao was able to procure one, however, from a resident of a Caracas barrio who had been broadcasting commercial movies from a pirate television station that he operated out of his house using a homemade transmitter. According to Blanco, this enterprise was "violently aborted" (*abortada violentamente*) and its proprietor detained by Venezuelan authorities acting at the behest of the country's most powerful media conglomerate, Radio Caracas Television (RCTV) (*ibid.*).

While this anecdote pertains to the unauthorized transmission of copyrighted content, it illustrates the tight control maintained by the state and the major media companies over the broadcast spectrum. As will be discussed below, unauthorized community broadcasters in the 1990s would also be subject to repression. Nor was repression restricted to the broadcast sector, as the state remained extremely wary of any civil society initiative that operated outside the control of the *puntofijista* corporate framework. For instance, the more radical *cineclubes* of the 1960s and 70s "were persecuted – and even tortured – by the police and national guard of those years" (Marcano).[214] Blanco and the other leaders of TV Caricuao recognized that their leftist tendencies and their connection to *Ruptura* made them especially suspect in the eyes of the major parties that controlled the state.

As Blanco recalled, "when we started the station, we always kept a low profile... because we knew that we could be victims at any moment of it being over, of them dispersing us". They recognized, however, that they enjoyed a certain amount of protection by dint of their relationship with CEPAP. As mentioned above, the UESR was established with strong support from members of AD and, at least from Blanco's perspective, its officials remained responsive to the party. Blanco believes they maintained a great deal of respect for CEPAP, whose faculty and administration were truly invested in popular education but in the end remained liberals: "Nor were they totally on the left or anything like that... Progressives, but nothing more."[215] This respect for CEPAP translated into a toleration of *TV Caricuao*:

214"*eran perseguidos – e incluso torturados - por la policía y los guardias nacionales de aquellos años*"
215"*Tampoco eran totalmente de izquierda ni nada por el estilo... Progresistas, pero más nada.*"

"They would say... 'Leave those hot heads over there alone.' They said 'hot heads' like that, [meaning something] like 'communists'."[216]

Nonetheless, the tension between *TV Caricuao* and the UESR was ever present, and it fell to Blanco, as the member of the project who was employed by the University, to respond:

> The project was always half underground. Because the university was always fighting over whether that project was theirs or the community's... I remember the administration asking me, "Look, that TV Caricuao project is the University's, right?" [I said:] "No, it's the community's project that's inside the university." Because... the [UESR] philosophy allowed it. That you could have a project inside the university but that it was another community's. But that was on paper, it wasn't true that they wanted that to happen..... In the end, the *adecos* [AD members] wanted the project to be theirs.[217]

As might be expected, the tension tended to increase when the university administration changed:

> We started to have small confrontations with the policy inside the university, because they started to change the administration. And some administrations started to realize that the project was a political inconvenience for their process, of the *adecos* [AD members] and *copeianos* [COPEI members]. One Chancellor practically eliminated the television station... he changed everything, everything was taken to a different site...[218]

Operating in this environment created a chilling effect on the groups's activities, as Blanco indicates with his references to keeping a low profile and operating half underground. Too much exposure could bring negative consequences from the *puntofijista* corporatist power structure. For example, *TV Caricuao* once lent a camera to a group of students from a different university. They recorded a street protest in which some students were beaten by the police. They then used the *TV Caricuao* facilities to produce an edited video that they showed to other students in their university, all without the *TV Caricuao* leadership group having any knowledge of the content. Soon after, Blanco received a call from the Chancellor, who herself

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216"*Decían... 'Dejen esas cabezas calientes allí.' Decían 'cabezas calientes' como así, [queriendo decir algo] como 'comunistas'.*"

217"*Siempre el proyecto estuvo medio subterráneo, no? Porque la universidad siempre estaba peleando si ese proyecto era de ellos o era de la comunidad.... Yo me acuerdo que la autoridad me preguntaba, 'Mira, pero ese proyecto de TV Caricuao es de la Universidad?' [Dije:] 'No, es un proyecto de la comunidad que esta dentro de la Universidad.' Porque ... la filosofía de la Simón Rodríguez lo permitía. Que tu podías tener un proyecto dentro de la universidad pero que fuera de otra comunidad. Pero era en papel, no era en verdad que ellos querían que eso pasara.... En el fondo, los adecos querían que el proyecto fuera de ellos.*"

218Blanco appears to be referring to a temporary relocation of equipment, as *TV Caricuao* has operated on the same site since its founding.; "*Empezamos a tener pequeñas confrontaciones con la misma política dentro de la universidad, porque empezaron a cambiar las autoridades. Y algunas autoridades empezaron a darse cuenta de que el proyecto era un inconveniente político para su proceso, de los adecos y los copeianos, no? Llegó un rector que eliminó practicamente la televisora de aquí... cambió todo, se llevó todo para otro sitio...*"

had just received an angry call from an official in the national government. Blanco played down the involvement of *TV Caricuao* and the repercussions were minor, but the incident illustrates how *TV Caricuao* walked a fine line between fulfilling the original vision of the project and destabilizing its tenuous perch on the margins of *puntofijista* civil society.

The precariousness of the project was exacerbated by financial conditions. The university provided the fundamental stability by paying Blanco's salary, maintaining the studio and office space, and, at least initially, supplying the basic audiovisual equipment. Functioning as a unit of CEPAP required *TV Caricuao* to emphasize the educational aspects of the project, which primarily meant structuring their productions in such a way as to fit into the university's curriculum. One of the primary results was that *TV Caricuao* regularly held workshops that would earn credit for university students but were also open to community members. The group also devoted considerable attention to documenting the results of their work, in the form of both paper-based reports that went to administrators and a well organized archive of all of their video productions that remains today as perhaps TV Caricuao's greatest contribution to the community.

During the crisis of the 1980s, however, resources for production grew scarce and the participants found it necessary to pool their own money, hold raffles, or otherwise raise funds outside the university structure. In the 80s, *TV Caricuao obtained* annual funding from the National Council of Culture (*Consejo Nacional de la Cultura* / CONAC) (de Stefano 2011).[219] In perhaps 1989 or 1990, *TV Caricuao* brought a proposal to the Ministry of Youth Affairs (*Ministerio de la Juventud*) for a series of workshops that would be geared toward adolescents and accredited by CEPAP. Blanco emphasizes that this accreditation was key to gaining Ministry funds as well as participation: "For the people that did the training, that wanted to work in media, community or not, it was better to come do a workshop here, that was going to have a certificate from a university [that would let them say] 'Look, I studied with the

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219I was unable to verify whether this funding was channelled through the NAC.

[UESB]...' It gave them prestige."[220] In other words, the imprimatur of the university once again created space within the *puntofijista* system that would not have been available to other community media initiatives with similar ideological perspectives.

The youth workshops, which *TV Caricuao* facilitated once or twice a year, became the organization's primary funding source, providing work to participants and allowing the acquisition of equipment that could be used outside of the workshops. Blanco recalled, however, that there was a significant downside to this mode of operation:

> [The project] began to lose that first organizational form. A group of people ended up inside the television station, they were no longer from groups from different community experiences, it was more like a group of people that remained devoted... Some twenty people, perhaps... The organization no longer came from the small organizations, now it was an organization that was under the same plan. Now the group was the television station. That took away a certain beauty from the beginning. [221]

What Blanco seems to be lamenting here is a loss of structural articulation with the community. *TV Caricuao* remained oriented toward the community, in the sense that it continued to record community activities and make its equipment available to community groups, but its active membership was now primarily focused on the internal operations of the organization, including producing the youth and other workshops, documenting the results, and assuring the continuance of funding. *TV Caricuao*, in other words, had to a certain extent ceased being a means and had become an end. Instead of facilitating the work of outside groups, it focused on its own operations. It was now less *of* the community than *at the service of* the community. This problematic would become endemic to Venezuelan community media initiatives following the rapid growth of the sector during the first half of Chávez's presidency, and we should take special note of the link that Blanco draws between it and the organization's dependence on

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220 "*Para la gente que hacía cursos de formación, que quería trabajar en un medio, comunitario o no, era mejor venir a hacer un taller aquí, que iba a tener un certificado de una universidad [que le permitiera decir] 'Mira, yo estudié con la Simón Rodríguez...' Le daba prestigio.*"

221 "*[El proyecto] comenzó a perder esa primera forma organizativa. Un grupo de gente se quedó dentro de la televisora, ya no eran de los grupos de las diferentes experiencias comunitarias, sino más bien era un grupo de gente que se quedó militando... Unos veinte personas, sería... La organización ya no partía de las organizaciones pequeñas, sino que ahora era una organización que estaba dentro de la misma plan. Ahora el grupo era la televisora. Eso le quitó cierta hermosura del comienzo.*"

government funding for the workshops. We would do well, however, to hold off on an analysis of this issue until we have made a more thorough review of the sector's history.

In Venezuela, as elsewhere, print had long been the primary communicative medium for marginalized political projects, and Venezuela's leftist parties continued to produce newspapers through the 1970s.[222] Towards the end of this decade, however, community organizers influenced by leftist ideologies began producing alternative newspapers as vehicles for their efforts. Capriles (1981) provides a sense of their scope and impact during this period when he mentions "the proliferation of printed periodicals from barrios or urban zones, dedicated to specific problems and the defense of the interests of their inhabitants. Some of these publications have print qualities, print runs, and distribution patterns that make them true newspapers" (160).[223] Details of most of these papers are absent from the historical record, presumably due to the familiarity, low cost, and discardable nature of the medium. [224]

The most well known of these early community papers, at least contemporarily, is *La Vega Dice*, which was founded in September 1979 as the "mouthpiece" (*vocero*) of a local neighborhood labor organization. By 1981 it was aligned with three other community groups (and no longer the labor

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[222] Beginning a historical survey of Venezuelan participatory media in the late 1960s leaves aside a long history of the alternative press associated with parties, unions, and other political and social movements. It is not uncommon for those in the Bolivarian community and alternative media sector to stretch their lineage back to the revolutionary press that facilitated the struggle for independence in the early 19th century (see Grases 1967). One such example can be found in the preamble to the proposed Law of Communication of Popular Power (*Ley de Comunicación del Poder Popular*) that will be discussed at length in chapter 5. This rhetorical maneuver dovetails with the Bolivarian discourse more generally. Since 2009, for example, the government has published and widely distributed, a newspaper called *El Correo del Orinoco* (The Orinoco Mail), which was the name of a newspaper founded by Simón Bolívar in 1818.

As one might expect, *chavista* accounts of participatory media in the *puntofijista* period tend to emphasize the clandestine initiatives that were repressed by the government of the Fourth Republic, at the expense of projects carried out in association with the Catholic church or legitimated civil society organizations. As for the party newspapers of the left in the 1970s, Morales (2004, 43) lists the *Tribunal Popular* (Popular Tribune) of the PCV, *Punto* (Point) of MAS, *Triunfo Socialista* (Socialist Triumph) of The People Advance (*El Pueblo Avanza* / EPA), and *Basirruque* of the Socialist League (*Liga Socialista*).

[223] "*la proliferación de órganos periódicos impresos de barrios o zonas urbanas, dedicados a problemas específicos y a la defensa de los intereses de sus habitantes. Algunas de estas publicaciones tienen características de impresión, tirada y distribución que las convierten en verdaderos periódicos.*"

[224] At least two early community newspapers are specifically mentioned in academic accounts, though their ideological affinities are unspecified: *El Tiempo de Caricuao* (The Caricuao Times), which was produced for some period of the 1970s (Morales 2004, 43); and *La Panela Ilustrada* (Panela Illustrated), which appeared in San Joaquín (Carabobo) in 1981 (Castro & Rojas 2004, cited in Leal 2007, 57). (*Panela* can refer to a type of raw sugar and also a traditional Venezuelan citrus drink sweetened with it.)

organization), with the staff aspiring "to become definitively the mouthpieces [sic] of all the popular sectors of La Vega" (La Vega Dice 1981, 22).[225] Members of the collective were politically active in the community beyond their work on the paper, winning "several elections in the unions and local government" and participating in advocacy campaigns. Some of them continued to work in culturally focused community organization after the paper ceased publishing (Fernandes 2010, 61).[226]

While the *La Vega Dice* staff may have lived and/or worked in the community, it was not a community newspaper in the sense that it focused on providing access so that all members of the community could participate in the production process. In its first years, at least, the staff employed a professionalized division of labor and organized its reporting into three categories: "labor" (*laboral*), "neighborhood" (*barrial*), and "culture-sport" (*cultural-deportiva*). There was a strong tendency toward explicitly politicized "exposés" (*denuncias*) of corruption and neglect. The workers viewed the paper's function in relation to the community as primarily "didactic" (*didáctica*) and there was clearly something of a vanguardist sentiment in this posture: "...our newspapers are directed to the popular sectors and these popular sectors are mainly constituted by [individuals from] marginal classes, our principal duty is that of educating, since the members of these sectors, in their majority, lack an adequate level of education..." (23).[227] Nonetheless, in a reflective piece published after the first two years of publication, the staff articulated their awareness of a need for changes that are directly in line with the broader shift in leftist media praxis that had marked the previous decade across Latin America.

225"*convertirnos definitivamente en voceros de todos los sectores populares de la Vega*"

226Fernandes does not state when La Vega Dice stopped publishing. The group had begun with 25 people but "continuous desertions" (*continuas deserciones*) had left an active staff of only "six or seven" by late 1981. By that time the group had published fourteen editions of sixteen pages each, including photos but not advertisements, on an irregular schedule. Using two different offset printing houses, it had run 2,000 copies of the first eleven editions (in black and white), 5,000 of the twelfth and thirteenth (black, white, and red), and 3,500 of the fourteenth (color scheme not specified). It sold the paper (cost not specified) within labor unions and by canvassing the neighborhood [*sistema de batidas*], and was self-financed, though it had initially received support from foundations and by organizing a raffle, and at one point had received "money from Peru" (*dinero de Perú*) (La Vega Dice 22).

227"*nuestros periódicos están dirigidos a los sectores populares y estos sectores populares están constituidos en su mayoria por [individuos de] las c1ases marginales, nuestro principal deber es el de educar, debido a que los integrantes de esos sectores, en su mayoría, carecen de un adecuado nivel de educación...*"

These changes built on the paper's ongoing shift from a somewhat exclusive focus on labor toward the inclusion of class issues more widely, and in this regard the staff called for "a profound reflection on what popular culture truly is", with a recognition that it can not be simply reduced to "autochthonous" (*autóctonas*) dance and music, but must encompass the lived experiences of daily life. Beyond this shift in content, however, the staff called for a shift in the very conception of alternative media, in which "[t]he popular newspaper must abandon its role of being only a point of reference to become an organizer and promoter of the unity of the people". [228] This would involve, on one hand, "a true participation of the masses in the newspaper", and on the other, "the creation of more popular newspapers in other parishes and … a very close relationship with them and those already existing" (25). [229] Envisioning participation in this way – as fundamental to a popular media *system* – invoked the counter-hegemonic mode of community media discourse and suggested, however rudimentarily, the need for a Gramscian civil society. [230]

Such were the types of participatory media projects that emerged from the Venezuelan left in the late 1970s. Already in that period, however, and somewhat more frequently in the 1980s, community and alternative media projects began to emerge unattached to either an overt political project or the Jesuit order, which is to say that they emerged within the mainstream liberal civil society that was legitimated by the *puntofijista* framework. The first such example is the unique but precedent setting case of *Teleboconó*, an alternative regional television station in the small town of Boconó (Trujillo) that began broadcasting in 1979.

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228 "*[e]l periódico popular debe abandonar su papel de ser unicamente un polo de referencia para convertirse en un organizador y promotor de la unidad del pueblo*"

229 "*una verdadera participacion de las masas en el periodico*"; "*la creación de más periódicos populares en otras parroquias y ... una vinculación muy estrecha con ellos y los ya existentes*"

230 I do not mean to oversell this particular case. La Vega Dice's formulation of participation as a conversion of the "masses" from mere "receptors of a particular message" into "individual emitters of a response" remains tethered to the transmission model of communication and offers only a simple feedback model of participation. Moreover, there is admittedly something of a gap between a fuzzy "relationship" among individual newspapers and a systemic model. We might best see these statements as evidence that the shift in terrain which has marked the last half century of participatory media praxis is (because still ongoing) tectonic in both scale and pace.; "*receptores de un mensaje determinado*"; "*individuos emisores de una respuesta*"

Teleboconó was conceived by Pablo Miliani, an electrical engineer, frigate captain, and airplane pilot who went on to serve as Minister of Communications during the Betancourt administration and then in the Venezuelan Senate (Gohla 1995, 3; Capriles et al. 1989, 162).[231] Upon retiring to his home town of Boconó (Trujillo), a smallish agricultural center at the northeastern end of the Andes, Miliani "discovered a different city. The traditional characteristics of a resident of Boconó, attentive, religious, caring, and respectful, weren't those that stood out in much of the town's youth" (161).[232] Miliani brought his concerns to town leaders, such as Miriam Zambrano, president of the town's cultural center (*Ateneo de Boconó*), who were likewise concerned about academic apathy and drug use among young people (Goyo et al. 1986, 47). They decided to address these issues by establishing a participatory media project. Most saw a newspaper or radio station as more feasible, but Miliani believed that young people would be most drawn to television and persuaded the others to move forward with the idea.[233]

Miliani obtained a three-month experimental television license from the Ministry of Transport and Communications (*Ministerio de Transporte y Comunicaciones*) and built a rudimentary studio, including a 3 watt transmitter, in his house. Success at this level was convincing and in March of 1978 Miliani and eight representatives of the commercial and cultural sectors of the city registered the non-profit Boconesa Cultural Television Foundation (*Fundación Televisora Cultural Boconesa*) (Capriles et al. 163, 167).[234] Miliani oversaw the construction of an addition to his own house and donated much of

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231 Unless otherwise indicated, all information and quites pertaining to *Teleboconó* is drawn from Gohla.

232 "*una ciudad diferente. Aquellas características del boconés, atento, religioso, cariñoso y respetuoso, no eran las que sobresalían en muchos jóvenes del pueblo.*"

233 Miliani recognized that young people "hardly read" (*apenas leen*) and believed they would not have the attention span to take in "an entire speech or talk" (*todo un discurso o una charla*) via radio (Capriles et al. 161). There is reason to believe, however, that the choice had a personal component, as well. In 1933, while still a boy, Miliani had constructed a radio transmitter and he considered himself a "communications fanatic" (*fanático de las comunicaciones*) (162). As an electrical engineer, ship captain, and private pilot, he would have had much experience with radio transmission, but at one point in the 1950s he had been forced to seek protection from the dictatorial regime in the studios of *Televisa*, Venezuela's first commercial television station. He spent several days mingling with the staff and talent, "thus awakening his interest in television" (*despertando esto su interés por la televisión*) (*ibid.*). Later, upon retiring in Boconó, Miliani agreed to oversee the national public broadcaster's local transmission equipment. One can imagine that a desire to experiment with new technologies contributed to Miliani's enthusiasm for creating a television station.

234 I am following Capriles et al. (1989), who place the establishment of the Foundation in 1978 and the first broadcast in 1979. Gohla states that the Foundation itself came into existence in 1979, whereas Castro & Rojas (2004, cited in Delgado & Geurrero 2008, 19) place the first broadcast in 1977 and Aponte (2005, 76) gives 1968

the funding for state-of-the-art production and broadcasting equipment. From the beginnings of its operation, *Teleboconó* used computers for data processing and graphic design, with later models being used for effects. It was also the first television station in Venezuela to broadcast in color and owned a mobile production truck for field recording (*ibid.*, Goyo et al. 49-50).

Miliani's primary focus was on the experience of the young people involved. [235] In order to participate, they had to maintain good grades. In addition to experiential training in television production and administration, *Teleboconó* offered assistance with school work as well as instruction in computers, chess, and folk and orchestral music. The station sponsored a traveling chess team and a local orchestra, with some members of the latter going on to play in national orchestras (Capriles et al. 165, Gohla 5). The studio space in Miliani's house was open from early in the morning until late at night and the young people could "come and go when they like" (3). In the late 80s there were over 100 participants ranging in age from six to twenty (Capriles et al. 164). [236] They were not paid for their work, nor did they formally belong to the Foundation, although they were kept informed of its decisions (165, 167).

As for programming, the station placed "primordial importance on the cultural, athletic, and social activities of the locality and region", which were often hosted by partner organizations such as the Municipal Council, cultural center, or the Tiscachic Center for Rural Services (*Centro de Servicios Campesinos Tiscachic*), among others (50, Capriles et al. 161). [237] The production process was not rigorously planned; "[t]he production team conceives and manages ideas as it goes" and "[t]he programming block is determined the same day, before going to air... according to the available material and/or the criteria of the transmission director on duty" (Goyo et al. 50-1). [238] By all accounts, *Teleboconó*

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as the initial year of the project.

235*Teleboconó* continues to operate today, but its value here is as an example of an early participatory media project in the liberal mold. This description of its practices, having been drawn from sources no more recent that 1995, does not speak to its current mode of operation.

236In 1995, Gohla reported that over 200 young people, ranging in age from six to sixteen, were "connected to the TV station in one way or another" and that "almost 300" had been "formed by the TV station throughout 16 years" (3-4).

237"*importancia primordial a las actividades culturales, deportivas y sociales de la localidad y e la región*"

238"[e]*l equipo de producción concibe y maneja ideas sobre la marcha*"; "*[l]a pauta de programación se elabora el mismo día, antes de salir al aire... de acuerdo al material disponible y/o al criterio del director de Transmisión*

was committed to maximizing the quality of its productions within the limits of its resources, but many were transmitted on the same day of their recording with no post-production and, in any case, "the images, in general, present defects. Lack of lighting, framing, little stability, are their frequent problems" (Goyo et al. 51).[239] Some programs were shot in the studio, including one called *Teleagro*, which was oriented toward agricultural issues and was produced by a volunteer who worked as an "agricultural technician" (*técnico agropecuario*) (Capriles et al. 166).

During its first decade or so, *Teleboconó* broadcast on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays from 6 to 11 pm, with the one kilowatt signal reaching only a local area (Goyo et al. 49-50). The station was unable to produce sufficient material to fill this schedule, however, and relied on cultural and educational content provided by foreign embassies, universities, and the National Television Station of Venezuela (*Televisora Nacional de Venezuela* / TVN), which was the smaller of the country's two public television stations (Capriles et al. 166). The latter of these provided over sixty percent of *Teleboconó* programming during the mid 80s (Goyo et al. 50). Miliani prohibited the transmission of *telenovelas* because their content was not "at the required cultural level", preferring instead to air foreign theater productions (*ibid.*). Nor did the station produce news programs, due to a lack of "sufficient informative material in the city", and Miliani was also intent on avoiding "any manifestation or activity of a political bent", which meant that opinion programs were not allowed (51).[240] Politicians, meanwhile, were "not allowed to talk about other politicians in bad terms, and they ha[d] to explain in what way, and how they would carry out and realise their programmes" (Gohla 4).

In addition to the resources provided by Miliani himself, Teleboconó received donations from private parties, cultural organizations, and government entities. As of the mid-80s, the Boconó Municipal

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[sic] de turno."

239Capriles et al. are more sanguine, noting that the productions have "a technical quality that can stand up to the commercial channels" (*una calidad tecnica tal que nada tienen que envidiarle a los canales comerciales*)(165).; "*las imágenes, por lo general, presentan fallas. Falta de iluminación, de encuadre, poca estabilidad, son sus problemas frecuentes.*"

240"*no está al nivel cultural requerido*"; "*suficiente material informativo en la ciudad*"; "*cualquier manifestación o actividad de corte político*"

Council (*Consejo Municipal de Boconó*) and the Trujillo Governor's Office (*Gobernación del Estado Trujillo*) were each providing 2,000 *bolívares* (Bs) per month (Goyo et al. 48), and by the late 1980s CONAC was providing regular funding (Capriles et al 167).[241] Throughout the 1980s, Teleboconó did not accept advertising, which Miliani saw as oriented toward consumerism and "against the principals that they profess and desire to inculcate in the youth" (ibid.), although it would publicize upcoming events at the cultural center and also produced short segments acknowledging donations from businesses (166, Goyo et al. 50).[242]

Beyond local community members who volunteer at the station or appear in its programs, Teleboconó has incorporated the participation of adults in several ways. They obtained feedback via unsolicited telephone calls (which were apparently not aired live) and by conducting periodic surveys (Capriles et al. 168). They also collaborated with various Venezuelan universities, who sent researchers and/or interns working in the fields of communication, engineering, and education (166).

As for the viewing public, one survey of 295 residents of Boconó conducted in 1986 found that three percent watched the station "often" (*a menudo*), 26 percent "sometimes" (*a veces*), 19 percent "rarely" (*rara vez*), and 52 percent "never" (*nunca*), with those from 12 to 21years old and those over 50 more likely to view the station. Among those who viewed the channel, the most appreciated element was the cultural and educational programming (18 percent), followed by the transmission of local activities (12 percent). Other responses included that it belonged to Boconó (4 percent) and that it was participatory (2 percent). The implication, therefore, appears to be that *Teleboconó* productions were somewhat less appreciated than the material brought in from elsewhere (Goyo et al. 53-4).

After a decade of operating very efficiently on an extremely tight budget, *Teleboconó* entered into a partnership that would both ease its budgetary constraints and significantly expand the reach of its signal. At the time *Teleboconó* obtained its license in 1978, Venezuela had two public and two private

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[241]Capriles et al. attribute the funding to "*Comision de Cultura del Consejo Nacional*", which I understand to mean the *Comisión Nacional de Cultura* (CONAC).

[242]"*contra los principios que profesan y que desean inculcar a la juventud*"

commercial broadcasters, all based in Caracas and transmitting across more or less national networks. The private stations, *Venevisión* and *Radio Caracas Televisión* (RCTV), operated with licenses that had been approved in the 1950s, belonged to two of the country's most powerful conglomerates, and wielded hegemonic cultural influence. The Venezuelan government approved multiple regional licenses throughout the 1980s but none covered Caracas until 1988, when *Televen* emerged as a national competitor to the two giants. Even after an initial capital outlay of 400 million Bs, some of which went toward a national network of nineteen signal repeaters, *Televen* had significant catching up to do (Hernández 1999, 33-4). This was the context for the agreement it reached with *Teleboconó*.

The details are not entirely clear, but *Teleboconó* gained four repeaters, transforming it from a local to a regional channel that covered "most of the western part of Venezuela", with the potential to reach "more than 2.5 million people". At some point following this expansion, the station began broadcasting every weekday from 4 pm to 10 pm, increasing its weekly transmissions from 18 to 30 hours, and *Televen* began using the broadcast network when Teleboconó was not on the air. [243] "In return, *Televen* maintain[ed] the technical equipment, finance[d] the depreciation of the equipment and provide[d] technicians and engineers in urgent cases, free of charge" (Gohla 4).

We have reviewed the structure and operations of *Teleboconó* at some length in order to better analyze its role in the structure of Venezuelan civil society. Capriles et al. classify *Teleboconó* as "one of the best examples of communicational democracy known until now" (160), but also point out that the project fails to establish "massive connection" (168) within its community. [244] In this regard, they note that the foundation, which embodied the legally recognized decision-making authority of the station, was limited to nine members and that no more were desired "due to the fear that they would want to change [the station's] orientation or that it would acquire a political-partisan profile" (168). This recognition can help us analyze what is meant by "massive connection", or articulation, in the context of participatory

[243]The six hour broadcasting day was divided into three two hour blocks, with the first catering to children, the second to adolescents, and the last to adults (Gohla 3). I do not know if a similar division was employed previously, when the broadcasting day was five hours.

[244]"*unos de los mejores ejemplos de democracia comunicacional conocidos hasta ahora*"; "*vinculación masiva*"

media and civil society. In terms of meaning-making, the station serves as a channel of articulation, connecting viewers to a proscribed set of cultural activities, as well as educational opportunities around certain themes. In terms of the decision-making process that determined the station's articulation of meaning-making, however, there was indeed a lack of "massive connection", or articulation, and this resulted from the project's narrow bounds of participation. The primary participants, of course, were young people, and their authority, already restrained by limited life experience and the social mores associated with their age, was further restricted to tactical decisions within a set of strategic parameters determined by others, primarily Miliani. This is not to diminish his extreme generosity, nor the considerable merit of the project. The station has doubtlessly benefited many young people while providing valuable television content to its viewers and we must recognize that these, especially the former, were the original motivations of the project. It was successful on its own terms, but we must recognize those terms as belonging to the development mode of participatory media discourse and adhering to a liberal model of civil society.

The foundation's conscientious restriction of decision-making authority was attributed to the fear that others would either challenge the station's orientation or bend it toward political ends. It is worth examining each of these feared outcomes in turn. The station's orientation can be understood generally as its focus on young people, but more specifically as its mission to "inculcate" particular values in those young people. These values were reflected in the activities available to the participants as well as the content of the station's programming, and the parameters of those fields were pre-determined by Miliani and the other directors of the foundation. Of the values allowed by those parameters, we might view some as conservative. Examples would include the choices to favor traditional and classical music over salsa and rock, or foreign theater over *telenovelas*. Others, however, might be deemed progressive, with examples including a negative view of advertising and consumerism or the encouragement of computer use. Of course, not all would agree with these classifications, but that only speaks to the point at hand. In terms of measuring the democratic value of a participatory media initiative, what truly matters is not the

values or meaning expressed within the content of the media, nor even the degree to which the project connects or articulates a community to allow for the flow of that meaning. Both of these are of extreme social importance, but the democratic value of a participatory media initiative is a function of the degree to which it articulates a community within a decision-making process that, in turn, determines the parameters of meaning-making. This point is crucial to recognizing the difference between those initiatives, like *Teleboconó*, that embraced the liberal model of civil society, and those, like *TV Caricuao*, that sought a more democratic civil society.

As we have seen, in actual practice, *TV Caricuao* fell into the same problematic as *Teleboconó*. As Blanco pointed out, by the 1990s, if not earlier, the decision-making authority within TV Caricuao had been reduced to a small group of consistent participants. They continued to produce content that accorded with their progressive, perhaps radical values, and they continued to find ways to articulate some segments of the community around that content, thus stimulating a meaning-making process that might not otherwise have existed in that area and among those people. Already lost, however, was the "beauty" of the early days, when they experimented with a "horizontal" structure meant to articulate various community groups within a democratic decision-making process that would structure a collective meaning-making initiative (that, in turn, would help articulate a wider community). In this sense, *TV Caricuao* in the 90s was, in terms of its structure, part and parcel of liberal civil society, even if its content expressed marginal or radical values. Crucially, however, Blanco recognized and was frustrated by that situation, which he associated with institutional and financial constraints. *Teleboconó*, on the other hand, sought to maintain and reinforce its structural position within liberal civil society. Perhaps more importantly, it sought to reproduce the liberal social order while denying, at least implicitly, that it was attached to any political project whatsoever. At work here is the liberal notion that cultural values are somehow separate from the larger political economy.

To make this explicit, we can turn back to the second of the foundation's fears, which was that opening up the decision-making process would allow outsiders to give the station a "political-partisan

profile". Assumedly, given the historical context, the fear was that it would become a vehicle for one of the leading parties, either AD or COPEI, or perhaps even a more radical position seeking to destabilize the *puntofijista* order itself. To prevent this, Miliani and the other directors sought to eliminate overt political discourse from the station's activities and programming, for example with the prohibition on opinion programs. Unacknowledged, however, is that political values were nonetheless manifested by the station's structure, activities, and programming, and that those values served to reproduce the liberal *puntofijista* order. This point might have been addressed in debates over the merits of foreign theater productions vis-a-vis *telenovelas,* or whether preparing young people to "become engineers, communicators, scientists and journalists working in the capital of Venezuela" (Gohla 5) is of benefit to the local community, but those debates were never held, in large part because decisions about the allocation of the radio spectrum and the structuration of its control were insufficiently democratic.

While admittedly speculative, it seems more than coincidental that the only local television license to be authorized during the first two decades of *puntofijismo* was awarded to a former Minister of Communications and national Senator. Miliani's clout and connections also seem likely to have enabled the deal with *Televen* – one of whose initial investors, Alberto Federico Ravell, had served as director of *Venezolana de Televisión* (VTV), the country's largest public television station, under the same administration that granted the *Televen* license.[245] Miliani's status, in other words, seems quite likely to have privileged his personal vision of participatory media relative to those held by other members of Venezuelan society and it is unlikely that he would have enjoyed that status if his personal values did not generally accord with those held by other privileged members of the *puntofijista* order. This is not to say that those values were identical in all cases. After all, Miliani's anti-consumerist stance on advertising must have been sharply at odds with the owners of *Televen*, all of whom were heavily invested in maximizing advertising profits and one of whom – Ravell again – had founded an advertising agency in

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245Hernández (1999, 34) lists Ravell as a *Televen* investor.

1980.[246] This difference, however, does not seem to have impeded an agreement that proved mutually beneficial to both projects. Nor did it prevent Miliani from renting mountaintop land, which offered advantageous locations for transmission towers, to both *Venevisión* and VTV (Capriles et al. 167).[247] These contradictions are not raised in an attempt to insult or indict Miliani, who seems to have been an honorable, capable, and dynamic man with an extremely generous nature and true fondness for young people. The point, rather, is to illustrate that his vision for *Teleboconó* did not preclude his facilitation of the liberal, capitalist media framework supported by the *puntofijista* order. This recognition, in turn, serves to better delineate the distinction between liberal and Gramscian notions of democratic civil society as they manifest in the history of Venezuelan participatory media.

Construyamos Juntos (Let's Build Together / CJ) was another important Venezuelan participatory media initiative that emerged from within the liberal framework. Whereas Teleboconó formed prior to the crisis period of the 1980s and later adopted a closer relationship with a commercial media outlet, CJ was founded within a commercial newspaper in 1986, as the economic crisis was accelerating toward its nadir, and expanded outward to articulate with a wider network of grassroots organizations. The sponsoring newspaper was the *Diario de los Andes* (Andes Daily), located in Valera (Trujillo). Raisa Urribarrí, an original member of the project and now a researcher specializing in Venezuelan participatory media, writes that:

> [t]he city and the state of Trujillo, in general, were at that time a laboratory of thriving community organization that required spaces for social interaction, articulation, projection, and recognition. The newspaper decided not to turn its back on that reality and dedicated itself to attending to these sectors as an act of corporate social responsibility. (2007, 8) [248]

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246 Ravell's father was a journalist and politician who was twice exiled for opposing Venezuelan dictators. The younger Ravell also worked as a journalist before serving as media director for Carlos Andrés Pérez's first presidential campaign in 1973. Ravell was then appointed to a post within the first Pérez administration and also served as media director for an unsuccessful candidate in the 1977 election. He sold his share of *Televen* soon after it was founded, but returned to television in 1994 as a co-founder and then General Director of *Globovisión*, Venezuela's first 24-hour news channel. *Globovisión* would become the most ardent anti-Chávez media outlet in Venezuela and Ravell himself would become a prominent and controversial opposition figure.

247 Due to budgetary constraints, VTV began accepting commercial advertising in the late 1970s. By 1988, public funding accounted for only ten percent of VTV's budget (Hernández 1999, 33).

248 All quotes from Urribarrí (2007, 2009) are my own translation.; *"[l]a ciudad y el estado Trujillo, en general, era en ese entonces un laboratorio de pujante organización comunitaria necesitada de espacios de interacción,*

The initial plan was to publish four pages of reporting "dedicated to the world of community life" on a bi-monthly schedule, but the project soon took on a different dimension as those charged with the new section decided to move beyond simply "'covering' the community source" and instead facilitate "the creation of a newspaper made by community organizations and leaders" (9). [249] Significantly, these staff members had not only "chewed on theories of alternative communication, in vogue in the country's communication schools in that era" (*ibid*.), but were especially motivated by the work of Kaplún who, as mentioned above, had ended his Venezuelan exile and published "The Popular Communicator" one year earlier.[250]

Over the course of five years, the CJ model spread throughout the state of Trujillo and was also adopted by a commercial newspaper (unaffiliated with *Diario de los Andes*) in the neighboring state of Mérida, leading to a total of 22 popular newspapers that operated within a National Network of Communicators (*Red Nacional de Comunicadores / RNC*).[251] These papers collectively owned a a press that was used for their own publication and even to generate a small profit via outside jobs. CJ also collaborated with two other groups, *El Convite* (The Banquet) and *Guarura* (Bodyguard[?]), to establish the "Mario Kaplún" Andean School of Popular Communicators" (*Escuela Andina de Comunicadores Populares "Mario Kaplún"*) , which received funding from the Venezuelan Ministry of the Family (*Ministerio de la Familia*) and UNICEF (Urribarrí 2009, 158; personal communication, June 20, 2011).

In conjunction with *Teleboconó*, CJ and the projects it set in motion clearly signal that throughout the 1980s actors and organizations within the privileged sectors of *puntofijista* civil society (including, in this context, the commercial) had become increasingly receptive to the idea of participatory, alternative, and community-oriented media. Urribarrí summarizes the interrelated tendencies of this period as

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articulación, proyección y reconocimiento social. El periódico [Diario de los Andes] decidió no estar de espaldas a esa realidad y se dedicó a atender a estos sectores como un asunto de responsabilidad social empresarial."
[249]*"cuatro páginas dedicadas al mundo de vida comunitario"*; "*'cubrir' la fuente comunitaria"*; "*la elaboración de un periódico hecho por las organizaciones y líderes comunitarios"*
[250]*"masticado las teorías de la comunicación alternativa, en boga en las escuelas de comunicación social del país en esa época"*
[251]Assumedly, the papers created the National Network, though that is not explicit in Urribarrí's account.

follows:

> During this stage, which was also marked by the decentralizing impulse that brought the election of mayors and governors, the application of participatory community diagnostics was promoted as a strategy to capture realities recognized as complex and elusive; critical media literacy was stimulated; the need to generate deeper texts, based on research into themes proposed for debate, was addressed; the use of fresh language, close to the daily life of the audience was advocated, but above all, hard work was put into establishing members of the audience, when all was said and done, as the emitters of their own messages. Although not in a systemic manner, some communication professionals, schools, and research centers engaged alternative media, linking up with its makers, and managed to open up a dialogue between activists and academics that, although not exempt from difficulties and prejudice, resulted in a mutual enrichment of perspectives. (158-9) [252]

These tendencies had two primary catalysts, both of which we have already reviewed. First, prominent Venezuelan academics and institutions had played a significant role in the international flourishing of participatory communications theory throughout the 70s, thus providing not only the familiarity but also a legitimating imprimatur that fueled its acceptance in the 80s. Second, the deteriorating economic and political situation of the country had spurred the exploration of new modes of civil society organization throughout society, not only in relation to the media. The convergence around participatory communications, in other words, was just one manifestation of that greater trend, discussed above, which had made the neighborhood movement appear to be the inescapable locus of a general convergence around community organization.

Recognizing the parallel nature of these processes prompts two important questions. First, we should ask if the sense of mounting unity around an alternative media movement was, like the seeming unity around the neighborhood movement, covering up very real fault lines that would ultimately lead to a sharp divergence. As we will see, this was indeed the case. Before proceeding to that analysis, however,

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252“*Durante esta etapa, signada además por el impulso descentralizador que trajo como consecuencia la elección de alcaldes y gobernadores, se promovió la realización de diagnósticos comunitarios participativos como estrategia para capturar realidades que se reconocían complejas e inasibles; se estimuló la lectura critica de medias; se atendió a la necesidad de generar textos más profundos, elaborados con base en la investigación de los temas que se proponían para el debate; se abogó por el uso de un lenguaje fresco y cercano a la cotidianidad de los destinatarios pero, sobre todo, se trabajó arduamente porque fueran estos, a fin de cuentas, los emisores de sus propios mensajes. Aunque no de manera sistematica, algunos profesionales de la comunicación, escuelas y centros de investigación se ocuparon de lo alternativo, vinculándose con sus hacedores, y se logró entablar un diálogo entre activistas y académicos que, aunque no exento de dificultades y prevenciones, redundó en un mutuo enriquecimiento de perspectivas.*”

we should also ask what role the largely middle class neighborhood movement played in the sphere of participatory communications. The historical record suggests that it was rather restricted.

Most accounts of Venezuelan participatory media in the *puntofijista* period do not mention the neighborhood movement at all, suggesting that its real impact was slight. Nonetheless, its leaders were quite familiar with the idea of community media. In a document entitled "The Possible Utopia" (*La Utopía Posible*) and partially reprinted in its "Neighbor's Manual", the *Escuela* included the following among the components of an ideal "community project stemming from neighborhood organization":

> A community with a self-managed artistic and athletic expression... With entertainment media that disseminate information and promote critical awareness and participation... Local theaters, cultural houses, *cineclubes*, poetry readings and groups... A community where the diffusion of information and the exchange of opinions is accessible to those who choose to participate: local or interest oriented newspapers and bulletins; community radio stations with programming that responds to the needs of the neighbors; bulletin boards, murals, walls for free expression, mailboxes, video and film clubs; informational centers with publications and computers.... Local television with public monitors, cable or conventional but produced and programmed by local groups and cooperatives of communicators, part of a process of community organization... Communication as a real process, without monopolies or manipulations, with networks of information between organized communities. (Santana 148-50)[253]

Further along, however, after reiterating that "possibilities for local radio stations... cable television service... [and] weekly newspapers or bi-monthly magazines with high print runs and broad diffusion are real", the manual acknowledges that "[t]hey need greater organization and coordination on the part of [the national coordinator] of local neighborhood associations" and are only "among the plans of the movement" (168).[254] In an enumeration of what had already been accomplished by existing associations,

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[253]All quotes from Santana are my translation.; "*proyecto de comunidad a partir de la organización vecinal*"; "*Una comunidad autogestionada en su expresión artística y deportiva… Con medios al servicio de la distracción que difundan información y promuevan la criticidad y la participación.... Teatros locales, casas de la cultura, cine-clubes, recitales y grupos de poesía… Una comunidad donde la difusión de información y el intercambio de opiniones esté al acceso de quienes se lo propongan: periódicos y boletines zonales o por temáticas; radios comunitarias con programación adecuada a la exigencia de los vecinos; carteleras, murales, paredes de expresión libre, buzones, clubes de video y cine; centros de publicaciones y de información por computador.... Una televisión local con monitores públicos, por cable o convencional pero realizada y programada por las agrupaciones locales y por empresas cooperativas de comunicadores, parte del proceso de organización comunitaria.... Una comunicación como proceso real, sin monopolios ni manipulaciones, con redes de información entre las comunidades organizadas.*"

[254]"*las posibilidades de radios locales... servicios de televisión por cable... periódicos semanarios o revistas quincenales de alto tiraje y difusión son reales*"; "*[n]ecesitan de mayor organización y coordinación por parte de Asovecinos de sectores vecinos*"; "*entre los planes del movimiento*"

the manual mentions attempts "to establish a clear and direct relation between the representatives and the represented inside the organization, through public board meetings, the publication of informative bulletins, and partial consultations for decision-making", as well as "experiences with local media", which are defined as "flyers, posters, bulletins, newspapers, banners, murals, pamphlets, megaphones, or events themselves" (139, 168).[255] One of the more consolidated associations in Caracas, the Community Integration Movement (*Movimiento de Integración de la Comunidad* / MIC) representing the Chuao and Cafetal *urbanizaciones*, sometimes employed murals within campaigns around issues such as the preservation of green spaces, but "they were not considered an important part of the Movement" (Rodríguez et al. 124-5).[256]

The manual does note that "[t]he neighborhood press is especially developed" (139) and in 1984 various associations formed the Venezuelan Association of Neighborhood Press (*Asociación Venezolana de Prensa Vecinal*), which "groups the teams that write and produce community bulletins and newspapers, to lower costs, improve quality, reflect on form and content, or train 'neighborhood reporters'" (160). [257] In the same year, FACUR began publishing a magazine called "Comunidad" (Community) which republished some of the content from neighborhood newspapers (Montes de Oca et al. 1989, 98-9). While making no claim to being comprehensive, one review of the press organs associated with the neighborhood movement lists thirteen periodicals (100-1). Of those, all but two were published within the Caracas metropolitan area and only three were produced by individual neighborhood associations. [258] Two

255"*establecer una relación clara y directa entre los 'representantes y los representados dentro de la organización, por medio de reuniones públicas de la directiva, la edición de boletines informativos y consultas parciales para la toma de decisiones*"; "*experiencias con medios de comunicación local*"; "*los volantes, afiches, boletines, periódicos, telas, pancartas, carteles, murales, folletos, el megáfono o los eventos en sí mismos*"

256"*no son considerados parte importante dentro del Movimiento*"

257The manual also references the 1984 inauguration of an Escuela affiliated Neighborhood Information Center (Centro de Información Vecinal) (161), and Urribarrí (2009) notes the existence of a "Good News Agency" (Agencia de Buenas Noticias), which was national in scope and also attached to the Escuela (158).; "[e]special desarrollo tiene la prensa vecinal"; "*agrupa a los equipos que elaboran y producen boletines y periodicos comunitarios, para abaratar costos, mejorar la calidad reflexionar sobre forma y contenido o formar 'periodistas vecinales'*"

258These were: "La Voz del Vecino" (The Neighbor's Voice), published by ASOCHUAO, a neighborhood association in Chuao; Alternativa" (Alternative), published by MIC; and "Asopaula", published by the Association of Residents of Santa Paula (Asociación de Residentes de Santa Paula). Of the latter, and without offering further details, the authors write that "[i]t has the support of its residents and is actually sectorial, of

other of the listed publications also served particular neighborhoods but were not published by neighborhood associations.[259] Two of the three neighborhood association papers charged a nominal cover price of two *bolívares* (Bs) in the mid 80s, and one was said to have "a great quantity of advertising".[260]

Though not published by a single neighborhood association, we might nonetheless take *El Pastoreño* as representative of the type of paper that the neighborhood movement aspired to produce. The paper emerged in the historic La Pastora parish of Caracas in 1978, during an era when accelerated urbanization was converting the zone into what would be termed a *barrio*. Its subheading defined it as "a Newspaper in the Service of the Conservation of La Pastora", it played a prominent role in the creation of the Committee for the Rescue of the Cultural Heritage of La Pastora (*Comité de Rescate del Acervo Cultural de La Pastora*), and it served as a "mouthpiece" (*vocero*) of the neighborhood associations of the sector (Villa et al. 1989, 132-3).[261] Its sixteen to twenty pages of content included coverage of the neighborhood associations, community news and events, interviews, opinion pieces and editorials. The paper played an important role in campaigns to preserve the parish's colonial architecture, to repair streets and build a park, and to have a cinema donated for use as a cultural center. It maintained an office for its staff of twelve and had an additional eight "permanent collaborators" (*colaboradores fijos*). It was published twice monthly with a print run of two thousand copies that were distributed in kiosks, bookstores, and community organizations, and the cover price was three *bolívares* (Bs). Two of the staff members were dedicated to managing advertising, but the paper also relied on "community support" (*apoyo comunal*). Due to a lack of funds, *El Pastoreño* ceased publishing from August of 1985 until May of 1987 (134), when support from individuals and organizations enabled it to resume, but renewed

elites. It could not be considered 'popular'" (Montes de Oca et al. 100).; "*Cuenta con el apoyo de sus residentes y es más bien sectorial, de élites. No podría considerarse 'popular'.*"

259 These were: "El Pastoreño" and "El Hatillano" (see Villa et al. 1989). Where specified, the other periodicals listed were published by administrative organizations of the neighborhood movement (FACUR, the Escuela, and [apparently] a collective of associations from Maracaibo), university students, or professionals (ostensibly as commercial enterprises).

260 Given the steady devaluation of the *bolívar* during this period, it is worth noting that the issues consulted by the researchers were printed in October of 1984 and June of 1986.; "*una gran cantidad de publicidad*"

261 "*un Periódico al Servicio de la Conservación de la Pastora*"

financial difficulties forced it to shut down roughly one year later (Montes de Oca et al. 101).

Outside of their ideological orientations, *El Pastoreño* and *La Vega Dice* have much in common, and their comparison can help us to see why the interests and tactics of popular community organizations and neighborhood movement appeared to converge in the 1980s. Crucially, however, *El Pastoreño* saw itself as representing a community that was threatened from without, and was therefore focused on a defensive conservation of traditional values. *La Vega Dice*, on the other hand, saw itself as representing a community that existed on the margins and sought to move closer to the decision-making structures of society. The specifics of these projects manifested the general tendencies of two very different social projects. As the crisis of the 1980s developed, both of those projects moved on similar terrain and each saw community media as a vehicle, but their ultimate goals lay in different directions.

Returning to the question of community media within the neighborhood movement, we should note that, as with the movement's activities more generally, there was very little discussion of financing. The newspapers mentioned above combined private contributions, sales, and advertising, suggesting a privately subsidized commercial model that seems inadequate to the movement's utopian vision. The mention of "cooperatives" in relation to television suggests both a recognition of the greater costs associated with that medium and the potential for its commercial operation, but the reference is vague indeed. In sum, there seems to have been no serious consideration of the political economy of a community media system from a movement who saw itself "[i]n a constant war against consumerism" (150).[262]

In 2003, Santana reflected that in the 1970s and 80s "apart from some regional or municipal governments, State entities that sponsored media with a community profile did not exist" (Urribarrí 2007, 2). Nonetheless, neighborhood association community newspapers apparently received some state funding between 1989 and 1992 (Yi Ng 74), the Mario Kaplún Andean School of Popular Communicators was able to obtain funding from the Ministry of the Family, and CONAC was directing

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262"*[e]n guerra constante contra el consumismo*"

some support to *cineclubes* and *TV Caricuao.* Given its considerable clout, the neighborhood movement might have sought to build on these meager beginnings by advocating for state support of participatory and community media among its national level policy proposals, perhaps in partnership with FEVEC, the Jesuit organizations, or other groups. Further research is warranted, but the lack of such efforts suggests that the movement's liberal conception of a wholly autonomous civil society prevented its leaders from envisioning a mode of participatory media production supported by public funds. It might also simply indicate that community media was not highly prioritized. In either case, the movement's vision for community media was hardly counter-hegemonic.

In fact, the manual's discussion of media production is matched, if not outweighed, by suggestions for working with existing media outlets, thus implying a ready acceptance of Venezuela's existent media system, marked as it was by a feeble public and a hegemonic commercial sector. In addition to the media noted above, the movement's conception of "neighborhood communication" includes "constant visits to private and government media" (153). [263] Even if this is understood as a pragmatic or tactical approach for short-term growth as opposed to an endorsement of a marketized media system, the associated suggestions demonstrate an acritical faith in professionalized journalism and a deep ignorance of privilege that, taken together, reveal once again the class-based assumptions of the neighborhood movement's model of civil society. The manual explains, for example, that:

> if our action and solicitudes are really representative of the community sentiment, we should think about diffusion through the big media outlets. For that we also have to organize, writing up a brief document with 'the news', in other words the objective and the causes of our campaign and plans to visit the information directors of radio stations, newspapers, and television stations. We should facilitate them with all the necessary support material (photos, maps, legal documents) and make possible their direct visit to our community and respect the journalists as professionals, providing all the information and the greatest possible collaboration, thanking them for their commentaries or reports... [The national institutions of the neighborhood movement] have discovered part of the dynamic of these information business organizations. Courses and consulting to train neighbors in the creation of "press offices" to develop a policy of disclosure with the sending of press releases, regular, documentary, and photographic information, and maintaining regular telephone relations with press, radio, and television communicators.

263"*comunicación vecinal*"; "*constantes visitas a los medios de comunicación privados y gubernamentales*"

(167-8)

Assumed in these suggestions is that community members would have sufficient education, cultural capital, and resources to gather and create legal documents, photos, and maps; to draft standard press releases; to make regular phone calls; and to travel to the offices of media outlets. Also assumed is that professional journalists and their managers would not only accept visits and phone calls, but also engage in mutually respectful relationships that lead to community visits and journalism worthy of gratitude. These assumptions fail to account for the lack of educational opportunities and public services, the crushing poverty, and/or the remote location of many *barrios* and rural villages. They also fail to account for the very real possibility of class, race, gender, ethnic, and other prejudices that many professionals would bring to their interactions with marginalized communities. The manual underlines this point when, in a list describing successful practices, it notes that some associations: "[d]evelop a relationship with communications professionals *and the owners and directors of the media organizations*, who end up being neighbors somewhere and thus more accessible" (139, my emphasis). Suffice it to say, few of the owners and directors of commercial media outlets were likely to be neighbors with residents of *barrios* and rural areas.

Also worth noting in this regard is the representation of the neighborhood movement, and civil society more generally, within the commercial media. As mentioned above, despite disapproval from FACUR leaders, *Escuela* publicity efforts extended to the production of radio and television shows that aired on commercial media outlets and were sponsored by business interests. At the same time, the commercial media sought to mold and appropriate the conception of civil society that was associated with the neighborhood movement. In 1987, Marcel Granier, the president of *Radio Caracas*, which was Venezuela's oldest and most prestigious media conglomerate, oversaw the publication of a document entitled "More and Better Democracy" (*Más y Mejor Democracia*), which equated democracy with decentralization and economic liberalization (Ellner 2010, 83-4) and hailed the neighborhood movement as "the most important phenomenon to take place in Venezuelan democracy during recent years" (Granier

& Gil Yepes, 1987, 142; cited in Yi Ng 1993, 14). [264] Then, throughout the acute political crisis of the 90s,

the powerful commercial media favored a more strictly autonomous, neoliberal conception of civil society

by "establishing a Manichean opposition between the state (characterized as corrupt, inefficient, and

clientelist) and a mythical civil society (which included the media), understood as a synthesis of all virtue:

creativity, initiative, efficacy, honesty and participation" (Lander 2007, 24). Specifically, in 1992, when a

package of proposed constitutional reforms raised:

> the possibility of some public regulations on the media, a systematic campaign was
> launched by all the entrepreneurial associations of radio, television and newspapers... This
> amazingly aggressive terror campaign made the timid reforms proposed (the right to reply,
> restriction of the monopoly on property and control of the media), appear as a threat to the
> very existence of democracy. Given the premises on civil society and democracy
> embedded in the new common sense of the Venezuelan political system, the owners of the
> media identified property rights (private ownership of the media) with individual rights
> (the right of citizens to information), so that any attempt to regulate the media seemed to
> jeopardize the right to information. (Lander 1995, 54-5) [265]

While this was not necessarily the attitude of the neighborhood movement or even the *Escuela*, such

rhetoric might have been less readily available and less effective had the neighborhood movement used its

power to more thoroughly and publicly articulate a vision of civil society that included community media

as a viable counter-hegemonic alternative.

The 1980s saw several participatory media initiatives emerge within sectors of the Catholic

church outside the Jesuit order. The most ambitious of these were two regional television stations, though

neither incorporated a high degree of community participation. *Amavisión* was founded in 1984 by

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[264]"*el fenómeno más importante ocurrido en los últimos años de la democracia venezolana*"

[265]As is well known, Granier would go on to place his media holdings in the service of the coup attempted against
Chávez in 2002. Throughout the Chávez administration, but especially in the period around the government's
May 2007 decision to not renew the broadcast license of *Radio Caracas Televisión* (RCTV), the media outlets
belonging to Radio Caracas and other private companies renewed the rhetoric of the 1992 campaign, though with
even greater vigor.; "*la posibilidad de algun nivel de regulación pública sobre estos medios, se desató una
campana sistemática coordinada entre todas las asociaciones empresariales de la radio, la televisión y la
prensa escrita... Con insólita agresividad, se produjo una campana de terror que hacia aparecer las tímidas
reformas sobre el derecho a la replica y las limitaciones al monopolio de la propiedad y control de los medios de
comunicación, como una amenaza que ponía en peligro la existencia misma del regimen democrático. Dadas las
premisas en trno a la sociedad civil y a la democracia que forman parte del nuevo sentido común en el sistema
político venezolano, los dueños de los medios lograron identificar los* derechos de propiedad *(la propiedad
privada de los medios), con los* derechos personales *(el derecho al acceso a la información por parte de los
ciudadanos), haciendo aparecer cualquier regulación sobre los medios como un atentado en contra del derecho
a la información*" (Lander 1995, 173).

Salesian priests of the Apostolic Vicariate of Puerto Ayacucho (Amazonas) to provide educational material to indigenous communities. *Niños Cantores TV* (Singing Children TV / NCTV), meanwhile, grew out of the Singing Children of Zulia Institute (*Instituto Niños Cantores Del Zulia*), which had been established in 1976 by the Archdiocese of Maracaibo with considerable financial support from the state. The institute operated from a campus in Maracaibo that included a music education program for children, a teaching farm, an athletic complex, and a university. NCTV was created as a commercial enterprise with the Archdiocese of Maracaibo owning a majority share. The television facilities were constructed in 1985 and the station began broadcasting in 1987 following a contentious licensing process that revealed efforts on the part of the main *puntofijista* parties to exert control over the station (Valbuena 1986).[266] While these projects applied certain elements of participatory praxis, in the final analysis they amounted to Church sponsored alternative television stations, with *Amavisión* adopting an advertising-free, educationally oriented public service model and NCTV embracing a commercial model based on advertising (Alcalá et al. 1989, Pérez et al. 1989, Hernández 1999).

Of much greater import to the development of participatory media in Venezuela was the Experimental Television and Video System (*Sistema Experimental de Televisión y Video* / SET-Video), which was facilitated by Maryknoll missionaries working in three *barrios* in the city of Barinas (Barinas). The idea for the project took form in 1983 when the missionaries, influenced by the tenets of liberation theology and committed "to listening to our communities regarding their necessities, worries, and vision of the future", responded to "their petition to utilize popular video as a constant tool of vindicating struggle, valued popular culture, and the collective rediscovery of their own common and collective history" (Ramírez et al. 1989, 149).[267] Having acquired Betamax cameras and editing equipment, the *SET-*

266Valbuena persuasively suggests that the executive's reluctance to issue the NCTV license was related, on one hand, to a power struggle between Jaime Lusinchi and Carlos Andrés Pérez, and, on the other, to a failed attempt by AD and allied business executives to gain a controlling share in the television station. COPEI politicians, meanwhile, appeared to have taken advantage of the situation to defend the Church, thus scoring points against the administration in power and gaining influence over the station.

267"*escuchar a nuestras comunidades respect a sus necesidades, inquietudes y su visión del futuro*"; "*su petitción de utilizar el video popular como una herramienta constante de lucha reivindicativa, cultura popular valorizada, y reencuentro colectivo de su propia historia común y colectiva*"

Video team (the missionaries and their local partners) offered a video workshop in March 1985.

The first concrete project to take form was "History of a Process" (*Historia de un Proceso*). The project emerged in a *barrio* that had formed when families began building makeshift houses on municipal land after they had been displaced from a nearby area. More families soon arrived and what came to be known as Las Colinas (The Hills) arose in an area that measured roughly one and a half miles by one-eighth of a mile and had no basic services beyond electricity. At that point the residents went to government officials who agreed to provide water service once they legalized and documented their claim to the land. The residents followed through but the government did not, so the residents began recording their meetings with government representatives who continually promised to provide water. They edited these into a chronological compilation and invited the Governor to watch it at a community *videoforo*. The water system was installed in December of 1986.

Other uses of video that came out of the *SET-Video* project included *videoforos* that featured documentaries presenting issues related to marginalized peoples across the globe, thus enabling *barrio* residents to contextualize their own experiences; the use of video in groups known as "Feminine Circles" (*Circulos Femininos*), which created space for women to collectively reflect and act on their experiences (see Chirinos et al. 1989); and the creation of a Popular Video Library (*Videoteca Popular*) with work from other popular communication organizations. The most ambitious initiative, however, was called "Barrios Also Make News" (*Los Barrios También Hacen Noticias*) and involved training six teams that produced and distributed fifteen to twenty minute videos throughout the three *barrios*. Each team included a "popular reporter" (*reportero popular*), a "camera operator" (*camarógrafo*), and a "diffuser" (*difusor*). The first of these was conceived as not only a reporter, but also a producer, who would keep up to date with the events of the *barrio* and consult with the "general coordinator of the news program" (*coordinador general del noticiero*) about which stories to cover, as well as the principal editor of the segment. The camera operator was responsible for the recording equipment and other work "intimately

linked to the popular reporter" at all stages of the process.[268] The diffuser, meanwhile, was in charge of copying and distributing the finished piece (151).

Particular emphasis was placed on establishing an alternative distribution circuit that the *SET-Video* team referred to as Channel Zero. This involved the use of cassette players that circulated with the diffusers, thus allowing for the videos to be passed around and shown wherever there was a television. The diffuser would then moderate the "small forum and interchange of ideas" that followed the screening (*ibid.*).[269] The diffusor was also responsible for facilitating further distribution, such as in *barrios* beyond those involved in the project or on regional television stations (152).

Not all of the *barrio* residents, of course, were involved in the production and distribution processes, but one survey of residents conducted during the early years of the project found that all respondents were familiar with *SET-Video* and believed that its productions were beneficial to the community (154). Significantly, the project was not self-sustaining nor fully self-managed, as it depended on financing from the Maryknoll organization, whose local office also served as the project's headquarters and post-production facility. Nonetheless, *SET-Video* established a workable model for continuous and highly participatory audiovisual production and distribution that would influence later Venezuelan initiatives.

As for the Jesuit institutions, in 1986 CESAP initiated a multi-dimensional project called *Catia Primero* (Catia First) that was based in a cultural center located in a sector of Catia known as Los Magallanes. The center served as a space for classes, workshops, meetings, and other activities, and the initiative placed particular emphasis on participatory communication (Hernández 2005, 75). One of the results was a community newspaper, also called *Catia Primero* (Castro y Rojas 2004; cited in Leal 56). While there are few published details of this project, further below we will touch on the importance that both it and *SET-Video* played in the growing community and alternative media movement.

268"intimamente ligado al reportero popular"
269"pequeño foro e intercambio de ideas"

In 1983, IRFA began producing a program called "Popular Saturday" (*Sábado Popular*), which aired from 8 am to noon on Saturdays and implemented a magazine format featuring news and entertainment that was influenced by "Barrio People", the earlier IRFA program that had grown out of CESAP's literacy initiative in La Vega, and specifically modeled on "From Everyone for Everyone" (*De Todos para Todos*), a program produced by *Radio Occidente*. The editorial line of "From Everyone for Everyone" was oriented toward individual empowerment and community organization, with segments focusing on popular organizations, the church, latin american music, and issues deemed to be of particular interest to women. Some of the content, meanwhile, emanated from the listeners, thus facilitating channels of popular interaction, although access to production and decision-making appears to have remained restricted.

In 1984, IRFA undertook a significant revision of its literacy and primary education programs in 1984. Among the more immediate changes was a decision to record some of the educational programs in the same communities where they aired, "which permitted a socialization of the work and a verification of the people's learning, through following up with the participants and facilitators" (Soto 11). [270] Ultimately, however, this restructuring process led IRFA to change its methodology entirely. In 1986 it adapted *Abrebrecha* (Breakthrough), an existing workbook curriculum that used Freire's "psychosocial methodology" (*metodología psicosocial*), for use in radio education. This meant that the literacy program would now be oriented toward political and social conscientization, and that – in a reverse of IRFA's previous process – the students would now begin working with facilitators *before* listening to any of the radio content, which would play a more complimentary role. New facilitators were trained in workshops conducted across the country by a small team, several of whose members had benefited from the literacy campaign that CESAP had carried out in La Vega in the 1970s (11-12). Meanwhile, the programming produced for *Abrebrecha* focused less on literacy and more on "stimulating dialogue" and "revaluing the

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[270] "*lo que permitía una socialización del trabajo y una verificación de los aprendizajes de la gente, a través de haciendo seguimiento a los participantes y facilitadores*"

life knowledge constructed by persons without formal education" (13). [271]

IRFA's implementation of *Abrebrecha* was not wholly successful. For instance, the newfound emphasis on conscientization led to increases in the duration of the facilitator training programs and the courses themselves, which may have contributed to an increase in drop-out rates. Significantly, however, many within IRFA had not been prepared for, nor disposed to accept, "such a radical methodological change" (Rodríguez 1991, 173; cited in Soto 13). This may have been related to two outside reactions. One of the businesses that sponsored IRFA "showed its discontent with the name selected, and even with some of the readings that appeared in the curriculum". [272] Meanwhile, the Latin American Association of Radiophonic Education (*Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica* / ALER), of which IRFA was an affiliate, "maintained a critical stance, questioning the possibility of conducting formal popular education over the radio" (Soto 13). [273] In the face of these problems, the *Abrebrecha* methodology was abandoned in 1988.

Taken together, these diverse initiatives can help us gain a sense of where the Catholic church stood in relation to participatory media and civil society in the 1980s. Unsurprisingly, there was no unified stance, but a range of positions manifested in the activities of different sectors of the church. At one end was NCTV, which was imbricated in the corporatist structure of the *puntofijista* system and willing to merge its public service mission with the capitalist commercial order. *Amavisión*, meanwhile, remained close to the traditional liberal model of public service initiatives that afforded little space for public participation in the production process and less still in the decision-making process. *SET-Video*, *Catia Primero*, and *Abrebrecha*, on the other hand, demonstrated that some sectors of the Catholic church continued to employ participatory media as a means of facilitating individual empowerment and

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[271]"*estimular el diálogo*"; "*revalorizando los saberes de vida construidos por las personas no escolarizadas*"

[272]Soto does not elaborate on the reasons why the name inspired this discontent. My presumption is that its bellicose connotation (of opening gaps in an enemy line) suggested a militant or revolutionary leftist ideology.; "*mostró su descontento por el nombre seleccionado, e incluso por algunas de las oraciones que aparecían en la cartilla*"

[273]"*mantenía una posición crítica, cuestionando la posibilidad de realizar educación popular formal a través de la radio*"

community self-management in line with a progressive Christian ethos. The short lifespan of *Abrebrecha*, however, suggests that the institutions facilitating these progressive initiatives were doubly constrained: first, by their reliance on support from entities operating within and supportive of the existing political-economic order; and second, by internal differences and/or misgivings over the extent to which political-economic power should be invested in civil society organizations controlled at the local level.

It seems likely that grassroots participatory media initiatives arose at an accelerated pace throughout the 1980s, though many would have been short lived and undocumented. Of those in the historical record, some continued to draw on leftist ideologies, though this influence was unattached to explicit political projects and had grown to encompass concerns, such as environmentalism, that were also preoccupations of more mainstream organizations like the neighborhood associations. Grassroots participatory media projects also continued to emerge from the *cineclub* movement, which continued to provide the most stable framework for Venezuela's nascent community and alternative media sector.

Projects of a militant leftist orientation included the *Teatro para Obreros (*Theater for Workers / T-POS), which emerged in 1984 from within La Vega's Utopia Active Community Group (*Grupo Activo y Comunitario Utopía*) to present works written, directed, and produced by community members and focused on social and cultural issues (Hernández 2005, 76).[274] Also of note is *La Piedrita* (The Little Stone), a community newspaper that appeared in the late 1980s and continued publishing for eight years. La Piedrita was attached to the La Piedrita Working Group (*Grupo de Trabajo La Piedrita*), a community organization that formed late in 1986 in a *barrio* called 23 de Enero (January 23rd) which bears a long and proud history of militant leftist organization and armed struggle. In addition to the newspaper, the Working Group organized an *Ernesto Guevara de la Serna* brigade, which used cultural activities in its social work with young people and was especially dedicated to painting murals in the highest and most

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[274]Hernández (2005) mentions two other theater groups: a "political and ideological group" (*grupo político e ideológico*) called *Metamorfosis-teatro* (Metamorphosis-theater) that operated in the 1970s, and *Triángulo* (Triangle), which maintained a site in La Pastora for its "direct and pedagogic-social theater" (*teatro directo y pedagógico-social*) (77). Though vague, his references suggest that these groups worked in a Brechtian mode but were not participatory in the sense understood by community media.

remote areas of the La Vega *barrio* (Fernandes 2010, 61-2).

One popular organization that expanded outwards from the *cineclub* model was the *Grupo Ombligo de Arte y Cultura Popular* (Navel Art and Popular Culture Group), which formed in La Pastora in 1981 and operated according to "the principle that art and expression should be in the function of neighborhood, cultural, and cooperative organization of the community".[275] Its projects included a *cineclub* dedicated to Super-eight and sixteen millimeter films, a Super-eight production workshop, "street workshops articulated in circuits", and the "Navel News Program of the *Barrio*" (*Noticiero Ombligo del Barrio*), about which the historical record appears, unfortunately, to offer no further details.[276] The *Grupo Ombligo* apparently influenced the formation, also in 1981, of a group in the neighboring district of Catia that called itself the *Precooperativa Mixta Taller Escuela Integral Arte y Expresión Comitei* [sic] (Mixed Workshop School Integral Art and Expression Precooperative Committee).[277] In addition to its *cineclub*, the *Precooperativa* operated a "cinema cooperative" (*cooperativa de cine*) and a "cooperative news programs" (*noticiero cooperativo*) (Hernández 2005; 74, 91).

These two groups influenced participatory media projects in La Puerta (Trujillo), and the latter also generated some activity in Las Minas de Baruta (Miranda), but they are of particular interest due to their innovations regarding the use of legally recognized organizational structures. The *Grupo Ombligo* promoted the use of the "cultural foundation, which many years later was the legal model partially adopted by community media organizations" under regulations passed during the Chávez

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275"*el principio de que el arte y la cultura deben estar en función de la organización vecinal, cultural y cooperativa de la comunidad*"

276Hernández does note, tantalizingly, that the Grupo Ombligo "[h]ad as a philosophical reference many concepts systematized with Venezuelan freemasonry, which served as a constructing guide for the communication and community articulation project as the initiating phase of a universal knowledge of reconciliation with the high and sacred" (74). This seems to explain the provenance of the group's name.; "*[t]uvo como referencia filosófica muchos conceptos sistematizados con la francomasonería venezolana, la cual se sirvió de guía constructora del proyecto de comunicación y articulación comunitaria como fase de inicación de un conocimiento universal de reconciliación con lo alto y sagrado*"; "*talleres callejeros articulados en circuítos*"

277Hernández does not explicitly state that the *Precooperativa* was the organization in question; this is my interpretation of his account.

administration.[278] The *Precooperativa*, meanwhile, experimented with the idea of "cultural cooperatives", a modification of the state sanctioned cooperative model which apparently involved establishing physical spaces that would serve as "centers of information and documentation" for more or less loosely affiliated teams of artists and facilitators, thus providing an archival and organizational nucleus for autonomous initiatives (*ibid.*).

The *Cine Móvil Huayra* collective united participatory communication with ecological concerns and played something of an articulating role in the 1980s and early 90s. [279] It originated in the late 1970s when a student hiking group (*grupo excursionista*) from the Camurí Grande (Vargas) campus of Simon Bolívar University (*Universidad Simon Bolívar* / USB) began producing radio content and constructing radio transmitters (Mujica 2013, 11). In 1980, the group formed a *cineclub,* called the *Cineforo Huayra*, that sought to combine screenings with audiovisual production (Hernández 2005, 66). This group began collaborating with *cineclubes* in the state of Lara on ecologically oriented audiovisual production. In relation to that project, in 1982 it participated in an unlicensed television broadcast using UHF channel 14 in Barquisimeto (100). In 1986, some of the participants separated from the USB hiking group and established the *Cineclub Móvil Huayra* (Huayra Mobile Cineclub) as an "itinerant brigade of community production".[280] *Cine Móvil Huayra* (as it came to be known) began working with the "ecological movement that was very strong in Tharma [sic; most likely Tarma (Vargas)]" (Mujica 2013, 11) and "initiated a series of productions on the biogeographic memory of the state of Lara" (Hernández 2005,

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278 "*fundación cultural, el cual muchos anos despues fue el modelo jurídico adoptado parcialmente por los medios comunitarios*"

279 Information related to *Cine Móvil Huayra* is primarily culled from Juan Manuel Hernández's historical account of Venezuelan community media (Hernández 2005). The text is poorly organized and lacking in relevant detail to the point of being difficult at times to interpret. It nonetheless offers a wealth of information that is unavailable elsewhere in print. I have cited it where I find it to be most trustworthy and have noted where I have not been entirely certain of my interpretation. The text is especially problematic in relation to *Cine Móvil Huayra*, however, because Hernández was a principal member of that collective. Between the difficulty of the text and the potential for Hernández's bias or self interest, it is difficult to judge the validity of his presentation of *Cine Móvil Huayra* as a node within the nascent community and alternative media movement of the 1980s and early 90s. I have attempted to present only factual claims and to suggest only the possibility of linkages, even where Hernández depicts them in bolder terms. Needless to say, further research is merited.

280 "*brigada itinerante de producción comunitaria*"

104). It also established a presence in the Los Magallanes *barrio* of Catia in Caracas. During this period the collective made contact with TV Caricuao and the *Precooperativa* (75). By the late 1980s the group had taken on the role of educators in participatory communication (Mujica 2013, 11).

Participatory Media After the Caracazo

In 1988, an observer of the Venezuelan participatory media sector, noting a decade of growth and an increasing tendency toward interconnection, might have projected increasing consolidation and the birth of a cohesive and self-defined movement. They would not have been entirely wrong, as a movement was indeed in the making, but it would not include many of the more prominent and seemingly most promising entities then in existence. For, as we have seen, the economic crisis of the 1980s tended to accelerate existent tendencies toward civil society organization, especially at the local level, but Pérez's reelection and embrace of neoliberalism forced proponents to go one step further and contextualize their endorsement of civil society within a more robust vision for a workable political economy, and there were three general tendencies. Some saw new forms of civil society as the key to a reorganized corporatist structure. Others saw civil society as tethered to the commercial sector within a neoliberal order. Still others saw civil society as the mechanism for a more participatory mode of self-governance.

Proponents of participatory media faced this same choice, though they did not necessarily make it knowingly. Organizations operating within neighborhood associations shared the fate of the neighborhood movement itself, and we have seen that the movement fell into decline following a sharp split in its leadership over the issue outlined above. We have also seen how both *Teleboconó* and *Niños Cantores TV,* each in its different way, accommodated themselves to a position of alterity vis-a-vis the increasingly commercialized media sector of the neoliberal order.[281] Of particular interest in this regard is the explanation that Urribarrí (2009) offers for the decline of not only *Construyamos Juntos* and related initiatives, but of the entire Venezuelan participatory media sector in the 1990s:

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[281] For reviews of the commercialization of radio in the late 1980s and television in the 80s and 90s, see Bisbal (1991) and Hernández (1999), respectively.

During the decade of the eighties, under the impact produced by the so-called "black friday" [when the currency was drastically devalued in 1983], this ample movement germinated and was fecund, but when the macroeconomic adjustment measures made themselves felt with force in the nineties, among other factors, these initiatives began losing vigor. As in other countries of the region, the community organizations and NGOs that gave them sustenance and amplification began to execute some social programs convened by the State with multilateral entities, which involved carrying out demanding activities of an administrative character. As a consequence of this situation, a great part of the time and energies of the organizations were thrown into this type of work, to the detriment of the promotion of programs that had emerged from within them. (159) [282]

Her reasoning, in other words, is that the vital energies of a nascent movement were sapped by its incorporation into a globalizing neoliberal order. We should note here the degree to which her statement overlaps with Blanco's comments about the negative effects on *TV Caricuao* that resulted from its reliance on state funding. Taken together, the histories of these various organizations do not seem to suggest that participatory media projects are stymied by a particularly *neoliberal* bureaucracy, as Urribarrí would have it, but that it is actually their dependent incorporation into a *liberal* order (of whichever type) that places decision-making authority not in the hands of the communities they are meant to serve, but within a system accountable to a political economy controlled by elites (whether they be corporate entities, as in *puntofijismo*, or corporations and those serving their interests, as in neoliberalism).

Supporting this interpretation is the fact that Urribarrí overextends her analysis to the entirety of the participatory media sector. While the more prominent liberal participatory media initiatives faded away during the 1990s, that decade actually saw the consolidation of a true community and alternative media movement. This movement was not entirely devoid of influence from liberal actors, but its most vigorous members would prove to be grassroots organizations that had avoided forming dependent relationships with any larger institutions. Some of these, especially in Caracas, advanced an explicitly

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[282]"*Durante la decada de los ochenta, bajo el impacto que produjo el llamado "viernes negro", este amplio movimiento germinó y fue fecundo, pero cuando las medidas de ajuste macroeconómico se hicieron sentir con fuerza al inicio de los años noventa, entre otros factores, estas iniciativas fueron perdiendo vigor. Como en otros paises de la región, las organizaciones comunitarias y ONG que les daban sustento y proyección comenzaron a ejecutar algunos programas sociales convenidos por el Estado con los entes multilaterales, lo cual implicó la realización de exigentes actividades de carácter administrativo. Como consecuencia de esta situación, gran parte del tiempo y de las energías de las organizaciones se volcaron hacia este tipo de trabajo, en desmedro de la promoción de programas surgidos de su propio seno.*"

counter-hegemonic, leftist ideology from the outset. Others, however, only formed a political economic critique as a result of their participation within the community and alternative media movement. Significantly, these positions were not immediately reconciled within the consolidating movement and led to deep fissures that would shape the movement's evolution, as well as related policies and practices of the Chávez administration. We can better understand these later developments by first discussing some general tendencies of the sector during the 1990s and then examining the case histories of several important participatory media initiatives.

As Venezuela's economic crisis evolved into a full fledged political crisis during the early 1990s, participatory media, especially in Caracas, tended to revert to its earlier association with the political left. In fact, despite the aura of legitimation that the neighborhood movement and initiatives like *Teleboconó* had cast on participatory media throughout the 1980s, it had never fully shaken this association. For instance, a 1989 review of communications proposals in electoral platforms found that MAS was the only one of the three major political parties to mention community media (Catalá 1989, 51-5). Meanwhile, Blanco, of *TV Caricuao*, recalled "a debate during the end of the 80s in the El Nacional newspaper, where they sought to question and satanize community television[,] relating it with guerrilla movements" (Mujica 2, n1).[283] This lingering perception was exacerbated, however, by the heightened climate of protest and rebellion in the period that included the Caracazo of February 1989 and the failed coup attempts of 1992, which generally energized and radicalized the Venezuelan left and specifically emboldened groups that saw community media as a tool for resistance, community organization, and progressive political change.

The Caracazo itself reinforced the need for alternative media outlets to provide a popular voice. As Blanco recounts:

> ...very few community media outlets existed at that time, [so] it was up to us [at *TV Caricuao*] to grab the camera and take the street and record what we could of what was

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[283]"*un debate a finales de los años 80 en el diario Nacional, donde buscaban cuestionar y satanizar a la televisión comunitaria[,] relacionándola con movimientos guerrilleros*"

happening... and apart from that[,] employees of some private television channels, that knew what we did, clandestinely passed us material that the commercial channels were going to disappear. (Mujica 8-9)[284]

At the same time, Liliane Blazer, a filmmaker working with a longstanding alternative cinema organization called *Cotraincine*, produced a documentary of the events, called "February 27" (*27 de febrero*), that "was quite a milestone for popular alternative media outlets" (Hernández 2005, 87) and would circulate in *cineforos* and other popular circuits for years to come.[285]

The climate of crisis also impelled a sense of urgency that led to the creation of important new groups. For example, the *Cineclub Carreteros* (Highway Riders Cineclub) formed in 1989 to link the communities that lay along a highway from Caracas to the coastal city of La Guaira. On of its early projects was the "Yulimar Reyes creativity workshop" (*taller de creatividad Yulimar Reyes*), so named in honor of the first victim of the Caracazo (83). In 1990 the Venezuelan Evangelical Center for Justice (*Centro Evangélico Venezolano por la Justicia* / CEVEJ) was established in the Cuartel sector of Catia "to promote the participation of evangelical Christians in the face of the national situation".[286] CEVEJ facilitated an alternative press initiative as well as a *cineclub,* which linked it to other popular communication groups in the area (78).

Some of the most militant activists to emerge during this period worked with community radio, a medium which has so far appeared in our historical review only in relation to IRFA. Gonzalez, writing in 2001, notes that community radio "initiatives and projects have been around for decades, although few have had a significant influence beyond the sphere of their respective communities" (221).[287] This began

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284 "*...muy pocas comunitarias existían en el momento, [así que] nos tocó [a TV Caricuao] agarrar la cámara y tomar la calle y grabar todo lo que podíamos de lo que estaba pasando...y aparte que empleados de algunos canales de televisión privados, que sabían lo que nosotros hacíamos, nos hicieron llegar algunos materiales clandestinamente que los canales comerciales iban a desaparecer.*"

285 "*fue todo un hito para los medios alternativos populares*"

286 "*por promover la participacion de los cristianos evangelicos frente al acontecer nacional*"

287 Hernández (2005) references two stations, *Radio de Sanare* and *Radio Libre* in Tocuyo, which operated in Lara during the 1980s, but it is unclear if the stations themselves or only certain programs were participatory (100). Leal identifies the first community radio station in Zulia as Miranda 91.7 FM, which broadcast in the La Limpia sector of Maracaibo from 1985 until 2000, when it ceased broadcasting due to a lack of funds (57).; "*desde hace decadas se han sucedido las iniciativas y proyectos, si bien pocos han tenido una influenda significativa mas alla del ambito de las respectivas comunidades*"

to change in the early 1990s, however, when a group in Catia employed a mobile speaker system (*radioparlante*) to broadcast to the local community. As a result of the deepening crisis, especially the attempted coups of 1991, facilitators of this experience joined other activists to form "a loose collection of radio producers known as [Citizens Band]", which held workshops in Catia, Caricuao, and La Vega, with the latter two leading to the formation of *Radio Perola* and *Radio Activa La Vega* in those sectors (Fernandes 2010; 165, 239). Among those involved in *Radio Perola* were members of the *Cineclub Cara en Contra,* who saw community radio as a platform for their "old dream" (*viejo sueño*) of producing a community news program (Hernández 2005, 87). Both *Radio Perola* and *Radio Activa La Vega* also began using mobile speaker systems, but in the mid to late 90s these and other stations began broadcasting on the FM band using unlicensed 13 volt transmitters (Fernandes 210, 165). One longtime community media activist estimated that there were 30 such clandestine radio stations in Caracas in the 1990s (Sosa 2011).

Little detail, it seems, has so far been recorded regarding those early years of community radio in Caracas, but what is clear is that current members of the *chavista* community and alternative media movement have memorialized it as an era of clandestine resistance and violent state repression. Often repeated, for example, is that practitioners would carry their small transmitter through the streets on a bicycle so that authorities would not be able to track down the source of the signal. *Radio Perola* was twice shut down during Caldera's administration (Fernandes 2010, 165), but the stakes of being caught were apparently much higher. Although not directly involved in radio, one resident of Caracas who became a community media activist toward the end of that era articulates the collective memory as follows:

> When you had a radio here, and what interested you was community organization, the organization of your community to achieve vindicating objectives... that was a crime.... They took the equipment from you, they put you in prison, and those that were... more leaders, they disappeared them..... Before '98, you put up a community radio station, and believe me, that when they dragged you out, [when] they grabbed you, they put you in prison. I'm going to tell you colloquially, a [?] fell on you, we said they gave you *una diabla* [lit. "a female devil", a severe beating purposefully carried out to approach but

> avoid permanent injury or death]... an ass kicking.... They took your equipment, and they disappeared many comrades, they killed them.... For that. Just for that. (Méndez 2011) [288]

Certainly further investigation is in order, but this perception testifies to the polarizing political climate of the era and the increasing use of community media by an emboldened and increasingly radical left. For example, one early radio station, *Radio Catia Libre* (Radio Free Catia), grew out of a collective called *Onda Libre* (Free Wave), whose "many years working in popular telecommunications" included collaboration with the Committee of Anarchist Relations (*Comité de Relaciones Anarquistas* / CRA).[289] *El Liberatario* (The Libertarian), a CRA periodical that promoted "self-management as a form of production and … a society free of the State and the market", appeared on newstands in 1995 (Hernández 2005, 84; Raydan 2007).[290]

One of the most important initiatives to emerge in the immediate wake of the Caracazo was the *Casa de la Cultura Simón Rodríguez* (Simón Rodríguez Culture House), which would ultimately give rise to Venezuela's most famous community media outlet, *Catia TVe*. The *Casa de la Cultura* was established in the Las Barracas Simón Rodríguez *barrio* of the Manicomio sector of La Pastora. We have already reviewed two groups, the *El Pastoreño* community newspaper and the *Grupo Ombligo* art collective, that were also based in the parish of La Pastora. A brief comparison with the former, which published as late as 1988, will help contextualize the emergence of the Cultural House and further delineate the two tendencies of participatory media that we have so far identified.

As mentioned above, *El Pastoreño* was founded in 1978 with the self proclaimed mission of conserving and rescuing the cultural heritage of La Pastora, which was incorporated as a parish of

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288"*Cuando tu tenías aquí una radio, que a tí lo que te interesaba era la organización comunitaria, la organización de tu comunidad para lograr los objetivos reivindicativos… eso era un delito…. Te quitaban los equipos, te metían preso, y los que eran … más lideres, los desaparecían.... Antes de '98, tu montas una radio comunitaria, y creeme, que cuando te rastreaban, [cuando] te agarraban, te metían preso. Te lo voy a decir coloquialmente, te caía una [?], nosotros decíamos, te daban una diabla… una coñaza.... Te quitaban los equipos, y a muchos camaradas los desaperecían, los mataban…. Por eso. Solo por eso.*"

289It seems likely that *Radio Catia Libre* is the station referenced by Fernandes that began using the mobile speaker system in 1992 or 93, but I am unable to confirm the link.

290*El Libertario* continues to exist as an online magazine that is highly critical of the Bolivarian government.; "*bastantes años trabajando en telecomunicación popular*"; "*la autogestión como forma de producción y ... una sociedad libre del Estado y el mercado*"

Caracas in 1889 and whose central sector features architecture form the colonial era. The origins of the Las Barracas Simón Rodríguez *barrio* in the Manicomio sector of the same parish came much later. In the 1950s, 150 families that had migrated from rural states were evicted by the local government from where they had originally settled and given temporary barracks (*barracas*) next to a psychiatric hospital (*manicomio*), with the promise of permanent homes in a soon-to-be constructed apartment building. Those apartments were given to other migrants in 1961, leaving the residents of the *barracas* to construct a *barrio* around their "provisional" metal cabins (Schiller 77-8). In all likelihood, the adapted rural traditions of these migrants and their improvised architecture were not elements of the cultural heritage that *El Pastoreño* set out to rescue in 1978. Rather, considering that by the 1980s the Manicomio sector had become "wracked by violence and drug trafficking" (*ibid.*), the children and grandchildren of the migrants were probably a principal part of the perceived threat.[291]

In any case, in 1989 a group of young residents of the Barracas *barrio* decided that a Corpomercadeo building which had been looted during the Caracazo and then abandoned would make a good "practice space for their newly formed *gaita* band", so they set about cleaning it up and furnishing it (79, Márquez 2005).[292] In so doing, they had "to confront other youths from the *barrio* that were into drugs and those things" who were also intent on using the abandoned space.[293] They soon decided, however, that rather than confronting these youths, they should try to motivate them to become involved in cultural activities. Ricardo Márquez, one of the founding members, recounts that:

> ...we held an assembly and the community decided that we would function in this space and so we founded the Simón Rodríguez Cultural House.... This space was rapidly converted as a small mayor's office for the *barrio*, the community met there once a week religiously to talk about everything. Planning activities, social work, talking about politics, etc., in sum, everything that interested the community. We organized many cultural and

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[291]As Schiller notes, in that period Manicomio "became known locally as 'the little Hong Kong,' a reference to the intense violence portrayed in Hong Kong action films that were broadcast on Venezuelan commercial television" (78).

[292]The Agricultural Marketing Corporation (*Corporación de Mercadeo Agrícola / Corpomercadeo*), was a state owned entity whose purpose was to make subsidized foodstuffs available to impoverished sectors. It was reputed to be highly corrupt (see Comenárez 2010).
Gaita is a genre of Venezuelan folk music.

[293]"*para enfrentar a otros jóvenes del barrio que andaban en la droga y esas cosas*"

social activities, people from other sectors and nearby *barrios* even participated, all this always framed by our political perspective which was never absent. (*ibid.*).[294]

The group members had begun to form their political perspective while attending the Luís Espelozón high school, located in the neighboring district of Catia, which had a long tradition of student activism. As Marquéz explains, "[o]ur group had a political militancy close to the PRV and other left movements and we began to do political work in the *barrio*" (Márquez).[295]

This alignment led the group to reject linking their project to the patronage networks of AD and COPEI, which left them vulnerable in relation to their use of the abandoned building. They began to face resistance from various official bodies, including the "civil authorities, parish council, [and] state security agencies" (Catia TVe 2006).[296] Toward the middle of 1989:

> ...the repression started, they raided us, some members were detained, they began to intimidate, it was tough[.] [A]t that time the mayor was Claudio Fermín and Antonio Ledezma [was] Governor of the Federal District, both members of AD, Ledezma the worst[.] [T]hey persecuted us, because during the Fourth Republic all forms of community organization were seen in a bad light by the authorities. (Márquez)[297]

In this regard, Márquez offers an anecdote that reveals the pervasive extent of the *puntofijista* corporatist power structure. The Ministry of the Family had agreed to provide the Cultural House with funding to operate a summer camp for 150 children living in the *barrio*. Once the group had finished planning, however, the Ministry backed out, forcing the community to call an emergency assembly and come up with sufficient funding to carry the project forward. Márquez recalled that "[m]uch later we found out that an AD member from the barrio had gone to the ministry and sabotaged the initiative" (*ibid.*).[298]

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[294]"*hicimos una asamblea y la comunidad decidió que nosotros funcionáramos en este espacio y así fundamos la Casa Cultural Simón Rodríguez... Este espacio se convirtió rápidamente como una pequeña alcaldía del barrio, la comunidad se reunía una vez a la semana religiosamente para hablar de todo. Planificando actividades, trabajo social, hablar de política, etcétera, en fin, todo lo que le interesaba a la comunidad. Organizamos muchas actividades culturales y sociales, inclusive participaba gente de otros sectores y barrios aledaños, todo esto siempre enmarcado en nuestra perspectiva política que nunca estuvo ausente.*"

[295]"[n]*uestro grupo tuvo una militancia política cercana al PRV y otros movimientos de izquierda y empezamos a hacer trabajo político en el barrio*"

[296]"*jefatura civil, junta parroquial, [y] cuerpos de seguridad del estado*"

[297]"*...comenzó la represión, nos allanaron, algunos compañeros fueron detenidos, nos empezaron a intimidar, fue duro[.] [E]n aquel momento el alcalde era Claudio Fermín y Antonio Ledezma [era] Gobernador del Distrito Federal, ambos adecos, Ledezma el peor[.] [N]os perseguían, porque durante la IV República toda forma de organización comunitaria era vista con malos ojos por las autoridades.*"

[298]"[m]*ucho después nos enteramos que un adeco del barrio había ido al ministerio y saboteó la iniciativa*"

The members of the Cultural House decided to multiply their activities in the community, in order to increase their support but also to give them "another front of struggle" from which to continue their work if they were evicted from their physical space (Catia TVe 2006). [299] One of the activities they pursued was the formation of a *cineclub*. One of the members had "forged connections with militant leftist students at [UCV], some of whom were active in a Marxist-Leninist political party" called Red Flag (*Bandera Roja*) (Schiller 79). These students encouraged the Cultural House to contact FEVEC, who subsidized the purchase of a 16mm projector and connected the Cultural House with CONAC and its Nucleus of Cinematographic Support, which provided 16mm films. [300] Thus, in 1991 the *Cineclub Manicomio* was born.[301]

The Manicomio district happened to have "one of the few covered athletic courts that exist in the Caracas' popular barrios" and this is where the *Cineclub Manicomio* decided to hold its screenings on Friday and Saturday nights.[302] They hung an approximately twelve meter wide sheet from the roof of the complex, which also protected the audience from rain as it sat on the outdoor bleachers (Márquez). The content of those screenings was limited to what CONAC made available on 16mm and therefore featured "mostly products of the New Latin American film movements of the 1960s" and other "material marked by a concern with Latin American experiences of poverty and dispossession" (Schiller 80). Despite these limits, the *cineclub* soon became a primary focus of the Cultural House. As a result of its steady activity, in 1993 the *cineclub* was invited to host a premier screening of a new Venezuelan film called "Shoot to Kill" (*Disparen para matar*) whose plot focused on violence in the *barrios* of Caracas. The film's promotors provided the projection equipment for the screening, which proved to be the first time that the members of the *Cineclub Manicomio* had seen a video projector (Márquez).

Serendipitously, this exposure to a new technology coincided with a drastic shift in the political

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[299]"*otro frente de lucha*"

[300]Márquez (2005) refers to CONAC's "Cinema Board" (*Dirección de Cine*), whereas Hernández (2005) refers to the Nucleus of Cinematographic Support (86).

[301]The word *manicomio* can be translated as "psychiatric hospital", but can also take on the connotations of "madhouse".

[302]"*una de las pocas canchas deportivas techadas que existen en los barrios populares de Caracas*"

context of the group's activity. As Márquez recalled:

> ...we had participated in the [failed] coup [attempt led by Chávez] of the fourth of February of 1992 in the *barrio* and they were going around looking for us. We were almost in a situation of clandestinity, but when there were the elections for mayor that Aristóbulo Istúriz won, the neighbors asked us if we would be table monitors and we went there without knowing much about what it involved. But when the divvying up of votes between [AD] and [COPEI] started, we started making a scene that ended in a brawl, and this was happening in other electoral centers in the city's other popular zones.... [O]ur attitude was known to the people of *Causa R*, [and] days after those elections a recently elected council member from *Causa R* called us and invited us to work with them in the cultural part of the mayor's office of Caracas. (Márquez)[303]

Thus, when Istúriz took office in 1993, the members of the Cultural House became part of the "cultural commission of the Office of the Mayor" (*comisión de cultura de la Alcaldía*), having gone from hunted pariahs to trusted advisors in less than a year. Based on their experience with "Shoot to Kill", the group's first suggestion was for the municipal government to purchase video projectors and lend them out to *cineclubes* in the *barrios*. The government did just that and the *Cineclub Manicomio* acquired a video projector.

One important consequence of this technological shift, from film to video, was the capacity to show a much wider range of material. The *cineclub* could, for instance, screen contemporary Venezuelan productions, such as "February 27" (Blazer's documentary on the Caracazo), though these drew significantly smaller crowds than pirated copies of Hollywood films. In the eyes of the organizers, however, the value of the latter was undercut by their dubious ideological messaging. To compensate, the*y* employed the *videoforo* model in an attempt to generate critical analysis (Eekhout and Fuentes 2001, 169; cited in Schiller 80).

An even more important consequence of the shift from film to video was the ability for the

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303.*...habíamos participado en el golpe del 4 de febrero del 1992 en el barrio y nos andaban buscando. Estábamos casi en una situación de clandestinidad, pero cuando hubo las elecciones para alcalde que ganó Aristóbulo Istúriz, los vecinos nos pidieron que fuéramos testigos de mesa y allí fuimos sin saber mucho como era la cosa. Pero cuando empezó la repartidera de los votos entre Acción Democrática y Copey, nosotros armamos un escándalo que terminó en una trifulca, y esto estaba pasando en otros centros electorales en otras zonas populares de la ciudad.... [N]uestra actitud fue conocida por la gente de la Causa R, [y] días después de esas elecciones nos llamó un concejal de la Causa R recién electo y nos invitó a trabajar con ellos en la parte cultural de la alcaldía de Caracas.*

cineclub to project material that it had shot within the community. In 1992 Ricardo had borrowed a VHS

camera from a friend and over the next several years the *cineclub* "documented local religious, sports, and

musical events" in the *barrio* (Schiller 80). The group eventually obtained funds from either CONAC or

the city's Cultural Commission to purchase a hi8 camera of their own. [304] In mid-1995 the group decided to

project their recording of a community religious procession (*La Paradura del Niño*) that had been

organized by the Cultural House. They publicized the screening but were shocked when, instead of the 80

or 100 people that regularly attended their events, over 1,000 people arrived to view the unedited

material. The *cineclub* organizers later recalled that "[t]his really impressed us, since the people

demonstrated that day that they did want to be the protagonist of their history but it had never been

permitted to them. This day was born the dream of organizing a TV channel so that the people could see

themselves" (Catia TVe 2006). [305]

The *Cineclub Manicomio* not only began screening more of the material they recorded, but they

also expanded the scope of their recordings and their methods of presentation. As Márquez recalled:

> We began to interview the people of the barrio with a little camera, we began to do
> exposés about problems in the community, we did reports, and when Fridays arrived we
> transmitted the baseball games on a big screen as well as the videos that we made and
> many people came to see the games on the big screen and filled the bleachers. When the
> intervals with propaganda came we cut and transmitted the videos that we were making.
> (Márquez)[306]

The *cineclub* began putting more and more energy into video production and less emphasis on screening

material produced outside the community. Meanwhile, Istúriz had agreed to provide 25 million *bolívares*

(Bs) in order to construct a new building for the Cultural House, but the project stalled after the old

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304Schiller attributes the funding for the group's first camera (without identifying the format) to the Cultural
  Commission (81). Márquez (historia de Catia TVe 2006) and Mujica (12) (who identify the format) attribute the
  funding to CONAC.
305"*[e]sto nos impresionó muchísimo, pues la gente demostró ese día que si quería ser protagonista de su historia
  pero jamás se lo habían permitido. Este día nació el sueño de organizar un canal de TV para que la gente
  pudiera verse*"
306"*Comenzamos a entrevistar a la gente del barrio con una camarita, comenzamos a hacer denuncias sobre
  problemas de la comunidad, hacíamos reportajes y cuando llegaba el viernes transmitíamos los partidos de
  baseball en pantalla grande también los videos que nosotros hacíamos y venía mucha gente a ver los juegos en
  pantalla grande se llenaban las gradas. Cuando venían los intervalos con propaganda cortábamos y
  transmitíamos los videos que nosotros hacíamos.*"

building was demolished (historia de Catia TVe 2006, Márquez). Then Ledezma, the group's old nemesis, replaced Istúriz as municipal mayor in early 1996 and, according to Marquéz, "said that he wasn't going to construct any culture house for some guerrillas".[307] The group was thus left without a physical space of their own, though they refused to return the video projector that technically belonged to the local government and which Ledezma was demanding (*ibid.*).[308]

One manifestation of the group's wholesale shift to video was the creation, in 1996, of the Magic Lantern Center for Cinematographic Culture (*Centro de Cultura Cinematográfica Linterna Mágica*), whose goal was "to make audiovisual works, but with children" (Catia TVe 2006; Márquez).[309] Around this same time the group began thinking seriously about how they might create a television station. Márquez became enthusiastic about creating a single channel cable network:

> ...I thought of a closed circuit, passing conduit through all the streets of the barrio and connecting all the houses by cable and in my mom's house making a studio so that there some members of the community would give classes or talks, etc. They told me that was crazy, that that was very difficult. (*ibid.*)[310]

Before discussing how the television project actually came into being, we should add some context to the history that we have just reviewed.

We have seen that one important outcome of the link between the founders of the Cultural House and the group of militant UCV students was the latter's suggestion to approach FEVEC for assistance with launching a *cineclub* in 1991. A second important outcome, however, was the arrival, in 1992, of Blanca Eekhout, a Red Flag activist who had come from a middle class family in the small city of Acarigua (Portuguesa) to study in Caracas. Eekhout became active in the *cineclub* and within a few months had

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307 "*dijo que él no iba a construir ninguna casa de la cultura a unos guerrilleros*"

308 The group continued to organize around the completion of the new space; it held a public assembly on the issue on January 15, 1998 (historia de Catia TVe 2006).

309 The text authored by CatiaTVe gives 1996 as the founding year, whereas Marquéz states that the civil association (*asociación civil*) was founded in 1998. It may be that the project began in 1996 but the legal organization was not created until 1998, or one of the dates may simply have been given in error. I have used 1996 under the assumption that it is more likely accurate, but verification is warranted.

310 "*...pensé en un circuito cerrado, pasando una tubería por todas las calles del barrio y cableando todas las casas y en la casa de mi mamá hacer un estudio para que allí algunos miembros de la comunidad impartieran clases o dieran charlas etcétera. Me dijeron que estaba loco, que eso era muy difícil.*"

moved to Manicomio, where she lived for the next ten years (Schiller 81). Originally a student of

economics, Eekhout eventually graduated with an arts degree and a concentration in cinema (Marquéz

2005). The 600 page thesis that she co-authored with another UCV student was entitled "Cine de Barrio:

The audiovisual discourse produced by the Manicomio Film Club between 1992-1999".[311] In addition to

providing a history and analysis of the *Cineclub Manicomio*, the thesis "reviews global efforts to

democratize communication... and theorizes the emergence of alternative communication in Venezuela"

(Schiller 81).

Eekhout brought a valuable theoretical framework to the group's activities. As Márquez

explained: "With the incorporation of Blanca into our group, we began to reflect much more on

communication. We had the practical things down, but Blanca understood the theory. She was really

thinking about how the media worked…" (Schiller 82). Eekhout's theoretical and historical

contextualization of the *Cineclub Manicomio* is evident in her summary of the group's evolution:

> A leftist, Aristobulo Isturis [sic], won elections to become mayor of Caracas in 1993. He is
> black. He was a teacher by profession. He was in the Congress, and he used that platform
> to defend the people involved in the uprising. His presence in the municipal office gave the
> CineClubs and other popular movements a great deal of support. Before 1993 we were
> working with a 16mm projector, and there were not a lot of films available. We'd show the
> same films over and over. It was fine, it was still collective, it was still a break with the
> atomization of people watching TV in their homes, but under Isturis [sic] we got a video
> projector and that gave us a chance to show so much more material. But more important
> than the video projector was that we got a camera. People started making videos with no
> training. Attendance at our events exploded. People were now seeing themselves on
> television. The first videos were just registries. People would tape the street corner, the
> dog on the corner, the people hanging out on the corner, the local shop, the local graffiti.
> The next step was films about local sporting events, or assemblies, or parties. My college
> thesis was on 'barrio cinema', the internal discourses and how barrio events are weaved
> through the cinema. The next step in the process was decisive: the activists in the struggle
> for water, in the 'asamblea popular del agua' [popular water assembly], began to use film
> as a tool for their struggle. The camera became a weapon: we would tape officials coming
> to the community and making promises, and use the film to hold them accountable. This
> film movement started to become the cables of a network to connect the community. A
> network of *barrio* news was created, based on creating and passing these films." (Podur
> 2004)

311In Latin America, it is common practice for the equivalent of a US undergraduate degree to require five years of
study and a substantial thesis paper, although 600 pages is an extraordinary length. Eekhout's co-author, Hectora
Fuentes, would later play a role in the launch of *Telesur*, a satellite television channel spearheaded by Venezuela's
Bolivarian government and co-sponsored by various other Latin American governments (Schiller 82).

Eekhout's summary suggests several connections that are worth expanding here and investigating further. First, as discussed above, Istúriz's most significant civil society innovation during his mayoral administration was the introduction of "water advisory councils" as a conduit for citizens to inform the government's provision of services. When she references the "popular water assembly", Eekhout is likely referring to these councils, which manifested a Gramscian tendency toward a civil state and served as a prototype for Bolivarian policy initiatives under Chávez. We can see, then, that already in the mid-1990s Eekhout and others in the *Cineclub Manicomio* were envisioning community media as one component of a larger civil society apparatus that would facilitate popular participation in the decision-making processes of the state.

Perhaps less evident are the historical linkages suggested by Eekhout's encapsulation, but the use of video to hold officials to their promises regarding municipal water service, as well the idea of "a network of barrio news" established by "passing" copies of videos, seem to have been drawn directly from *SET-Video*. There is reason to believe that this was not merely coincidental. Lying evident but so far latent in our history of Venezuelan participatory media is the fact that the relatively small parish of La Pastora and the larger neighboring parish of Catia have been the site of a disproportionate number of the initiatives so far reviewed.[312] In the early 1990s groups like CEVEJ, *Onda Libre*, the *Cineclub*

312The *El Pastoreño* newspaper (1978), the *Grupo Ombligo* (1981), and the *Cineclub Manicomio* (1991) were all based in La Pastora. The *Precooperativa* (1983) and *Radio Catia Libre* (1992?) were both based in Catia, and *Cinemobíl Huayra* established a presence in the Los Magallanes sector of Catia (early 1980s). We have also seen that Catia was home to a high school with a long history of student activism; that *Causa R* chose Catia as the site for its organizational efforts (1970s) and established a community organization called *Pro Catia (*which operated until 1983); that *Catia Primero*, a community organization sponsored by CESAP that published a community newspaper of the same name, was established in the Los Magallanes sector of Catia (1986); and that CEVEJ and its communicational projects were based in Catia (1990).

In an attempt to add some explanatory context, we might note that La Pastora and Catia belong to Libertador, the largest and historically most impoverished of the municipalities that make up the city of Caracas proper, but one that includes or is proximate to important sites of political power and cultural expression. Compared to residents of the arguably more impoverished and precarious *barrios* on the steep hillsides surrounding the city, or to areas like Caricuao, which was previously a separate town lying at some distance from the city center and which has only relatively recently been incorporated into the expanding metropolis as something like a "bedroom community", residents of Libertador enjoy easier access to certain of the city's resources and administrative organs. Of course, the wealthier municipalities of Caracas, such as Chacao, have exponentially more resources and privileged access to authorities, but also a less critical need for community organization. The suggestion, in other words, is that Catia and La Pastora occupy something of a "sweet spot" where the urgency of community organization has been matched by its feasibility. This notion requires further scrutiny, especially when we

Manicomio, the CRA, and *Cinemóbil Huayra*, among others, were all interacting within the same geographic area (Hernández 2005, 78). In the 1980s, the facilitators of *SET-Video* had offered video courses in Barquisimeto and Caracas, where Maryknoll missionaries were also active. The project continued to operate in Barinas until the mid-1990s, suggesting that its presence in these other urban centers may also have continued (80; Ramírez et al. 145, 151). More importantly, however, in the early to mid-90s the *SET-Video* project was "revitalized in Catia" by *Cinemóbil Huayra*, which was simultaneously working in both Catia and rural areas in Lara to promote the concept of the " *barrio* news program" (*noticierio del barrio*) that had been developed in Catia and La Pastora during the early 80s by the *Grupo Ombligo* and the *Precooperativa* (Hernández 2005; 81-2, 101). The point requires further investigation, but it seems likely that techniques which had been developed in the 1980s, especially those which had proved successful by *SET-Video* in Barinas, were transferred to *Cineclub Manicomio* by the efforts of *Cinemóbil Huayra*, if not other groups, and perhaps in conjunction with Eekhout's research project.

Catia in the early 1990s appears to have been a vital nucleus of participatory media production in what would become a national community and alternative media movement. To get a sense of how this national movement ultimately came together, we will turn our attention back outside of Caracas. From this point forward, we will focus even more exclusively on video and television than we have so far. In part, this is a pragmatic choice, as a thorough history of Venezuela's proliferating participatory media initiatives during the 1990s would be daunting. Happily, such a history is not necessary for our purposes, since our more limited emphasis on audiovisual initiatives will more than sufficiently illustrate the consolidation of the national movement and the evolution of its collective vision of civil society. In fact, since video production and television broadcasting are more resource intensive relative to other participatory media platforms, these activities are more visibly dependent on the broader political

consider that the centrality of these areas may not explain a greater abundance of community organization so much as a greater probability of it being included in the historical record.

economy and thus bring into greater relief those issues that most concern us, namely the organization of civil society and its relation to the state and the economy.

The history of *Teletambores*, a community television station in the central, industrial city of Maracay (Aragua), begins in the 1980s. Toward the end of that decade two teenagers named Leo Briceño and Moises "Chicho" Flores began participating in the *Cineclub Yaracuy*, which was based in the Rio Blanco barrio on the outskirts of the city. The *cineclub* screened what Briceño referred to as "critical cinema... of a cultural, educational, community, and political character" (Briceño 2011). [313] Flores recalled projecting Venezuelan documentaries provided by CONAC as well as "movies from the Venezuelan cinema that weren't transmitted on television, that weren't commercial but *were* good cinema", but the *cineclub* also "really accompanied the international solidarity with Central American countries" by showing documentaries on their political situation and US imperial intervention (Flores 2011). [314] Until it fell dormant at some point in the early 1990s, the *Cineclub Yaracuy* facilitated *cine* and *videoforos* not only in Maracay, but throughout the state.

Meanwhile, some residents of Maracay had travelled to Nicaragua in the 1980s to support the Sandinista revolution. Many returned to Venezuela following the Sandinistas' electoral loss in 1990 and some of them told friends from Nicaragua about the increasingly dynamic political climate in their home country. This attracted a Belgian named Thierry Deronne who had graduated with a degree in communications in 1985 and spent the next three years in Nicaragua facilitating workshops in popular video production (ibid., Deronne 2009, 39). Deronne arrived in Venezuela in 1993 or 94 and, along with a group of Venezuelans that included Briceño and Flores, set up the *Escuela Popular de Cine de Maracay* (Popular Cinema School of Maracay). The content produced in *Escuela Popular* workshops was primarily shown in *cineclubes*, but the organizers grew frustrated with such a restricted audience. Just like the organizers of the *Cineclub Manicomio*, they became increasingly focused on "the dream of how to arrive

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313"*cine crítico... de carácter cultural, educativo, comunitario, y político*"
314"*peliculas del cine venezolano que no se transmitía por la televisora, que no era comercial pero sí era buen cine*"; "*acompañó mucho la solidaridad internacional con los países centroamericanos*"

massively in the communities through a community media outlet" (Briceño 2011). [315]

With its deep connection to Sandinistan experiences of popular communication, the *Escuela Popular* was even more predisposed than the nucleus of participatory media initiatives in Caracas to a counter-hegemonic mode of community media. Thus, unlike the national movement that seemed to be developing just several years earlier and which was anchored to liberal notions of civil society by the neighborhood associations and the National Network of Communicators that grew out of *Construyamos Juntos*, the framework for a new movement was catalyzed by popular resistance to neoliberal reform and oriented toward a Gramscian notion of civil society. As mentioned above, however, not all of the important organizations that would make up this new movement were similarly rooted. To illustrate the point we will look at another region that would prove to be of considerable importance for the consolidating national movement.

The mountainous southwestern states of Mérida and Táchira that lie along the Colombian border saw a modest burst of community television initiatives in the 1990s. With one important exception, these initiatives emerged in isolation from each other and none were attached to an overt macro-level political project or vision. The common denominator seems to have been increased access to television technologies in a region where they had not yet become widespread, thus leaving opportunities for their exploitation open to innovative individuals and groups. Initiated as they were outside of political projects, these community television stations all implicitly adopted the familiar model of liberal civil society (or, in one case, commercial enterprise). What makes the story of these television stations particularly interesting for our review, however, is that all of them would later be incorporated into the Bolivarian community media framework, with two in particular assuming leading roles in a national community and alternative media movement that would go on to repudiate the liberal model of civil society. Three of these stations will be introduced in this chapter, while the remaining two will be discussed in the following.

In 1993, the small mountain town of Bailadores (Mérida) had perhaps 2,000 residents. Due to its

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[315] "*el sueño de como llegar masivamente a las comunidades a través de un medio comunitario*"

elevation and the surrounding mountains, television reception in Bailadores was particularly bad. One of the residents, Dr. Carlos Andrés Pérez (not the former President), was particularly interested in video and computer technologies, so he convened a series of meetings with townspeople to gauge their interest in constructing a cable system "with much social sense and not with a commercial sense". Ninety families agreed to contribute to a fund that ended up with roughly 70,000 Bs and Pérez, with assistance from several other residents, installed a cable system whose 15 channels included VTV, the three national commercial broadcasters, and channels dedicated to sports, cartoons, movies, and news (Padrón 2006, 96-7).

Early on, Peréz realized that he could connect a camera to the system and transmit the signal. As families continued to contribute and the system grew, Pérez continued to entertain the idea of using one of the channels for local content. In 1996, while VTV was transmitting a test signal, Pérez took advantage of the break to perform a test of his own by transmitting programming from a VCR. Soon after, during a town fair, he decided to transmit his first live broadcast: "...it occurred to me to send out the signal and we went on air, with all the technical errors because one knew absolutely nothing, not camera operation, not signal operation, not operation of anything" (97).[316] Pérez's parents had moved out of the town, so Pérez was able to use their vacated house as the headquarters for the new cable channel and he used the funds generated by the cable system to purchase necessary equipment.

Soon the *Televisora Cultural Comunitaria de Bailadores* (Cultural Community Television Station of Bailadores) was transmitting from 6:30 am to 9pm, although it seems that not all of the material was produced by the community. Some shows, however, were moderated by community members and there were live broadcasts "from the stadium, the town square, the church, part of the farm, and the hotel, since they had cable outlets in those places that allowed the immediacy of events that were being generated" (*ibid.*).[317] By 1999, however, key participants had either retired or left town. The cable system degraded

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316 "*...se me ocurrió sacar la señal y salimos al aire, con todos los errores técnicos porque uno no sabía absolutamente nada, ni manejo de cámera, ni manejo de aire, ni manejo de nada.*"
317 "*desde el estadium, la plaza Bolívar, la iglesia, parte de la granja y el hotel, ya que tenían puntos de cable en estos lugares que permitían la inmediatez de los eventos que se estuviesen generando*"

and the channel ceased operating for several years.

In 1993, the same year that Bailadores began putting together its cable system, Ivan Ramírez, a photographer living in the small town of Michelena (Táchira), mentioned to a friend, Eduardo Betancourt, that he was particularly interested in television. Betancourt, an electrical engineer who "had been familiarized with a television station" in his home country of Colombia, suggested that it wouldn't be so difficult to build a transmitter (Padrón 83).[318] Rámirez went to San Cristobal, the state capital, to buy the necessary parts and on September 23, 1993 the Cultural Television Station of Michelena (*Televisora Cultural de Michelena*), commonly known as *TV Michelena,* began broadcasting on VHF channel 4, thus becoming the first regular community television broadcaster in Venezuela (*ibid.*, Mujica 14).[319]

TV Michelena established a four person board of directors in February of 1994. In that same year engineers from the regional office of the Ministry of Transport and Communications visited *TV Michelena* "with the purpose of regularizing the legal situation of the television station before this body" and the National Telecommunications Commission (*Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones* / CONATEL), which had been established as an autonomous regulator in 1991, during the privatization and liberalization of the telecommunications sector.[320] While the terms of the station's official authorization require further research, Padrón indicates that broadcasting permission was granted to the Michelena Cultural Foundation (*Fundación Cultural Michelena*), which was presumably established as a non-profit organization in June of 1994 for just that purpose (Padrón 83).[321]

318 Castro & Meleán (2007, cited in Mujica 14) link the motivations of both *TV Michelena* and *TV Rubio* (discussed below) to "the local population's desire to reconquer for Venezuela radioelectric spectrum conquered by Colombia in the Venezuelan Andes of the border region" (*deseo de las poblaciones locales de reconquistar para Venezuela espectros radioeléctricos conquistados por Colombia en los Andes venezolanos fronterizos*), although they offer no source for the claim. The issue of spectrum sovereignty and interference along the Colombian border has definitely been of concern to the community and alternative media movement, but other sources, as well as my interviews with José Angel Manrique, one of the founders of *TV Rubio*, indicate that these two early community television broadcasters were not acting on such motivations.; "*había estado familiarizado con una estación de televisión*"

319 As mentioned above, both *TV Caricuao* and *Cinemóbil Huayra* had facilitated short broadcasts.

320 "*con la finalidad de regularizar la situación legal de la televisora ante este organismo*"

321 José Angel Manrique, one of the founders of *TV Rubio* who interacted with the founders of *TV Michelena* in 1995 (see below), told me that *TV Michelena* did not have a license until community media broadcasting was legalized under the Chávez administration. The legal status of *TV Michelena* during the 1990s requires confirmation.

In its earliest days, *TV Michelena* broadcast rented movies and programming obtained from a satellite uplink (Padrón 83), but soon after "they were recording cultural and social activities... and editing them" (Manrique 2011).[322] As for funding, Ramírez covered the "majority" of the costs, with contributions also coming from Betancourt. The station also enjoyed significant support from local authorities. The municipal mayor, Luís Enrique Piñeda, sat on the original board of directors and the mayor's office provided "economic, institutional, and political" support. Moreover, the municipal council "provided resources for the operation of the television station" and included the Cultural Foundation in the 1995 municipal budget.[323] Official support also came from the state legislature, which granted funds for the purchase of a character generator (which enables the addition of titles and credits to content edited in an analog system) (Padrón 83-4).

Not far from Michelena, in the small city of Rubio (Táchira), Rafael Rincón and José Angel Manrique heard about *TV Michelena* sometime in 1995.[324] At the time, Rincón was a student in communications at the University of the Andes (*Universidad de los Andes* / ULA) and Director of the Joseph Kamratowski Rubian Cultural Foundation (*Fundación Cultural Rubiense Joseph Kamratowski*), where Manrique, who was studying electrical engineering, worked as the Student Director (*Director Estudiantil*) (Leal 1999, Padrón 78). The foundation, which was named for a Polish choral director who had lived in Rubio around the turn of the 20th century, focused primarily on musical activities, including a student orchestra and choirs for both children and adults. Rincón and Manrique were intrigued by the idea of broadcasting the foundation's activities and so traveled to Michelena to learn more about the cultural television station. As a result of this meeting, Rincón contracted Betancourt to construct a transmitter for the Kamratowski Foundation. Betancourt never fulfilled his end of the deal, however, so Manrique and

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The members of the *TV Michelena* Board of Directors established in 1994 were Ramírez, Betancourt, Luís Enrique Piñeda and Henry Colmenares. The Cultural Foundation had nine official positions, with Ramírez and Betancourt serving as President and Vice President, respectively, and Piñeda serving as one of the board members (*vocales*) (Padrón 85).

322 "*grababan actividades sociales y culturales... y las montaban*"

323 Padrón suggests these were two separate avenues of support; it is not clear if the Cultural Foundation sponsored any activities beyond the television station.; "*aportó recursos para la operación de la televisora*"

324 Unless otherwise noted, all material related to TV Rubio is drawn from my interviews with Manrique (2011).

Rincón's father, who was a physics teacher, researched the technology and constructed a 20 watt unit that transmitted on VHF channel 13.[325]

The *Televisora Cultural de Rubio* (Cultural Television Station of Rubio), commonly known as *TV Rubio*, began broadcasting in October of 1996. In addition to the transmitter itself, the elder Rincón and Manrique had constructed a system of eight antennas, with the principal tower located on a nearby hill, that allowed their tiny transmitter to reach 70 percent of the city (Padrón 78). Manrique had also constructed rudimentary audio and video consoles for the studio space they created in the building where the Kamratowski Foundation was located (Leal 1999). Rafael Rincón, meanwhile, had connections in the nearby Liberator Experimental Pedagogic University (*Universidad Pedagógica Experimental Libertador* / UPEL) and was able to secure the loan of three very old VHS cameras.[326] Editing was performed by a laborious analog tape-to-tape process (Padrón 121).

In the beginning, the station did little more than record and transmit the performances and other activities of the Kamratowski Foundation. By late 1999, however, the station had attracted 20 regular volunteers, all high school students (Leal 1999, Hernández 1999b). The station's slogan at the time was "the channel of youth without limits" (*el canal de la juventud sin límites*). The students produced regular "programs that included "Open Committee: The Voice of the Neighbors" (*Cabildo Abierto: La Voz de los Vecinos*) and "Alternative Page" (*Página Alternativa*), both described as "opinion spaces" (*espacios de opinión*); "Chitchat" (*La Cháchara*), a "neighborhood discussion circle" (*conversatorio vecinal*); "Today's Interview" (*La entrevista de hoy*); "The Doctor and the Community" (*El Médico y la Comunidad*); TVCR Sports (*Deportivas TVCR*); and "The Home Magazine" (*El magazín del hogar*), a program "for the housewives" (*para las amas de casa*) (Leal 1999).

In its early years, *TV Rubio* appears to have been firmly rooted in the liberal tradition of civil society and to have manifested no trace of counter-hegemonic ideology. Evidence for this conclusion can

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[325]According to Manrique, some time later Rincón gave an interview in which he mentioned Betancourt's failure to deliver the transmitter. Soon after, Betancourt visited Rincón and returned the money he had been paid.
[326]UPEL's name references Simón Bolívar, who is commonly known as "The Liberator" (El Libertador) in Venezuela.

be found in the titles and descriptions of the programs. The references to "neighbors" and the "neighborhood" link to the dominant vision of civil society that had been provided by the neighborhood movement, and the assignation of a domestic show to an audience of not only women, but "housewives", signals a conservative approach to gender roles. We can also see, however, in the strong association of the station with young people, a vision of community media as inherently alternative, amateur, and merely a form of practice for professionally produced media. Indeed, in September of 1999 one newspaper columnist describes *TV Rubio* as "following the model of the pioneer *Teleboconó*" (Hernández 1999b).[327] Finally, it is telling that both *TV Michelena* and *TV Rubio* referred to themselves as "cultural television stations", signaling a self-identification with a circumscribed sphere of aesthetic activity that compliments, is dependent on, and leaves largely unquestioned the existing liberal political-economy. *TV Rubio*, having grown out of a foundation dedicated to music in the classical tradition, would have been especially rooted in this conception.

We have seen that *TV Michelena* found favor in the state assembly and apparently also the national regulator. In the absence of further investigation, we might tentatively recognize this as resulting from the leveraging of official support at the local level, and perhaps also as a judgement that *TV Michelena* was an isolated, modest, and benign initiative that posed no threat whatsoever to existing power structures. In any case, *TV Rubio* initially appeared to be on a similar path. An article appearing in the major state newspaper in September of 1996, the month before the station began broadcasting, included the following quote from Asdrúbal Aguiar, the Minister of the Secretary of the President:

> A team of young people that demonstrate that excellent community work can be carried out with effort, dedication, and quality, which not only surprises me but obliges me to express to them my most sincere congratulations; with such an act I have to recognize that you are in the hopes of a country, which requires the participation and above all the creativity of its new generations. (cited in Padrón 78)[328]

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327 The columnist includes a paragraph based on an email, apparently a press release of some sort, from Rincón. Regarding the comparison to *Teleboconó*, it is not clear whether the columnist is drawing from the email or making the association himself.

328 "*Un equipo de jóvenes que demuestran que una excelente labor comunitaria se puede llevar a cabo con esfuerzo, dedicación y calidad, la cual no sólo me sorprende sino me obliga a expresarles mis más sinceras felicitaciones; por tal hecho tengo que reconocer que ustedes están en las expectativas de un país, que requiere*

In this light, the confusion caused by CONATEL's visit to the station in 1997 is understandable. As Manrique recalled, "...they came to verify what it was that we were doing because they had heard about a television station... And so they took photos and we were happy because we supposed they came to help us. [pause] No, they didn't come to help us."[329]

CONATEL opened a case against *TV Rubio* for transmitting without a license and officials returned to the offices to confiscate equipment, although they inexplicably took items like cameras and monitors, but neither the transmitter nor the antenna system. Nonetheless, TV Rubio ceased operating while Rincón traveled numerous times to Caracas seeking official authorization.[330] At one point, Rincón even managed to plead his case directly to President Caldera, who "shook his head" (*se movió la cabeza*) but said nothing, which the TV Rubio organizers could only interpret as a denial, since they never received authorization. One newspaper account noted that CONATEL had opened administrative procedures against 13 radio stations, in addition to TV Rubio. Manrique recalled that at least some of these stations were indeed shut down, which opens the possibility that the action against TV Rubio may have been taken in conjunction with those taken against the community radio broadcasters in Caracas.[331]

TV Rubio itself was never officially closed. Manrique did not have a definitive explanation for this result; he suggested that perhaps CONATEL was not able to gather the necessary proof, but later told me that *TV Rubio* had escaped due to a loophole, since the applicable law in that period was the Law of Telecommunications written in 1940, early enough that television was not specifically mentioned. Both of these suggestions seem somewhat unlikely considering, on the one hand, how conspicuously *TV Rubio* was broadcasting and, on the other, that updated regulations governing the licensing of television had later been attached to the 1940 law and in any case previous administrations had set a strong precedent of

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la participación y sobre todo creatividad de sus nuevas generaciones."
329"*...ellos vinieron a averiguar que lo que estabamos haciendo porque habían escuchado de una televisora... Y bueno tomaron fotos y nosotros felices porque suponiamos que vinieron a ayudarnos. [pausa] No, no vinieron a ayudarnos.*"
330When I was in Venezuela in 2011, the trip from Rubio to Caracas by bus took something like 18 hours, depending on conditions.
331Manrique read me excerpts from the article. I did not ascertain the names or locations of the stations, nor whether they were operating as community or commercial broadcasters.

jealously restricting entrance into broadcast television (see Valbuena 1986, Hernández 1999a). Here, too, further investigation is required, but it seems possible that *TV Rubio* was given a tacit pass, considering that it was, similar to *TV Michelena*, operating far from the center of political power, firmly within the liberal tradition of civil society, and with a clearly non-threatening ideological orientation.

In 1998, *TV Rubio* resumed its operations and it was in this period that the station's volunteers created the programs mentioned above. In a display of the arbitrary nature of state policy in relation to community media during that period, CONAC provided *TV Rubio* with funding. Nonetheless, in the eyes of the *TV Rubio* organizers, the Caldera administration had positioned itself as a threat. [332] Manrique recalled, for example, that "in that time, freedom of expression was questioned [and] it was impossible to think that the state, the government was going to approve permits for cultural community media outlets".[333] *TV Rubio* organizers now considered that they were operating illegally. This perception of an intolerant state colored the context within which *TV Rubio* joined the growing national movement of community and alternative media.

Exactly how this movement finally came together in the late 1990s deserves further research. We have seen that one important popular nucleus had developed in Catia during the early 1990s and was beginning to serve as a center of gravity for initiatives in less central areas like Caricuao, where both *TV Caricuao* and *Radio Perola* operated. One important marker of the growth of a national movement came in the form of FEVEC's Ninth National Congress, held in October of 1996 in the New People Center of Popular Formation (*Centro de Formación Popular Nuevo Pueblo*) in Barquisimeto (Lara), at which "the transition of the *cineclub* to new models of alternative communication such as *videoclubes*, free and alternative radio stations, and regional television stations was officially proclaimed" (Hérnandez 2005,

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332 Significantly, the newspaper article covering the action against TV Rubio (as read to me by Manrique) stated that CONATEL was acting "on the instructions of the Ministry of Transport and Communications" (*por instrucciones del Ministerio de Transporte y Comunicaciones*), even though CONATEL had been created as an autonomous institution under Pérez's neoliberal reforms. The opposition to the Bolivarian revolution would later cite CONATEL's lack of autonomy as a primary component in the state's alleged campaign against free speech.

333 "*en ese tiempo, la libertad de expresión era cuestionada [y] era imposible pensar que el estado, el gobierno iba a aprobar los permisos a las comunitarias culturales*"

103).[334] As if to reinforce the point, one month later the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) hosted a seminar called "Democratizing the Radio Spectrum" (*Democratizar el espectro radioelectrico*) in Caracas (González 2001, 223).[335] Meanwhile, certain intellectuals continued to advocate for community media. For example, Pasquali's unrealized 1995 proposal for a Radio and Television Law incorporated "the notion of community media" (Pasquali 2006, cited in Ávila 2008, 51).[336] Support from academic circles may have contributed to events like the AMARC seminar. [337]

For community television in particular, a watershed moment came when Manrique met various members of the fledgling community and alternative media movement in Caracas. There are somewhat conflicting versions of their initial encounter; Manrique has stated that he was in Caracas "approximately in 1997... looking for funding" (*[a]proximadamente en 1997... buscando recursos*) (Mujica 2013), whereas Schiller writes that the meeting occurred at "a conference on grassroots media" in 1998 (84). [338] In any case, as Manrique tells the story, Márquez and others from the *Cineclub Manicomio / Linterna*

334Hernández (2005) goes on to say that in 1997 FEVEC "is paralyzed, to later be dismantled since its original activity[,] characterized by a state mediation that was changing, gave no response" (103). Though frustratingly vague, the statement suggests that perhaps the Caldera administration was reducing CONAC's funding to the *cineclubes*. This is only a speculative interpretation, but it would add more evidence to the argument that the state's aggressive opposition to grassroots participatory media only served to radicalize and cohere a national movement. "*se paraliza, para luego desmantelarse ya que su actividad original[,] caracterizada por una mediatización estatal que estaba cambiando, no dio respuesta*"; "*se proclamaba oficialmente la transición del cineclub a nuevos modelos de comunicación alternativa tales como viedeoclubs, radios libres y alternativas, y televisoras regionales*"

335AMARC formed in Montreal in 1983 and is universally known by the acronym formed by the French version of its name: *Association Mondiale des Radiodiffusuers Communautaires*.

336"*la noción de medios comunitarios*"

337On the other hand, one review (Molina 2008) of all of the articles relating to popular, alternative, and community media that appeared in the journal *Comunicación* from 1985 through 2006 (inclusive) suggests that Venezuelan intellectuals turned away from community media during this period. 25 articles appeared from 1985 through 1995 (11 years), an average of 2.27 articles per year, whereas only seven articles appeared from 1996 through 2006 (11 years), an average of 0.88 articles per year. (It is unclear if Molina included the year 2007 in his review. If so, then no articles were published that year and the average would drop to 0.58.) Perhaps even more telling is that in the period from 1996 to 2001 (inclusive) only two articles appeared, both in 1999. These were precisely the years in which Venezuela's national movement consolidated. To this we can add that Marcelino Bisbal, one of Venezuela's foremost communication scholars, an administrator of the *Centro Pellín*, and a longtime contributor to *Comunicación*, has come out decidedly against the Bolivarian community and alternative media movement (see Bisbal 2004, 2006).

338Ostensibly, Manrique could have been at the conference looking for funding. In my interview, he specified neither the date nor the context of the initial meeting. Eekhout, meanwhile, also places the initial encounter in 1998, at "a meeting" (*un encuentro*) that included community media activists "from 23 de enero, Manicomio, from Barquisimeto, everywhere" (*todos lados*) (historia de Catia TVe 2006).

Mágica were shocked to discover that *TV Rubio* had not only already accomplished their dream of operating a television station, but had done so with a technology far more efficient than their use of cable. Manrique explained that *TV Rubio* was operating illegally and that CONATEL had opened a case against it, but that it would cost them about 1,000 Bs if they wanted to construct a transmitter of their own. It wasn't until 1999 or 2000, however, when Manrique got a call from Márquez saying, "Hey, we robbed a bank, we've got the cash now."[339]

As we will see, Manrique then shared his knowledge with the group in Maracay, which led to the creation of *Teletambores*, and the network would continue to branch out. These connections, however, were being made in the rapidly shifting, post-*puntofijista* political context of the Chávez administration and we must address that context before continuing with the particulars of the community and alternative media movement. In order to close this chapter and set up that discussion, we will end our review of *puntofijista* participatory media by looking briefly at how TV Rubio began to change in 1999. This discussion will help us better define some of the issues related to community media and civil society that we have touched on throughout this chapter and that will occupy our attention more directly from here on out.

The knowledge transfer between *TV Rubio* and the *Cineclub Manicomio* was hardly unidirectional. As Eekhout put it, "They were very sympathetic to our cause, but they didn't have any connections to the movements. So we were close to the people but not the technology, they were close to the technology but not the people. We put our experiences together and started broadcasting" (Podur). As a result of this exchange, *TV Rubio*, primarily in the person of Manrique, would come to play a major role in the continued consolidation and mobilization of the national movement, but the popular ideology of the groups in Caracas seems to have also affected the production model in use at *TV Rubio*. For instance, although the station had identified itself with young people, in statements to the press during the second half of 1999, Rincón emphasized that "anybody can come here and have their space, and that contributes

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339"*Mira, robamos un banco, ya tenemos la plata.*"

to deepening democracy.... [W]e want them to talk, to participate, to take hold of democracy actively and without vices."[340] He also underlined the goal of "fertilizing the path of demystifying television, with the intention of bringing it closer to the people" (Leal 1999). [341]

More importantly, TV Rubio was set to debut a community news program, called "Informe 13", on December 1, 1999. The show would run for 45 minutes every night at 7:30pm and air reports from "70 community reporters, one for each neighborhood association, which would be the carriers of the specific needs and potentials of each sector". [342] Here is Rincón's description from September of that year:

> The news show is our flagship project, as it's a pilot project of citizen participation in the elaboration and diffusion of informative messages for a television station. Our channel will only facilitate the cameras and microphones to diffuse what the community reporters say of their own neighborhoods or sectors. We will respect in their integrity the voice of the reporters and their sources. In a short time each community will bring more news than that which we are in capacity to transmit, this will make the social, political, and economic life of the municipality more dynamic, to a great degree. Many people don't go so far as to imagine how important it is that each barrio has its own community reporter, who has been selected by their community, by their neighbors. We have only suggested to them that they be people that know the problematic and potentialities of the barrio, and that additionally they be recognized and backed by a letter of postulation from the Neighborhood Association, plus 50 signatures of neighbors from the sector. We've requested the collaboration of some professors and students from the ULA School of Communication in order to help us offer the basic tools to these community communicators. (Leal 1999) [343]

One is tempted to see here a further evolution of the "*barrio* news program" that emerged in various forms in the 1980s with the *Grupo Ombligo*, the *Precooperativa*, and *SET-Video*, and that seems to have

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340"*...cualquier persona puede venir aquí y tener su espacio, y eso contribuye a profundizar la democracia....
   [Q]ueremos que hablen, que participen, que asuman la democracia en forma áctiva y sin vicios.*"
341"*abonar el camino en la desmitificación de la televisión, en la intención de acercarla a la gente*"
342"*70 reporteros comunitarios, uno por cada asociación de vecinos, los cuales serán los portadores de las
   necesidades y potencialidades de cada sector en específico*"
343"*El noticiero es nuestro proyecto bandera, pues se trata de una experiencia pilóto de participación ciudadana
   en la elaboración y difusión de los mensajes informativos para un medio televisivo. Nuestro canal sólo facilitará
   las cámaras y los micrófonos para difundir lo que los reporteros comunitarios digan de sus propios barrios o
   sectores. Respetaramos en su integridad la voz de los reporteros y sus fuentes. En poco tiempo cada comunidad
   aportará más noticias de los que estaremos en capacidad de transmitir, esto dinamizaré, en sumo grado, la vida
   social, política, y económica del municipio. Muchas personas no alcanzan a imaginar lo importante que es el
   hecho de que cada barrio tenga su propio reportero comunitario, el cual ha sido selecionado por su comunidad,
   por sus vecinos. Nosotros sólo los hemos sugerido que sean personas conocedoras de la problemática y
   potencialidades del barrio, y que además sean reconocidos y respaldados por una carta de postulación de la
   Asove, más 50 firmas de vecinos del sector. La hemos pedido la colaboración a algunos docentes y estudiantes
   de la Escuela de Comunicación de la ULA para que nos ayuden a brindar las herramientas básicas a estos
   comunicadores comunitarios.*"

been carried by *Cinemóbil Huayra* to the *Cineclub Manicomio*, who would have then transferred the idea to *TV Rubio*. These links are so far tenuous, though, and we must recognize that it would be easy enough for the facilitators of any popular video project to take the relatively small step of envisioning a news program, especially if they have had the opportunity to study the history of alternative participatory media, as Rincón did.

Whether directly related or not, *Informe 13* is of especial interest here because it expands on the general model that we saw with *SET-Video*, in which a central unit facilitates equipment to satellite producers. One major difference, of course, is the distribution method, which in the Channel Zero model of *SET-Video* involved copying tapes and holding mini *videoforos*, but in *Informe 13* uses mass broadcasting. Another significant difference, though, is that *Informe 13* was designed to make use of the already existing civil society structure of the neighborhood association, as a means for both determining geographical areas of coverage for each reporter and establishing a degree of democratic control over the selection and performance of the reporters via the letters of postulation. This ingenious maneuver, in conjunction with the extensive history that we have reviewed above, lead to a series of crucial observations.

To begin, we might recognize that with *Informe 13, TV Rubio* was attempting to carry the orderly and existent liberal structure of civil society forward into a more progressive and participatory mode. This suggests that *Informe 13* is as much a continuation of the "*barrio* news program", which we have marked as Gramscian, as of the *Escuela* vision for neighborhood association community media or the National Network of Communicators, two projects that we have marked as liberal. This point is crucial because it demonstrates the significant degree of overlap between these two modes of civil society in relation to community media. Both can be interested in the *autonomous production* of media content within a framework that allows for *inclusive access* to a *participatory system*. Hopefully, however, we have indicated that within the Gramscian model, this is *always* the goal. To be clear, we could not say as much about a general *socialist* model of civil society, since we would have to acknowledge (as discussed at

length in chapter 2) that some socialist visions – those we have identified as Scientific or vanguardist – severely limit autonomy, access, and participation. These are precisely the limits that, when imposed by a state and/or party, have been decried by liberals (among others) as dictatorial and unfree. Indeed, this has been the most widely reported point of contention around Bolivarian media, both public and community, and much of the next two chapters will be devoted to teasing out the degree to which Bolivarian community media tends toward the vanguardist model and the degree to which it hews to the Critical or Gramscian model of civil society – and what exactly accounts for these different tendencies.

Within the liberal model of civil society participatory media, the maximization of autonomy, access, and participation does *not* have to be the goal. Hopefully we demonstrated as much in the case of *Teleboconó*, where the focus on youth functioned as a restriction on participation, and where Miliani's dictates regarding content (albeit well intentioned) limited autonomy. Or in the case of *La Pastoreña*, where the professionalized model restricted both access and participation to a select group whose ideas on cultural preservation did not represent the entire community. But what we need to emphasize at this point is that the liberal model *can* seek to maximize autonomy, access, and participation, as with the Neighborhood Movement's idealistic vision of community media. The problem with the liberal model, however, is that the presupposition of a political economy based on capitalist markets ensures that autonomy, access, and participation are never *actually* maximized. This is precisely what we have attempted to demonstrate by revealing how the neighborhood movement's funding model, based as it was on member contributions, resulted in a restriction of access based on class (among other vectors of inequality).

The inadequacies of the liberal model do not end with the issue of funding. We can demonstrate this by returning to the plan for *Informe 13*, where the letters of postulation from the neighborhood associations are meant to democratize the selection of the community reporters. This would undoubtedly contribute to the autonomy of each geographic sector and augment the potential for that sector's residents to enjoy access and participation. Nonetheless, it vests decision-making authority (regarding the choice of

the reporter) in the neighborhood association, a private civil society organization that in and of itself may not maximize access and participation. For example, a small clique may maintain most of the association's power (and account for a majority of the fifty required signatures). Whereas the liberal model of civil society tends to ignore these issues, or at least argue that they are intractable, the Gramscian model seeks to integrate civil society with formal governance, and thus the larger political economy, in the form of a civil state.

The complexities of these issues can be daunting and they have tormented the subfield of community media studies for decades. What has been absent, however, is a framework that conscientiously situates participatory media within a discussion of civil society and its relation to the broader political economy. This is the framework that we have attempted to develop by highlighting two tendencies of Venezuelan participatory media during the *puntofijista* era. One accepts the liberal tradition of civil society and positions participatory media as inherently adjunct to the commercial media apparatus. The other hews to the Gramscian model of civil society and positions participatory media as a replacement for the commercial media apparatus.

Within a liberal context, these two tendencies overlap because both generally focus on questions of access and participation within the existing order. The result is something of a false convergence, as we have suggested occurred in Venezuela during the 1980s, when it appeared that leftist activists and the middle-class neighborhood association movement shared a single vision of community media. Even where project facilitators do maintain a more-or-less explicit focus on constructing an alternative civil society and/or political-economy, they are forced to operate within the context of a liberal civil society and capitalist economy. This means that initiatives tending toward the Gramscian model can be nonetheless shaped in the liberal mold by the exigencies of survival. *TV Caricuao* is a good example of this, since it found stable funding but lost its dynamic organizational model as a result. Once again, the result is a false convergence.

We have attempted to show that the Gramscian tendency in Venezuelan participatory media

emerged during the 1960s, grew modestly during the 1970s and 80s, and then more rapidly during the 1990s in response to the deepening political crisis. At no point, however, was this tendency able to fully distinguish itself from the liberal tendency, partially because of the constraints of the *puntofijista* system and partially because there was no preexisting alternative model to emulate. With Hugo Chávez in office, however, the *puntofijista* framework would begin to fall away, thus opening up space for the evolution of a new model for participatory media production within a new framework of civil society. As we will see in the following chapters, this process would be complicated by the lingering inertia of the liberal model and the continuous imposition of vanguardist tendencies.

Chapter 4: Community Media and the Bolivarian Revolution

If we can consider the history of Venezuelan participatory media during the *puntofijista* era as the first phase of a longer history, then the goal of this chapter is to introduce a second phase of that history. There are no exact markers for these phases, but it is relatively easy to correlate the commencement of what we are calling a second phase with the inauguration of Chávez in early 1999 and the adoption of the new Bolivarian constitution later that year. These events, in a dialectical relationship with the already emerging national movement of community and alternative media, led to the further consolidation of the grassroots national movement, the construction of a legal framework for broadcast community media, a significant expansion of state financing and support, and the rapid proliferation of community media outlets. An additional and highly influential factor in that growth was increasing political and social polarization, and especially the failed attempt to oust Chávez in a civic-military coup in April of 2002. The second phase also saw a fragmentation of the national movement into two tendencies, each with representational national organizations and each supportive of Chávez, but with distinct strategies and tactics. Any attempt to make sense of this history must contextualize it within the broader history of the Chávez administration's policies as they relate to its evolving conception of civil society. We will, therefore, begin our review there. Once that general framework is in place, we will turn our attention to the particulars of the community media sector.

Policy and Civil Society in the Chávez Administration: 1998 - 2005

In the 1998 presidential election that brought Hugo Chávez to power, socio-economic position became a greater predictor for voting behavior than in previous elections. Chávez "captured the vote of the poor and lower-middle sectors of the country by a wide margin, [while] his opponents attracted those sectors with the greatest resources" (López Maya 2003, 84). We can link this result to Chávez's rhetorical strategy during the campaign, in which he began referring to his (desired) constituency as "the people" (*el pueblo*), thus offering a unifying identity that draws on and reinforces the positive role played by popular,

non-elite actors throughout Venezuelan history (*ibid*.).[344] This construction of the Venezuelan people provided a broadly inclusive counter to the dominant identification of civil society with middle- and upper-class organizations and movements, which had been tacitly advanced by the neighborhood movement and reinforced by the discourse of the commercial media.

From this point on, the term "civil society" would be employed primarily and self-referentially by organizations and movements acting in opposition to Chávez and his supporters. Their appropriation of that title rests on the liberal conception of civil society as wholly autonomous from the state and invokes comparisons to civil society movements that emerged to oppose communist totalitarian rule in Eastern Europe in the 1980s. From this perspective, community-based and other popular organizations that support Chávez are not properly civil society but, instead, are either: a) clients of the Bolivarian state / party apparatus (much like *barrio* neighborhood associations were held to be co-opted by AD during the 1980s and 90s) or b) hierarchically directed appendages of the state / party apparatus (much like the mass organizations of revolutionary Cuba). In the former scenario, Chávez managed to dismantle *puntofijismo* only by establishing in its place a new system of corporatist and clientelistic rule. In the latter, Chávez is a dictatorial autocrat. The vital point, in any case, is that since the elections of 1998, the term "civil society" has generally been associated with opponents of Chávez's Bolivarian movement within Venezuelan public discourse.

Supporters of Chávez, on the other hand, have happily forsaken the mantle of civil society and instead refer to themselves as the organized people (*pueblo organizado*) or organized community (*comunidad organizada*). The question of autonomy from this perspective is more complex. On one hand, *chavistas* recognize the legitimacy of the notion of autonomy that informs the liberal conception of civil society. Towards this end, they insist that the pro-Chávez parties, as well as community-based organizations and other social movements, maintain a necessary degree of separation and independence

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344For an extensive and sympathetic analysis of the relationship between Chávez's rhetoric and the history of popular participation in Venezuela, see Vargas 2007.

form the Bolivarian state. On the other hand, *chavistas* point out that – as was made evident under *puntofijismo* – the liberal definition of civil society emphasizes autonomy from political parties and the state without recognizing (or at least objecting to) dependence on private capital and an economic system predicated on exploitation. Given this reality, they insist that the Venezuelan state, the pro-Chávez parties, and community-based and other social movement organizations must work together for the construction of a non-exploitative system. Further, the people, by necessity, must have resources sufficient to the execution of this liberatory project and, since those resources have been systematically denied to them throughout history, they must – at least for the time being – be channeled through the state. From this perspective, it is only logical that there would be coordination, cooperation, and resource allocation among the state, the parties, community organizations, and social movements.

Bolivarian civil society therefore finds itself in the awkward position of simultaneously insisting upon its autonomy *and* willfully ceding a significant degree of that autonomy (or at least appearing to do so). For observers committed to the liberal perspective, this ambivalence is cast as hypocrisy. For participants, however, the internal coherence of their logic is predicated on a nuanced notion of autonomy that seeks to balance short-term necessities with long-term goals. They are, in other words, willing to accept a certain degree of dependence on the state so long as that dependence is temporary and ultimately leads to increased autonomy. In so doing, they attempt to stake out a cooperative but critical orientation toward the state and parties. The subtlety of this position has been especially hard to articulate to the degree that the Bolivarian Revolution has remained vague in relation to its long term goals. Over the course of its existence, however, the Bolivarian movement has brought its goals into sharper focus. With increasing clarity and precision, *chavistas* have outlined a plan for a political economic system that seeks to maximize participatory democracy while guaranteeing social and economic justice.

In many respects, as will be further discussed below, the Bolivarian vision embraces the Gramscian concept of a civil state in which the role of the state is to facilitate decision-making and administration by citizens organized as a civil society (e.g. the "organized community"). There is, of

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course, significant room for debate regarding the implementation of that vision. Oppositional critics insist that, either by design or as the result of unintended consequences, the Bolivarian vision will result (or, for some, has already resulted) in an institutionalized concentration of power within the state, especially the executive branch. Debate among the *chavistas*, meanwhile, concerns the mix of policy choices and organizational structures that will best address urgent issues while still advancing toward long-term goals.

Debates within the Bolivarian movement have turned on at two principal axes of argumentation (Ellner 2010, 139-74). The first concerns the pace and depth of revolutionary change. The "soft line" position in this debate "considers government advances and successes as ends in themselves" and emphasizes the "consolidation of gains rather than further radicalization" (141). The "hard line" position, on the other hand, advocates a continuous advance that focuses on "the creation of parallel structures and the purging of old ones" (143). To be sure, both soft and hard liners expect the revolutionary process to take decades, but the hard liners, out of a desire to more quickly surpass the existing institutional framework, have shown a greater willingness to accept risk and confrontation. The soft liners, meanwhile, have shown a greater willingness to form political alliances, as well as a greater tolerance for the co-existence of new and old structures. Over the years, Chávez himself implemented a mix of soft and hard line policies, although many soft liners have broken away as the movement has radicalized (see 139-74).

A second axis of debate, which is of principal interest to the present discussion, concerns the degree to which the revolution should be guided by the state and the parties (i.e. from above) or by social movements and unorganized sectors of the population (i.e. from below) (175). This is, of course, essentially the same debate that (as discussed in chapter two) has been playing out within Latin American socialism for over half a century, with the tendency shifting away from a top-down and toward a grassroots approach. The Bolivarian Revolution, in line with the broader tendency, has largely embraced a Gramscian position and defined itself, at least rhetorically, in terms of grassroots participation. Nonetheless, the Bolivarian movement has often relied on the efficiency and discipline of hierarchical organization and decision-making, thus exposing itself to charges of clientelism, paternalism, and

authoritarianism.[345] As will be discussed in relation to Bolivarian social programs, top-down models have been employed in order to address urgent social needs and shore up the movement's political base in the face of concerted opposition. Additionally, institutional inertia and the absence of a well articulated model for the structuration of a civil state have led well-intentioned leaders to implement hierarchical organizational models even where these do not serve their own stated goals. Some *chavistas*, meanwhile, simply do not have confidence in the efficacy of radically participatory structures and are either pursuing a hierarchical vision of socialism or are merely endeavoring to consolidate their own power for personal benefit. All of these rationalizations favor top-down models at the expense of grassroots participation. There are also cases, however, where the Bolivarian government has implemented top-down structuration and centralized decision-making with the justification that these are necessary for creating and fostering participatory organizational structures. In such cases the argument is that the state must take less participatory measures in the short term in order to maximize participation in the long term.

For all of these reasons, the Bolivarian Revolution has vacillated between centralized, hierarchical, and even authoritarian decision-making, on the one hand, and progression toward the types of radically participatory decision-making structures that would characterize a civil state, on the other. The general contours of that vacillation during the first Chávez administration will be sketched in the remainder of this section and provide the backdrop for our subsequent examination of Venezuela's community media sector within the emerging Bolivarian framework.

The primary concern of the administration during its first years in power was to follow through on the MBR-200's call for a refounding of the republic. The convocation of a constituent assembly was approved via a national referendum in April of 1999 and elections for representatives to the assembly were held in July, with Patriotic Pole candidates capturing 125 of the 131 seats. A new constitution was drafted in the space of three months and approved by 72 percent of voters in December. Less than one

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345As will be argued in the conclusion, hierarchy is not entirely incompatible with participatory organizational models, as is suggested by this dichotomous presentation. Nonetheless, framing the debate in this manner facilitates a presentation of the tensions that have shaped the Bolivarian Revolution and the role of community media therein.

year after Chávez's inauguration, Venezuela had formally moved from the fourth to the fifth republic. Actually transforming the existing institutional framework and overcoming the traditional modes of government, however, would be a different story altogether.

The new constitution changed the country's name to the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (*República Bolivariana de Venezuela*), implemented significant structural changes, and opened up space for greater popular participation in governance.[346] Under the new framework, the "Public Power" (*Poder Público*) of the state is "distributed" between three levels of governance, the National, State, and Municipal. The National Public Power is divided into five coequal branches, including the Executive, Legislative, and Judicial Powers that had existed under the 1961 constitution. As for the two new branches, the Electoral Power (*Poder Electoral*) was tasked with overseeing elections and the Citizen Power (*Poder Ciudadano*) with fiscal and ethical oversight of the other branches, as well as protection of citizen rights. Other significant changes to the previous system included abandoning the bicameral Congress in favor of a unicameral National Assembly and prohibiting public financing of political parties. These changes, some of which had been mentioned years before in MBR-200 documents (López Maya 2003, 85), manifested a commitment to overcoming the corruption of *puntofijismo*.[347] The Bolivarian constitution also amplified commitments to human rights, including explicit guarantees to indigenous peoples, and it specified the responsibilities of the state in relation to environmental stewardship.

Critics of the constitution, including leaders of AD, COPEI, and FEDECAMERAS, objected to the recognition of a right to housing, along with guarantees of publicly funded hospital services and education at all levels, as excessive state intervention. They also criticized the new system for rolling back previous efforts at decentralization and especially objected to the concentration of power in the executive, pointing to articles that allowed the National Assembly to pass "enabling laws" which would allow the

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346Although the assembly had elected to discard the name change, it was included "at the last minute" upon the insistence of Chávez, who considered it a "point of honor" (López Maya 2003, 85).

347Some critics argued, however, that prohibiting public financing of parties placed less privileged sectors of the population at a disadvantage relative to those with greater resources (López Maya 2003, 86).

President, during a limited period, to unilaterally issue legislation relating to specific issues (85-6). [348]

These arguments, of course, only reprised the themes of the debate that had raged throughout the previous decade.

The new Bolivarian *magna carta* pointed the country away from the neoliberal path, but it still leaned heavily on a liberal conception of representative democracy. Mechanisms for participatory governance were mentioned, but only in general terms. For example, Article 62 recognizes the "obligation of the State and the duty of society to facilitate the generation of optimum conditions" for the "participation of the people in forming, carrying out and controlling the management of public affairs" in order "to ensure their complete development, both individual and collective". [349] Article 70, meanwhile, lists "channels of participation and active involvement" (*medios de participación y protagonismo*) for both the "political" and the "social and economic" spheres. Included among the options for the former are "the town meeting and citizens assembly whose decisions will be binding". [350] Options for the latter include "self-management, co-management, cooperatives in all their forms including financial, … [and] community businesses and other associative forms guided by values of mutual cooperation and solidarity". [351] The same article, however, specifies that the "conditions for the effective functioning" (*condiciones para el efectivo funcionamiento*) of those channels is to be established by law, which meant that the practical extent of the new government's commitment to popular participation remained to be determined. [352]

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348 Article 74 of the constitution allows for all laws to be submitted to a popular referendum upon the initiative of 10 percent of registered voters. For laws issued under the enabling clause, however, the threshold is only 5 percent of registered voters. The National Assembly may also modify or rescind the laws through normal legislative procedures. Previous Venezuelan Presidents had been granted similar power to rule by decree (Crisp 1998).

349 "*obligación del Estado y deber de la sociedad facilitar la generación de las condiciones más favorables*"; "*su completo desarrollo, tanto individual como colectivo*"

350 "*el cabildo abierto y la asamblea de ciudadanos y ciudadanas cuyas decisiones serán de carácter vinculante*"

351 "*la autogestión, la cogestión, las cooperativas en todas sus formas incluyendo las de carácter financiero, ... [y] la empresa comunitaria y demás formas asociativas guiadas por los valores de la mutua cooperación y la solidaridad*"

352 In addition to Articles 62 and 70, Article 166 mandates representation of the "organized communities" (*comunidades organizadas*) on state-level Planning and Public Policy Coordination Councils (*Consejos de Planificación y Coordinación de Políticas Públicas*) and Article 182 mandates representation of "neighborhood organizations" (*organizaciones vecinales*), and "organized society" (*sociedad organizada*) on Local Public

Perhaps surprisingly, as the constitutional process played out, Chávez largely maintained the economic policy of his predecessor (Ellner 2010, 111). The idea seems to have been to refrain from making significant changes to macroeconomic policy until the new political framework had been emplaced. Nonetheless, in February of 1999 – on the tenth anniversary of the Caracazo – Chávez announced a program called *Plan Bolívar 2000*, in which 40,000 soldiers would provide social assistance, including housing, health care, and education, to those sectors of the population where it was most urgently needed. The plan was in keeping with the MBR-200 vision of a civic-military alliance, but critics, including those from within the MVR, objected to its model of centralized service provision and lack of opportunities for community participation and self-sustenance. Chávez himself defended the plan, suggesting that it was more participatory than many understood (Chávez & Harnecker 2003), but the debate illustrated the wide range of meanings attached to the notion of participation and the Bolivarian movement's lack of a framework for instituting civil society governance.

For those advocating more robust forms of grassroots participation, there had been at least one encouraging development in 1999, as activists had managed to convince the government to adopt as national policy the water advisory councils that had been implemented by Istúriz when he had served as mayor of Libertador (López Maya & Lander 2011, 67-8). Specific legal implementations of the new constitutional framework, however, were slow to arrive. This was due, in part, to the fact that ratification of the new constitution required new elections for state officials and these were not held until late July of 2000, when Chávez was reelected with a 60 percent majority and the MVR won 91 of 165 seats in the new National Assembly. In the meantime, *chavista* activists attempted to implement change from below. Towards this end they proposed holding the citizens assemblies mentioned in Article 70 and called for structural transformation in the labor movement, universities, and oil industry via constituent assemblies, as per the national example, but these initiatives produced few results (Ellner 2010, 178).

The pace of change began to accelerate in 2001. In September the government released its

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Planning Councils (*Consejos Locales de Planificación Pública*).

"Guidelines of the National Social and Economic Development Plan 2001 – 2007" (*Lineas Generales del*

Plan de Desarrollo Económica y Social de la Nación 2001 – 2007). This document, which outlines a

model of development whose "character and rhythm" emerge from the specifics of the Venezuelan

situation, recognized that the "process of democratic control of the instruments of power" was still in

construction and thus defined the period in question as one "of transition toward the Bolivarian

revolution".[353] This transition was presented primarily in terms of economic policy that called for "a

diversified and competitive productive system that is open to international markets, based on private

initiative, and with the presence of the State in strategic industries, but with openings for private

investment".[354] At the same time, however, the Guidelines recognized the constitution's "protection and

fomentation of the social economy, as a strategy for the democratization of the market and of capital",

where the social economy included "family businesses, cooperatives, and community labor associations"

(13).[355]

    In its presentation of "social equilibrium" the Guidelines recognized that the government's work

to overcome inequality can not be conceived as a form of welfare "to cure the wounds of those excluded

from the market" but instead encompasses the creation of "conditions to achieve citizenship" based on

political, economic, and social rights (18).[356] Even in this section, however, much of the emphasis is

placed on economistic concerns, chiefly the reduction of poverty, and plans for the "democratization of

community life" (19) are overshadowed by those for the democratization of the market.[357] Still, the four

"orienting principles" for achieving social equilibrium are "universality, equity, participation, and co-

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353"*un carácter y un ritmo*"; "*proceso de control democrático de los instrumentos del poder*"; "*de transición hacia
    la revolución bolivariana*"; All translations from the Guidelines are my own.
354"*un sector productivo diversificado, competitivo, abierto hacia los mercados internacionales, basado en la
    iniciativa privada y con presencia del Estado en industrias estratégicas, pero con apertura a la inversión
    privada*"
355"*la protección y fomento de la economía social, como una estrategia para la democratización del mercado y del
    capital*"; "*empresas familiares, cooperativas, asociaciones comunitarios para el trabajo*"
356"*equilibrio social*"; "*para curar las heridas de los excluidos del mercado*"; "*condiciones para alcanzar la
    ciudadanía*"
357"*la democratización de la vida comunitaria*"; The Guidelines are divided into four main sections: economic
    equilibrium, social equilibrium, political equilibrium, and territorial equilibrium.

responsibility" (91).[358] Significantly, the strongest statement regarding participation reads as follows:

> The public, reconstituted as a space guaranteeing the collective interest is thus converted into an instrument of civic power, not understood as power transferred or ceded, but as the creation of a new power capable of legitimately valuing the participation of society, communities and families in the formulation, execution, and evaluation of public decisions, and in accountability and public oversight. (92)[359]

There is, in this passage, an indication that the Bolivarian vision of a civil state – at least in its appearance during this transitional phase – is not as utopian as Gramsci's vision has sometimes been interpreted, in the sense that civil society will overtake all forms of state governance and the state will cease to exist. The Bolivarian vision, rather, was for civil society to emerge as a new "instrument of civic power" that does not demand that the state "cede" its power, but that stands alongside the state in a democratic dialectic of governance.[360] López Maya & Lander (2011) have put the matter quite succinctly:

> As a strategy to reach social equilibrium, the Guidelines considers the work of two fundamental actors to be decisive: first, the state in all of its administrative levels and branches, *as the creator of conditions that make possible the empowerment of citizens*; second, citizens, who through their participation in families, communities, and organized groups are transforming themselves into political subjects with values such as solidarity, respect for democratic procedures, and co-responsibility. (64, my emphasis)

Of course, this leaves open the question of which responsibilities belong properly to the state and which to civil society, but the Guidelines can be taken as a marker of the Bolivarian understanding of a civil state.

As with the constitution, it remained to be seen how the Chávez administration would implement the Guidelines. The first major indication came in November, when Chávez made use of decree authority granted by the National Assembly to issue a package of 49 laws, many of which were designed "to reverse the neoliberal trends of the 1990s" (Ellner 2010, 112). These included laws mandating that the

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358"*principios orientadores*"; "*la universalidad, la equidad, la participación y la corresponsabilidad*"

359"*Lo público, reconstituido en espacio de garantía del interés colectivo se convierte así en instrumento de poder ciudadano, no entendido como poder transferido o cedido, si no como la creación de un nuevo poder capaz de hacer valer legítimamente la participación de la sociedad, las comunidades y familias en la formulación, ejecución y evaluación de decisiones públicas, y en la rendición de cuentas y contraloría pública.*"

360This conception is in line with Moulian's (2000) presentation of the state within 21st Century Socialism: "The 'new socialism' conserves that anti-statist vocation and proposes to actively attempt to convert the State into a semi-State, without however believing that it can be extinguished" (120, my translation). ["*El 'nuevo socialismo' conserva esa vocación anti-estatista y se propone buscar activamente que el Estado devenga semi-Estado, sin creer sin embargo que éste pueda extinguirse.*"]

government control the majority stake in mixed enterprises in the oil sector, making idle land subject to expropriation and redistribution, and ensuring state control of the social security system.

Outside observers have characterized these reforms as "democracy *for* rather than *by* the people" (Hellinger 2011, 33; original emphasis), as did many *chavistas*. Following the *caracazo* in 1989, popular organizations in Caracas had come together in an "Assembly of Barrios" that remained active until 1994. Many of the same organizations that had formed part of the Assembly reemerged in 2001 to proclaim that none of the 49 laws, which were supposed to make good on the framework of the constitution, recognized their aspirations regarding the "regularization of urban land tenancy" (López Maya & Lander 2011, 66-7). Their activism led Chávez to issue another decree, in February of 2002, that established a system of Urban Land Committees (*Comités de Tierra Urbana* / CTUs), comprised of 100 to 200 families, to coordinate with the government on the issuance of property titles. The CTUs, which followed the pattern set by the water advisory councils, served as an organizing locus for *barrio* residents, maintained their independence, became "famous for their flexibility and organizational versatility" (*ibid.*), and went on to address collective issues beyond land ownership (Wilpert 2003; see also Antillano 2005). The CTUs thus provide an important example of how progressive forms of civil society organization during the *puntofijista* era shaped policies in the Chávez administration and also how new manifestations of popular civil society that emerged as a result of Bolivarian policies could maintain their autonomy and continue to evolve. The CTUs, in fact, were an important precursor of the communal council (*consejo comunal*), which (as discussed in the following chapter) would become the fundamental organizational component of the more evolved framework for a Bolivarian civil state that emerged several years later.

Political opponents of the Chávez administration were also critical of the 49 decreed laws, claiming that they had not been properly submitted for public debate, as called for in the constitution. In December, FEDECAMERAS filed a legal action in an effort to block them (Attorney General's Office admits... Jul 22, 2004).[361] Whether it was the procedural aspects of their passage or the actual content of

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361FEDECAMERAS pointed to Articles 206 and 211 of the constitution.

the laws that inspired such outrage, they served to unify and reignite opposition to Chávez and the following months saw a series of large demonstrations and counter-demonstrations throughout the country. As has been well documented and copiously discussed, these demonstrations became violent on April 11, 2002, thus providing a pretext for leaders from FEDECAMERAS, the CTV, AD, COPEI, and the Venezuelan military to attempt a coup. The imposed government fell apart only two days later, however, when massive popular mobilizations and resistance from within the military restored Chávez to office.

In the aftermath of the coup attempt, the Chávez administration set a conciliatory tone by creating a Presidential Commission for National Dialogue, implementing decentralizing provisions of the constitution that created opportunities for oppositional state governors, and appointing more moderate figures to important posts, including the head of the state oil company (Ellner 2010, 118). Nonetheless, in December of that year FEDECAMERAS, CTV, and top oil executives attempted to destabilize the country by calling a general strike that focused especially on the petroleum sector. Although extremely damaging to the economy, the maneuver failed and the strike fizzled out after eight weeks. The opposition then collected enough signatures to submit Chávez to a national recall referendum in August of 2004, but that attempt failed when 59 percent of voters endorsed his presidency. In 2005, opposition parties chose to boycott elections for the National Assembly, claiming that the electoral system was fraudulent. This plan backfired, as they failed to delegitimize the government and ended up ceding full control of the National Assembly to the *chavistas*. The cumulative effect of the opposition's efforts was to galvanize and further radicalize the Bolivarian movement. Opposition intransigence to the administration's conciliatory efforts following the coup attempt had discredited the soft liners' counsel to form alliances and lent credence to the mistrust of hard liners. Additionally, rising oil prices vastly increased Venezuela's foreign exchange reserves and provided the administration with much more room to maneuver.

Throughout the period of increasing polarization, the government implemented multiple new policies and programs designed to increase popular participation in governance and economic production.

The results of these attempts were mixed. Of particular importance was the relaunch of the Bolivarian Circles during the second half of 2001.[362] Leaders of the Bolivarian movement had recognized that the MVR suffered from excessive bureaucracy and that social programs up until that point had leaned heavily on the armed forces and lacked organization at the grassroots level (Ellner 2010, 181; Arenas & Gómez 2005, 181). They thus urged a return to the organizational strategy that had been used with success by the MBR-200, although it was now modified to integrate with the state apparatus under a newly created National Coordination of Bolivarian Circles (*Coordinación Nacional de los Círculos Bolivarianos*). The goal was to create a specifically Bolivarian form of civil society that would channel the desires of the community and the programs of the state; at least one *chavista* politician specifically stated that the goal was to replace the neighborhood associations with Bolivarian Circles as the fundamental organizational unit within the framework of the *puntofijista* Fundamental Law of Municipal Governance (181-2). While they continued to play a role in disseminating and discussing Bolivarian ideology, the most common functions of the renewed Bolivarian Circles seem to have been enabling citizens to access government services and fomenting support for Chávez prior to the 2004 referendum.

According to the official strategy, each Circle was to have between 7 and 11 members, although some grew much larger (Hawkins & Hansen 2006, 106). In 2003 the government claimed a total of 2.2 million members, although truly active members have been estimated at only 700,000 (107). Members of the circles tended to be relatively well educated and have significant experience in political and community-level activism. There is also some indication that members were somewhat wealthier than "rank and file" *chavistas* and one survey found that 55 percent of the Circles' funding came from their members (110-11). These demographic findings can help explain two larger trends in the history of the Bolivarian Circles. The first is that they maintained a great deal of autonomy. Their members tended to be relatively radical and committed to participatory democracy. They mistrusted political parties, including

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362Arenas & Gómez (2005) state that the renewed emphasis on Bolivarian Circles began in June of 2001 (168). Ellner (2010) points to a speech given by Chávez in April of that year (181). Hawkins & Hansen (2006) state that Chávez called for the formation of new Bolivarian Circles in 2000, but suggest that the process had little momentum until after Chávez led an official swearing in ceremony in December of 2001 (102-3).

the MVR, and resisted the hierarchical organization of the state. Many of the Circles, while maintaining allegiance to Chávez, organized into parallel associations at local, regional, state, and national levels (106-7) and very little of their funding – 10 percent or less – seems to have come from the state. [363]

The second trend, however, is that the Circles were less a mechanism for participation in governance, at least in terms of decision-making around policy, than an auxiliary to the state apparatus. They were generally composed of the most committed and capable *chavistas* who served to direct other community members to government services. Many of the members were simultaneously active in those programs, especially in remedial education and health care provision (108). Moreover, members tended to identify more strongly with Chávez and the Bolivarian movement at large than with a specific set of policies or with their particular Bolivarian Circle as an independent organization. In other words, they exhibited a "charismatic mode of linkage" that not only "created an internal contradiction or tension between the [Circles'] stated goals of autonomy/internal democracy and serving Chávez", but also "undermined their efforts at institutionalization" (119). [364] Additionally, the Circles "unwittingly (and sometimes wittingly) served as new clientelistic brokers, ensuring the provision of [state] programs in neighborhoods [or to individuals] *that supported Chávez*" (118, original emphasis).

The model of the Bolivarian Circle had emerged within the MBR-200 as a tool for elaborating a national political movement. For the purposes of constructing an organized civil society apparatus as a component of the Bolivarian civil state, however, the model proved to be overly rudimentary. The Circles strove for internal democracy but had no replicable institutionalized structure. Nor did they have any real power over social resources, which restricted them to facilitating access to state programs and invited the formation of clientelistic patterns. Participation in the Bolivarian Circles dropped off sharply around 2005

363The Circles studied by Valencia (2007) "received no funding from the state" (127). Hawkins & Hansen found that 10 percent of funding, generally in the form of in-kind contributions, came from the state (109).

364Hawkins & Hansen usefully distinguish between the "charismatic mode of linkage", which centers on a political personality and is thus closely related to populism, and the "programmatic mode of linkage", in which political action is committed to a specific set of policies or principles (119). These are not, of course, mutually exclusive, but to the extent that the charismatic mode invites a top-down movement it can operate at cross-purposes with the principle of participatory democratic decision-making.

as the government shifted it's emphasis to new forms of Bolivarian civil society and (as would befit a charismatically linked movement) many members of the Circles followed suit (124). [365]

In early 2003, as Venezuelan society remained deeply polarized and oil prices were relatively high, the Chávez administration began implementing a series of extensive social programs referred to as "missions" (*misiones*). Conceptually, the missions were basically an expansion of the *Plan Bólivar 2000* program, although managed and staffed by civilians instead of soldiers. The most prominent of the missions, which provide no-cost health care, multi-level adult education, and food staples at subsidized prices, were created in 2003. New missions, addressing issues such as housing, land reform, the social economy, female heads of households, and the environment, among other issues, were created in subsequent years. Billions of dollars of state oil revenues have been directed to the missions, which are among the Bolivarian movement's most important attempts to create parallel structures meant to surpass the institutions inherited from the *puntofijista* and neoliberal periods.[366] The missions have been attacked for their fiscal irresponsibility and their lack of results, while supporters have celebrated their role in drastically reducing poverty levels and improving important indicators of societal well-being. The debate that concerns us here, however, is the degree to which the missions have contributed to the formation of a civil state.

As their goals included safeguarding the rights guaranteed by the constitution and advancing the goals laid out in the Guidelines, the missions were designed to create the general conditions within which an autonomous "civic power" could emerge to assume its role in a system of shared governance and their design reflected efforts to increase popular participation (see Alayón 2005). At a minimum, they created new volunteer opportunities for community members. Indeed, many members of the Bolivarian Circles

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365The Bolivarian Circles were never disbanded or entirely abandoned. In July of 2011 they were "relaunched" and the various parallel national associations joined together in a "Unitary Council" (Zárraga 2011). Their role, however, is less focused on community organization and they are far from being cast as the primary unit of Bolivarian civil society. They have, rather, returned to their original role as cells of ideological discussion and agitation within a more explicitly political sphere.

366For example, in 2007, the state petroleum company directed $1.36 billion to the primary medical mission and $546 million to the primary housing mission (Gómez 2009).

volunteered within the mission structure and the government's shift of emphasis toward the missions contributed to the decline of the Circles. Critics, however, have painted the missions as attempts to establish patronage networks and other forms of clientelism in order to consolidate Bolivarian control. More sympathetic observers, while not discounting the possibility and existence of clientelistic relations within the mission system, have suggested that, as with the Bolivarian Circles, the correct frame to employ is that of a "charismatic-populist" linkage which lacks "overt conditionality" and "intentional efforts at exclusion". Rather, the "ideological, partisan atmosphere" is "a natural outcome of a movement that relies heavily on the figure of Chávez and sees him and the movement as the embodiment of the popular will" (Hawkins et al. 2011, 211). Be that as it may, they note that, although the missions "make some noteworthy, largely indirect contributions to Venezuelan civil society", their organizational logic is clearly hierarchical, with funding and decision-making dependent on national leaders (197). In sum, whether or not the missions have been of substantial benefit to the well-being of Venezuelan society, they seem to be much more in the line of traditional social benefit programs, with their concomitant risks for clientelism and other forms of abuse, than they are a vehicle for generating a new framework of civil society and consolidating community self-governance.

Victory in the August 2004 referendum firmly established majority support for Chávez and placed the Bolivarian government on a firmer footing than it had enjoyed at any point in the previous three years. Oil prices and revenue had continued to climb and the economy had surged away from the 2002 / 2003 recession, ultimately posting 18.3 percent GDP growth in 2004 (Weisbrot et al. 2009, 8). With the missions (understood to be) addressing the most urgent needs of the population and consolidating the movement's political base, the administration found itself with greater freedom to extend opportunities for democratic participation in both the economy and the state.

In February of 2005 the government created the Ministry for the Popular Economy to improve upon previous attempts to facilitate the widespread establishment of worker cooperatives. The new ministry began working closely with previously established state banks to provide credit, often in the

form of microcredits, and with one of the missions that had been tasked with training and other forms of assistance for new cooperatives. By October of 2006 the government claimed 141,000 registered cooperatives (Ellner 2010, 122-3). By law the cooperatives are required to provide volunteer services to the communities in which they are located, meaning that they are meant to contribute to both civil society and the social economy. Many of the cooperatives, however, never got off the ground, and many more failed. The government never expected all of the new cooperatives to succeed, of course, but only hoped that the strongest would serve as models for future efforts. Nonetheless, the cooperatives have been heavily dependent on the state, especially in their early years, and there has been significant misappropriation of funds. One of the most sensitive problems with the cooperatives has been how to ensure that they comply with their legal obligations, since the government has been reluctant to wield a heavy hand against its most ardent supporters (130-1). In any case, the economistic focus of the cooperatives did not prove to be a vehicle for popular participation in civil governance:

> The initial idea that cooperatives would automatically produce for the satisfaction of social needs and that their internal solidarity based on collective property would extend to their local communities, proved to be an error. Most cooperatives still followed the logic of capital; concentrating on the maximization of net revenue without supporting the surrounding communities, many failed to integrate new members. (Azzellini 2013)

The cooperatives illustrated one of the persistent shortcomings of Bolivarian attempts to establish robust mechanism of participatory governance, although the problem was in no way limited to the cooperative sector.

As of 2005, the "organized communities" still lacked sufficient investment in and control over public resources to encourage widespread interest in what the 2001 Guidelines had referred to as "social oversight" (c*ontraloría social*) and defined as:

> ...a strategy for which the organized communities are converted into effective guards of public administration in its various levels, to guarantee the suitability of the state's action in the development of programs and projects directed toward the improvement of community standards of living, through the development of community units for the monitoring and administrative control of the planned public agenda. (106) [367]

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367 "*...una estrategia para que las comunidades organizadas se conviertan en vigilantes efectivas de la gestión pública en sus distintos niveles, para garantizar la idoneidad de la acción del estado en el desarrollo de los*

Social oversight clearly lies at the heart of the project of shared governance established in the Guidelines and it had not been sufficiently accomplished by the charismatic linkages that motivated the Bolivarian Circles and the hierarchical organization that structured the missions. These programs had gone further toward the creation of an innovative and progressive welfare state than they had toward the construction of a civil state.

Chávez and the Bolivarian government appear to have been keenly aware of this problem and their vision extended far beyond a renewed emphasis on the cooperative business model. In November of 2004, Chávez publicly "encouraged citizens to form units of *Contraloría Social* in their neighborhoods in order to exercise some degree of vigilance and control over state-sponsored social programs" (Fernandes 2010, 236). During that same month, he led a workshop for MVR leaders and outlined ten key objective of the Bolivarian movement's "New Strategic Map" (*Nuevo Mapa Estratégico*) (Chávez 2005). Whereas the 2001 Guidelines had evidenced an economistic approach, only two of the ten objectives of the "new map" were primarily economic, and the first three on the list emphasized civil society structuration:

> 1) Advance in the constitution of a new social structure (social revolution, power to the poor), 2) Articulate and optimize the new communicational strategy (shared responsibility), 3) Rapidly advance in the construction of a new democratic model (popular participation) (Garrido 2004)[368]

The most important marker of this sustained shift toward a new framework for popular power was the emergence of an organizational entity called the communal council as the basic structuring component of the Bolivarian civil state.

The communal council first appeared as a relatively minor component of the 2002 Law of Local Councils of Public Planning (*Ley de los Consejos Locales de Planificación Pública* / LCLPP) which, in response to article 182 of the constitution, called for municipal mayors to preside over Local Councils of Public Planning (CLPPs) that would also include municipal council members, parish board presidents,

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programas y proyectos dirigidos al mejoramiento de los niveles de vida de las comunidades, mediante el desarrollo de unidades comunitarias para el monitoreo y control de gestión de la agenda pública plaificada."

[368]"*1) Avanzar en la constitución de una nueva estructura social (revolución social, poder a los pobres), 2) Articular y optimizar la nueva estrategia comunicacional (responsabilidad compartida), 3) Avanzar aceleradamente en la construcción del nuevo modelo democrático (participación popular)*"

and representatives of neighborhood and other social organizations. Under the 2002 law, CLPPs were tasked with promoting "the Network [sic] of parish and communal councils in each of the spaces of civil society that, in general, respond to the typical nature of the municipality" and the members of those councils "will be able to carry out oversight, control, and evaluation" of the projects approved by the CLPPs.[369] The law thus conceived the communal councils as subcomponents of the parish councils, both of which were secondary to the CLPPs, which were to become the primary component of participatory governance at the local level (López & Añez 2005, 123 – 127).[370] The law did not, however, specify how the communal councils were to be organized.

Communal and parish councils were again mentioned in the Fundamental Law of Municipal Public Power (*Ley Orgánica del Poder Público Municipal* / LOPPM) that was enacted in June of 2005 and which finally replaced the *puntofijista* Law of Municipal Governance that had legally established the neighborhood associations.[371] The LOPPM reiterated the framework created by the 2002 LCLPP and the role of the communal and parish councils within it.[372] The law also stipulated, in article 114, that "[t]he ordinances of the [CLPP] must regulate all aspects of the integration, organization, and functioning of the parish and communal councils",[373] but this only further cemented the authority of the CLPPs over the communal councils and undercut the ability for the councils to serve as effective conduits of civil governance. In other words, a certain circularity was built into the role of the communal councils, whose existence depended on the CLPPs, and thus elected (and party supported) members of the municipal

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369"*la Red de consejos parroquiales y comunales en cada uno de los espacios de la sociedad civil que, en general, respondan a la naturaleza propia del municipio*"; "*podrán realizar el seguimiento, control y evaluación*"

370As Ellner (2009) points out, the CLPPs "ended up largely under the control of mayors who packed them with their own followers".

371Article 7 of the LOPPM establishes "[t]he municipality and other local entities" as "primary spaces for civic participation in the planning, design, execution, control and evaluation of public administration".; "[*e]l Municipio y las demás entidades locales*"; "*espacios primarios para la participación ciudadana en la planificación, diseño, ejecución, control y evaluación de la gestión pública.*"

372Interestingly, the LOPPM refers to the "transfer" (*transferencia*) of municipal public services to "organized communities and neighborhood groups" (*comunidades y grupos vecinales organizados*) (Article 260). This is in seeming contradiction to the passage from the 2001 Guidelines, cited above, which denied that "civic power" should be "transferred or ceded".

373"*La ordenanza del Consejo Local de Planificación Pública deberá regular todo lo relativo a la integración, organización y funcionamiento de los consejos parroquiales y comunales.*"

government, even though the councils were tasked with the social oversight of municipal government projects.

CLPPs were not created in all municipalities and very few, if any, networks of parish and communal councils were created. Resistance to the CLPP framework resulted to some extent from a lack of political will on the part of municipal authorities, either due to mere institutional inertia or a willful aversion to ceding authority and power. This was only augmented by the highly polarized political climate, in which those opposed to the Bolivarian movement, including municipal officials and oppositional civil society organizations, actively resisted any proposals whatsoever coming from the Chávez administration (133). These various modes of obstruction were at least partially enabled by the dependency of the council structure, as the mechanism of social oversight, on the municipal structure, which maintained the liberal representative model of democracy and its susceptibility to capture by powerful interests.[374]

The CLPP framework did not create a viable basis for a civil state but, by establishing a rudimentary notion of the communal council, it did presage the more robust framework that would be elaborated through a series of policy statements and laws, beginning with the Law of Communal Councils (*Ley de Consejos Comunales*) in 2006. This framework will be discussed at length in the following chapter. What we have so far reviewed in this chapter is the evolution of Bolivarian civil society during the first seven years of the Chávez administration. We have seen that political exigency, economistic preoccupation, institutional inertia, and the lack of a coherent vision all hampered the structuration of a participatory civil society with a determinative role on governance. Nonetheless, there is evidence for a

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[374]In 2004, the Torres municipality in the state of Lara elected a progressive mayor, Julio Chávez, from outside (and arguably to the left of) the MVR. Significantly, Chávez oversaw an innovative and radical overhaul of the structure of municipal governance, with the goal of maximizing public participation, but did *not* apply the structure called for in the 2002 LCLPP. Instead, he applied the model of the constituent assembly, which had been employed at the national level in 1999. This choice did not reflect opposition to the national Bolivarian movement, which he supported. In fact, the municipality was one of the first to adopt the communal council system following passage of the 2006 Law of Communal Councils (Harnecker 2008). The failure to create a LCLPP in Torres is indicative of the degree to which that framework was not viewed as a way forward even by local leaders most committed to participatory governance.

consistent focus on and movement toward this goal. Early initiatives took the form of innovative and massive welfare projects that allowed for only minimal participation. More robust channels of participation in governance, like the water advisory councils and the CTUs, were isolated, restricted in scope, and not scalable. Nonetheless, these various efforts, in conjunction with a continual focus on the maximization of social oversight, contributed to the design of the more systematic approach of the communal councils.

The broad outline of this history bears some similarity to that of the community media sector. As we will see, once broadcast community media was given a legal basis, the Bolivarian government sought to expand the sector via the contribution of considerable resources, but these flowed from centralized institutions outward, thus generating clientelistic tensions along the lines of the missions or Bolivarian Circles. This situation was exacerbated by the lack of a social governance structure, in other words a civil state, within which community media could be anchored. As a result, community media outlets had a hard time fulfilling their goal of making significant contributions to the process of social oversight. At the same time, there was no stable mechanism for communities to exercise strong social oversight over the media outlets. Nonetheless, important lessons were learned as the movement progressed and the need for a systematic overhaul became more pressing. Keeping the similarities of these trajectories in mind as we review the history of community media during the early years of the Chávez administration will enable us to better appreciate later attempts to integrate that sector with the communal council structure.

The Consolidation of the Community and Alternative Media Movement in the Early Years of the Bolivarian Republic

As might be expected, many members of the burgeoning Venezuelan community and alternative media movement were ardent supporters of Chávez and the Bolivarian revolution throughout the 1998 elections. With the adoption of the new constitution in December of 1999, that support began to bear fruit. As Eekhout later recalled:

The Constitution provided a legal framework for community media. Until then, community media were essentially illegal. But the media activists participated in the constitutional process and got communication established as a human right. So community media were not only supposed to be legal, but protected and developed as a human right like health care or education. (Podur 2004a)

This arguably overstates the case; it seems more apt to say that the constitution provided a legal basis rather than a framework, as community media is not mentioned per se. In fact, article 108, which most specifically addresses the media, references only state support for public media and suggests a progressive liberal model (see Velasco 2001, 143):

> Communications media, public and private, shall contribute to civil education. The State will guarantee public radio and television services, and library and computer networks, in order to permit universal access to information. Educational centers will incorporate the knowledge and application of new technologies, and resulting innovations, in accordance with such requirements as may be established by law.[375]

This does not, of course, preclude state support for a private system of civil society media, but when Bolivarian community media advocates point to a constitutional basis for state support, they most commonly refer to articles 57 and 58. The latter of these, however, offers nothing that necessarily exceeds a liberal system:

> Communication is free and plural, and involves the duties and responsibilities indicated by law. Every person has the right to timely, truthful, and impartial information, without censorship, in accordance with the principles of this Constitution, as well as the right to reply and corrections when they are directly affected by inaccurate or offensive information. Children and adolescents have the right to receive information suitable to their overall development.[376]

There is, of course, room to argue that communication can be neither truly free nor inclusively plural, and that mediated information can not be truthful and impartial, outside of a radically participatory system, but the point here is that the formulation of this article adopts language common to many liberal states.

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[375] "*Los medios de comunicación social, públicos y privados, deben contribuir a la formación ciudadana. El Estado garantizará servicios públicos de radio, televisión y redes de bibliotecas y de informática, con el fin de permitir el acceso universal a la información. Los centros educativos deben incorporar el conocimiento y aplicación de las nuevas tecnologías, de sus innovaciones, según los requisitos que establezca la ley.*"

[376] "*La comunicación es libre y plural y comporta los deberes y responsabilidades que indique la ley. Toda persona tiene derecho a la información oportuna, veraz e imparcial, sin censura, de acuerdo con los principios de esta Constitución, así como a la réplica y rectificación cuando se vea afectada directamente por informaciones inexactas o agraviantes. Los niños, niñas y adolescentes tienen derecho a recibir información adecuada para su desarrollo integral.*"

The potentially transcendental clause of the Bolivarian constitution upon which which state support for a system of participatory media can be founded is tucked into article 57:

> Every person has the right to express freely his or her thoughts, ideas or opinions orally, in writing, or by any other form of expression, *and to make use of any means of communication and diffusion for such purpose*, and no censorship shall be established. Anyone making use of this right assumes full responsibility for everything expressed. Anonymity, war propaganda, discriminatory messages or those promoting religious intolerance are not permitted. Censorship restricting the ability of public officials to report on matters for which they are responsible is prohibited. (my emphasis) [377]

Here, too, there is room for interpretation. To say that a citizen has the right "to make use of" a communications medium does not guarantee that they have *access* to that medium. This would be the interpretation that has predominated in the liberal tradition and which understands the freedom of expression in a negative sense, in that a citizen's expression can not be *restricted* by the state. In context, however, the clause seems to exceed that interpretation. The right to expression in any form is already guaranteed in the preceding clause, and the prohibition against censorship is established in the succeeding clause as well as the succeeding article. The only additional meaning that could therefore have been intended by the clause in question is a positive right to access that places a burden on the state to *facilitate* that access.

> We can further contextualize this interpretation by looking at articles 99, 100 and 101:

> Cultural values are the irrenounceable property of the Venezuelan people and *a fundamental right to be encouraged and guaranteed by the State, which will provide the necessary conditions, legal instruments, means and funding*. The autonomy of the public administration of culture is recognized on such terms as may be established by law. The State will guarantee the protection and preservation, enrichment, conservation, and restoration of the cultural heritage, tangible and intangible, and the historic memory of the Nation. The assets constituting the cultural heritage of the Nation are inalienable and not subject to embargo nor statute of limitations. Penalties and sanctions for damage caused to these assets shall be provided for by law.[378]

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377 "*Toda persona tiene derecho a expresar libremente sus pensamientos, sus ideas u opiniones de viva voz, por escrito o mediante cualquier otra forma de expresión y de hacer uso para ello de cualquier medio de comunicación y difusión, sin que pueda establecerse censura. Quien haga uso de este derecho asume plena responsabilidad por todo lo expresado. No se permite el anonimato, ni la propaganda de guerra, ni los mensajes discriminatorios, ni los que promuevan la intolerancia religiosa. Se prohíbe la censura a los funcionarios públicos o funcionarias públicas para dar cuenta de los asuntos bajo sus responsabilidades.*"

378 "*Los valores de la cultura constituyen un bien irrenunciable del pueblo venezolano y un derecho fundamental que el Estado fomentará y garantizará, procurando las condiciones, instrumentos legales, medios y*

Popular culture constituting the national identity of Venezuela enjoys special attention, with recognition of and respect for intercultural relations under the principle of equality of cultures. *Incentives and inducements will be established by law for persons, institutions and communities that promote, support, develop, or finance cultural plans, programs and activities within the country*, as well as Venezuelan culture abroad. The State will guarantee cultural workers inclusion in the social security system to provide them with a dignified life, recognizing the particularities of cultural work, in accordance with the law.[379]

The State will guarantee the issuance, reception, and circulation of cultural information . Communications media have the duty of contributing to the dissemination of the values of popular tradition and the work of artists, writers, composers, motion picture directors, scientists, and other cultural creators of the country. Television media shall include subtitles and translation into sign language for persons with hearing problems. The terms and modalities of these obligations will be established by law. (emphasis mine) [380]

Here we can also find support for both liberal and more progressive interpretations of the state's relationship to the media. Much depends on the interpretation of "culture" and "popular culture".

The mention of "cultural heritage" and "historic memory" in article 99 suggests a narrow interpretation in which culture is understood from a modern- and paternalistic liberal conception as something static that can be cordoned off and protected. Likewise, the mention of "values of popular tradition" suggests a narrow interpretation in which popular culture is associated with forms of expression, such as dance and artisanal craftwork, that reflect the colonial era or pre-colombian indigenous practices.[381] This interpretation is reinforced by article 309, which reads: "Artisanship and

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presupuestos necesarios. Se reconoce la autonomía de la administración cultural pública en los términos que establezca la ley. El Estado garantizará la protección y preservación, enriquecimiento, conservación y restauración del patrimonio cultural, tangible e intangible, y la memoria histórica de la Nación. Los bienes que constituyen el patrimonio cultural de la Nación son inalienables, imprescriptibles e inembargables. La ley establecerá las penas y sanciones para los daños causados a estos bienes."

379 "*Las culturas populares constitutivas de la venezolanidad gozan de atención especial, reconociéndose y respetándose la interculturalidad bajo el principio de igualdad de las culturas. La ley establecerá incentivos y estímulos para las personas, instituciones y comunidades que promuevan, apoyen, desarrollen o financien planes, programas y actividades culturales en el país, así como la cultura venezolana en el exterior. El Estado garantizará a los trabajadores y trabajadoras culturales su incorporación al sistema de seguridad social que les permita una vida digna, reconociendo las particularidades del quehacer cultural, de conformidad con la ley.*"

380 "*El Estado garantizará la emisión, recepción y circulación de la información cultural. Los medios de comunicación tienen el deber de coadyuvar a la difusión de los valores de la tradición popular y la obra de los o las artistas, escritores, escritoras, compositores, compositoras, cineastas, científicos, científicas y demás creadores y creadoras culturales del país. Los medios televisivos deberán incorporar subtítulos y traducción a la lengua de señas, para las personas con problemas auditivos. La ley establecerá los términos y modalidades de estas obligaciones.*"

381 This is corroborated by the official English version of the Constitution, which translates "*popular*" as "folk", thus rendering the phrases "folk cultures" and "values of folk traditions".

typical popular industries of the Nation will enjoy the special protection of the State, in order to preserve their authenticity, and they will receive credit facilities to promote production and commercialization." [382] We need only recognize the difficult baggage carried by the word "authenticity" to see that the constitution's emphasis on "popular culture" is linked to essentialist liberal assumptions of progress, development, and modernity. In this sense, these articles reproduce an irony common to Latin America since the 1960s, in which progressive impulses can lead to a reactionary and rather conservative defense against "cultural imperialism".

On the other hand, if culture and popular culture are interpreted broadly, to include evolving modes of creative production that engage with contemporary issues, genres, and styles, then these articles suggest a different range of outcomes. This broader and more progressive interpretation is supported by the reference to "cultural information" and the specific inclusion of motion picture directors and scientists within the category of "cultural creators". It is also endorsed by language in article 98, which states that the freedom of cultural creation includes "the right to invest in, produce and disseminate creative, scientific, technical and humanistic work". [383] Under this wider umbrella there is room to envision guarantees for "the issuance, reception, and circulation of", as well as "incentives and inducements" for, non-essentialized forms of Venezuelan media, such as investigative reporting, hip hop music, or comedic films, and some might argue that only a national system of participatory media could adequately respond.

In sum, the Bolivarian constitution is open-ended and somewhat ambiguous in relation to media and culture. It undoubtedly exhibits a progressive intent, and there is evidence to suggest that it establishes a framework for participatory media that transcends the liberal order, but this remains open to interpretation. As such, its practical significance would ultimately depend on consequent state policy. Its immediate effect, however, was to encourage the cohering community and alternative media movement,

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[382] "*La artesanía e industrias populares típicas de la Nación gozarán de protección especial del Estado, con el fin de preservar su autenticidad, y obtendrán facilidades crediticias para promover su producción y comercialización.*"

[383] "*el derecho a la inversión, producción y divulgación de la obra creativa, científica, tecnológica y humanística*"

which viewed the new constitution, optimistically, as providing considerable opportunity for advance.[384]

Another important catalyst for the consolidation of the national movement was a palpable, though gradual, shift in CONATEL's attitude toward community media. Soon after Chávez's inauguration, a representative from CONATEL visited *TV Rubio* with an invitation to a meeting in the state capital. As Manrique recalled, he and others from *TV Rubio* went, but not without a lingering mistrust that had been developed during the Caldera administration:

> We went, because he said that he came on behalf of the government and wanted to hear the experiences of [community and alternative] radio and television.... That day we went with concern. And when we arrived... there were military police, there were buses, and we all said, 'That's it. They're going to put us all in the buses and they're going to take us to prison.' But I don't know why the buses were there, but they weren't for us.... And we remained in the meeting and the guy launched into a big speech, that the government was interested in hearing about the experiences and so on and so forth. And that CONATEL wanted to listen. (Manrique 2011)[385]

CONATEL's newfound willingness to listen inspired trust and optimism among community media practitioners who were invited to this meeting. Ayan Vergara, one of the first community radio broadcasters in the state of Zulia, later recalled that:

> [w]hen Chávez took office, we had already been transmitting for awhile and we thought that they were going to shut us down because a government was coming to install a dictatorship. But the exact opposite occurred, I have to recognize and I've always reaffirmed, that President Chávez's CONATEL was more receptive than in other governments, they invited us to learn about our work with community radio stations, we met with them in Táchira when that had never occurred. (Ávila 2008, 44)[386]

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384 On the other hand, many defenders of the status quo of Venezuela's commercially dominated media system argued that the constitution would lead to increased censorship and state control, due to the express mention of the educative and civic responsibilities of media providers (Velasco 2001). Those opposed to the Bolivarian government have since wielded similar arguments in relation to other laws and policies, especially the Social Responsibility in Radio and Television Law (*Ley de Responsabilidad Social en Radio y Televisión* / RESORTE) which was proposed in 2003 and adopted in 2004 (see below).

385 "*Nosotros fuimos, porque decía que venía de parte del gobierno y quería escuchar las experiencias de radio y televisión [comunitaria y alternativa].... Ese día nosotros ibamos con temor. Y cuando llegamos... habían policía militar, habían autobuses, y todos dijimos, "Nada. Nos van a meter todos a los buses y nos van a llevar todos preso. Pero no sé porque estaban los autobuses allí, pero no eran para nosotros.... Y nosotros quedamos en la reunión y el tipo se lanzó en todo un discurso, dijo que el gobierno tenía interés en conocer a las experiencias y tal y cuestión. Y que CONATEL quería escuchar.*"

386 "*Cuando Chávez asumió la presidencia, ya teníamos rato transmitiendo y pensábamos que nos iban acabar porque venía un gobierno a implantar una dictadura. Pero sucedió todo lo contrario, tengo que reconocer y siempre lo he reafirmado, que el Conatel del presidente Chávez fue más receptivo que en otros gobiernos, ellos nos invitaron para conocer nuestro trabajo con las emisoras comunitarias, nos reunimos con ellos en Táchira cuando nunca había ocurrido.*"

The shift in attitude was neither absolute nor immediate, however, and the assembled practitioners remained cautious. As Manrique noted, "everyone talked, said … what they had to say. Or what they supposed could be said. Because not everything was said. Or it wasn't advisable to say everything" (Manrique 2011).[387]

The most important outcome of that meeting in Táchira, however, was not directly related to CONATEL. Although Manrique was already familiar with *TV Michelena* and the network of community media practitioners in Caracas, he only became aware of the extent to which community media had been growing in the western states when he saw them assembled that day. He described the connections forged at that meeting as the "genesis" of the Venezuelan Network of Community Media (*Red Venezolana de Medios Comunitarios* / RVMC), which formed in "the beginning of" (*comienzos de*) 1999 (ibid., González 222).[388] Manrique would be the driving force and president of the RVMC for the next eight years, during which time it would play a crucial role in the organization of Venezuela's community media sector.

By September of 1999, *TV Rubio* was being described as "part of a pilot program, developed by the new authorities of CONATEL, for the development of alternative, community, and educational communications" (Hernández 1999).[389] This designation does not seem to have brought any material support, but clearly there was real interest in the sector on the part of the new government. The first major test of the Chávez administration's commitment to community media, however, came in early 2000, as it set out to update the antiquated 1940 Law of Telecommunications (LOT). The formulation of the new law was indicative of the somewhat incoherent nature of Bolivarian policy in that period more generally. Once the new constitution was passed in December of 1999, the previously elected bicameral congress was dismissed, but the new national assembly was not to be elected until July of 2000. In the interim,

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387"*todo el mundo habló, dijo … lo que tenía que decir. O lo que supuso que podía decir. Porque todo no se dijo. O todo no convenía decirlo.*"

388Both Castro & Rojas (2004, cited in Delgado & Guerrero 2008, 20) and Fuentes-Bautista & Gil-Egui (2011, 258) mistakenly place the formation of the RVMC in 1996.

389"*parte de un programa piloto, desarrollado por las nuevas autoridades de Conatel, para el desarrollo de las comunicaciones alternativas, comunitarias y educativas*"

legislative duties were carried out by an appointed National Legislative Commission (*Comisión Nacional Legislativa*), popularly known as the "little congress" (*congresillo*). The new LOT was one of the very few pieces of legislation passed by this body.

The initial formulation of the new LOT was heavily influenced by the Chamber of Telecommunications Services Businesses (*Cámara de Empresas de Servicios de Telecomunicaciones*, CASETEL), which sought to consolidate the privatized and deregulated order that had been put in place with Pérez's neoliberal reforms in 1991. CONATEL, which had been created as a result of those reforms, saw itself as an autonomous regulator whose goal was to ensure universal service but otherwise maintain a commercial marketplace for telecommunications service that would be open to foreign investment. As such, CONATEL also supported the initial, neoliberal proposal for the new LOT (González 222).

Once this proposal was made public, however, members of the community and alternative media movement began to organize to change it. On March 10th and 11th of 2000, "groups and collectives" from Caracas, Maracay, and the state of Lara met in Barquisimeto at "The Free Communication Meeting" (*El Encuentro de la Libre Comunicación*). One of the principal groups, *LibreCommunicación* (FreeCommunication), described itself as "a front of various groups that work in alternative, free, popular, and/or countercultural communication"[390]. The nucleus of this group was a collective called *Onda Libre* (Free Wave) that had established *Radio Catia Libre* in the early 1990s (Manrique 2011; Hernández 2005, 85).[391] The RVMC, led by Manrique, was the second principal group, and these two were joined by "diverse popular organizations that work in popular, community, and alternative communication" (LibreComunicación 2000).[392] These groups collectively drafted a "Manifesto of Free Communication"

390"*un frente de varios grupos que trabajan en comunicación alternativa, libre, popular y/o contracultural*"

391Manrique referred to this collective as *Onda Nueva* (New Wave) in our interview, but it seems that he misspoke. González (2001), for example, seems to have an insider's knowledge of the organization around the LOT and is identified as "an activist and human rights researcher" (*activista e investigador en DD. HH.*) as well as a "member of the Free Wave collective" (*miembro del colectivo Onda Libre*).

392"*diversas organizaciones populares que trabajan en comunicación popular, comunitaria o alternativa*"; Alvin Lezama, who served as a consultant for CONATEL during the formulation of the LOT and would go on to become that institution's Director General in 2003, would later recall that "the community initiatives that had been working for some time in Venezuela from the Andes, from Catia TV [sic], and Vargas, among others, put together an assembly and carried a proposal to be included in the LOT" (Morales 2004, 39).; "*las iniciativas*

that would serve as the centerpiece in a campaign "around the right to free communication and the freedom of access to the media on the part of communities". [393]. The Manifesto was presented on May 3, which is the UN's World Press Freedom Day, at a conference in Caracas on public services that had been organized by CASETEL, the Andean Commission of Legal Scholars (*Comisión Andina de Juristas*), and the federal office of the Public Advocate (*Defensoría del Pueblo*). It was also made available online, allowing an opportunity for other groups to add their name to the list of supporters (LibreCommunicación 2000).

The Manifesto ends with a list of six demands that are worth citing in full:

1) Official recognition of the community media sector as an essential component of public service broadcasting and a vital contribution to pluralism in the media and the validity and enjoyment of the freedom of expression and information.
2) The creation on the part of the State of a public space for debate and consultation in which representatives of civil society and the organized communities (and not only private enterprise) participate in the design and instrumentation of communication and telecommunication policies, laws, and regulations.
3) A guarantee in the new Law and the new Regulations of Telecommunications that the assignation of broadcasting frequencies, the technical criteria, and the priorities of development promote and incentivize the creation of media outlets on the part of non-governmental organizations and organized communities, without establishing political, economic, administrative, technical, or any other type of barriers to the exercise of the right to inform and express oneself freely, beyond those imposed by the use of the limited resources of the broadcasting spectrum.
4) That the State earmark a significant amount of fiscal revenues from the taxes of telecommunication businesses in order to institute plans for the development and formation of cultural, community, and civic structures of communications.
5) That the so-called National Telecommunications Plan advanced by the State take into account and favor the existence and development of absolutely autonomous community radio and television broadcasters with no type of official interference in the programming and emission of content.
6) The designation of a significant part of the broadcasting spectrum for use by micro-broadcasters and community media outlets.[394]

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comunitarias que tenían tiempo trabajando en Venezuela desde Los Andes, de Catia TV y Vargas, entre otras, hicieron una asamblea y llevaron una propuesta para incluirlo en la LOT"

[393]"*en torno al derecho a la libre comunicación y la libertad de acceso a los medios por parte de las comunidades*"

[394]*1) El reconocimiento oficial del sector de los medios comunitarios como un componente esencial de la radiodifusión de servicio público y como contribución vital al pluralismo en los medios y a la vigencia y disfrute de la libertad de expresión e información. 2) La creación por parte del Estado de un espacio público para el debate y la consulta en el cual los representantes de la sociedad civil y las comunidades organizadas (y no solo la empresa privada) participen en el diseño e instrumentación de las políticas, leyes y normativas de comunicación y telecomunicaciones. 3) La garantía en la nueva Ley y el nuevo Reglamento de Telecomunicaciones de que la asignación de las frecuencias del espectro radioeléctrico, los criterios técnicos y*

This list marks the first time that Venezuela's community and alternative media movement publicized a univocal set of concrete policy demands. It is also the last time that the movement would do so in such a concise and definitive form.

The movement's inability to return to such cohesion and unity has been due in part to the explosive growth experienced by the sector during the first half of the Chávez administration. This growth made it much harder, from a logistical point of view, to organize internal debate and produce unanimously or even widely endorsed documents. Beyond practical difficulties, however, the movement would also see a significant expansion in the scope of social and political-economic considerations that drove its attempts to influence state policy. As we will see, this expansion of scope would not only prevent concision but would lead to significant fragmentation within the movement. We will review these transformations below; they are noted here in order to introduce the notion that the community and alternative media movement, as of 2000, enjoyed a (seemingly) great degree of internal consistency precisely because it generally accepted the liberal framework of state governance. The Manifesto of Free Communication, in other words, is a progressive but still liberal policy document.

We can view this point from a slightly different angle by noting that the Manifesto's demands are restricted to the broadcasting sector. This limitation makes sense in the context of activism around a proposed telecommunications law, but it is also suggestive of the amicable but significant division between broadcasting and print-based community media organizations that has persisted within the movement to this day. This division is, of course, primarily due to differences in the resources required

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las prioridades de desarrollo promuevan e incentiven la creación de medios por parte de las organizaciones no gubernamentales y las comunidades organizadas, sin que se establezca ningún tipo de barreras políticas, económicas, administrativas, técnicas o de cualquier otra índole para el ejercicio del derecho a informar y a expresarse libremente, más allá de las que impone el uso de los recursos limitados del espectro radioeléctrico. 4) Que el Estado destine una significativa cuota de los ingresos fiscales provenientes de la carga contributiva de las empresas de telecomunicaciones para implantar planes de desarrollo y de formación de las estructuras culturales, comunitarias y cívicas de las comunicaciones. 5) Que el llamado Plan Nacional de Telecomunicaciones que adelanta el Estado tome en cuenta y favorezca la existencia y desarrollo de emisoras de radio y televisión comunitarias absolutamente autónomas y sin ningún tipo de injerencia oficial en la programación y emisión de contenidos. 6) La atribución de una parte significativa del espectro radioeléctrico para el uso por parte de micro-difusores y medios comunitarios.

and the policy considerations at play in relation to each medium, and it makes sense that community broadcasters would continue to have distinct concerns in relation to community newspaper journalists or, for that matter, muralists, theater producers, web producers, and others. What was absent in 2000, however, and what would remain absent for at least another eight years, was an overarching conception of the role of community media in the construction of a socialist media system and a socialist state. In the absence of such a conception, the community media movement found itself pushing for policies and resources on a situational basis in an attempt to expand the bounds of the liberal framework. The most salient efforts occurred in relation to broadcasting because the liberal regulatory structure was especially dense and constrictive in that sector. While this somewhat fragmented approach garnered real and significant victories, it also led to inconsistencies and inefficiencies that, although they continue to hamper the sector, have spurred efforts to reorganize community media policy on a broad scale and in accordance with the emerging structure of the Bolivarian socialist state.

The community and alternative media movement's progression from a restricted set of concerns within a liberal framework toward an overarching structural model within a socialist framework is the primary focus of this chapter. The Manifesto of Free Communication can serve as a baseline for measuring this shift, since it is a progressive liberal document in terms of its policy goals and rhetoric. For example, the Manifesto cites the historical marginalization of popular sectors with respect to communication and a tradition of "official support of the monopoly of broadcast media and press promoted by sectors of economic power"[395], and it argues that the Bolivarian government was perpetuating this tradition by advancing proposals for a new LOT that were nothing more than "agreements negotiated between the State and private enterprise, that conceive of telecommunications as exclusively economic activities and have been especially designed to take advantage of the fiscal opportunity offered by the opening of the telecommunications sector beginning in the year 2000" (which

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[395]"*apoyo oficial al monopolio de los medios radioeléctricos y de prensa promovidos por los sectores de poder económico*"

had been determined by the liberalization schedule implemented by Pérez in 1991) .[396] The document goes on to declare "free and community practices of communication … essential for the creation of spaces that support the participation of citizens in a democratic process" and thus implicitly calls out the hypocrisy of a government "that bases its legitimacy on the deepening of democracy through the people's greater prominence and participation in social processes".[397] All of this showcases the progressive ethos of a movement that was deeply skeptical of the liberal state apparatus.

Nonetheless, the rhetoric of the Manifesto remains decidedly liberal. For example, we have seen that it calls for the participation of "representatives of civil society and the organized communities" in policy debates. As mentioned above, the escalating polarization of Venezuelan politics in late 2001 would cement the division of these two rhetorical terms, with "civil society" applying almost exclusively to those opposed to the Bolivarian government. In early 2000, however, the community and alternative media movement still saw itself as triangulated between an unethical commercial sector and an untrustworthy state apparatus, and thus an important component of a progressive civil society acting in conjunction with popular sectors in defense of the democratic ideals of the liberal tradition. The movement's lingering distrust of the state also induced the Manifesto's authors to anchor their demands in the pronouncements of classic international liberal institutions, including the UN's declaration of freedom of information as a fundamental human right, the Organization of American States' Convention on Human Rights, and "the principals and postulates" (*los principios y postulados*) of AMARC. The Manifesto does point to articles 57, 58, 101, and 108 of the Bolivarian constitution, but there is no reference to the ideals of the Bolivarian revolution or the person of Chávez, much less to the ideology of socialism, as would be common in the documents produced from within the movement in years to come.

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396 "*acuerdos negociados entre el Estado y la empresa privada, que conciben las telecomunicaciones como actividades exclusivamente económicas y han sido diseñados especialmente para aprovechar la oportunidad fiscal que ofrece la apertura del sector de las telecomunicaciones a partir del año 2000*"

397 "*las prácticas de comunicación libres y comunitarias ... esencial para la creación de espacios que apoyen la participación de los ciudadanos en un proceso democrático*"; "*que fundamenta su legitimidad en la profundización de la democracia a través de un mayor protagonismo y participación del pueblo en los procesos sociales*"

Moreover, in the highly polarized political battles that would play out over the next decade, both the Convention on Human Rights and an important declarations from AMARC would be wielded by those opposed to the Bolivarian government and its allies, including the community and alternative media movement.

As for the specific goals of the Manifesto, the most decidedly liberal is the call for community media to be recognized as "an essential component of public service broadcasting", which is to say a subset of the existing liberal media system, as opposed to a basis for a radically democratic and transformatively hegemonic media system, as in the socialist model. The remaining demands tend to reinforce this conception of community media as inherently alternative, as opposed to potentially hegemonic. This distinction, as discussed in chapter one, is crucial. We will see that later on the opposition to the Bolivarian revolution would adopt this same rhetoric in order to argue that it supports community media, but that the model of community media sought by the Bolivarian movement is corrupted precisely because it seeks to become hegemonic. Arguments around this point can become quite tangled, but they come down to the nature of the relationship between the state and community media practitioners. The key idea here is autonomy, which is central to both liberal and socialist notions of a free media system.

In the previous chapter we saw that the neighborhood movement ultimately fragmented around differing conceptions of autonomy in relation to civil society, and that its notion of autonomy in relation to community media revolved around the idea of self-sustenance, principally through contributions by members. We examined how this conception was designed to preserve the community media sector's autonomy from the state and political parties, but that it nonetheless placed it in an implicitly dependent relationship on the status quo of the capitalist political economy. This notion of autonomy is thus in line with a neoliberal conception of the liberal order.

The Manifesto, meanwhile, calls for "the existence and development of *absolutely autonomous* community radio and television broadcasters with no type of official interference in the programming and

emission of content" (emphasis added), but it places itself in a different relationship to the political-economic order than that assumed by the Neighborhood Movement. It does this by coupling its call for autonomy with a call for the state to "earmark a significant amount of fiscal revenues from the taxes of telecommunication businesses in order to institute plans for the development and formation of cultural, community, and civic structures of communications". As such, it socializes the sector's dependence on the capitalist order in order to offer a progressive liberal framework for the sustenance of community media. It does not even attempt to explain, however, how the state's allocation of these funds would be conducted in a manner that does not impinge upon the community media sector's autonomy. This is a key issue for this chapter, precisely because it becomes ever more important as the community and alternative media movement begins to align itself with the Bolivarian revolution and integrate with the burgeoning socialist state. In other words, Bolivarian efforts to construct a counter-hegemonic community media system return us to the overarching question of chapter two, in which we reviewed the generally failed attempts of Latin American socialist states to foster and support an autonomous participatory media system anchored in civil society. The Manifesto's attempt to support "absolute" autonomy via state distribution of fiscal revenue is a progressive liberal solution, but it anticipates the question of autonomy in a socialist state because it relies on the state to manage resource allocation in the community media sector.

The Movement for Free Communication opens up another crucial question for this chapter, since we will be tracking the dialectical relationship between civil society and the state as the driving force behind the evolution toward a Gramscian civil state. To be sure, in 2000 the community and alternative media movement was merely focused on carving out space for community media within the liberal order, but in order to do so they enlisted the support of the aforementioned federal office of the Public Advocate, which had been established by the Bolivarian constitution to aid citizens in such advocacy efforts (González 2001). Thus, a tool created by the constitutional Constituent Assembly enabled the community and alternative media movement to advocate for official recognition. This recognition helped grow the movement, which then contributed to other state initiatives. In recognition of these contributions, the state

has attempted to further integrate the community media sector into the emerging socialist framework by providing additional resources and restructuring the legal framework, and the movement has responded by continuing to support the state. Though oversimplified in the above summary, the existence of this dialectic is unquestionable. The nature of the dialectic, however, has been the subject of considerable debate. Bolivarians would argue that the state and the organized communities (civil society) are working together, with a shared ethics and vision, to create 21 st Century Socialism, which we understand here to be a civil state. Opponents of the Bolivarian revolution, on the other hand, would argue that the state, in a manner similar to 20th century socialist governments, is merely appropriating civil society to reinforce its authoritarian, if not dictatorial, control over society. As suggested above, and as we will endeavor to illustrate below, there is evidence for both tendencies. Neither, however, were fully developed during the debates over the LOT, when the movement's advocacy and the state's concessions operated within the inherited liberal framework.

Returning to our historical account, the pressure generated by the Movement for Free Communication persuaded CONATEL and the Little Congress to create space for contributions from the community media sector, with the result that the final version of the new LOT made Venezuela one of the first Latin American nations to officially recognize community broadcasters. The LOT mentions community broadcasters in several articles, but the crucial language is in article 200, which reads:

> The state will promote the existence of non-profit, public service community radio and television broadcasting stations as media for the plural and transparent communication and action of the organized communities in their respective area. Their rules, planning, characteristics, requirements, and limitations will be determined by means of a regulation, in accordance with the National Telecommunications Plan and the National Table of Frequency Band Assignments.[398]

The LOT, being a fundamental law, did not spell out the details of the newly legitimated sector's operation. Those would have to wait for the authorization of a specific set of regulations. Beyond the

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[398]"*El Estado promoverá la existencia de estaciones de radiodifusión sonora y televisión abierta comunitarias de servicio público, sin fines de lucro, como medios para la comunicación y actuación, plural y transparente, de las comunidades organizadas en su ámbito respectivo. Su régimen, ordenación, características, requisitos y limitaciones se determinarán mediante reglamento, en concordancia con el Plan Nacional de Telecomunicaciones y el Cuadro Nacional de Atribución de Bandas de Frecuencia (CUNABAF).*"

official recognition and basic intent articulated in the above article, the only specific information provided in relation to community broadcasters was found in article 158, which enabled the president to totally or partially exonerate community broadcasters from special telecommunications taxes.

The inclusion of community broadcasters imparted a significantly progressive element to the LOT, which also called for one percent of the gross revenue of commercial telecommunications providers to finance a Universal Service Fund (articles 54 - 62, 151) as one component of the state's compliance with the law's guarantee of universal service (article 49). The LOT also outlined the rights of citizens in relation to telecommunications and called for the state to promote the creation of non-governmental organizations that were meant to defend those rights in conjunction with the Public Advocate (article 201). While CONATEL has made innovative use of the Universal Service Fund, the user associations have never reached fruition (see Corporación Andina de Fomento 2004, 6-7).[399] On the whole, subsequent observers have viewed the LOT, which endorsed "free" market competition and "minimized the idea of government as representative of the public interest" (Fernandes 2010, 196), as an extension of Pérez's neoliberal reforms. Certainly this is the sentiment of those within the Bolivarian revolution. Alvin Lezama, who served as a consultant to CONATEL during the formulation of the LOT and rose to become that institution's General Director in 2003, recalled that:

> [w]e followed the guidelines of neoliberalism: we made a number of rules more flexible to favor the companies, thinking that way service would arrive to more regions of the country and to a vaster sector of the population.... we fell into the trap of neoliberalism, the precepts of the World Trade Association (Lezama 2006).[400]

In a 2009 speech before the National Assembly, Diosdado Cabello, who served as General Director of CONATEL during the formulation of the LOT, called it as a "neoliberal Law" and, in what he referred to as "self-criticism", stated that "perhaps the only good thing in that Law, truly, is that it gives space to the communities to organize themselves" (Cabello 2009).[401]

399CONATEL's annual reports on the Universal Service Fund can be accessed online at: http://www.conatel.gob.ve/
400"*[s]eguimos las líneas del neoliberalismo: flexibilizamos unas cuantas reglas para favorecer a las compañías pensando que así le llegaría el servicio a más zonas del país y a un sector más vasto de la población.... caímos en la trampa del neoliberalismo, los preceptos de la Organización Mundial del Comercio*"
401"*Ley neoliberal*"; "*autocrítica*"; "*quizás lo único bueno que tiene esa Ley, verdaderamente, es que se le da*

Whether properly neoliberal or not, the leaders of Venezuela's largest telecommunications enterprises certainly lauded the LOT at the moment of its adoption (ANMCLA [Mar 25] 2008). As Manrique (2011) recalled, "We scored a goal... because the private sector didn't realize the move made by the [community media] sector.... [who it saw as] the little poor people, the fools, the popular classes". [402] Whether the private sector didn't notice or, as seems more likely, it was simply unconcerned about the inclusion of a community media sector that seemed infinitesimally marginal, the state of affairs made the official signing ceremony a rather unique event, at least in retrospect. On hand to observe were Diego Cisneros and Marcel Granier, the presidents of Venevisión and RCTV, respectively, as well as representatives from the Movement for Free Communication, including Manrique and Eekhout. [403] Within just two years, following the attempted coup of April 2002, these sectorial leaders would be, ideologically if not personally, the bitterest of foes. In July of 2000, however, they could all find something to praise in the LOT, which is emblematic of Bolivarian policy during the first several years of the Chávez administration.[404] As discussed above, while there was clear evidence of a commitment to progressive and even participatory initiatives, there was still no overarching policy framework and considerable space was provided for the continuance of inherited economic policies.

Between the LOT and the Attempted Coup: Further Consolidation and Growth, Early Fragmentation within the Movement, and the Liberal Framework of the Regulations

The LOT was a significant and concrete step in the ongoing dialectic between the Bolivarian government and the community and alternative media movement, and it contributed to the growth of the sector in at least three interrelated ways. First, it inspired greater commitment to community media on the

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espacio a las comunidades para que se organicen"

402"*Nosotros metimos un gol… porque el sector privado no se dió cuenta de la jugada del sector. Los pobresitos, los bobitos, los populares.*"

403Manrique did not recall with exactitude which members of the movement were on hand, but he noted those he could recall by their first names. Besides himself and Blanca [Eekhout], there were Ricardo [Márquez] and Wilfredo [Vasquez] (from *Catia TVe*), Gorka (from *LibreComunicación*), and Andy (affiliation unknown).

404The LOT was published in the Official Gazette (*Gaceta Oficial*) of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela on June 12, 2000, but the signing ceremony did not take place until July.

part of groups and individuals who had been at the margins of the movement. We will discuss a founding member of *TV Petare* as an example. Second, it brought the community and alternative media sector to the attention of Hugo Chávez, who recognized its potential and personally advocated on its behalf in key moments over the next several years. In this section, we will discuss Chávez's personal involvement in relation to *Catia Tve*, and we will also look at some early forms of assistance provided by municipal and national institutions. Third, while the LOT officially recognized community broadcasters, the parameters and procedures for their licensing and operation were to be spelled out in a corresponding set of regulations. The process of organizing around the formulation and adoption of these regulations provided a vital opportunity for the further consolidation of the movement and its continued engagement with the Bolivarian government. At the same time, however, the necessity of formulating legal criteria for community broadcasting opened up a significant rift in the burgeoning movement. We will discuss these vectors of evolution in relation to the RVMC.

Petare is a parish and the capital of the eastern Sucre Municipality of Caracas. Once an independent town, Petare was incorporated into the metropolitan area in the second half of the 20th century as Caracas expanded. Like so many other sectors of the city, immigrants established informal neighborhoods on the steep slopes surrounding Petare, which grew into the largest and most populous conglomeration of *barrios* in Caracas. Charles Méndez grew up in Petare, where his family had always supported leftist political ideas. In the 1990s, Méndez was active in the "grassroots movement" (*movimiento de base*) that supported Chávez's call for a constituent assembly. Following the adoption of the Bolivarian constitution, he joined with six friends and fellow *chavistas* who were inspired by the media activists of that decade to explore the idea of working in community media. As Méndez recalled:

> in that period the Network [RVMC] didn't exist, ANMCLA didn't exist, nothing existed. There was simply a movement that identified us... There was a vanguardist movement from here in Caracas, in Catia. I remember that they would invite me, the crew: 'Come on, come on, a clandestine community radio!', that [type of] stuff. (Méndez 2011) [405]

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[405] The National Association of Community, Free, and Alternative Media (Asociación Nacional de Medios Comunitarios, Libres, y Alternativas / ANMCLA) will be discussed in detail below.

Some members of the group had studied sociology or economics but had little practical experience with media, but one had been involved in the *cineclub* movement, another had earned an undergraduate degree in filmmaking in Cuba, and Méndez had worked for over a decade as a technician at RCTV. Méndez and his colleagues were thus inclined more toward television than radio, but even with their mix of enthusiasm and diverse knowledge the group struggled to find a path forward until the approval of the LOT:

> We had been around for two years, but the idea was very vague... not even the structure of the state, nobody was prepared to establish community radio and television stations.... With articles 57 and 58 of the constitution, you were guaranteed truthful [and] timely communication, freedom of expression, all that stuff... [but] we had only the constitution. It was – for us, it was... ephemeral, the reality of having a television station, but there was the experience of Colombia, the experience of all of Latin America, the international experiences of community radio and television stations. Therefore we had the dream that, well, if we had achieved in the constitution that they approved those articles, we had the hope that with the Telecommunications Law articles would be introduced that would give legal cover for our alternative media. And that was achieved. When the LOT was approved, we saw that it was possible... a path opened, but there was still much ground to cover. And we started to work.[406]

As it turned out, establishing *TV Petare* would require many years of work. By the time the station finally went on the air in 2008, Méndez would be the only remaining member of the original group. We will discuss the difficulties he encountered further below, but here we should underline two related points. First, that the legal recognition delivered by the LOT was instrumental in converting sympathetic but reserved activists into the founders of a television outlet with its own identity and history.

Unless otherwise noted, all information pertaining to TV Petare and all quotes from Méndez are drawn from my interviews with him.; "*en esa epoca no existía la Red [RVMC], no existía ANMCLA, no existía nada. Simplemente había un movimiento que nos identificaba…. Había un movimiento vanguardista desde aquí en Caracas, en Catia. Yo me acuerdo que a mí me invitan, los panas, 'Vengan, vengan - Una radio clandestina comunitaria, es[e tipo de] vaina.*"

406 "*Teníamos dos años, pero la idea era muy vaga… ni siquiera la estructura del estado, nadie estaba preparado para conformar radios y televisoras comunitarias..... Con los artículos 57 y 58 de la constitución, te garantiza la comunicación veraz [y] oportuna, la libertad de expresión, todo esa vaina… [pero] teníamos nada más la constitución. Era muy - para nosotros, era... efemero, el hecho de tener una televisora, pero venía la experiencia de colombia, la experiencia de todo latinoamérica, las experiencias internacionales con radios y televisoras comunitarias. Entonces tuvimos el sueño de que, bueno, si habíamos logrado en la constitución que aprobaban estos artículos, teníamos la esperanza que con la Ley de Telecomunicaciones se introdujeran los artículos que nos dieran cabida legal a los medios alternativos. Y eso se logró. Cuando se aprueba la LOTEL, nosotros vimos que era posible … se abrió un camino, pero todavía había mucho camino por recorrer. Y empezamos a trabajar.*"

In other words, the legitimation provided by the Bolivarian government created space for less daring and/or more constrained activists to participate in the community media sector. Second, these activists were not entirely new to the sector, but had been drawn to it partly as a result of the decades of efforts discussed in chapter three. As mentioned, one early member of *TV Petare* was active in both the Bolivarian and the *cineclub* movements. Méndez's personal history, however, provides an important example of the intertwined nature of community-based media and political activism.

Fe y Alegría maintained a cultural and athletic center in the neighborhood where Méndez grew up, and the priests that ran the center used a mobile sound system to broadcast the afternoon prayer and announce social services. Méndez recounted that "from the community organizations, there were people that asked for space to put on cultural programs on that mobile sound system. That was the experience of the sector where I lived."[407] In fact, during the 1970s his father had used the sound system on Sundays at 7am to host a program featuring contemporary Venezuelan music. Méndez reflected that, "[i]n my case, that experience meant a lot to me.... I understood what could be achieved with a communication medium... Hell, if a mobile sound system worked to organize an entire community... what couldn't you do with a television station?"[408]

Méndez's desire to work specifically with television did not develop until the 1980s, however. He had studied electrical engineering at a technical high school and, during school vacations, he worked at a shoe store owned by a Spanish immigrant. Méndez was unable to afford university studies after high school, but he remained friends with the sons of the shoe store's owner, one of whom earned a degree in engineering, became head of RCTV's videotape division, and offered Méndez a job. Méndez worked at RCTV from 1983 until 1996 and he managed to earn a university degree during this time. Nonetheless, he felt stifled at RCTV due to his class and race. For example, RCTV sent many of its workers to train in

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407"*desde la organización comunitaria, hubo gente que pidió espacio para montar programas culturales en esa radio parlante. Esa fue la experiencia del sector donde yo vivía.*"

408"*[e]n mi caso, me sirvió mucho esa experiencia.... Entendí lo que se puede lograr con un medio de comunicación… Coño, si una radio parlante servía para organizar a toda la comunidad… con una televisora, qué no se puede hacer?*"

Cuba, but Méndez was never offered that opportunity "because I was black, a poor man from the *barrio..... I* experienced discrimination, racism, everything." Méndez, who was especially skilled in special effects, found himself passed over for promotions by people with much less experience but better connections to the decision makers. Méndez's dissatisfaction with RCTV also extended to the content it produced:

> I was always critical of the generation of content that was done in [commercial] televisión.... Really, no space was given for [popular] venezuelan culture.... When a black person like myself appeared on television it was to be ridiculed, to be stigmatized. The roles performed by black people in the dramas that were produced here were the thug, the delinquent, the thief, the drug trafficker. That was the characterization of the black man on television.... And the [black] women were the prostitute, the salsa dancer, the schemer... It was all the negatives.[409]

Méndez's inclination toward community media was a product of his family, professional, and political histories, but it may have gone undeveloped had he not become involved with a movement of likeminded activists that successfully lobbied for legal recognition of their activities. The legitimation provided by the LOT inspired them to continue moving forward and ultimately led to the creation of *TV Petare* as Caracas' third community television broadcaster, alongside *TV Caricuao* and *Catia TVe*.

While *TV Caricuao* has the longer history, *CatiaTVe* is by far the most well known community television channel in Caracas. This status is due primarily to the central role it has occupied in the community and alternative media movement, as well as the rather conspicuous support it has offered to the Bolivarian revolution. Both of these, in turn, were to a great degree enabled by the station's relatively central physical location within the country's most important city. Another vital factor in the renown of *Catia TVe*, however, was its early association with President Chávez himself, and that relationship was catalyzed by the community and alternative media movement's organization around the LOT.

The first moment of personal contact between Chávez and *Catia TVe* has been enshrined in the

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409"*Siempre fui crítico de la generación del contenido que se hacía en [la] televisión [commercial].... Realmente, no se le daba cabida a la cultura [popular] venezolana... cuando saliá un negro, así como yo, en televisión era para ser ridiculizado, para ser estigmatizado. Los papeles que ejercían los negros en los dramáticos que se producían aquí eran el malandro, el delincuente, el ladrón, el traficante de droga. Eso era la caracterización del negro en la televisión.... Y las mujeres [negras] era la prostituta, la salsista, la intrigante... Era todos los negativos.*"

lore of the station's history and is often recounted to the groups of international tourists that visit its premises. The encounter is sometimes couched as a moment of discovery, when Chávez both learned of and immediately recognized the potential of community media. Eekhout, for example, has offered this summary:

> At the beginning of 2000, President Chavez was in Catia for a public event. Some of our people went to interview him, identifying themselves first as being from "CatiaTV, community television." He said: "What do you mean, community television?" When he heard what we were doing, he realized how important it was to support it. But other members of the government didn't realize. (Podur 2004b)

If there has been a mild tendency to mythify the moment, *Catia TVe* is also nonetheless responsible for revealing the more nuanced historical truth by including footage of the meeting in a video documentary of the station's history.

The event actually occurred in July of 2000, weeks after the LOT had been officially approved and on the eve of the official signing ceremony. At this time, the members of the *Cineclub Manicomio / Linterna Magica* were in the process of constructing a 40 watt UHF transmitter, based on the one Manrique had constructed for *TV Rubio,* and establishing a broadcasting station in space they had rented within the Jesus Yerena General Hospital in Lidice, which is near Manicomio (Manrique 2011; Eekhout and Fuentes 2001, 479, cited in Schiller 2009, 88).[410] They were not yet on the air, nor were they using the name *Catia TVe*; on the night before Chávez's visit to Catia, several members of the group had created a mic flag (the box below the head of the microphone that identifies a news outlet) which read "Community Television of the West" (*Televisora Comunitaria del Oeste*) (Historia de Catia TVe 2006).[411]

The Catia TVe crew approached Chávez on the street, amidst a scrum of reporters, onlookers, and members of his entourage. In the footage of the interview, Eekhout can be heard asking, "Mr. President, what do you think of the creation of community radio and television stations which is what we are

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410 In the *Catia TVe* documentary, Eekhout can be heard explaining to Chávez that they were already broadcasting via radio (presumably an allied community station) and that they were a month away from broadcasting their video signal. Later the transmitter is described as being "barely 30 watts" (Historia de Catia TVe 2006).

411 In the documentary, Márquez identifies Monica Gil, Leafar Guevara, Wilfredo Vásquez, and Blanca Eekhout as the members who created the mic flag.

developing? The social property of the communication media?"[412] To which Chávez replies:

> Well, that is marvelous. I have to congratulate you because... you have advanced – you are like the vanguard of a struggle that is now going to be done with much more force, because, as you know, tomorrow I am going to put into effect, in the afternoon, the new Law of Telecommunications and it appears noted, precisely, in a very extensive and very precise set of articles, that the communities have the right to establish and manage community communication media. Continue forward and leave that example. I congratulate you.[413]

Moments later, engaged in a more direct conversation with Eekhout, Chávez adds:

> ...look, the idea is that even the Bolivarian schools, little by little we are advancing in that, also function... and the children even make programs and record things themselves, interviews, they participate, that is marvelous. That is the democracy that we want, the democracy of the people.[414]

Finally, Chávez calls over Vice Minister Alejandro Andrade and explains:

> I want to help them.... I want you to go see where they are and in what things we can help, ok? And, in addition, to see the model, to explain it to people in the whole country, in Guasdalito, in San Fernando, in Delta Amacuro, so the people learn how beautiful it is to participate... (*ibid.*)[415]

Chávez's words are significant on several levels. First, they demonstrate his style of charismatic politics and his knack for positioning himself as a populist leader. Second, they reveal that Chávez was already familiar with the concept of community broadcasting and the provisions made for it in the new telecommunications law. Third, they indicate the importance that the Bolivarian movement placed on the concept of participation, and that Chávez recognized community media as a significant manifestation thereof. At the same time, however, we see that he alludes to two different visions of community media. In his association of community media with media production by school children, he invokes the

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[412]"*Señor Presidente, qué piensas de la creación de emisoras y televisors comunitarias que es lo que estamos desarrollando nosotros? La propiedad social de los medios de comunicación?*"

[413]"*Bueno, eso es maravilloso. Tengo que felicitarlos porque… se han adelantado, son como la vanguardia de una lucha que ahora se va a hacer con mucho más empuje, porque, como tu sabes, yo mañana voy a poner de ejecutarse, en la tarde, a la nueva ley de telecomunicaciones y aparece señalado, precisamente, en un articulado muy extenso y muy preciso, que las comunidades tienen derecho, el derecho a gestionar y manejar medios de comunicación comunitarias. Sigan adelante y dejen ese ejemplo. Los felicito.*"

[414]"*...mira, la idea es que incluso las escuelas Bolivarianas, poco a poco vamos avanzando en eso, funcionen también… y los niños inclusos hagan programas y graban ellos mismos las cosas, entrevistas, participen, eso es maravilloso. Eso es la democracia que queremos, la democracia de la gente.*"

[415]"*Yo quiero ayudarlos a ellos…. Queiro que vayas a ver donde estan ellos y en que cosas podemos ayudar, ok? Y además ver el modelo para explicarselo a gente en todo el país, a Guasdalito, en San Fernando, en Delta Amacuro, que la gente vaya aprendiendo lo bello que es participar, no te parece?*"

alternative discourse of community media, in which it is inherently marginal, non-professional, and not competitive with commercial or state media. Nonetheless, his identification of *Catia TVe* as a vanguard, and his instruction to spread the model across the nation, invokes the counter-hegemonic discourse, in which community media can displace the institutional apparatuses of commercial and state media. In his future pronouncements, Chávez would abandon entirely the alternative discourse, associated as it is with the liberal understanding of civil society, and cast community media as a vital component of the Bolivarian counter-hegemonic media apparatus.

As it turned out, Andrade never followed through and *Catia TVe* did not gain any immediate assistance from the encounter. Márquez recalled going to CONATEL to follow up, but "they didn't hear me in that moment, or they didn't take me into account" (*ibid.*). Later that year, however, Eekhout attended a cultural awards ceremony where she was able to deliver to Chávez an invitation to the official inauguration of *Catia TVe* on the 15th of December. Chávez responded saying that he was engaged on the date they had selected but that he would be available on the 20th of that month. When officials from CONATEL heard about the planned inauguration, however, they objected strenuously, arguing that, since the regulations corresponding to the LOT had not been finalized, the station could not operate legally. According to Eekhout, "[t]he President replied that it was legal according to the constitution, and the regulations would have to catch up. Finally, some changes were made to the regulations, and CatiaTV [sic] became official" (Podur). In actuality, the regulations would not be finalized for another year, but Chávez did apparently intervene in some manner. CatiaTVe was given provisional authorization to broadcast and the official inauguration ceremony was finally held on March 31, 2001.

Chávez's comments during the inauguration ceremony indicate the degree to which he had sharpened his views on community media as a component of the Bolivarian revolution. As he entered the room, a man called out, "Hugo, here you are going to hear the good things that are happening in our country!" To which Chávez replied, "Of course, and the bad too... Neither good nor bad, let's say that we're going to leave aside classifications. The opinion of the people.... And the alternatives and the

projects of the people. And what's more, we're going to go to battle against lies." [416] During his official

statement, Chávez added: "So now it won't be Chávez alone on the networks, no now we also have

TeleCatia [sic], in the hands of the people, because it's the people that [make] battle. A television station

that isn't managed by economic interests, that is marvelous. That is indeed freedom" (Historia de Catia

TVe 2006).[417] Here Chávez has already abandoned any hint of classifying community television as

marginal, casting it instead as a viable counter-hegemonic alternative to the commercial media that will

spread the truth of popular social movements.

   Chávez used this discourse and his aura to raise the stature of community media in general and

Catia TVe especially, and the effect was tangible. For example, student activists from the UCV, who were

part of a movement against the privatization of the university, saw the *Catia TVe* inauguration on

television and, recognizing a potential ally, went to the studios. One of the activists, Gabriel Gil, later

recalled that "*Catia [TVe]* was the first that went to cover with other eyes the protests that we were

doing."[418] Gil himself became an active member of the *Catia TVe* staff and went on to serve as Director in

2008 and 2009, before becoming Vice Minister of Communications and Information and then taking a

managerial position at a state owned television channel (Gil 2011). [419] Behind the scenes, meanwhile,

Chávez's support seems to have been key in helping *Catia TVe* get off the ground. Not only were

arrangements made to get around CONATEL's objections regarding the regulations, but *Catia TVe*

enjoyed a "small grant" from a state ministry, as well as funding from the state oil company (*Petroleos de*

Venezuela, S.A. / PDVSA).[420] When hospital officials complained about the heavy traffic in and out of the

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416"*Hugo, aquí vas a oír de las cosas buenas que están pasando en nuestro país!*"; "*Claro, y la mala también… Ni buena ni mala, digamos que vamos a dejar de clasificaciones. La opinión del pueblo…. Y las alternativas y los proyectos del pueblo. Y además, vamos a armar una batalla contra la mentira.*"

417"*Entonces ya no estará Chávez solo en las cadenas, no ahora también tenemos a TeleCatia [sic], en las manos del pueblo, porque es el pueblo que [da] la batalla. Una estación de televisión que no esté manejada por intereses economicos, este es maravilloso. Eso así es libertad.*"

418"*Catia fue la primera que fue a cubrir con otros ojos las protestas que nosotros [hacían].*"

419Gil was Vice Minister of of Strategy in the Ministry of Communications and Information (*Ministerio para la Comunicación y la Información* / MINCI) from April of 2009 to April of 2010 while Blanca Eekhout served as Minister. He then became Programming Coordinator (*Coordinador de Programación*) at *Visión Venezuela* (ViVe), the community-oriented state broadcaster discussed further below.

420Schiller states that the grant came from MINCI but no ministry was established under that specific name until

space, the ministry stepped in again to help *Catia TVe* rent space in the Venezuelan National Library for recording and editing (while the transmission equipment remained on the hospital premises) (Schiller 88).

With this assistance from the state, *Catia TVe*, was able to broadcast two hours daily to a potential audience of one to three million people.[421] In actual practice, however, "the signal [was] often unreliable due to weather and the uneven terrain of the Caracas valley." Nonetheless, by late 2001, the station's "focus shifted from local concerns specific to Manicomio to a broader effort to use media as an activist tool throughout poor neighborhoods of west Caracas" (*ibid*). Under the aura of Chávez, *CatiaTVe* had surged forth to become the country's most recognized community television station, but it was only the most salient new addition to a growing community television sector.

In 2000, the *Escuela Popular* in Maracay used a small UHF transmitter constructed by Manrique (from *TV Rubio*) to establish their own community television station. According to Flores (2011), the members of the *Escuela Popular* decided to name their new station *Teletambores* (Teledrums) "because the drum here in this zone or at the Latin American level ... informs(,) ... brings together(,) ... as a result of the drum the people communicate and come together."[422] For their early broadcasts, members of *Teletambores* housed their equipment in the house of friends living in the Camburito neighborhood of the Francisco Linares Alcántara municipality on the outskirts of Maracay, but within a year strong winds had blown down the antenna and *Teletambores* began operating out of the house of Maria Santini, one of the founding members. Whereas *Catia TVe*, like *TV Rubio*, could make use of mountainsides to transmit across entire valleys, Teletambores operated on flat land and, according to Briceño (2011), could only transmit 500 to 750 meters in any direction. The station operated on Fridays, Saturdays, and Sundays from 6 to 9 PM, thus becoming Venezuela's fourth open-air community television broadcaster.[423] The

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2002. If the grant did not come directly from CONATEL, it is possible that it came from the Ministry of Infrastructure, to which CONATEL was attached in 2001.

421 Eekhout and Fuentes (2001, 479; cited in Schiller 88) give a figure of one million, whereas Manrique (2011) estimated three million.

422 "*porque el tambor aquí en esta zona o al nivel latinoamericano… comunica... reune… a raíz del tambor la gente se comunica y se aglutina*"

423 Community television was not the only medium to expand outside of Caracas and the direct support of government institutions. In Zulia, for example, at least four community radio stations were established in 2001

members of Teletambores, especially Thierry Deronne, would become important figures in the alternative and community media movement at the national level.

Chávez's engagement with *Catia TVe* was only the most salient aspect of an expanding interest in community media on the part of government institutions in the years following the passage of the LOT. For example, the Foundation for Culture and the Arts (*Fundación para la Cultura y las Artes* / FUNDARTE) attached to the office of the mayor, expanded on its program to develop *cineclubes* (see chapter 3) by establishing an Alternative Communication Unit (*Unidad de Comunicación Alternativa*) that facilitated the establishment of four *cineclubes*, four community newspapers, and four community radio stations around Caracas (Benítez 2008, 74).[424] At the national level, alternative and community media were mentioned in the "Guidelines of the National Social and Economic Development Plan 2001 – 2007" as a component of the "sub-objective" to "[g]uarantee the enjoyment of universal and equal social rights", as well as a subcomponent of the strategic goal of "[a]rticulating the process of decentralization with participation in social policies".[425] The language in the Guidelines tends to cast community media within the alternative discourse familiar to liberalism, noting that they "can be utilized as icons in the intervention of demands and necessities in the areas of education, health, the environment, citizen participation, food, and co-responsibility in free access to information and transparency" (102-3) and that they:

> support the process of the democratization of communication, with the development of instruments and alternative communication media necessary for social dialogue, cultural resistance, self-education, diffusion of typical interests and organizing experiences, and of exercising active and participatory democracy. (116)[426]

(Delgado & Guerrero 2008, 23; Iguaran et al. 2008, section 4.3.10).

424The *cineclubes* were created in the parishes of 23 de Enero, Caricuao, La Vega, and El Valle. The newspapers were *El*
Clarín de San Juan (San Juan), *El Torrense* (La Vega), *23 en Positivo* (23 de Enero), *Epa Parroquia* (El Recreo). The radio stations were *Radio Alí Primera*, *Radio Macarao* and *Radio Senderos de Antímano*.

425"*[g]arantizar el disfrute de los derechos sociales de forma universal y equitativa*"; "*[a]rticular el proceso de descentralización con participación en las políticas sociales*"

426"*pueden ser utilizadas como inconos en la intervención de las demandas y necesidades en las áreas de educación, salud, ambiente, participación ciudadana, alimentación y corresponsabilidad en el libre acceso a la información y la transaprencia*"; "*apoyan el proceso de democratización de la comunicación, con el desarrollo de instrumentos y medios de comunicación alernativos necesarios para el diálogo social, la resistencia cultural,*

In late 2001, CONATEL joined with CONAC and other organizations to establish a National Center of Production for Community Radio and Television (*Centro Nacional de Producción para Radio y Televisión Comuitaria*) that, "[i]n addition to functioning as a database that stores different types of programs, also should provide training and refresher courses, as well as courses in the management of maintenance for the conservation of equipment" (Velandia 2002).[427] It is unclear, however, whether the National Center ever operated and there is no evidence to suggest that it played a significant role in the subsequent development of the community media sector.

Despite the official recognition of community broadcasters established by the LOT, in 2001 no community broadcaster was operating legally except *Catia TVe*, which had secured provisional authorization through Chávez's intervention. For the community and alternative media movement, the next task was to push CONATEL to pass the regulations that would detail the parameters and procedures for the licensing and operation of community broadcasters. Members of the movement met at the regional level throughout the first half of 2001 to draft proposals (González 2001, 223). These then became the basis for discussions at the first National Meeting of Community Media (*Encuentro Nacional de Medios Comunitarios*) which was held in Rubio and promoted by the RVMC, led by Manrique from *TV Rubio* (Manrique 2011).[428]

Rather than producing a unified proposal, however, the meeting in Rubio resulted in a sharp division within the community and alternative media movement that would persist for at least another five or so years. As Manrique put it, "Nothing came out of that first meeting.... In fact, there were almost

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la autoformación, la difusión de los propios intereses y de las experiencias organizativas y de ejercicio de la democracia participativa y protagónica."

[427]"*[a]demás de funcionar como un banco de datos que almacene distintos tipos de programas, también debe proporcionar cursos de formación y actualización, así como de gerencia de mantenimiento para la conservación de los equipos.*"

[428]González (2001) offers a somewhat different account than that given by Manrique, calling a meeting in Caricuao "the most significant" of the regional meetings, "from which came a proposal for the regulations, that was later enriched with contributions from other regions at a national meeting in Rubio" (223).; "*el mas significativo... de donde salio una propuesta de reglamento, que fue luego enriquecida con aportes de otras regiones en un encuentro nacional en Rubio.*"

fistfights."[429] On one side of the divide was the RVMC, which was primarily composed of groups from Táchira, Barquisimeto, Lara, Ciudad Bolivar, and other states outside of Caracas. The other side of the fissure was dominated by voices from Caracas. We will therefore adopt Manrique's shorthand and refer to those opposed to the RVMC as the "centralists" (*centralistas*), though this must be understood in terms of geography, not ideological orientation. The differences between these two factions can be described, on one hand, in terms of their general attitude and, on the other, in relation to their specific policy goals. The centralists are generally considered to have been more radical on both counts.

The RVMC was primarily interested in consolidating the legal recognition of the sector and establishing a framework that would permit the continued operation and growth of the sector. As Manrique explained, "for us it was a point of honor to have the permits.... If we had already operated without permits, with permits we could do lots of good things. We could look for financing." [430] Here we must recognize community media cast in a classically liberal notion of civil society in which state recognition allows for resources to be obtained from the private sector. This conception rests on a notion of autonomy similar to that expressed by the Neighborhood Movement, especially the *Escuela*, in the 1980s.

The centralists, on the other hand, believed that resources for the community media sector should come from the state, not – or at least in addition to – the private sector. In Manrique's recollection, the centralists' goal during the meeting in Rubio was to create a new organization, in substitution of the RVMC, that would take on the task of administering the state funds. Manrique and those in the RVMC considered this as a power grab. Whether or not the intention was to wrest power from the RVMC, we can recognize the proposal as a quite progressive manifestation of liberalism or even as a move toward socialism. We should note, however, the emphasis on establishing administrative control within civil society, not the state, which also reinforces the widely held view that the centralists operated from a loose

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429"*De ese primer encuentro no salió nada.... Inclusive, casi hubo peleas.*"
430"*para nosotros era un punto de honor tener los permisos.... Si ya habíamos operado sin permisos, teniendo permisos podíamos hacer muchas cosas buenas. Podíamos buscar financiamiento.*"

core of anarchist ideals which demanded that power be vested almost entirely in the organized communities. There was thus a tendency toward what we have been describing as a Gramscian civil state, but in the absence of any thorough and explicit proposals describing a broader vision for the functioning of community media in relation to the state and other instances of civil society, we should go no further than to note this as one of a mixed set of tendencies emanating from the centralists, not a platform or doctrine.

As a result of the repression of community broadcasting experienced during the *puntofijista* era (by 2001 known as the Fourth Republic), both sides of the fissure exhibited a deep distrust of the state apparatus. Méndez, of *TV Petare*, noted a slogan that was in use by many within the community and alternative media movement at the time: "The government is a friend and the state is an enemy." [431] In other words, trust was high in Chávez himself, and in certain officials within his administration, but on the whole the state apparatus was still largely populated by officials and bureaucrats who maintained a Fourth Republic mindset and were reluctant or altogether unwilling to act in favor of the ideals expressed in the Bolivarian constitution that founded the Fifth Republic. Mistrust of the state did not prevent the RVMC, however, from seeking dialogue and negotiated solutions. The centralists, however, were more radical on this point as well. They adopted a much more confrontational approach, often choosing public protest, sometimes violent, over partnered dialogue. Though grounded in fact, this tendency may have loomed larger in reputation than in actual practice. As we will see, in 2002 the centralists created a formal organization of their own which has entered into several important agreements with state institutions.

The division between these two factions of the community and alternative media movement can be seen as the product of the two overlapping but distinct vectors of activism that we identified in chapter three. We saw that in the highly urban context of Caracas several factors, including more salient conditions of dire poverty, a higher concentration of politically charged activism, a greater proximity to powerful institutions, and a more heated application of state repression, created a climate in which many

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431"*Tenemos un gobierno amigo, y un estado enemigo.*"

community media practitioners viewed themselves as activists aligned with leftist ideals and movements. In the provinces, however, a different rhythm of daily life, a tradition of civil society more focused on culture, a lesser proximity to powerful institutions, a less intensive political climate, and a less repressive pattern of state repression created a climate in which community media practitioners understood themselves primarily in terms of cultural facilitators. Manrique's reflections reinforce this understanding:

> [The centralists] were more *chavista* than Chávez, to put it that way, and [the RVMC] was a bit more conservative.... [The centralists] have been a little more radical and those that were in the provinces were less radical, they came from a distinct process.... Many of those that are in Caracas come from the militancy of the Left.... [T]he people that were here [in the provinces], the popular movements that were here, [were] less left [and] more cultural.[432]

To be sure, the geographic division was not absolute. For example, the members of *Catia Tve* were among the more leftist practitioners of community media during the 1990s and therefore maintained friendly relations with the centralists, but they also played a principal role in the RVMC both during the formulation of the regulations and afterwards (Eekhout 2011). At the same time, because some rural areas and smaller cities had more militant traditions of political activism, or merely due to the predilections of particular collectives, the centralists attracted allies from outside Caracas. Nonetheless, though further research is certainly in order, distinct social contexts seem to have contributed significantly to two general patterns of development that eventually produced a debilitating tension between two tendencies within the community and alternative media movement.

According to Manrique the immediate result of the fissure that opened during the national meeting in Rubio was that the RVMC took it upon itself to "unilaterally" approach CONATEL in an effort to propel the formulation and adoption of the regulations. During the negotiations over the LOT, Manrique and the other representatives from the community media sector had developed a close rapport with Jesse Chacón, the Director of CONATEL. As Manrique recalled, "We had a magnificent relation

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432"*[Los centralistas] era[n] más Chavista que Chávez, para decirlo así, y [la RVMC] era un poco más conservador…. [Los centralistas] han sido un poco más radicales y los compañeros que estaban en la provincia eran menos radicales, venían de otro proceso distinto.... Muchos de los campañeros que están en Caracas vienen de la militancia de la izquierda…. [L]a gente que estuvo aquí [en la provincia], los movimientos populares que habían acá, [fueron] menos izquierda [y] más cultural.*"

with Jesse. Going to CONATEL was like going to our house."[433] It was not difficult, therefore, for the RVMC to arrange for a series of meetings to negotiate the text of the regulations. In the first of these, perhaps a dozen members were present; Manrique recalled representatives from *TV Rubio*, *TV Michelena*, *Catia TVe*, *Teletambores*, "some radio stations from Lara, [and] some people from Ciudad Bolivar", as well as members of the collective that would later form a television station called *Canal Z* (discussed below).[434] "We all created the proposal together and we defended it together [before] the technocrats." [435] Manrique's terminology is significant because, although they felt comfortable with Chacón, things were often more tense with the employees of CONATEL who sat across the table from the RVMC. These functionaries would generally have had engineering backgrounds and been used to the neoliberal model of commercial telecommunications (Lobo 2011). Few, if any, would have identified with the Bolivarian movement. Nonetheless, the RVMC was committed to dialogue and, as Manrique put it, "for us it was very easy to negotiate with CONATEL.... We could agree, we could advance.... We fought with them and would come out of that."[436] The result was that in mid-2001, after what Manrique estimated as eight to ten sessions, both sides agreed to a draft proposal.

CONATEL attempted to invite outside participation in the negotiation process by posting successive versions of the proposal to the Internet and soliciting public input. As González pointed out, however, this was only a feeble solution, since:

> ...the process of participation has seen itself affected by … the lack of facilities to participate in the design of the regulations. Following the same pattern that was settled on in the process of the design of the [LOT], the regulatory authorities of the sector facilitated the successive versions of the regulations, but they haven't sufficiently favored the opening of the doors for dialogue. Additionally, CONATEL has a tendency little in keeping with the national reality of favoring participation through the internet, a medium that is still today of minority access in the country. (223)[437]

433"*Nosotros tuvimos una magnifica relación con Jesse... nosotros llegamos a CONATEL como a casa.*"
434"*una radios de Lara, [y] una gente de Ciudad Bolívar*"
435"*La propuesta la hicimos entre todos y la defendimos entre todos [ante] los tecnócratas.*"
436"*Para nosotros fue muy facil negociar con CONATEL.... Pudimos acordar, pudimos avanzar, pudimos articular…. Pelearon con ellos y que saliera de eso.*"
437"*...el proceso de participacion se ha visto afectado por … la falta de facilidades para participar en el proceso de diseno del reglamento. Siguiendo la misma pauta que se concretó en el proceso del diseno de la [LOT], las autoridades reguladoras del sector facilitaron las sucesivas versiones del reglamento, pero no han propiciado lo*

Nonetheless, CONATEL received 30 responses. Many of them came from the same groups that participated in the negotiating sessions, but both AMARC and Radio Fe y Alegría contributed their observations. Although CONATEL had closed the official response period in May, representatives of the centralist faction went to CONATEL in September of 2001 and demanded to be heard. Manrique believes that "[t]hey didn't much manage to have an impact on the proposal that we had presented... because... [they] went to insist, to fight, to say that everything was bad." [438] CONATEL, however, agreed to hold four additional sessions to accommodate the centralists and "they proceeded together to modify those articles where they reached agreement. This collective [the centralists] claimed to be satisfied with some 80 percent of the regulations" (CONATEL 2003). [439]

The regulations were approved by the Council of Ministers (*Consejo de Ministros*) on November 3, 2001 and went into effect on January 8, 2002, when they were published in the Official Gazette as Presidential Decree number 1521. [440] Despite CONATEL's attempts to foster public dialogue, the regulations were primarily marked by the vision of the RVMC and the technocratic expectations of CONATEL. [441] The result was a document cast in the liberal mold and this outcome would have significant repercussions for the community media sector over the decade to come. Here we will attempt to identify the most important aspects of the regulation so that we can trace their effects on the practice of community media and subsequent attempts to reorganize community media policy. First, we will discuss the technocratic requirements imposed by CONATEL and the difficulties they created for community

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suficientemente la apertura de las puertas para el dialogo. Adicionalmente, CONATEL tiene una tendencia poco acorde con la realidad nacional de propiciar la participacion a tra· ves de internet, medio que es alin hoy en dia de acceso minoritario en el pais."

438"*[e]llos no lograron mucho incidir en la propuesta que nosotros habíamos presentado... porque… [fueron] a exigir, a pelear, a decir que todo estaba malo.*"

439"*se procedió en conjunto a modificar aquellos artículos donde se llegaron a acuerdo. Este colectivo [los centralistas] manifestó estar satisfecho con un 80 por ciento del reglamento*"

440Manrique believes that the regulations took several months to be approved due to resistance among high officials in the Chávez regime and that they would not have been approved at all if it were not for the personal intervention of Jesse Chacón.

Presidential Decree number 1552, published on the same date, exonerates licensed community broadcasters from paying the taxes established in the LOT. This decree corresponds to article 158 of the LOT.

441Without providing specifics, Morales (2004, 40) notes that AMARC also contributed to the process.

media broadcasters. Second, we will examine the notion of autonomy as it is manifest in the regulations in relation to both political and economic control. Third, we will analyze the framework established for the interaction of community broadcasters with their communities and civil society more generally.

As noted above, in 2001 many CONATEL officials continued to operate with the technocratic mindset pertinent to the liberal framework within which the agency had been created. They were not necessarily averse to incorporating community media into the broadcasting regime, but they insisted on attaching stipulations modeled on their experience with commercial broadcasters. These were established in article 5 of the regulations, which enumerates the required elements of an application for a community broadcasting license, including justification of the "technical viability" (*viabilidad técnica*) of the project, its "economic viability and sustainability" (*viabilidad económica y sostenibilidad*), and the articulation of a valid "social profile" (*perfil social*), which is to say that applicants were required to demonstrate how the broadcaster would achieve the social goals mentioned in the regulations (and discussed below).

For applicants from the popular sector whose educational and/or professional backgrounds did not include the formulation of such studies, the vague requirements of the regulations could seem daunting and the representatives from the RVMC feared they would created unnecessary hurdles that would limit popular participation. As Manrique explained, "[t]he community sector wasn't prepared to do it. Why have an economic project where you prove that sustainability and economic viability exists for five years? How was that going to be explained if the popular sector has never had money?" [442] At the same time, he understood why CONATEL felt that these studies were necessary. CONATEL wanted to be "armored" (*blindado*) against any accusations that a community broadcasting license had been awarded capriciously and the studies would provide evidence that it had carried out due diligence. Recognizing that CONATEL would not back down on these demands, Manrique and his team accepted their inclusion, but only within a pre-conceived framework for minimizing their impact on future applicants.

442"*[e]l sector comunitario no estaba preparado para hacerlo. Porque tener un proyecto económico donde tu pruebes que existe la sostenabilidad y la viabilidad económica de aquí a cinco años? Cómo se iba a exponer si nunca el sector popular ha tenido plata?*"

As for the technical study, they were able to convince CONATEL that issues related to broadcasting power, antenna placement, and spectrum allocation were almost always going to be beyond the ken of future applicants. As such, the regulations included a "transitory provision" (*disposición transitoria*) which stated that during the first year after the regulations went into effect CONATEL "will offer technical support to Community Foundations with the aim of promoting them." [443] In actual practice, CONATEL performed the technical studies itself and, though rarely in a timely fashion, they seem to have continued to do so well beyond the indicated first year. While this ensures the orderly use of the radio spectrum, it also created an opportunity for at least the perception that CONATEL favored the broadcasting applicants for whom it provided this service, thus ironically undercutting an initial motivation for the studies, which was to protect CONATEL from charges of favoritism.

In order to further simplify the process, in May of 2002 CONATEL created models for the economic and social studies (CONATEL 2003). The RVMC, however, had already decided to take the matter into its own hands. Its members joined forces to create the economic and social studies for the first five applicants to come from its ranks. This allowed for the formulation of a standardized model that, once the initial studies had been authorized by CONATEL, could then be replicated and used with minimal modification by future applicants. As Manrique summed it up, "...after the first five were achieved... the rest are going to be... very easy for everyone else. Take the model, assemble the model, this is like this, make the move, bim boom bap, present [it] and that's all." [444] This system of employing models has allowed CONATEL to have the "armor" it desired without placing a major obstacle in the way of aspiring broadcasters, but it has also reduced the studies themselves to formulaic fodder. In the end, the various studies can be seen as components of a technocratic liberal bulwark that largely failed to contribute to the goals of sustainability and social integration while also negatively impacting the autonomy of community media broadcasters. The potential loss of autonomy resulting from CONATEL's

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443 "*ofrecerá apoyo técnico a las Fundaciones Comunitarias con el objeto de promoverlas*"
444 "*...despues de que se lograron los cinco primeros… los demás van a ser… muy facil para todos los demás. Tomense el modelo, armen el modelo, esto es así, echen la jugada, bim boom bap, presenten y eso es todo.*"

assumption of the technical studies is especially ironic given the regulations' adhesion to a traditionally liberal notion of autonomy in which civil society is sharply separated from the state. This framing of autonomy can be seen within the regulations in relation to the structure of community broadcasters, their content, and their source of revenue.

In formulating the regulations, CONATEL and the representatives of the community broadcasting sector had a difficult time deciding what kind of organization would be permitted to obtain a community broadcasting license. No existing model seemed to embody the necessary characteristics, so they were forced to adapt the existing model of a foundation, as specified in Venezuela's civil code, into a legal personality that the regulations identify as a "community foundation" whose model would be determined by CONATEL (Méndez 2011). Article 21 of the regulations provides the key distinction of a community (as opposed to a traditional) foundation: "...they must foresee democratic, participatory and plural mechanisms, for both the election and the exercise of the function of the authorities or organs of direction, administration, and control."[445] The same article goes on to specify that the administrative authority of the community foundation can be comprised of no more than nine members who can occupy their position for no more than three years and must reside in the geographic area served by the broadcaster.

In order to assure the autonomy of community foundations, article 22 specifically prohibits certain categories of persons from serving as board members. Included in these prohibitions are: "public civil servants occupying high level posts", "active members of the military", "leaders in any level of political parties or electoral groups", and "leaders or representatives of unions or chambers [i.e. business associations]".[446] Also excluded were "operators of services of radio and television broadcasting", those who occupied administrative positions in such broadcasters, board members of other community broadcasters, and persons linked or related to them.[447] Finally, only one board member could come from

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[445]"*deberán prever mecanismos democráticos, participativos y plurales, tanto para la elección como para el ejercicio de las funciones de las autoridades u órganos de dirección, administración y control.*"

[446]"*funcionarios públicos que ostenten cargos de alto nivel*"; "*militares activos*"; "*dirigentes en cualquier nivel de partidos políticos o grupos de electores*"; "*dirigentes o representantes de gremios o cámaras*"

[447]"*operadores de servicios de radiodifusión sonora y televisión abierta*"

any particular church. Clearly visible in these prohibitions is an attempt to protect community broadcasters from co-optation by the most powerful blocks of the corporatist *puntofijista* system of civil society. Along these same lines, but in terms of content, article 26 absolutely prohibits the transmission of "partisan or proselytizing messages of any nature", thus specifically decoupling community broadcasters from party politics and religious persuasion.[448]

Economic autonomy for community broadcasters was another goal of the regulations, which provided for multiple sources of revenue from the private sector. Article 19 states that "[t]he assets of the community foundations, made up of contributions, donations, or grants, will be able to come from members of the community where the service is provided … or from other people but never from radio or television broadcasting operators."[449] Further, the provision of these assets can not imply "subjection to conditions different from those established in the present Regulations."[450] Article 20, meanwhile, specifies that "income obtained through the offering of community radio and television broadcasting services" must be reinvested in the operations of the community foundation.[451] While those services are not limited by the regulations, they are only specified in relation to advertising and program sponsorship. Article 30 allows for five minutes of advertising per hour from "natural persons", "small and mid-size businesses" located in the community, and "large industries" and "natural persons" from other communities, so long as these two latter categories do not comprise more than fifty percent of the total.[452] Finally, article 31 allows for the sponsorship of programming by "natural or legal persons, domiciled or not within the area", who would be entitled to place a message of no longer than five seconds, up to four times per hour, that includes "auditory or visual messages of the name or logo of such businesses or public entities".[453]

448"*mensajes partidistas o proselitistas de cualquier naturaleza*"
449"*[e]l patrimonio de las fundaciones comunitarias, constituido por aportes, donaciones, o subvenciones, podrá provenir de miembros de la comunidad donde se preste el servicio ... o de otras personas pero nunca de operadores de radiodifusión sonora o televisión abierta.*"
450"*sujeción a condiciones diferentes a las establecidas en el presente Reglamento*"
451"*ingresos obtenidos por la prestación de los servicios de radiodifusión sonora comunitaria y televisión abierta comunitaria*"
452"*personas naturales*"; "*pequeñas y medianas industrias*"; "*grandes indstrias*"
453"*personas naturales o jurídicas, domiciliadas o no dentro de la localidad*"; "*mensajes auditivos o visuales del nombre o logo de tales empresas o entes públicos*"

The only instance in which the government is specifically mentioned as a source of revenue is thus in relation to sponsorship, but the regulations clearly foreground the private sector as the primary source of financial sustainability.

In this regard the regulations accord with the desire of Manrique and the RVMC to establish a legal basis upon which community broadcasters would be able to achieve their own financial independence. To do so, they would operate as non-profit entities but compete to some degree in the commercial marketplace for publicity. We can locate this model firmly within the liberal tradition of civil society and, given the leeway provided for advertising, even place it toward the neoliberal end of that spectrum. In this regard, the impulse was once again very close to that of the Neighborhood Movement, especially as articulated by the *Escuela*. Of course, just as donations and grants were to be explicitly detached from any influence on the operations of the broadcasters, the limitations on advertising were also meant to protect the community foundations from being controlled by their advertisers. An unintended effect of these limitations, however, was to narrow the opportunities for funding. In retrospect, Eekhout (2011) noted this as one of the primary "weaknesses" (*debilidades)* of the regulations:

> There's nothing [similar to these limitations] that regulates the media in general, private or public, but the restrictions on community media are much more firm. Why is that? Because this was being done from the perspective of understanding community media as an instrument in the hands of the people, as an instrument of the people, as a non-profit. [454]

Eekhout's lament, in other words, is that any attempt to ensure autonomy within the liberal framework of civil society seems to result in a mitigation of opportunities. By reducing the scope of advertising for community broadcasters, the regulations worked to handicap and thus marginalize their operations, just as has occurred for decades within liberal orders that adopt the alternative discourse of community media.

As noted above, the centralist faction of the community media movement anticipated this turn of events and thus had argued for state funding that would be distributed by an association of community

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[454]"*No hay nada [similar a estos limitaciones] que regule los medios en general, privados o públicos, pero las restricciones a los comunitarios son mucho más firmes. Eso porqué? Porque este se estaba haciendo desde el perspectivo de entender lo comunitario como un instrumento en manos de la gente, como un instrumento del pueblo, no con fines del lucro.*"

media broadcasters. As we will see, this idea would form the kernel of the funding model that would later be debated by the Bolivarian community media sector, once it became apparent that the liberal model imposed by the regulations was not sufficient to guarantee sustainability. In 2001, however, both CONATEL and the RVMC continued to adhere to the liberal model. In their defense, we might note that the mere act of legalizing community media was in and of itself a major step, placing Venezuela out ahead of most other Latin American states. As such, state funding may have been considered infeasible, at least as a core element of the law.

At the same time, neither CONATEL nor the RVMC were necessarily opposed to the state playing a role in the sustainability of the emerging community media sector, as evidenced by the inclusion of "public entities" as potential sponsors. Additionally, article 27 states that "community operators will be able to be beneficiaries of agreements in relation to training that CONATEL signs with national and international, public and private organizations". [455] Perhaps most telling is the role that state financing ended up playing in the model for the study of "economic viability and sustainability" that the RVMC developed for the use of applicants. As Manrique explained, they had trouble conceiving of a manner in which an applicant would be able to acquire the funding necessary to establish itself, so they decided to turn to the state:

> Then we were figuring out... what was the economic solution? It was that they put... the supposed [resources] that the community and alternative media outlets were going to have from the state.... That was the way out... as the [LOT] says, 'The state will promote the existence of community media outlets.' So, how is a state going to promote the existence if its not going to finance them? … The discussion was that the state should give a seed contribution, an initial contribution. An initial working capital. [456]

The RVMC thus saw this as a compromise solution, believing that once the broadcaster was established

455"*los operadores comunitarios podrán ser beneficiarios de los convenios que en materia de capacitación suscriba la Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones con organismos públicos y privados, nacionales e internacionales*"

456"*Despues se fue solucionando… cual fue la solución económica? Era que se ponía… los supuestos [recursos] que los medios comunitarios y alternativos iban a tener del estado.... Eso era la salida…. como dice la [LOT], 'el estado promoverá la existencia de los medios comunitarios.' Entonces, cómo un estado va a promover la existencia si no lo va a financiar? … La discusión fue que el estado debe dar un aporte semilla, un aporte inicial. Un capital de trabajo inicial.*"

with the help of the state (via a generous interpretation of the text of the LOT), it would be able to maintain itself within the liberal framework established by the regulations. As we will see below, however, this would not prove to be the case.

The final aspect of the regulations that we will address here is the framework they established for the interaction of community broadcasters with their communities and with civil society more generally. As with CONATEL's technocratic requirements and the notions of political and economic autonomy outlined above, the relationship between community and civil society embedded in the regulations hews to the liberal model. Article two provides the following definition of a community:

> [a] group of people that reside or find themselves domiciled in a locality and that [CONATEL] determines to find themselves closely linked due to their common problematic and their historical, geographic, cultural, and traditional characteristics [457]

The regulations are thus primarily based on the notion of a community of place, but they add to that notion the stipulation that residents must be bound by shared characteristics and concerns (i.e. "their common problematic"). This addition is laudable, as it suggests that true communities, even when defined geographically, are not merely communities of place, but also of affinity, in the sense that the residents of a community are bound together by their relation to a shared set of outcomes that are, at least partially, determined by their shared geography. For example, residents of a hillside *barrio* belong to the same community not only because they live nearby but also because they face common difficulties, such as water provision and trash disposal.

In article six, however, this nuanced notion of a geographic community is mitigated by the limitations placed on the service area of community broadcasters, the determination of which is made by CONATEL. These service areas can be no smaller than the parish but no larger than the municipality in which the broadcaster is located and they cannot include the fractional part of a parish. As a result of these stipulations, the possible formulations of a community are, as a practical matter, limited by the pre-

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[457]"*[un] conjunto de personas que residen o se encuentran domiciliadas en una localidad y que la Comisión Nacional de Telecomunicaciones determina que se encuentran estrechamente vinculadas en razón de su problemática común y de sus características históricas, geográficas, culturales y tradicionales*"

existing boundaries of the areas of local governance determined by previous administrative regimes. As will be discussed further in the following chapter, those boundaries were sometimes determined by power relations (such as hereditary land ownership) that have little to do with the majority of the locality's current residents. Additionally, even where original boundaries did encompass cohesive communities, subsequent demographic shifts, especially increases in population density, have often fragmented and/or reformed the patterns of community. The adherence of the regulations to that model therefore diminishes the ability of CONATEL to place community broadcasters in the service of a well integrated community.

There is a further limitation to the geographic schema established in the regulations. By assigning community broadcasters to a fixed area, the regulations assume that communities are discrete, do not overlap, and do not scale. This assumption corresponds to an un-nuanced notion of community of place. As an example, we might conceive of three parishes, one above the other on the same mountainside. The lowest parish may have adequate water provision and trash disposal. The middle parish may have adequate trash disposal but no water provision, and the upper parish may enjoy neither. Meanwhile, all three are concerned with the high potential for mudslides during heavy rains. Here we can see that if we define community in terms of shared outcomes in relation to particular issues, as opposed to the mere imposition of geographic boundaries, the scope of community can change in relation to the particular issue under consideration. The regulations leave little flexibility for this scalability. We will return to this issue below.

Another issue to note is the degree to which the regulations manifest the development discourse of community media. This can be seen in article 17, which defines the objective of the community foundations as "assuring the free and plural communication of the members of the communities … as well as *contributing to the solution of the community's problems*" (my emphasis).[458] This tendency is reinforced by article 26, which states that operators must "[g]uarantee the transmission of programs with

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458"*asegurar la comunicación libre y plural de los miembros de las comunidades ... así como coadyuvar a la solución de la problemática de la comunidad*"

educational, cultural and informative content that benefits the development of the community, as well as contribute to the solution of the community's problems" and "[g]uarantee the transmission of messages directed toward public service that procure the solution of the community's problems". [459] This emphasis on the correction of problems evidences a somewhat paternalistic tendency that has long manifested in the literature on development and, in development communications, can be seen as something of a holdover from the dominant paradigm of the 1950s and 60s. Perhaps more importantly, however, the emphasis on public service, educational, cultural, and informative content suggests once again that community media is marginal and merely supplemental to mainstream media. One could perhaps interpret "cultural" programming to include all forms of entertainment, but given its relation to educational and informative programming, not to mention the identification of early community television broadcasters like *TV Michelena* and *TV Rubio* as "cultural" foundations, this connotation seems unlikely. Arguably, the regulations therefore suggest that community media are meant to respond to the weightier and more serious aspects of community building, whereas entertainment should be left to the commercial system. In sum, the regulation's discursive framing of community media is much more in line with participatory development and alternative discourses, associated as they are with a liberal framework of civil society, than with a counter-hegemonic discourse in which community media bears the potential to displace the dominant commercial apparatus.

In addition to their discursive approach, the regulations also set up a concrete framework for interaction between broadcasters and the communities they serve. This relationship hinges on the role of the "community producer", which is defined in article two as:

> [a] natural or legal person that produces audio or audiovisual content, that has been trained and accredited as a community producer by an operator of community radio or television broadcasting services and that is not linked with any operator of radio or television broadcasting[460]

[459] "*[g]arantizar la transmisión de programas de contenido educativo, cultural e informativo que beneficien el desarrollo de la comunidad, así como coadyuvar en la solución de la problemática de la comunidad*"; "*[g]arantizar la transmisión de mensajes dirigidos al servicio del público que procuren la solución de la problemática de la comunidad*"

[460] "*persona natural o jurídica que produce contenidos sonoros o audiovisuales, que ha sido formada y acreditada*

Community producers are explicitly distinguished, in the same article, from independent producers, with the sole difference being the accreditation provided by the community broadcaster. Meanwhile, articles 37 (for radio) and 41 (for television) allow community operators to broadcast up to 24 hours per day but require that they broadcast no less than six hours per day. Various requirements are then placed on the makeup of the broadcasting day. Article 28 states that community broadcasters "will be media for the transmission of independent production and community production, so much their own as that generated in other communities" and it goes on to require that 70 percent of any given day's transmissions be comprised of community production.[461] The broadcasting operator may contribute to that amount, but article 29 makes clear that the operator may produce no more than 15 percent of the content transmitted in a single day. At least 55 percent of each day's transmission, in other words, must be content produced by community producers. The same article limits the portion of each day's transmission produced by a single producer, whether community or independent, to 20 percent, meaning that, at a minimum, at least three community producers must contribute to each day's transmission.

The intent of these requirements seems clear. They are meant to ensure that community broadcasters promote the participation of community members in the production process, that community broadcasters do not devolve into conduits for commercial or public content, and that content remains focused on the community itself. In practical terms, however, the effect of these requirements is that, for a six hour broadcast day with five minutes of publicity per hour, over 180 minutes of content must be created by at least three different community producers. Even a minimum familiarity with the production process for radio and, especially, television allows one to comprehend that producing that amount of quality content is extremely resource intensive.

To be sure, broadcasters are free to utilize content created by community producers from outside of their own community. A networked exchange of content between broadcasters might therefore lessen

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como productor comunitario por un operador de servicios de radiodifusión sonora comunitaria o televisión abierta comunitaria y que no está vinculada con ningún operador de radiodifusión sonora y televisión abierta"
461"*serán medios de transmisión de la producción independiente y la producción comunitaria, tanto propia como aquella generada en otras comunidades*"

the burden of constant local production so long as there is sufficient content from other community producers that is applicable to the localities served by other broadcasters, but there is obviously a tension between focusing on a particular community (especially in terms of responding to its specific "problems") and producing content that has a wider appeal. There have been some attempts to share content among community broadcasters, but the steady stream of local production implied by the requirements of the regulations has proven difficult in conjunction with the limited resources made available by their proposed funding mechanisms. We will return to this issue below.

Finally, we should note that the regulations position community broadcasters as a relatively isolated instance of civil society in which the only prescribed interactions with the community occur around content production. In other words, there is no vision for the integration of community broadcasters with other instantiations of civil society, much less local government. It would be possible, of course, for representatives of other civil society organizations to participate in content production, to vote as members of the community foundations, or even serve on the administrative board, but there is no formal framework for such interrelationships (and, due to the imposition of a liberal notion of autonomy, they are in fact limited by the prohibitions on who is eligible to serve on that board). The relative isolation of community broadcasters is a further manifestation of the liberal framework of civil society that is modeled on the notion of an atomistic competitive market made up of private enterprises. This should be especially clear in comparison to our working notion of a Gramscian civil state in which an integrated civil society takes on a maximal level of decision-making in public governance. For now it will be sufficient to recognize the imposition of this isolated or atomistic vision of civil society; we will trace its implications further below.

In sum, we have seen that in relation to the LOT and its regulations the community and alternative media movement operated within the liberal tradition of civil society, as a pressure group interacting with a liberal state apparatus. Although some within both the movement (e.g. the centralists) and the state (e.g. Chávez) had begun to articulate a counter-hegemonic vision for community media,

these were tentative and incomplete. The RVMC and CONATEL, who played the primary roles in the shaping of the regulations, were significantly impelled by the inertia of the fourth republic and implemented only a progressive liberal model of community media. In the following sections we will review how this model shaped the explosive growth of the sector in the wake of the events of April 2002.

The Attempted Coup and its Aftermath: The Politicization and Explosive Growth of Community Media

As noted above, the Venezuelan political sphere became increasingly polarized throughout 2001 and the early months of 2002, with the result that on April 11 oppositional leaders took advantage of massive and competing street demonstrations to launch a coup. Pedro Carmona, President of FEDECAMERAS, held power illegitimately for two days before Chávez was restored by loyal units of the military supported by massive popular protests in Caracas and throughout the country. As has been widely documenter, the role of the media was extremely pivotal in these events (cf. Beasley-Murray 2002; Giordano 2002a, 2002b; Hernández 2002; Klein 2003; Britto 2004; Wilpert 2007; Quezada nd.). We have seen that the presidents of Venevisión and RCTV, the nation's dominant television networks, had stood alongside community media activists during the signing of the LOT. Now, along with the two other major Venezuelan television networks, they were principal players in the scheme to replace Chávez. As Klein summarizes:

> ...in the days leading up to the April coup, Venevisión, RCTV, Globovisión and Televen replaced regular programming with relentless anti-Chávez speeches, interrupted only for commercials calling on viewers to take to the streets: "Not one step backward. Out! Leave now!" The ads were sponsored by the oil industry, but the stations carried them free, as "public service announcements." They went further: On the night of the coup, Cisneros's station [Venevisión] played host to meetings among the plotters, including Carmona. The president of Venezuela's broadcasting chamber co-signed the decree dissolving the elected National Assembly. And while the stations openly rejoiced at news of Chávez's "resignation," when pro-Chávez forces mobilized for his return a total news blackout was imposed.... When Chávez finally returned to the Miraflores Palace, the stations gave up on covering the news entirely. On one of the most important days in Venezuela's history, they aired Pretty Woman and Tom & Jerry cartoons.

The most significant act of collusion between the commercial media and the coup plotters, however, was

the intentional manipulation of footage to make it appear as if *chavistas* were responsible for shooting unarmed opposition protesters.[462] This footage was aired by commercial news outlets on the day of the coup and throughout the following weeks in an attempt to justify the actions taken against the Chávez administration (Wilpert 2009).

The government, meanwhile, also made use of the media resources available to it. In the days leading up to the protests, the Chávez administration repeatedly made use of a legal provision, known as a *cadena* (chain), that allows the state to require all broadcast media to simultaneously transmit a government announcement. These were generally ten minute addresses from then Vice President (and formerly Director of CONATEL) Diosdado Cabello that presented the administration's point of view on the developing crisis. On the day of the protests, the state television channel, VTV, aired interviews with government officials and supporters. At 3:45pm, as the now violent demonstrations were being broadcast by the commercial networks, Chávez himself made use of the *cadena* to address the nation. Roughly a half hour later, after the networks split the screen to air the demonstrations alongside Chávez, he ordered that they be taken off the air, leaving no live broadcast footage of the street scenes and only VTV to air his address. The commercial channels managed to continue transmitting via cable and satellite, however, and at about 10pm, once the opposition had gained the upper hand, VTV went off the air and the commercial broadcasters returned (Wilpert 2007). The following evening, however, VTV returned to the air under the control of Chávez supporters and begin transmitting a counter-narrative of the events of the previous day (Beasley-Murray 18-9).

The struggle over television broadcasting and other forms of mainstream mass media during the three days of the crisis heightened the importance of other forms of communication, especially among *chavistas* who realized that the commercial networks were airing a distorted version of events. This was

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462Although the question of who killed the protesters remains highly controversial, abundant evidence that they were not killed in the manner described by the manipulated footage is provided by two documentaries: The Revolution Will Not Be Televised (2003) and The Llaguno Bridge: Keys to A Massacre (*Puente Llaguno: Claves de una Masacre* / 2004). For an account and analysis of the discursive value of the former within the Bolivarian movement, especially in relation to community media practitioners, see Schiller 2009.

especially evident in Caracas, where alternative news and interpretations, including the fact that Chávez had not willfully resigned, began circulating among informal networks. As news spread, more and more *chavistas* descended from the *barrios* surrounding the city to the Presidential residency in downtown Caracas, which became the epicenter of the popular movement to restore Chávez to power. The informal communication networks that drove these demonstrations included the "grapevine" (known in Latin America as "*radio bemba*" [lip radio]), taxi drivers, motorcycle messengers, cellular text messaging, and the internet, as well as alternative and community media.

Fernandes (2010) reports that "...it was mainly the alternative print media that was able to get the message out", with activists making use of the Caracas Municipal Press to produce 100,000 copies of an informative bulletin (167). Meanwhile, Nicolás Rivera covered the competing demonstrations of April 11th for *Radio Perola*, one of the community radio stations that had been shut down by the Caldera administration in the 1990s. The following day, with the opposition in control of the government, the police raided *Radio Perola* and arrested Rivera, beating him, taking him to his home where his wife was also beaten, forcing him to sign a false statement, and then taking him to jail. Rivera was released on the 14th, after Chávez had regained the presidency (Giordano 2002b). *Radio Catia Libre* and *TV Caricuao* were also raided, and *Catia TVe* workers dismantled their own antenna in an effort to avoid its confiscation (*ibid.*, Historia de Catia TVe 2006b, Blanco 2011).[463] The workers of Catia TVe also played an instrumental role in bringing VTV back on the air, even though their unfamiliarity with the professional equipment resulted in significant technical difficulties (Giordano 2002b, Beasley-Murray 18).

Just how important alternative and community media were in facilitating the massive support for the restoration of Chávez is not clear. For example, two alternative film collectives, COTRAIN and Panafilms, recorded invaluable footage that was used in two different documentaries to demonstrate that

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[463]Giordano reports that *Catia Tve* was also raided, but that station's own historical documentary gives the version of events included here.

the commercial media's account of the shootings during the demonstrations was false, but this footage was not broadcast during the crisis itself (Forrest 2003). [464] A videographer from *Catia Tve*, meanwhile, recorded soldiers on the roof of the presidential residence calling for the support from the assembled crowd. That footage was shown at various sites in Caracas, but it was not broadcast because *Catia TVe* had gone off the air. While *Radio Perola* and other stations offered coverage of the events, their low power transmitters could only be heard within limited areas. In fact, it was the powerful network of *Radio Fe y Alegría*, along with courageous reporting by its staff in the face of threats and demands from the opposition controlled police, that did more than any other alternative or community outlet to spread accurate information not only throughout Caracas, but across the country (Barrios & Urdaneta 2002, Giordano 2002a, López 2006).

Except for perhaps the reporting of *Radio Fe y Alegría* and the role of *Catia TVe* in putting VTV back on the air, it seems unlikely that alternative and community media played a determinative role in the outcome of the attempted coup. Nonetheless, the sector's already rising profile was thrust much further into the public sphere as a result of the work carried out by community media practitioners. As Chávez had already recognized, community media provided a strong example of the Bolivarian ideal of participation within "organized communities"; now it could be held up by the government as one of the people's tools for combating the treachery and deceit of those opposed to Bolivarian revolution, thus giving it additional appeal. Meanwhile, *chavistas* outside of the government who were outraged and energized by the coup now recognized community media as an accessible opportunity for working to defend and advance Bolivarian ideals. In the years since the coup attempt, community media (much more than *Radio Fe y Alegría*) have been hailed by the Bolivarian movement for their role in thwarting the attempted coup. For example, on the fifth anniversary of the coup attempt, "[s]tate media turned to community activists and particularly to community media producers to remember and reflect on their experience of the coup" (Schiller 2009, 261). More pointedly, one of the founding members of *Radio Ali*

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464 See note 463.

Primera explained that "alternative media, in a sense, were baptized in the street, with blood... during the coup d'etat" (Varenzuela 2011).[465] This commonly invoked rhetorical link between the birth of Bolivarian community media and the coup attempt is not altogether false, since the events of April 2002 led to explosive growth in and drastically increased government support for the sector. Nonetheless, it also serves to obscure the deeper roots of Venezuelan community media across decades of popular organization that stretch back to the 1960s.

Without a doubt, however, the attempted coup revealed the vulnerability of the Bolivarian revolution in the face of a hegemonic commercial media system. For Chávez and other government officials, this pointed to an urgent need to establish a Bolivarian "media hegemony" (*hegemonía mediática*). Their attempts to do so have involved three interrelated vectors of action: tighter regulation of private media, expansion of the public media apparatus, and increased support for the community media sector. While community media has never garnered the headlines given to the government's battles with commercial broadcasters and organizations defending freedom of the press, it certainly became a widely recognized and contentious axis of debate and action.

Growth in the sector was almost immediate, since already existing groups were inspired to push forward faster and with greater energy. For example, the Popular Revolutionary Assembly (*Asamblea Popular Revolucionaria*), a group that went into *barrios* to distribute fliers urging residents to join the protests against the coup, went on to create a website called aporrea.org that continues to serve as a clearing house for news and opinions from within the community and alternative media movement (Wilpert 2007). Meanwhile, all throughout the country previously inactive *chavistas* were inspired to form new print, radio, and television collectives (see Fernandes 2010, 167).

One example that illustrates both these tendencies is a collective from Maracaibo (Zulia) that had been publishing a leftist magazine called *Letra Zurda* (*Left-handed Writing*) since the late 1990s. In 2002, this group attended an alternative and community media conference in Lara where they met workers from

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465"*los medios alternativos, de una forma, se bautizó en la calle, con sangre… cuando el golpe de estado*"

Catia TVe and *Teletambores* and decided to apply for a television broadcasting license of their own. Soon after, however, the initial group "divided internally due to personal problems" (Useche 2009). [466] Nonetheless, it had already attracted new members as a result of the attempted coup and a group of these newcomers took the reins of the television project, *Canal Z* (Channel Z). One of the members of this new group later recalled:

> that the coup d'etat had … made very clear to us what, and for what, the [commercial] media were.... That made us ... wake up..., in that we also said, 'Well, now we can't stay here, watching another coup, watching another way to break up even the [political] project, we're going to be disarmed.' From that point we took control of the thing and we haven't let it go.... (*ibid.*)[467]

Though bureaucratic delays and a dependence on the state for resources prevented *Canal Z* from broadcasting until 2007, in the meantime the station's workers applied the *cineforo* model that they had learned from *Catia TVe*. Once they acquired video cameras, they would assist residents in creating documentaries about the history of their communities and screen these in outdoor locations on Sunday afternoons. *Canal Z* workers quickly established themselves as among the most influential member of the national alternative and community media movement, in large part due to their status as the only community television broadcaster in Venezuela's second largest city.

The growth of the community media sector was also enabled by a sharp increase in government recognition and support. The coup attempt spurred CONATEL to accelerate the process of issuing licenses to community broadcasters (Manrique 2011). *Catia TVe* and *Teletambores* received licenses in May, and by the end of 2002 licenses had been issued to eight community radio and six community television stations, including *TV Caricuao*, *TV Michelena*, and *TV Rubio*.[468] (As we will see later, however, this is not to say that all of these stations began broadcasting in 2002.) In June, *Catia TVe* and *Radio Perola* shared a Special Mention Prize (*Galardón en Mención Especial*) from the government's

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466"*se dividen internamente por problemas personales*"

467"*que el golpe del estado … nos dejó muy claro que era, y para que estaban los medios [comerciales]. Eso nos hizo ... despertarnos..., en el que nosotros también dimos, 'Bueno ya nosotros no podemos quedarnos aquí, viendo otro golpe, viendo otra manera de romper con el proyecto [político] incluso, nosotros nos vamos a estar desarmado.' De allí asumimos la cosa y no lo hemos soltado...*"

468*Catia TVe* had received only a provisional license in March 2001.

National Journalism Awards (*Premios Nacionales de Periodismo*) for the work they had done during the coup attempt – although *Radio Perola* did not yet have a broadcasting license. In a related move, that same month *Catia TVe* was the location for a live filming of Chávez's very popular Sunday television and radio program, "Alo Presidente!". In August, CONATEL hosted the First International Forum and National Meeting of Community Media (*Primer Foro Internacional y Encuentro Nacional de Medios Comunitarios*), which included community media practitioners from Spain, France, Uruguay, and Brazil, as well as representatives from AMARC. In October, CONATEL and AMARC jointly hosted a workshop on the management of community media outlets (CONATEL 2003).

In the same month, the Chávez administration established the Ministry of Communications and Information (*Ministerio de Comunicación e Información* / MINCI). Representatives from MINCI, as well as those from VTV and the state-owned Venezuelan News Agency (Agencia Venezolana de Noticias / AVN), met with community media practitioners at the First National Meeting of Alternative Media (*Primer Encuentro Nacional de Medios Alternativos*) in April of 2003. In June, Nora Uribe, then Minister of Communication and Information, met with representatives from the sector "in order to reinforce the mechanisms of information exchange, while also strengthening the links between the Ministry and said media outlets, as an expression of the communications policy of the Venezuelan State".[469] MINCI then began organizing "different training activities, workshops in the area of communication, and working groups with social organizations in order to consolidate the development of media outlets in communities" (Morales 2004, 46).[470] In August, MINCI created the General Office of Alternative and Community Media (Dirección General de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios / DGMAC) which took over these and other responsibilities.[471] During this period, CONATEL continued to actively support the community media sector. It arranged, for example, a series of meetings in March of 2003 that sought to

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[469]"*a fin de reforzar los mecanismos de intercambio de información, aprovechando a la vez para estrechar los vínculos entre el Ministerio y dichos medios, como expresión de la política comunicacional del Estado Venezolano*"

[470]"*diferentes actividades de capacitación, talleres en áreas de la comunicación y mesas de trabajo con las organizaciones sociales a los fines de consolidar el desarrollo de los medios en las comunidades*"

[471]DGMAC was formally instituted on April 14, 2005, with Ministerial Resolution number 20 (Milano 2008a).

direct state financing from various public entities toward community media (CONATEL 2003). As we will see, however, the effectiveness of DGMAC initiatives, as well as the relationship between MINCI, CONATEL, and the alternative and community media movement, has varied over the years.

The creation of MINCI was just one of the manifestations of the government's drive to rein in the commercial media and establish a media hegemony within the extremely polarized political and social climate of the post-coup period. One of the most divisive government initiatives during that time was the Law of Social Responsibility in Radio and Television (*Ley de Responsabilidad Social en Radio y Televisión* / RESORTE Law), which was presented in the National Assembly in January of 2003 but not approved until December of 2004. The main objective of the RESORTE Law was to establish a framework for regulating broadcast content in accordance with social and family values. The opposition charged that it was merely an attempt to censor the media and referred to it as the Gag Law (*Ley Mordaza*). Media coverage over the RESORTE Law brought public debates about Venezuelan commercial media to a fever pitch, but the law contained at least two provisions that were of potential import for the community media sector.

The first of these provisions, found in article 11, states that multichannel subscription service providers (like cable and satellite television companies) must distribute free of charge the signals of VHF and UHF broadcasters in their area, including community television stations, with the condition that such channels may not occupy more than fifteen percent of the service provider's total offerings. This obviously offers community television broadcasters an opportunity to significantly increase their reach, not only because houses receiving cable or satellite television would otherwise be unlikely to tune in to their broadcast signal, but also because multichannel service providers reach households beyond the limited range of community television transmitters. Within the framework of the regulations, increased viewership might translate into additional revenues, whether through advertising or donations, and it might also attract more participants, thus increasing the quantity and perhaps the quality of community produced content. The actual significance of the provision, however, depends on CONATEL's ability and

willingness to enforce it, and in actual practice very few community television broadcasters have been included in the offerings of multichannel providers. Canal Z, for example, has written several letters to the cable company in its area requesting to be included. They have received no response nor has CONATEL sought to enforce the provision (Manuel Hernández 2011).[472]

The second provision in the RESORTE Law that bore potential implications for community media, found in article 14, mandates that all radio and television broadcasters must carry five and a half hours of content produced by "independent national producers". Article 13, which defines these producers and requires that they be registered, exempts "independent community producers" from the formal registration requirement and suggests that their productions will also count toward fulfilling the mandated quota. Nonetheless, some community producers still registered as independent national producers, hoping to increase their chances. The legal provision seemed to offer community broadcasters a golden opportunity to increase their revenue and prestige, but in actual practice "[m]ost community-trained producers … had trouble selling their programs to the already existing state or commercial channels." As a result, many community producers have come to the conclusion that the independent national production quotas merely "perpetuated a capitalist model of media production that prioritized the skills and financial wellbeing of the professionally trained middle-class who had the skills to produce 'quality' television" (Schiller 2009, 350).

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[472]At least two community television broadcasters are carried by local cable providers:

Montaña TV (Mountain TV), in Cordero (Táchira), was originally established as part of a small, family-owned local cable service provider called *Montaña Visión* (Mountain Vision) in 1997. The owners of that company operated a community channel in order to increase demand for subscriptions. In 2000, a much larger cable service provider called *NetUno* entered the market. Unable to compete, *Montaña Visión* sold its subscriber base to *NetUno* but negotiated to keep the community channel on the cable system. It then applied for and received a broadcasting license in 2004 as *Montaña TV* (Chacón 2011).

The RESORTE Law did enable TV Rubio to negotiate a position in the local cable offerings, although in something of a roundabout manner. When *Intercable*, the local cable provider, decided to raise its rates, *TV Rubio* organized a boycott designed to prevent the rate increase and ensure its inclusion on the cable menu. TV Rubio managed to organize a march of some 800 people past the offices of *Intercable* and finally succeeded in enlisting the help of CONATEL, which mediated negotiations that resulted in a compromise in which *Intercable* was permitted to raise its rates so long as it included *TV Rubio* in its offerings. Later, when a second cable service provider entered the market, it included *TV Rubio* without issue (Manrique 2011). While CONATEL played a role in this outcome, it seems likely that this was primarily the result of the community organization carried out by TV Rubio, which forced *Intercable* to negotiate, and Manrique's familiarity with CONATEL due to his years of activism in the RVMC.

Both of the above provisions of the RESORTE Law seek to empower community media within a capitalist market and they accord with a progressive liberal model of civil society. In the first case, community television broadcasters are largely dependent on the state's centralized regulatory body to protect their access to a commercial system since they have almost no mechanisms to govern the process themselves. In the second case, community broadcasters are marginalized by a system that prioritizes "national" programming that accords with the stylistic and technical codes of the hegemonic commercial system, and thus its professionalized and hierarchical organizational model, as well as its dependence on capital and advanced technology.

Vision Venezuela Television (ViVe TV), a state television network that was inaugurated in November of 2003, can be seen as an attempt to bridge community television, as a local instantiation of participatory civil society, with the professionalized world of television production at a national level. The first president and vice president of ViVe were Blanca Eekhout, of Catia TVe, and Thierry Deronne, of Teletambores, respectively, and they imparted the ethos of participatory community television to the new network. Nonetheless, ViVe is a public broadcaster funded entirely by the government whose organizational structure remains professionalized and hierarchical. As Eekhout explained toward the end of ViVe's first year on the air:

> There is no possibility for people's participation in the private media. The only space where there was even a possibility is the state media. But there are contradictions. There are definitely two conflicting models. One is that of a state TV network, with a state budget. The administration of [Vive TV] is controlled by the state. And the state is still, even after all of the changes that have been made, it is still a state that is conceived in the framework of neoliberalism, based on the idea of management and 'efficiency'. Those of us from activist backgrounds discovered that in some ways there were fewer headaches when we were working without state support! The neoliberal model of the media does not put the community and the people at the centre of things. It is about creating spectators who watch TV alone in their homes. We don't want spectators. We want communication. We are critical of the media. We want to give tools – cultural, educational, social, economic tools – to the communities. In the communication sphere we want to create the kinds of tools that exist in the economy, like the Banmujer [women's bank] and microcredit initiatives that have helped people empower themselves. (Podur 2004)

ViVe began as a centralized network but has since reorganized itself into six regional broadcasters that are

unified as a single network. Even a summary analysis of its strategic goals and various methodologies would fall beyond the scope of our historical review of the community media sector. Here we will simply flesh out some of the "contradictions" to which Eekhout alludes.

ViVe's principal goal has been "to make visible the diverse initiatives that are born of the people and the distinct experiences of popular, rural, worker, and indigenous organization" (Eekhout & Deronne 2009).[473] It has primarily done this by producing its own professionalized content, although ViVe's staff has taken pains to incorporate the participation of the communities that have been the subject of its productions. For example, at one point ViVe's producers decided to create a fictional series set among the afro-venezuelan community. When they presented their proposal to afro-venezuelan social organizations, however, the proposal was rejected and the organizations made a counter proposal that resulted in a three chapter mini-series that "was produced by a [ViVe] producer, but under the direction and coordination of a social movement" (Gil 2011).[474] At the same time, however, ViVe is under the direction of MINCI and part of the "National System of Public Media". As such, it's crews are often compelled to cover official events and press conferences in a traditional journalistic style and are thus diverted from ViVe's primary mission (*ibid.*).

ViVe has also encountered difficulties in producing content that is appealing to a wide range of viewers. Deronne (2007) provided much of the network's initial stylistic vision and oversaw the publication of a manual of sorts, entitled "Theory and Practice of Socialist Television", which provides considerable insight into his intellectual framework. The manual does include some quotes and excerpts from Mattelart in relation to popular production during the Allende administration in Chile, as well as a brief section on a "socialist mode of television production". The vast bulk of the text, however, is dedicated to a critical analysis of the aesthetics of cinema from a marxist perspective that seems little removed from twentieth century vanguardist frameworks. In practice, Deronne's preferred approach

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473"*Visibilizar las diversas iniciativas que nacen del pueblo y las distintas experiencias de organización popular, campesina, obrera e indígena, entre otras.*"
474"*fue producido por un productor … pero bajo la dirección y coordinación de un movimiento social*"

emphasized the use of extended long shots and minimal cutting that are intended to invoke that actual lived conditions and rhythms of documentary protagonists (Kunich 2011). Eekhout and Deronne have argued that this format:

> ...of small human teams, deep observation of processes, imperceptible among adversaries, capable of discovering and recording proofs and complex processes, has a greater capacity than other formats for audiovisually describing, understanding, and expressing the problems of popular organizations. (Eekhout & Deronne 206-7)[475]

Venezuelan audiences, however, were not appreciative of the resulting fare. As Sergio Arriasis, head of ViVe's Office of Strategic Development, put it:

> It's very complicated to change people's minds. At the beginning, no one understood ViVe. In the first year, when we were showing peasants planting seeds, people thought 'what the hell is this?' When we showed indigenous people speaking their own language with Spanish subtitles, nobody understood, including *Chavistas*. (Wynter 2010)

ViVe officials, however, have argued that its programs do not require a large audience in order to have a significant social effect. In their study of programming produced by ViVe Zulia, for instance, Eekhout and Deronne note that "far from being of high ratings, they are programs of low diffusion, but that hasn't impeded their high impact in society (Eekhout & Deronne 206).[476] Nonetheless, in recent years some producers within ViVe have sought to integrate Bolivarian ideals with more contemporary aesthetic styles that will attract larger audiences (Gil 2011). This tendency, however, leans more heavily on professional producers and technicians and is thus less conducive to direct community participation.

Beyond its own productions, ViVe has made concerted attempts to foster independent national producers since even before the RESORTE Law was passed. As Eekhout explained in 2004:

> ViVe, in advance of the law, has already established its quotas – 60% national production, and of that, 60% independent production. We are supporting and financing independent producers and collectives. TV has this possibility of diversity and plurality in programming. There's also the cultural programming, to make visible work in communities. Not just excluded people and movements, but also artists, musicians, who

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[475]"*...de equipos humanos pequeños, observación a profundidad de los procesos, imperceptible entre los adversarios, capaz de descubrir y registrar pruebas y procesos complejos, tiene una capacidad de alcance mayor que los otros formatos para describir, comprender y expresar audiovisualmente los problemas de las organizaciones populares.*"

[476]"*...lejos de ser de alta audiencia, son programas de baja difusión en la pantalla, pero ello no ha impedido su alta contundencia en la sociedad.*"

had never found spaces in the past. We are trying to create a platform for them. (Podur
2004)

In their analysis of the first 60 independent productions supported by ViVe, Eekhout and Deronne note

that 55 percent were "developed … by cooperatives and community producers with a medium amount of

experience, that are accompanied in a process of mutual training and learning" (Eekhout & Deronne 196).

This figure comes with some caveats, however. Half of all the independent producers selected came from

the Caracas metropolitan area, with another third coming from three of Venezuela's most developed states

(Miranda, Zulia, and Mérida). Eekhout and Deronne recognize that "[t]his reflects the disequilibrium of

favorable conditions of access in the elaboration of audiovisual discourse (lack of training, of

technological access, etc.), which imposes on us the urgent necessity of incrementing our action in the

interior of the country..." (196-7).[477] They note that toward this end ViVe "is articulated with

approximately 27 community television stations from across the country, with which [they] are deepening

relations of support and solidarity to gain access to the independent producers of their regions" (197).[478]

Nonetheless, as Schiller notes, "the few community producers ... who secured contracts with [state

broadcaster] Vive TV were the most technologically savvy producers. Nevertheless, they constantly

complained about the quality monitors [from ViVe] who made demands about the image, sound, and

lighting" (Schiller 2009, 350 n97). As of 2011, community television operators continued to complain

that the system of national independent productions established by the RESORTE Law had not provided

significant opportunities for their advancement.

Independent production contracts were not the only method by which ViVe attempted to raise the

profile of community television production, however. Soon after ViVe went on the air, it dedicated a

Saturday morning time slot to a program called "Let My People Talk" (*Que Hable Mi Gente*) which

showcased community produced content. This program only lasted a short time, presumably due to the

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477"*[e]sto refleja el desequilibrio de las condiciones favorables para el acceso en la elaboración del discurso
audiovisual (falta de formación, de acceso tecnológico, etc.), lo que nos impone la urgente necesidad de
incrementar nuestra acción en el interior del país...*"
478"*se articula a su vez con aproximadamente 27 televisoras comunitarias de todo el país, con las cuales [estan]
profundizando las relaciones de apoyo y solidaridad para acceder a los productores independientes de sus regiones*"

difficulty of procuring sufficient content on a weekly basis (Manrique 2011). Beginning in 2007, however, ViVe began providing support to a Venezuelan initiative called ALBA TV, whose goal was to coordinate community media efforts at an international level, especially in Latin America. [479] In October of 2010, ViVe began airing half hour presentations of community media programming curated by ALBA TV. In 2011 ALBA TV was given a weekly time slot, thus offering a regular opportunity for Venezuelan community television producers to air their content. Many community television stations also retransmit the program, which counts toward their daily quota of community produced content (Kunich 2011).

ViVe has been an active ally of the community media sector in areas beyond independent production contracts and content distribution. For example, ViVe's Popular Latin American Cinema School (*Escuela Popular Latinoamericana de Cine* / EPLAC) has offered workshops throughout the country that included 421 participants through their first several years (Eekhout & Deronne 191). [480] In at least one case, ViVe provided a video camera to a fledgling community television station (Durán 2011). Through internships and paid positions, ViVe has also provided opportunities for community television practitioners to practice their craft in a more resource rich context, although some community

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479The ALBA TV project was initially conceived in December of 2006 at the First Congress of Communication Toward Socialism (*Primer Congreso de Comunicación Hacia el Socialismo*) in Caracas. Among the initial participants were Pablo Kunich, an Uruguayan who was then employed by ViVe, and workers from *Catia TVe*. Various institutions in the Venezuelan government offered initial verbal commitments and ViVe supplied funding for workshops to be held in Bolivia, Ecuador, Nicaraua, and Brazil, but the project remained largely stalled until 2009, when support from ViVe's Popular Latin American Cinema School (*Escuela Popular Latinoamericana de Cine* / EPLAC) allowed for community media practitioners from across Latin America to participate in workshops held in Venezuela. These workshops allowed more Venezuelan community television stations to become involved and the project began to take more concrete form. The television stations asked Kunich to manage the creation of a web site and twelve agreed to provide financing and/or equipment, although not all of them followed through. In 2010 ViVe began providing office space and salaries for three ALBA TV workers. The Venezuelan government had long promised that ALBA TV would be given priority access to transmission channels on its satellites, but as of 2011 that had not materialized (Kunich 2011).

480"EPLAC was born ... in a school occupied by the community, in a barrio in the west of Caracas during the oil sector strike of 2002. From its beginnings, the role of this school was to offer free popular workshops in revolutionary cinema, in the cinematographic language, camera and sound practice, and editing to the organized communities, so that they express themselves in an autonomous manner. Very rapidly, EPLAC was installed in ViVe, launching a joint effort." (Eekhout & Deronne 187)

   "*La EPLAC nació ... en una escuela ocupada por la comunidad, en un barrio del oeste de Caracas durante el paro petrolero del año 2002. Desde su inicio, el papel de esta escuela fue ofrecer gratuitamente talleres populares de cine revolucionario, de aprendizaje del lenguaje cinematográfico, práctica de la cámara y del sonido y aprendizaje de la edición a las comunidades organizadas, para que ellas se expresen de manera autónoma. Muy rápidamente, la EPLAC se instaló en ViVe, emprendiendo una labor en conjunto.*"

broadcasters complain of losing precious talent to ViVe since they can't afford to match its salaries. ViVe has also served as an institutional partner in order to enable community television and radio stations to participate in international agreements for the provision of resources.

Finally, we should note that ViVe has also played an active role in fostering and supporting popular organization more generally. Towards this end it as created a "citizen assistance office" whose role is "to provide rapid and timely information, as well as orient citizens, communities, and social groups that present proposals, complaints, plans, and inquiries to the institution" (Eekhout & Deronne 191). [481] Through this office ViVe has attempted to support community groups by reporting on their activities as well as their need for support from other government institutions.

Community television practitioners recognize and appreciate ViVe as an ally, but they are also quick to insist that while ViVe produces television focused on organized communities and social movements,it does not produce community television. In this light, we might usefully compare ViVe to the Bolivarian missions that were discussed earlier in this chapter. Like the missions, ViVe clearly contributes to Venezuelan civil society, both in its support for community media and more generally in its support for popular organizations and social movements. Nonetheless, ViVe employs a hierarchical organizational logic that is only partly mitigated by its regionalized structure. It is a state-funded public broadcaster that might best be described as an extremely progressive instantiation of the liberal tradition which sometimes exhibits the vanguardist current of leftist ideology. It's contributions to the formation of a Gramscian civil state are not nil, but its institutional inertia seems to contribute to a much greater degree to the perpetuation of a bureaucratic state apparatus.

Another significant contribution by the state to the growth of Venezuela's community media sector came in October of 2003, during the Second International Forum and First Festival of Community Media (*II Foro Internacional y I Festival de Medios Comunitarios*) that had been organized by MINCI

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[481]"*unidad de atención al ciudadano*"; "*brindar información rápida y oportuna, así como orientar a los ciudadanos, comunidades y grupos sociales que presentan propuestas, denuncias, planteamientos y solicitudes a la institución*"

(Morales 2). At this event, which was held in the center of Caracas and hosted delegations of community media practitioners from across Latin America, Chávez gave a speech lauding community media and announced that the government would set aside 5 billion *bolivares* (\$2.3 – 3.1 million) for a fund supporting community media.[482] Chávez specifically noted that the money would go toward "the creation of a news agency exclusively dedicated to the sector, and 'the installation of a technological platform for satellite distribution available to every community media outlet'" (Rivero 2003).[483] In actuality, the fund was not directed toward these goals, but was used to finance individual community media outlets. We will take a closer look at the disbursement of these funds in the following section.

With the establishment of MINCI's DGMAC and ViVe, as well as a very public announcement from Chávez himself regarding a significant allocation of state funds, the events of 2003 cemented the reality that the Bolivarian state stood firmly behind the growing community media sector. This show of support coincided with a sharp increase in officially licensed community broadcasters. By the end of 2002, a total of 14 stations (8 radio, 6 television) had been licensed. In 2003 the total rose to 61 (50 radio, 11 television) and in 2004 it shot up to 157 (135 radio, 22 television). Growth then slowed, with a total of 174 (149 radio, 25 television) at the end of 2005 and 196 (168 radio, 28 television) at the end of 2006. Another spurt, especially in radio, occurred in 2007, by the end of which 263 stations (227 radio, 36 television) had been licensed (Urribarrí 2009, 186). Growth then slowed again, with 283 stations (241 radio, 42 television) licensed at the end of 2008, before stopping altogether. In fact, the official count dropped to 280 (244 radio, 36 television) by April of 2011 (Villalobos 2012).

These numbers are indicative of the size of the community media sector, but they must be taken with several precautions. First, they refer only to broadcasters, which require an official license from CONATEL, and thus leave aside periodicals, online outlets, muralist collectives, and other forms of

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482 Rivero (2003) reports the amount as \$3.1 million, whereas Fernandes (2010, 166) gives a figure of \$2.3 million. There is also some confusion as to the provenance of this money. Rivero identifies the source as the Cooperative Development Fund (*Fondo Cooperativo de Desarrollo*), whereas Morales (2004, 36) points to the Intergovernmental Decentralization Fund (*Fondo Intergubernamental para la Descentralización* / FIDES).

483 "*la creación de una agencia informativa exclusivamente dedicada al sector, y 'la instalación de una plataforma tecnológica de distribución satelital a disposición de cada medio comunitario*'"

community media. Numbers for these other types of media are hard to come by, but one Bolivarian politician, in an address to community media practitioners, stated that as of December of 2009 there were 211 "registered" community newspapers in the country, for a total of 492 officially recognized community media outlets.[484] A second limiting factor of the above figures is that they refer only to those broadcasters that have been officially licensed. As we will see, the licensing process in CONATEL has been subject to extreme bureaucratic delays, meaning that some broadcasters have operated for significant periods without a license and the official count may therefore underrepresent the sector. The combination of the above factors may account for the figure of 600 community media outlets given by Andres Izarra, then serving as Minister of Communications and Information, in late 2008 (Urribarrí 2009, 167).

An exact count of community media is therefore impossible to come by and the counts we do have reflect only the state's interpretation of what constitutes a community media outlet, meaning that there is also room for political bias. Nonetheless, CONATEL's broadcasting figures should be sufficient to demonstrate two important trends. First, the explosive growth exhibited in the sector during the years following the attempted coup and second, that the state altogether ceased to license new broadcasters beginning in 2009. Although their numbers do not accord with other published accounts of CONATEL's official figures, Fuentes-Batista & Gil-Ergui (2011) nonetheless provide support for the latter tendency when they write that "according to data published by CONATEL, the number of licensed community-based broadcasters decreased from 453 to 288 between 2007 and 2010 (almost a 64% reduction) and the estimated number of non-licensed stations fell from over 1,000 to about 600 during the same period (a decrease of around 40%)" (259).

Our task now is therefore to identify what accounts for these identified trends in the growth and subsequent stagnation (if not contraction) of Venezuela's community media sector. We have already suggested that the boom in growth was the outcome of at least three interrelated factors. First, a long

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484The figure was given by Representative (*Diputado*) Julio Chávez, then serving as Vice President of the National Assembly's Permanent Committee on Popular Power and Communication Media, during his opening address to the June 17, 2011 debate in Maracaibo on the proposed Law of Popular Communication. Left unclear was with whom, how, or why these newspapers were registered. Assumedly, the number came from MINCI.

history of popular organizing around alternative and community media that enabled a robust social movement to cohere in the late 1990s. Second, the intersection of that social movement with the Chávez administration's predisposition for supporting popular participation as a solution to social problems, with the result being the construction of a legal framework for community media broadcasting and expansive state support for community media more generally. Third, a moment of political crisis that highlighted the potential and significance of community media (both rhetorically and actually) for the Bolivarian movement as it faced increasing opposition from traditional corporatist power blocks, including the commercial media.

The question before us, therefore, is why this surge in growth should have ground to a halt after 2008. The hypothesis that we will carry into the following section is that the framework for community media established between 2000, with the signing of the LOT, and 2003, with the surge in supportive state institutions and funding, was insufficient to support a deeply integrated and influential community media sector, much less to maintain the levels of growth seen between 2003 and 2005. As we have seen, this framework incorporated highly centralized institutions and funding patterns that rested on a liberal set of regulations. If it can be said to have diverged from the liberal tradition, it did so in ways that tended toward centralized state control and even vanguardist notions of content production. As the Bolivarian state became more explicitly socialist, these tendencies threatened to infuse the system with the type of state-centric tensions discussed above in relation to Sandinista community media in Nicaragua, rather than toward the sector's inclusion as a vital component within a Gramscian civil state, which has been the longstanding goal of many within the alternative and community media movement, as well as some officials within the Bolivarian state. As evidence for the incapacities of the liberal framework mounted, calls for a new framework emerged with greater frequency. In the following chapter we will examine some of the most significant problems experienced by the Bolivarian community media sector before reviewing the history of attempts to establish that new framework.

Chapter 5: Toward the Restructuration of Bolivarian Community Media

We have thus far reviewed the transition of Venezuelan community media from its first phase, during the *puntofijista* era, to a second phase, in which it expanded drastically within a progressive liberal legal framework under the Bolivarian government of Hugo Chávez. In this chapter we will look at the process within which both practitioners and government officials have worked to move Venezuelan community media into a third phase. We will begin by examining some of the more serious problems faced by community media outlets to understand why practitioners are eager for a new regulatory framework. These problems are especially salient for the community television broadcasters on whom we will focus due to the resource intensive nature of that medium. Our exploration of these issues will especially seek to highlight how they are connected to the limitations of the progressive liberal framework that has shaped the second phase.

Attempts to establish a third phase have sought to integrate community media with what Bolivarian officials have referred to as a "new geometry of power" that employs the communal council as a base unit and seeks to invest social governance in a participatory civil society along the lines of a Gramscian civil state. We will therefore review the major legal and structural elements of this new system before turning toward a closer examination of how community media might fit within it. That examination will begin by looking at the relationship of community councils and community media under the current regulations. We will then discuss attempts to reorganize and fortify the community media sector, heeding once again the tension between state and citizen control. In this context, we will conclude by discussing the multi-year effort to formulate and pass what came to be known as the Law of Popular Power Communication. Although the LCPP ultimately failed to pass, the structural elements envisioned during the process of its formulation will provide a basis for the theoretical considerations to be discussed in the conclusion.

Division, Difficulty, and Stagnation: Problems in Venezuela's Community Media Sector

In this section we will review a range of difficulties that emerged within the community media sector following the explosive growth of 2003 and 04. These difficulties are reflective of the limitations inherent in the liberal legal framework and the state-centric model of support that underpinned that growth. We will first examine the continued fragmentation within the community media sector itself. Then we will look at several issues related to the relationship between the state and the community media sector. We will conclude by addressing issues related to the internal structure of community media outlets and their relations with the communities they are meant to serve.

As we have seen, a significant fissure opened up within the alternative and community media movement during the process of formulating the regulations that correspond to the LOT and govern community media broadcasters. On one side was the RVMC, which we have identified as emerging from a more traditional and culturally oriented civil society background, and which proved itself more ready to work with a state apparatus that maintained significant institutional inertia from the fourth republic. On the other side were the centralists, who we have identified as emerging from a leftist and activist political background and having adopted a more radical stance in relation to the state. We saw also that the RVMC proved much more influential on the formulation of the regulations.

The centralists had already been meeting regularly throughout 2001, but as community media rose to prominence in the months following the attempted coup they decided to create a formal organization of their own. In June of 2002, they established the National Association of Community, Free, and Alternative Media (*Asociación Nacional de Medios Comunitarios, Libres, y Alternativas* / ANMCLA) (Fernandes 2010, 239-40).[485] From the outset, ANMCLA was envisioned with a different purpose than the RVMC. The latter was created in order to advocate on behalf of its members and thus fortify the community media sector itself. ANMCLA, on the other hand, was "established as a forum for

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[485]Fernandes (2010, 239) traces ANMCLA's roots to the *Banda Ciudadana* community radio collective discussed in chapter three.

facilitating interaction among [alternative and community media] projects and different actors of the popular movement" (Fuentes-Batista & Gil-Ergui 258). ANMCLA's vision, in other words, had less to do with advocating on behalf of its members in the manner of a sectoral organization than with working to place its members in the service of other social movements, all of whom were aligned in their struggle to recreate society according to the tenets of radically leftist ideologies. To be sure, there was no formal organization that united these social movements and ANMCLA did not articulate a specific policy platform, but we can see in its tendency to support the integration of a wide alliance of social movements and civil society initiatives a significant commitment to critical socialist and even anarchist ideal of civil society governance based on widespread popular participation. This is not to say that the RVMC did not ultimately share those ideals, but it began in a much more conservative position and was more willing to work with the state and within the existing liberal framework to take small steps toward those goals. ANMCLA, on the other hand, focused on working with social movements in order to pressure the state to adopt more radical positions more quickly. In this sense, we can therefore view the RVMC and ANMCLA as embodying positions analogous to the soft and hard line positions (discussed in chapter 4) regarding the pace and depth of revolutionary change more generally within the Bolivarian process.

This difference is illustrated by the stance taken in the years following the enactment of the regulations. As discussed above, the RVMC formulated a plan to ensure that its members would be able to obtain licenses as efficiently as possible by using a shared model for their applications to CONATEL. According to Manrique, the plan worked and some 50 RVMC broadcasters were among the first to be licensed. ANMCLA, on the other hand, initially adopted an attitude of rejecting the need for the state to authorize a community broadcaster, arguing instead that the only required legitimation must come from the people. In practice, however, the benefits of being eligible for state resources became clear and ANMCLA broadcasters began seeking licenses according to the regulations (Manrique 2011).

Regardless, ANMCLA's pronounced distrust of the state apparatus persisted and became especially acute in the weeks following Chávez's announcement of the 5 billion *bolívares* (Bs) fund for

community media in October of 2003. While there are few records of the process, it seems that CONATEL called a meeting with representatives from the RVMC and ANMCLA on November 14 for the purpose of establishing a cooperative to administer the funds to individual stations. ANMCLA reported that it agreed with CONATEL's proposal for 74 million to be used for the administration of the cooperative itself, with another 60 percent of the money was to be used as loans for equipment and the rest to be disbursed as grants for administrative costs and training programs. CONATEL's proposal, however, which was backed by the RVMC, was based on the idea that only officially licensed stations would be eligible to participate in the cooperative. ANMCLA's representatives felt that this was unfair and that unlicensed broadcasters should also be given an opportunity to benefit from the funds. As they summarized:

> ...we proposed to designate part of the resources to aid those that still didn't possess an Administrative Authorization but that nonetheless their work and social practice [sic] fits perfectly in what we have called[,] together with the Compañero President [Chávez] and MINCI, the Bolivarian Dream, resources that could help them to finish their project and above all fortify the community radio and television sector. (Radio Perola 2003) [486]

ANMCLA's representatives additionally argued that alternative web sites be considered as members of the cooperative (*ibid.*). In the end, the conflict resulted in a stalemate that left CONATEL unwilling to move forward with the cooperative. Instead, CONATEL took on the responsibility of administering the funds itself (Manrique 2011).

There is irony in this outcome. As we saw, during the first National Meeting of Community Media, held in 2001 in preparation for negotiating the regulations, the centralists (who would become ANMCLA) had lobbied for the formation of a new organization that would administer state funds for the entire sector. The RVMC viewed this as a power grab and in any case did not believe that state funds were necessary. Now, some two and a half years later, the RVMC had come around to the idea of state funding, at least in terms of "seed capital", and was actively supporting the creation of a new organization to

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[486] "*...propusimos que se asignara parte de los recursos para ayudar a quienes aún no poseían Habilitación Administrativa pero que sin embargo su trabajo y práctica social se inscribe perfectamente en lo que hemos llamado[,] junto al Compañero Presidente y el MINCI, el Sueño Bolivariano, recursos que podrían ayudarlos a que terminaran sus proyecto y sobre todo fortalecer al sector de radios y televisoras comunitarias.*"

administer those funds. ANMCLA, however, was now opposed to this solution. We can make sense of this irony by recognizing that in both cases the RVMC supported the more liberal option, whereas the centralists / ANMCLA sought to invest greater responsibility and capacity in civil society while simultaneously divesting the state of its control over civil society. This is not to say that the RVMC did not seek to empower civil society, as it most assuredly did; the difference comes down to the pace and scope of change, especially in relation to the role of the state. The RVMC was willing to move more slowly and abide by a more rigid set of norms in exchange for good order. ANMCLA sought more rapid change and was willing to tolerate a higher amount of disorder in exchange for more extensive opportunities for citizen participation in governance. In a further bit of irony, however, ANMCLA's resistance in the case of the 2003 funding resulted in a state institution taking complete control, with civil society playing no administrative role whatsoever.

The RVMC / ANMCLA split grew increasingly heated over the next couple of years, inducing most community broadcasters to choose one side or the other. *TV Petare*, for instance, belonged to both organizations but withdrew from ANMCLA in 2005. In providing his personal motivation for withdrawing, Méndez articulates a sentiment common to those who opposed ANMCLA:

> Why am I going to be in an association to throw stones at those who are by my side? [There are] regulations that I don't like sometimes, but the state has them like that and we have to advance to change the regulations... You don't have to [disrespect] the regulations [and say] I'm going to take advantage [of that] to screw everyone else. That isn't revolutionary. For me revolutionary is … let's change the regulations, let's change the [law], that's revolutionary.... We're all radicals. [487]

ANMCLA certainly positioned itself in opposition to the state – as we will discuss below, ANMCLA members famously occupied CONATEL's headquarters in 2005 – but this was a tendency, not an absolute. For example, one ANMCLA member, David Berrios, was named as Director of DGMAC in 2005. According to Manrique, this occurred during the last flare up between the RVMC and ANMCLA.

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[487] "*Porqué me voy a estar en un gremio para tirarle piedra a quien está a mi lado? [Hay] normas que a veces no me gustan, pero el estado las tiene así, y tenemos que avanzar a cambiar las normas… No hay que [atreverse] las normas [y decir] yo voy a aprovechar [de eso] para joder a los demás. Ese no es revolucionario. Para mí revolucionario es … vamos a cambiar las normas, vamos a cambiar la [ley], eso es revolucionario…. Todos somos radicales.*"

The division was significant enough that CONATEL called a national meeting in May of 2005 in an attempt to establish dialogue between the two organizations. Nonetheless, RVMC members believed that Berrios had removed TV Rubio from a list of broadcasters who would be receiving equipment from the state and therefore sought to have Berrios removed from his position (Manrique 2011). For our purposes, the details of these conflicts are of little importance except to illustrate the degree of division and to indicate the resulting inefficiencies within the sector.

As the years went on, however, the divide became less significant, partly because both the RVMC and the Bolivarian state continued to move away from the liberal model, and partly because ANMCLA found itself forced to reorganize due to its own internal divisions. A clear example of the RVMC's shift came in 2007, as Chávez publicly took responsibility for CONATEL's decision to not renew the broadcasting license for RCTV, one of the commercial television broadcasters that had participated in the 2002 coup attempt. That decision reignited the fierce debate over the media that had subsided somewhat after the RESORTE Law was passed, and many international observers issued statements opposing the move as an authoritarian overreach that would unduly restrict media freedom. One of those was AMARC, the long standing and widely respected international association of community broadcasters that had played a significant role in facilitating the development and legitimation of Venezuela's community media sector. In fact, AMARC and the RVMC had been working together since the Second International Forum and First Festival of Community Media in 2003, and they had recently entered into an agreement, along with Radio Fe y Alegría, for a series of projects. The RVMC, however, issued a statement of support for the Bolivarian government and publicly broke with AMARC. Significantly, Radio Fe y Alegría continued to maintain a relatively neutral political profile and also continued to work with AMARC (*ibid.*). Also of significance was the fact that AMARC's statement against the RCTV decision included an explicit statement of support for the community media legal framework established by the LOT and the regulations (Pía Matta 2007). In essence, although the RCTV decision was not explicitly concerned with community media, AMARC was declaring that its support for Venezuelan policy would not extend

beyond the liberal media model, whereas the RVMC was signaling that it was willing to push beyond that model in cooperation with the Bolivarian state.

The RVMC continues to exist in name, but since Manrique's departure as the organization's leader it has taken on a much diminished profile. Meanwhile, new associations of community media organizations have arisen over the years. For example, the National Movement of Alternative and Community Media (*Movimiento Nacional de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios* / MoMAC) formed in March of 2008 with a membership tilted toward print collectives. Many of the community television broadcasters, meanwhile, have organized as the National Movement of Community Television Stations (*Movimiento Nacional de Televisoras Comunitarias*) which, as of 2011, seemed to be the conduit for most of the lobbying efforts waged by members of Catia TVe, Teletambores, TV Rubio, TV Petare, and Canal Z, among others.[488]

ANMCLA continues to work at bridging the community media sector with other social movements in order to push the Bolivarian revolution toward a greater reliance on civil society and a diminished role for the state. In recent years, however, ANMCLA has undergone significant internal reorganization as a result of conflict and mistrust. In March of 2007, 66 community media foundations and collectives signed the "Charallave Manifesto" in which they publicly resigned their membership in ANMCLA, citing a "mistaken model" (*modelo equivocado*) in which members from Caracas refused to rotate leadership posts, improve the flow of information, and allow for sufficient internal debate (Venezuela: Medios Comunitarios de varias regiones del país renuncian a la ANMCLA 2007).

ANMCLA experienced another tumultuous split as a result, ironically, of agreements it had made to distribute publicity for state institutions, including the recently re-nationalized National Telephone Company of Venezuela (*Compañía Anónima Nacional Teléfonos de Venezuela* / CANTV) and the newly established Ministry for People's Power of Communes (*Ministerio de Poder Popular de las Comunas*)

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[488]Jesús Suarez (2011), President of Catia TVe, stated that 17 of the 37 licensed television broadcasters participated actively in the National Movement of Community Television Stations.

(Prensa de Frente 2009). The agreement with CANTV involved distributing advertising among 100 community media outlets affiliated with ANMCLA throughout one year in return for 3,600,000 BsF. In 2009, some 2 million BsF had not been distributed and were unaccounted for. Suspicion fell on one of ANMCLA's longtime leaders who had been among the most important of the inner circle in Caracas. For various reasons the situation was never legally resolved, but the gravity of the situation resulted in the departure of some member collectives and a reorganization of ANMCLA's internal structure, with traditional leaders vacating official posts, increased representation from outside of Caracas, and a renewed dedication to transparency, especially in relation to financial matters (Reyes 2011). As of 2011, ANMCLA represented roughly 50 community media collectives in eight states. Most of those collectives were radio stations, although ANMCLA's membership included at least three television collectives (*ibid.*).[489]

Accompanying the above mentioned intra-organizational dynamics in the community media sector is a significant diminishment in its internal fragmentation. On one level, this can be attributed to the passing of the "old guard" within the RVMC and ANMCLA, and thus the dissolution of personal animosities and ideological posturing. More importantly, however, we can see it as symptomatic of a broad shift in terms of strategy and state policy. In the early years of the Chávez administration, the inertia of the liberal model remained strong, both within CONATEL and the RVMC. As time progressed, however, the limitations of that liberal model, expressed primarily in the regulations, became apparent. As we will see, this is not to say that either the state or the alternative and community media movement has adopted a coherent strategy for overcoming those limitations, but this has become the goal of all supporters of the Bolivarian revolution. The debate, in other words, has shifted from the degree to which the liberal model should be defended to which model should be put in its place. In a certain sense, at least according to the simplified binary presented above, this outcome might be seen as vindicating ANMCLA's "hard line" stance. We would do well to recognize, however, that were it not for the stability

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[489]Reyes named Lara TV (Lara), Bolivar TV (Yaracuy), and Barrio TV (a mobile audiovisual school in Caracas).

of the model originally advanced by the RVMC, and especially the various forms of cooperation between the state and community media practitioners, the community media sector would not have experienced the explosive growth and dynamic vitality that has made the need for a new model so very salient. In this regard, we might view the tension between the RVMC and ANMCLA as having had at least some salutary effect.

In order to see why the need for a new framework of community media regulation became so critical, we must now turn our attention to the limitations of the current framework. To begin, we will look at three interrelated sets of difficulties that have troubled the relationship between the community media sector and the state. First, we will review how the centralized and bureaucratic structure of the state resulted in lost opportunities for community media practitioners. Second, we will examine how the lack of a coherent policy across, as well as diachronically within, state institutions also created obstacles. Finally, we will look at how the complicated notion of autonomy has played out over the years.

We have already seen that the licensing process overseen by CONATEL has been the subject of disputes within the community media sector. One basic issue is that the four studies required by the regulations are seen as particularly onerous for aspiring community broadcasters. As noted above, many members of the RVMC were able to circumvent this obstacle by copying an "approved" format from the first stations to receive licenses. ANMCLA applied the same approach, with 20 community radio stations copying the application of Radio Negro Primero in Caracas (Fernandes 2010, 168). Nonetheless, aspiring broadcasters across the country have continued to find the process intimidating and overwhelming. For example, in the first trimester of 2007, Saúl González, then president of the Association of Community Radio Stations of the State of Zulia (*Asociación de Radios Comunitarios del Estado Zulia* / ARCEZ), estimated that only 15 of the 120 stations in Zulia had a license. While some of these stations would not qualify as community broadcasters, given their programming and organizational model, González partially attributed the state of affairs to the difficulty of completing the application process:

… we acquire the equipment ourselves, and we are legitimate but we've had many

problems because you have to do a lot of "paperwork", they have to understand that we're from the community. We've had many obstacles due to CONATEL because you have to do a social project [study], a technical one, [an] economic one, and a legal one. Many of us are people from the community and what we want is to advance the community forward and not everyone is a student and they don't know what they have to do. (Ávila 2008, 56)[490]

As a result, calls for reform of the current framework often articulate a desire for "the simplification of the community projects [studies] that allow for speeding up the permitting and authorization of alternative media" (Movimiento Integrador de Medios Alternativos y Comunitario [MIMAC] 2009). [491]

In addition to the difficulty of completing the studies, many in the sector found the basis for the economic study to have become obsolete. Méndez of TV Petare noted that the economic study:

...was a capitalist study the same as any other [private] national television station.... It had to do with the sale of publicity space to any business, the contracting of specialized personnel.... The only reference that we had was the private media. But, notice that with the reflection on the coup d'etat in 2002, we realized that that couldn't be the logic.... [W]e can't put ourselves under that logic because [then] we're in the hand of any capitalist. [492]

While this is primarily a question of the funding model for community media, the fact remained that aspiring stations were required to either submit a study that reflected an ideologically untenable model or substantiate an entirely new and untested model added a layer of distaste to the application process.

Meanwhile, even when stations did properly complete the required process, they often found themselves waiting years for their license to be approved. According to article 13 of the regulations (in accordance with article 28 of the LOT), CONATEL has a period of 45 days (extendable one time only for a period of 15 days) to respond to a completed application. According to article 31 of the LOT, however, the absence of a response during that period is to be interpreted as a negative response, meaning that

[490]"...los equipos los adquirimos nosotros mismos, y somos legítimos pero hemos tenido muchos inconvenientes porque hay que hacer mucho "papeleo", deben entender que somos de la comunidad. Hemos tenido muchos impedimentos por parte de Conatel porque hay que hacer un proyecto social, uno técnico, económico y uno legal. Muchos de nosotros somos gente de la comunidad y lo que queremos es impulsar hacia adelante la comunidad y no todos son estudiantes y no saben lo que deben hacer."

[491]"la simplificación de los proyectos comunitarios que permitan agilizar la permisología y habilitación a los medios alternativos"

[492]"...era un estudio capitalista igual que calquier otra televisora nacional [privada]... Tenía que ver con la venta de espacio publicitaria a cualquier empresa, contratación de personal especializado... La única referencia que teníamos era los medios privados. Pero, fíjate que con la reflección del golpe del estado en 2002, nosotros nos dimos cuenta que eso no podía ser la lógica.... [N]osotros no podemos meternos en esa lógica porque estamos en la mano de cualquier capitalista."

applicants have no recourse if they do not hear back from CONATEL. In actual practice, these articles have been entirely disregarded, as CONATEL has rarely, if ever, responded within the 60 day limit, yet many applications have been approved far beyond this window.

Many radio stations, which can more easily acquire the funds and resources necessary to begin broadcasting, have simply begun to broadcast "illegally" while waiting for their license to be approved. As will be discussed below in relation to autonomy, CONATEL is unlikely to force these broadcasters off the air when its own lentitude can justifiably be cited as the cause of illegality. As Villalobos (2012) points out, however, "[t]his apparent 'letting slide' makes it possible for the emergence of media outlets that aren't subject to the established regulations and carry out a [mode of] communication closer to commercial activity and removed from community purposes."[493] The proliferation of "pseudo-community" broadcasters then provides ammunition for critics of Bolivarian community media policy (see Castro y Rojas 2004, Leal 2007, Ávila 2008).

Some television broadcasters have also begun operating without a license. Canal Z, for example, submitted its application in 2002 but did not receive a license until 2006. In the meantime, the collective began broadcasting using the very same transmitter that Manrique had built for Catia TVe. Nonetheless, without the funding, equipment, and consulting from CONATEL that accompanied a license, Canal Z was unable to maintain a presence on the airwaves and it was not until September of 2008 that the collective began broadcasting legally. The experience of TV Petare was similar; it submitted an application in 2002, did not receive a license until 2005, and did not begin broadcasting until 2008. In both cases the collectives continued to conduct workshops and produce videos in their communities during this period, but without a license and a broadcasting presence, their opportunities for attracting funding and other forms of collaboration, including community participation, were significantly diminished. [494]

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493 "*[e]ste aparente "dejar, dejar pasar" hace posible que surjan medios que no están sometidos a las regulaciones establecidas y hagan una comunicación más próxima de la actividad mercantil y alejada de los propósitos comunitarios.*"

494 Two participants in Canal Z, including one of the founding members, worked at Radio Fe y Alegría in Zulia. Thanks to these connections, Radio Fe y Alegría made its installations available for Canal Z to hold workshops.

Beyond those lost opportunities, however, the delay caused the community television practitioners to develop rancor and suspicion toward CONATEL. Kenia Useche (2009), one of the leaders of Canal Z, described the process as "our war, almost, against CONATEL", which she described as "an institution that was created in another time, not suitable to our reality". [495] Like many members of the alternative and community media movement, workers at both TV Petare and Canal Z became convinced that the delays were not merely the result of the bureaucratic delays that are common to many Venezuelan institutions, but that certain officials working in CONATEL were actively opposed to the expansion of the community media sector. Keyla González, a lawyer and leading member of Canal Z, remarked that "[w]e found out that our experience [application] had been shelved in CONATEL because there was no type of interest in liberating the radio spectrum occupied by private companies" (Prieto 2010). [496] Méndez, from TV Petare, similarly explained that their application "got lost inside CONATEL" when an official passed it to a group "on the right" so that they could use it for an application of their own. [497] By enlisting connected friends and showing the receipts of their submissions they were not only able to salvage their application, but also to bring about the firing of two CONATEL officials. Canal Z had an especially tough time advocating on their own behalf, due to the time (14 – 20 hours) and cost of the bus trip from Zulia to Caracas, where CONATEL is located. Useche explained that many trips were required, with the group finally having to stay for an entire week in order to push through the application, and that only happened after they had launched a campaign with letters from other community media outlets, support from MINCI, and even an entire half hour program produced by ViVe (and aired on both ViVe and the principal state broadcaster, Venezolana de Televisión [VTV]) dedicated to the difficulties encountered by Canal Z in obtaining a license (Prieto; Eekhout & Deronne, 203).

Similar delays have been common in other state institutions. Much of the funding for the

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495"*nuestra guerra, casi, contra CONATEL*"; "*una institución que fue creada en otro tiempo, no adecuado a nuestra realidad*"

496"*[n]osotros nos enteramos que nuestro experiencia había sido engavetado en Conatel porque no había ningún tipo de interés por liberar el espectro radioeléctrico ocupado por empresas privadas*"

497"se perdió dentro de CONATEL"; "de la derecha"

Bolivarian community media sector has been distributed by MINCI. One of the several conduits of this funding has been the "Cuba – Venezuela Integral Agreement of Cooperation" (*Convenio Integral de Cooperación Cuba – Venezuela* / CICCV), which has been renewed annually since 2000 and has resulted in an interchange between the two countries in areas as diverse as agriculture, energy efficiency, mining, sports, education, culture, and – most famously – healthcare. MINCI took advantage of the fifth CICCV, signed in 2004, to finance equipment, including transmitters, antennas, cameras, microphones, and computers, for 128 community radio and television broadcasters. By the end of 2007, however, 58 broadcasters had not yet received the promised equipment, and 11 of those had still not received it by the end of 2008 (Sistema Nacional de Comunicación Popular, Alternativa y Comunitaria 2009). [498] Given the rapid pace of technological change in the video and computer sectors, much of this equipment was therefore approaching obsolescence by the time it was installed. As will be discussed below, similar delays affected equipment procured by MINCI through the tenth CICCV, signed in 2009.

A significant contributing factor to the inefficiencies of the largely centralized mode of resource provision for the Bolivarian community media sector has been the lack of a coherent policy both across and within state institutions. To a significant extent, this has been caused by the frequent rotation of top officials and the degree to which their personal preferences dictate institutional policies. At the inter-institutional level, one issue has been that MINCI or other organizations have frequently recognized and aided broadcasters that were not licensed by CONATEL (Triviño 2011). More broadly, however, different institutions have often worked toward the same goals but in isolation from each other. CONATEL,

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[498] There is some inconsistency in relation to these numbers. The document from which the above figures were culled provides contradictory information that can be interpreted to mean that either 11 or 12 broadcasters lacked the equipment at the end of 2008: "Program of Technological Endowment, that has benefitted to date 117 community media outlets of the 128 equipment packages contemplated in the Program of the Cuba-Venezuela Agreement.... In 2008 of the 58 media outlets awaiting installation 46 (37 radio and 9 television) have been put on air." Meanwhile, Andrea Salinas (2011), employed in DGMAC in 2011, stated that the 2004 agreement called for 100 community radio and 20 community television broadcasters to be equipped. Rigger Triviño (2011), who served as Director of DGMAC from August 2009 to June 2010, referred to "a bit more than" (*un poco más de*) 100 radio and 20 television packages, but remembered that more than 20 had not been delivered by the time he left the post.; "*Programa de Dotación Tecnológica, que ha beneficiado hasta la fecha a 117 medios comunitarios de los 128 equipos contemplados en el Programa del Convenio Cuba-Venezuela.... En 2008 de los 58 medios por instalar se han puesto al aire 46 (37 radios y 9 televisoras).*"

MINCI, and ViVe, for example, have continually launched funding and training programs that are not integrated and thus tend to repeat similar efforts with new participants, instead of focusing on building the capacity of and providing steady resources for consistent participants.

Standing even further outside of those efforts, however, is the work undertaken by the government's Infocenter Project (*Proyecto Infocentro*), which is run by the Infocenter Foundation (*Fundación Infocentro*) that is housed not in MINCI, but in the Ministry for People's Power of Science, Technology, and Intermediate Industries (*Ministerio del Poder Popular para Ciencia, Tecnología, e Industrias Intermedias* / MCTI). An infocenter is a public site that makes information and communication technologies (ICTs), primarily internet-connected computer terminals, available to the general population at no cost. Infocenters also provide instruction in how to utilize such technologies, and they provide space for the community to meet and participate in a range of other activities. The Infocenter Foundation has also used the infocenters as bases for the creation for what it refers to as Communications Brigades (*Brigadas Comunicacionales*), which are community media collectives that work in a variety of media, from murals to web pages (but not broadcast) (see ¿Qué son las Brigadas comunicacionales?, nd). While Communications Brigades operate across the country, they are rarely articulated with community media broadcasters, are not actively supported by DGMAC, and do not participate consistently in the alternative and community media movement.

Inside MINCI, the lack of policy coherence has principally been caused by the frequent rotation of Ministers and Directors of DGMAC. When Delcy Rodríguez became Minister of Communications and Information in August of 2013, she became the tenth person to hold the post since MINCI was established in 2002, although since Andrés Izarra served during three non-consecutive periods, hers became the thirteenth distinct administration in an eleven year period. New ministers bring a new vision and focus to MINCI policies and they usually install a new Director of DGMAC that they trust to carry out their plans. MINCI's portfolio is quite broad, however, and the role of state media and propaganda campaigns often overshadows the community media sector in terms of priorities. Berriós, who served as Director of

DGMAC in 2004 and 05 under Andrés Izarra, reflected after the fact that "our work isn't recognized and the government doesn't understand that what we do has a profound political meaning" (Urribarrí 2009, 181).[499] In some administrations, however, community media is given greater prominence and leeway for action, meaning that the relationship between the central state institution and the alternative and community media movement can shift dramatically over a short period of time.

Blanca Eekhout, who served from April of 2009 to April of 2010, is widely recognized within the movement as the most amicable of all the Ministers of Communications and Information. She is the only Minister to have come directly from the community media sector, having worked at Catia TVe for over a decade and, as we have seen, she had developed a vision of community media at the national level through her work in establishing ViVe. In MINCI, Eekhout appointed Gabriel Gil, who had entered Catia TVe as a student activist and risen to Director in 2008, as her Vice Minister of Strategy, and she appointed Rigger Triviño, who had also been a student activist and then spent years working in various community media collectives in the state of Carabobo, as Director of DGMAC. Both Gil and Triviño were quite young and eager to change MINCI's culture in relation to community media. Even so, the difficulties of utilizing DGMAC to benefit the movement are manifest in relation to Eekhout's administration. Asked how her personal experiences had shaped her work at MINCI, she replied that "in the period of a year you can't make transformations in order to materialize ... everything that is implied by that vision of 'the community'" (Eekhout 2011).[500]

MINCI has been structured by two principal departments: Strategy and Communications Operations (*Gestión Comunicacional*). Gil explained that prior to Eekhout's administration, DGMAC had been assigned to Operations, but that they decided to place it under Strategy, which was the department that ran the state's publicity campaigns. As a result, DGMAC was able to channel funds to community media outlets in exchange for running public service advertisements and publicity from state institutions.

[499]"*nuestro trabajo no se reconece y el gobierno no entiende que lo que hacemos tiene un profundo sentido político*"
[500]"*en un lapso de un año tu no puedes hacer transformaciones como para que se materializen ... todo lo que implique esa visión de lo comunitario*"

We will discuss the implications of this and other state policies in relation to the question of autonomy further below; for the moment we will focus on publicity as a means of funding. Triviño was certainly aware of the possible implications: "...we didn't like the idea of publicity spots … however, the state had gone so many years without economically supporting community media, that many media outlets were on the floor, economically speaking...".[501] According to Gil, prior to Eekhout's administration MINCI paid for community media outlets to distribute state publicity, but "in a reductionist manner... It was something like 2,000 Bsf per year. With that a media outlet can't function. It was a very small vision." [502] Triviño explained that when he entered DGMAC, there were roughly one million BsF available for some 1,000 recognized (but not necessarily licensed) community media outlets, whereas MINCI had a budget of 24 million BsF for advertising on private commercial media. Since DGMAC was now in the Strategy department, with Gil's support he was able to transfer 30 percent of the money from that budget in order to provide substantial financing for over 150 community media outlets during his tenure (Triviño 2011; Medios alternativos y comunitarios consolidarán... 2010). [503]

When Eekhout was transferred from her post, however, DGMAC was returned to Communications Operations and the flow of publicity to community media outlets was cut off once again. Triviño did not mince words when accounting for this change, declaring that the following two Ministers, "Tania [Díaz] and Mauricio [Rodríguez] don't believe in community media as such. There was no solid work with the people of the community media, there was no financing or support for community media."[504] While many members of the alternative and community media movement openly shared this opinion, the Ministers and their staff might have countered that state publicity was not the appropriate

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[501]"*a nosotros no nos gustaba el tema de la pauta publicitario … sin embargo, el estado tenía tantos años sin apoyar económicamente a los medios comunitarios, que muchos medios estaban en el piso, ecónomicamente hablando…*"

[502]"*...de una manera reduccionista… era algo así como 2,000 BsF al año. Con eso un medio no funciona. Era una visión muy pequeña.*"

[503]Between September and December of 2009, 3,660,000 BsF were distributed to 96 radio stations, 1,640,000 BsF went to 11 television stations, and 992,000 BsF to 48 printed publications (Medios alternativos y comunitarios consolidarán... 2010).

[504]"*Tania y Mauricio no creen en los medios comunitarios como tal. No hubo trabajo sólido con gente de los medios comunitarios, no hubo financiamiento o apoyo a los medios comunitarios.*"

avenue for financing a supposedly autonomous community media sector. Whatever the reason, the sudden shift in policy drastically altered the fortunes of those community media outlets that had enjoyed the funding, meaning that they had to cut back on the salaries that they could offer to their workers, as well as any planned investments in infrastructure, equipment, or programming.

Another example of the debilitating effects of MINCI's inconsistent policies can be found in the fate of the community media financing package included in the tenth CICCV, signed in 2009 during Eekhout's administration.[505] According to Triviño, this package had three initial components: a training program, equipment for 35 community radio and 12 community television stations, and funds to "interconnect" community media broadcasters into a single network. At the time that the agreement was signed, the 12 television stations were led to understand that mobile recording units were to be included in the equipment package. These were meant to alleviate longstanding problems associated with producing community television on location inside communities. Television stations could not afford their own vehicles, much less vehicles suitable to mobile production. Meanwhile, attempts to use taxis or more affordable forms of public transport were inherently risky, as it was not uncommon for valuable cameras to be stolen.

When control of the project passed to the administration of Andrés Izarra and the new Director of DGMAC, Rukleman Soto, the equipment for the television stations was placed "under revision" (Salinas). Officially, no specific reason was given for this decision, but many community television practitioners suspected that Soto did not believe the television stations would make proper use of such expensive equipment. Eduardo, who worked at Canal Z, appraised the situation as follows: "They believe that the community media outlets can't move forward.... They think that it will be lost money, because we're not going to produce. I imagine that those people aren't committed to the project." [506] Méndez, from

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505 The original sponsoring institution for this agreement was ViVe, but at some point control was transferred to MINCI (Kunich 2011).

506 "*Creen que los medios comunitarios no pueden seguir adelante.... Piensan que va a ser plata perdido, porque no vamos a producir. Me imagino que esa gente no son comprometido con el proyecto.*"

TV Petare, concluded that Soto "was applying a fourth republican policy." [507] Manrique, from TV Rubio, suggested that the new administration viewed providing mobility and satellite connections to the community television sector as a potentially "dangerous" loss of control. While the radio equipment was delivered in the second half of 2011, the television equipment was not delivered until a year later and the mobile units were not included.

As discussed so far, the problems related to state institutions can be seen as inefficiencies symptomatic of a highly centralized bureaucracy, but we have also already seen indications that they overlap with the particularly vexing issue of autonomy. The question of autonomy in Venezuela's community media sector is worthy of a separate study; here we will attempt only to sketch the outlines of the issue so that we may take it into consideration as we discuss attempts to reorganize the sector's political economic framework. [508] We will first examine certain facets of CONATEL's application of its licensing authority. Then we will look at the question of funding and its effect on the actions and content of community media broadcasters. Finally, we will initiate a comparison of the notion of autonomy within a liberal and a Gramscian civil society framework.

As the broadcast regulator, CONATEL is responsible for enforcing the provisions of the LOT and the community broadcasting regulations. We have already seen, however, that extreme delays in the licensing (and initial funding) process created a situation in which many community broadcasters (or those that claim to be), especially radio stations, operate or have operated without a license under the pretense of being unable to procure one. Since the Bolivarian government seeks to foster community media, and because delays within CONATEL itself have contributed to the problem, the regulator has generally refrained from penalizing or shutting down unlicensed community broadcasters. This has, of course, incurred harsh criticism from those opposed to the Bolivarian government. As early as September of 2002, during the period of extreme polarization following the attempted coup, El Nacional, one of

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507"*estaba aplicando una política cuarta republicana.*"
508Schiller (2009, 2011) impressively integrates a discussion of autonomy in relation to liberal and socialist
  frameworks with her analyses of Catia TVe.

Venezuela's most respected and widely circulated dailies, ran a story on community media that called CONATEL into question and included the following quote from Marcelino Bisbal, one of Venezuela's most renowned academics in the field of communications:

> Under a regime in which the rule of Law is in fashion, the regulatory entity would be obligated to systematize the use of the spectrum and to instill order, because otherwise we would be in a radio frequency jungle. If a community experience invaded without the corresponding permits, and the governing organization did not intervene, one would suspect the existence of dark intentions along the way. (Velandia 2002)[509]

Similar arguments were levied by the Venezuelan Broadcasting Guild (*Cámara Venezolana de la Industria de la Radiodifusión* / CVIR) (Brett 2003, 9). This critique continued to smolder and flared up again in 2009, when CONATEL demanded that all broadcasting license holders present their credentials and then revoked the licenses of 61 radio and two television stations due to various irregularities (Urbina 2012, 48). Critics of the Chávez administration countered that many community broadcasters were operating without licenses and that CONATEL was operating a double standard.

Critics have also long contended that Bolivarian community media are in breach of article 26 of the regulations which, as noted above, prohibits "partisan or proselytizing messages of any nature". For example, in the period following the coup attempt, "a major grievance of the CVIR, as well as of the political opposition (with which the CVIR is closely allied), is what they perceive to be the radical political profile of the stations. Indeed, in press articles and editorials the community stations are frequently portrayed as ideological mouthpieces of the state" (Brett 2003, 9). Meanwhile, a 2005 article in the El Universal newspaper, Venezuela's leading business daily and arguably its paper of record, referred to community radio stations as "radio-electronic media of the state … employed for propaganda and politIcal proselytism" (cited in Fernandes 2010, 186). Such criticism is also evident within the Venezuelan academy. Bisbal (2007) has classified alternative and community media outlets, with specific reference to members of ANMCLA, as "semi-state" or "semi-public media" (659). Urribarrí (2009), meanwhile,

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509"*Bajo un régimen en el que prive el estado de Derecho, el ente regulador estaría en la obligación de sistematizar el uso del espectro y de imponer orden, porque de lo contrario estaríamos en una jungla radioeléctrica. Si una experiencia comunitaria irrumpiera sin la permisología correspondiente, y el organismo rector no interviniera, se sospecharía de la existencia de intenciones oscuras en el camino.*"

writes of a transition from community to "*gov*unity" media (gob*unitarios*) and notes a "pernicious symbiosis between [community media] and the government" (171).[510]

The argument expressed from this perspective is that government support, whether CONATEL's selective enforcement of the regulations or funding and resource provision from state institutions, is predicated on obedience and supportive content from the recipients of that support. Bisbal, for example, penned a 2004 article in El Nacional that carried the headline "Media Incentivized by the Government Are Not Community Media", and he writes (2007) that:

> the interference of the government is visible … by the insertion of publicity spots, by the purchase of equipment and installations, even the contribution of resources for their 'fortification'. They are media that directly or indirectly are linked to government policies under the political ideology of the current Government. (659)[511]

Urribarrí (2007) echoes this argument when she concedes that some broadcasters must "try to maintain their autonomy and a critical tone", but only with a degree of difficulty that is proportionate to their dependance "on licensing from CONATEL to operate the spectrum frequency and, in almost all cases, also on state financing" (5).[512]

The relationship between state support and autonomy is a complex and thorny issue that lies at the heart of any discussion of governance and sustainability models for community media. Our analysis must begin by recognizing that Bisbal, Urribarrí, and the Venezuelan opposition are wielding a strong version of the traditional liberal notion of autonomy as completely independent of the state. We have seen this argument previously in relation to the neighborhood movement, especially the stance taken by the Escuela. We must also recognize that the Bolivarian community media has been to some degree lying in a bed of its own making since it was complicit, through the advocacy of the RVMC, in instituting the liberal notion of autonomy in the regulations. As we have seen, while organizations such as Radio Fe y Alegría

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[510]"*perniciosa simbiosis entre los [medios comunitarios] y el gobierno*"

[511]"*la ingerencia del gobierno es visible por lo que apuntábamos antes, es decir por la inserción de pautas de publicidad, por la compra de los equipos e instalaciones, hasta el aporte de recursos para su "fortalecimiento". Son medios que directa o indirectamente están articulados a las políticas gubernamentales bajo el ideario político del actual Gobierno.*"

[512]"*tratar de mantener su autonomía y un tono crítico*"; "*de la habilitación de Conatel para operar la frecuencia del espectro y, en casi la totalidad de los casos, también del financiamiento estatal*"

and AMARC have continued to endorse that liberal intent, the RVMC has sought a different framework. In 2011, Manrique remarked that "these regulations have already become obsolete." [513] With specific reference to the prohibition on proselytization in article 26 he added that "I, speaking personally, made a mistake."[514]

It would be an oversimplification to say, however, that community media outlets aligned with the Bolivarian revolution merely seek to echo the messages of the government or the ruling political party, as Bisbal and Urribarrí suggest. This would correspond to a state- or party-led vanguardism reminiscent of the type of minimally participatory communications system instituted in Cuba. Of course, this is precisely what many in the opposition believe to be the intent of Bolivarian community media policy. Pasquali, long one of Venezuela's most prominent supporters of participatory communications, is now one such ardent opponent and has drawn dire implications from the financing provided via the CICCV, noting that "the installation of the so-called 'community' broadcasters ('self-managed media with resources from the state' or in other words *chavistas*) runs on an account of the cuban [enterprise] Copexte [sic]" (Pasquali 2007) and claiming to know "of so-called community broadcasters that even have a political inspector overseeing the purity of the doctrine" (cited in Ávila 2008, 51). [515] This unsubstantiated and seemingly untrue claim is unique in the literature on Bolivarian community media, but indicates the suspicions and intent of those opposed.

The difficulty of discussing autonomy in relation to Bolivarian community media, however, is that two distinct but overlapping and interrelated understandings of autonomy are always at play, and they are generally not so well defined as Pasquali would have it. First, there is the traditional liberal notion of civil society autonomy discussed above. While Manrique may appear somewhat blithe in his disavowal of

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513"este reglamento ya quedó obsoleto"
514"*Yo, en lo personal, me equivoqué.*"
515Copextel is a Cuban state-owned enterprise that offers products and services related to home appliances, commercial computer systems, and telecommunications, among other areas.; "*la instalación de las emisoras mal llamadas 'comunitarias' ('medios autogestionados con recursos del Estado' o sea chavistas) corre por cuenta de la cubana Copexte [sic]*"; "*de mal llamadas emisoras comunitarias que hasta cuentan con un comisario político cubano velando por la pureza de la doctrina*"

article 26, this notion of autonomy continues to inform Bolivarian community media. Eekhout, for example, who can also claim a role in the authorship of the regulations, defended article 26 with the following logic:

> The political is present in everything. Community media could never be at the margin of the political. I think that the intention is that it doesn't become a type of fishing line for a party, but that it truly picks up the political expression of a people. But not that it is conditioned, as if in being community it can be the medium of such and such party.... I don't know if perhaps that becomes a limitation and the people think that they can't talk about politics. Talking about politics is a necessity in community media, it's determinative. But being conditioned by a party could be a limitation.[516]

What Eekhout elides, however, is that Bolivarian community media outlets are dependent on the state, that they have often had a difficult time sustaining integrated community participation, and that they often do articulate government and ruling party positions on important issues. We will examine some specific cases below, but as a ready example we might recall that Chávez broadcast his Sunday television program from Catia TVe while Eekhout was serving as Director of that station in 2002. Such confluence between government and community content, in conjunction with an obvious regulatory and financial dependency on the state, is what leads critics to claim that Bolivarian community media are almost entirely bereft of autonomy.

Community media practitioners, however, sometimes express an alternative understanding of autonomy that corresponds to what we have referred to as a Gramscian civil state. From this perspective, regulatory and financial dependence on the state can be (and, they would argue, is) separated from the conditioning of content and administrative decisions so long as decision-making authority rests with the community itself. In other words, the state can and should provide necessary *resources* (especially to historically impoverished sectors) so long as *governance* remains in the hands of the people.

The outlines of this debate can be drawn from the work of long time participatory

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[516]"*La política está presente en todo. Los medios comunitarios jamás podrían estar al margen de la política. Creo que la intención es que no se convirtiera en una especia de palangre de un partido, sino que de verdad recogiera la expresión política de un pueblo. Pero no que estuviera condicionado, como que si es comunitario puede ser el medio del partido tal.… No sé si a lo mejor eso más bien se convierte en una limitación y la gente cree que no se puede hablar de política. Hablar de política es una necesidad en lo comunitario, es determinante. Pero que esté condicionado por un partido puede ser una limitación.*"

communications practitioner and scholar Alfonso Gumucio, whom Urribarrí (2007) invokes to argue that

Bolivarian community media lack autonomy:

> One could certainly describe as light the evaluation that is made about the performance of a media outlet taking into account only the source of its resources, but as Alfonso Gumucio (2006) notes, official financing has always been a limiting factor for the existence of really autonomous community media, since on occasion, when the State provides support, it also conditions the content and applies a veiled or open censorship. (5)[517]

Elsewhere, however, Gumucio (2003) is careful to note that the mere provision of state resources is not an

insurmountable obstacle to autonomy:

> If there existed any coherence in the policies of the State, community radio stations and community telecenters would receive the same support that public schools, libraries, or national cultural projects receive. This doesn't mean that the State should intervene in the political communication project of community media outlets, but it should support their development as autonomous, decentralized entities.... This indicates that there are other aspects that directly influence institutional sustainability: the property of the media outlet, internal organization, labor relations, mechanisms and transparency of management. [518]

To this brief list we must add the relationship between the media outlet and the community it is meant to

serve, especially in terms of governance and resource allocation. Gumucio's more nuanced notion of

autonomy is ignored by critics of Bolivarian community media, but it reflects the ideals of many

Bolivarian community media practitioners. This vision has proven especially difficult for those

practitioners to articulate, however, for several reasons.

First, because while the structures of both a liberal and a vanguardist, state-directed socialist civil

society are well known and thus easy to invoke, most community media practitioners lack a concrete

vision of, much less a ready vocabulary for, what we have been referring to as a Gramscian civil state.

517"*Ciertamente podría calificarse como ligera la apreciación que se haga acerca del desempeño de un medio tomando en cuenta sólo la fuente de sus recursos, pero como apunta Alfonso Gumucio (2006), el financiamiento oficial ha sido siempre una limitante para la existencia de medios comunitarios realmente autónomos, pues en ocasiones, cuando el Estado proporciona el apoyo, también condiciona los contenidos y ejerce una censura velada o abierta.*"

518"*Si existiera alguna coherencia en las políticas de Estado, las radios y los telecentros comunitarios deberían recibir el mismo apoyo que reciben las escuelas públicas, las bibliotecas o los proyectos culturales nacionales. Esto no significa que el Estado deba intervenir en el proyecto político comunicacional de los medios comunitarios, sino apoyar su desarrollo como entidades autónomas, descentralizadas..... Esto indica que hay otros aspectos que inciden directamente en la sostenibilidad institucional: la propiedad del medio, la organización interna, las relaciones laborales, los mecanismos y la transparencia de la gestión.*"

This is not to say that they are not aware of what they want. Indeed, as we will see below, the alternative and community media movement has progressively developed such a vision. Nonetheless, discussions continue to fall back to the familiar binary of liberal autonomy or state control. Schiller (2009) has cogently recognized this tendency in her study of Catia TVe:

> Although … Catia TV producers challenge the validity of liberal democracy's norms, they also deploy notions of autonomy and freedom that have roots in a liberal democratic tradition, in order both to deflect criticism from their detractors as well as to struggle against the impositions and restraints of state officials. (16)

Indeed, on a superficial level the Gramscian notion of autonomy can appear very similar to the liberal notion of civil society autonomy. Some liberal states, especially in Europe, have even made public funding available to community media outlets under terms meant to preserve autonomy. It is therefore not hard to understand why, in the face of accusations that their efforts are dictated by the government, Bolivarian community media practitioners are more apt to call on the familiar structures and ideals of a liberal state than to point to an ideal of civil society governance that has been instantiated only partially and ephemerally, at best, in human history.

This leads us to a second reason for the difficulty of articulating the vision of community media as part of a Gramscian civil state. Such a state does not yet exist in Venezuela, meaning that community media practitioners are forced into the awkward position of defending an existing system that is not, in fact, what they desire. They are caught between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, their detractors defend a liberal system for which there are ready models and within which the autonomy of community media is clearly valued (if not actually achieved). On the other hand, they seek a Gramscian system that does not exist, that they can not bring into existence on their own, and for the establishment of which they must rely on the concerted efforts of both popular social movements and a hopefully friendly state. Choosing the latter option requires passing through a transitional period that is necessarily replete with contradictions and about which there are no guarantees that it will lead to the desired outcome.

Any realistic appraisal of the current state of affairs in the community media sector thus reveals

certain vulnerabilities. To begin, there is the fact that community media outlets are, to a great degree, dependent on the government. To this must be added evidence which suggests that some government officials do not share a Gramscian perspective on civil society and would prefer to employ community media as a propaganda appendage of the state communications apparatus. Given this state of affairs, community media practitioners are forced to make difficult decisions regarding the manner and degree to which they are willing to support the government in exchange for continued access to resources. They are locked, in other words, into an ongoing and tense negotiation regarding means and ends within the context of multiple social pressures and uncertainties.

The result of this negotiation is that community media outlets sometimes do prioritize their support for the Bolivarian revolution, and sometimes the government that represents that revolution, in ways that would not necessarily accord with decisions taken within a more robust system of community governance. Factors that contribute to this outcome include dependence on state resources, but also the inexistence of and immediate inability to establish an integral system of community governance, as well as sincere support for the Bolivarian government in conjunction with vanguardist predilections on the part of some community media practitioners. Appreciating the context of debates regarding community media autonomy in Venezuela requires that we examine these factors in greater detail.

We have already seen that the financing model foreseen in the regulations was predicated on advertising and private contributions. Few, if any, community media outlets have been able to obtain a comfortable level of sustainability from those sources, however. Among community television broadcasters, TV Rubio has had relatively greater success attracting advertisers. This is perhaps not surprising, given its longer history and familiarity with fundraising outside of a context of state support. Manrique insisted that TV Rubio would have been able to continue operating outside of any state support. The station charged 150 to 300 BsF per month for a 30 second advertisement that ran twice in the morning, once in the afternoon, and eight times in the evening. [519] The majority of advertisers were small

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[519]In 2011, Canal Z was seeking 600 BsF per month to run a publicity spot four to six times per day. This was

businesses, such as hairdressers, mechanics, and local supermarkets. Manrique acknowledged that some

placed advertisements as a form of solidarity, but he insisted that others sought only the publicity value.

He gave a monthly figure of 5,000 to 6,000 BsF as an average advertising revenue.

The purchase of advertising by government institutions, however, drastically altered the financial

situation. Manrique specifically mentioned advertising from MINCI (during Eekhout's administration)

and from the National Electoral Council (*Consejo Nacional Electoral*), which he referred to as

"extraordinary income" because it was not steady, but depended on the publicity campaign cycles of the

institutions. Manrique specified that one such contract provided 40,000 BsF over a period of five or six

months. "They paid late, but they paid," he explained, with the money being used for "investment plans

for the television station", including the purchase of a computer, a video camera, and end of year bonuses

for the station's workers.[520]

Publicity campaigns are only one of the ways that community media outlets receive state funding.

Also common are various types of grants. We have already seen that the funding announced by Chávez in

2003 was distributed by CONATEL as "seed capital" in order to finance the preparation of installations

and initial equipment packages for broadcasting. We have also seen that MINCI has distributed

equipment financed via the CICCV. Additionally, community media outlets often obtain financing by

proposing "projects" to be financed by government entities, whether at the federal, state, or local level.

Frequently these projects are centered on production and/or media literacy workshops offered to the local

community, often with one goal being the attraction and initial training of new volunteers or workers.

These projects generally provide wages for those running the workshops, but government entities

sometimes provide sufficient enough financing to cover the purchase of new equipment to be used during

but also long after the workshop itself. Manrique described the process of constantly proposing projects as

"a systematic job" (*un trabajo sistemático*) that was crucial to meeting an average annual budget of

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several years after the period to which Manrique referred, so inflation would account for some of the difference,
as would Canal Z being located in Maracaibo, Venezuela's second largest city.
[520]"*Pagaban tarde, pero pagaban*"; "*planes de inversión de la televisora*"

150,000 BsF at TV Rubio.

Practitioners evince contradictory attitudes about the effects of their financial dependence on the state. Gil, who has experienced the situation from leadership positions within both Catia TVe and MINCI, defended the autonomy of community media in relation to MINCI advertising by arguing that: "that was under an agreement to transmit some spots in a certain time... that doesn't include any interference in the programming of the media outlets, no interference in the work, nothing." [521] The irony, of course, is that this argument is hardly different than that deployed by commercial journalistic outlets in the type of capitalistic liberal system that the Bolivarian revolution is meant to supersede. Other workers at Catia TVe have been somewhat less evasive:

> Although Catia TV producers did not openly acknowledge that the station's publicity contracts with state ministries shaped their editorial decisions, they expressed concern that their financial reliance on the state could perhaps "someday" inhibit their ability to broadcast *denuncias* [critical reports]. (Schiller 2009, 200)

The issue goes beyond direct interference or censorship, however. For example, Triviño explained that while he served as director of DGMAC, decisions about which outlets would receive contracts for MINCI publicity campaign were based on "the work with the community, who participated in the outlet, and... on strategy, geopolitically speaking", with the latter factor favoring the inclusion of community media outlets in "border states [and] principal cities". [522] In late 2011, meanwhile, producers from two well established community television stations acknowledged that government officials were talking about providing resources, via CONATEL, to some community media outlets, presumably in preparation for the 2012 elections. When asked about this possibility, Jacson Lobo, Coordinator of the Office of Technical Accompaniment (*Gerencia de Acompañamiento Técnico*) in CONATEL's General Office of Universal Service (*Gerencia General de Servicios Universales*) denied that any such plans existed, suggesting instead that the community media producers must have been referring to CONATEL's administration of

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521"*eso era bajo un acuerdo de transmitir unas cuñas en cierto tiempo… que no incluye ningún intromisión a la programación de los medios, ninguna intromisión al trabajo, nada.*"
522"*el trabajo con la comunidad, quienes integraban el medio y... por la estrategia, geopolíticamente hablando*"; "*los estados fronterizos, las ciudades principales*"

the interconnection project that formed part of the CICCV package. Several weeks later, however, the same producers confirmed that would be receiving equipment and funding for staff salaries from CONATEL, and both believed that this decision was directly related to the upcoming elections.

To be clear, not even the community media producers themselves were certain of the reasoning behind CONATEL's offer and both were adamant that no quid pro quo was involved. These stations were already proudly supportive of the Bolivarian process and they believed that the additional resources would only allow them to produce and facilitate more and / or higher quality content of the type that they would have generated in any case. Here we can see the sometimes uncomfortable overlap and contradictions between community media support for the Bolivarian *project* and support for a Bolivarian *government* that represents that project without always manifesting its deepest ideals, especially when the sort term goal of maintaining power through elections is seen as essential to the longer term goal of establishing a more robust system of civil society governance. The bottom line, however, is that some government officials seem to indeed view community media as a component of the state media apparatus, not an autonomous sector of civil society. These officials are invested in community participation only to the extent that it bolsters the "media hegemony" of the Bolivarian revolution which, in some cases at least, is reduced to the propagandistic line of the government.

Community media practitioners recognize that they are in a dependent position, but they also understand that transforming community media into a viable counter-hegemonic media system requires state resources. Moreover, they believe that this is a proper and necessary use of such resources, as Schiller (2009) illustrates:

> Reliance on state funding was a problematic issue for many Catia TV staff and volunteers... Their financial dependency leaves the station vulnerable to critics who questioned their objectivity. Additionally, the station's staff fears that state funding could impede their ability to broadcast *denuncias* (complaints) critical of government figures and state institutions. Catia TV's leaders periodically suggested the possibility of trying to create financial independence from state institutions by raising money among their neighbors and viewers. Ricardo, Catia TV's director, and Hector, an assistant-director, learned about the model of the listener-funded Pacifica Radio network in the U.S. when the Berkeley Art Museum in California invited them to exhibit their work in 2006. Many

Catia TV producers, however, responded with outrage that the station might try to raise money among the poor in the name of autonomy. Not only did the idea strike many staff and volunteers as wildly impractical, they also expressed their beliefs that oil revenues are the population's national patrimony and that the government should distribute these state resources to community organizations. Many Catia TV producers see the station's receipt of state funds as an integral part of creating a state that serves the popular classes. (153)

Rather than identify a definitive relationship between community media practitioners and the state, we must recognize that the latter are in a bind. They are dependent on resources allocated by a state that continues to be primarily structured along the lines of a liberal bureaucracy even as it is undergoing a transformative process that oscillates between the centralized and hierarchical tendencies of twentieth century socialist states and the participatory governance of a Gramscian civil state. Schiller is also incisive on this point:

How Catia TV producers ... understand the state as an aspect of their everyday life constantly shifts. They exhibit multiple approaches to the state simultaneously. There is no definitive embrace either of the state as something apart (not them) or themselves as something they form part of with the responsibility to fix things and bring about new possibilities. (360)

Community media outlets must simultaneously do business with, resist, and embrace these various modalities of the Bolivarian state.

Juggling these disparate perspectives can be confusing and result in loss opportunities, as is well illustrated by Gil's strategic justification for placing the DGMAC under the control of MINCI's Strategy department while he served as Vice Minister in Eekhout's administration. Ironically, although one effect was to make more publicity campaign funding available as a means toward the immediate fortification of the sector, he expressed a deeper desire to shift the role of community media from a top-down channel for propaganda toward a bottom-up channel for popular sentiment:

Community media was on the side of operations. Because the vision that they have – I say 'that they have' because they have it again – is that 'I utilize community media to disseminate messages.' … A form of disseminating messages, like another tool, like another megaphone.... A vertical conception of communication. We changed community media to Strategy with the intention that it be reversed.... They [community media] are on the ground and allow us to have information. We can utilize all that information to teach strategy and get potential.... Because communicational strategy – And we didn't resolve that either, no? It's a task that was left pending. – has been fundamentally reactive.... If the

opposition says something, I respond to it. But it has never been offensive.... Very few times has it been offensive. And part of that is because we don't know our potential, our people, our movement, the capacities. Therefore, that was the idea of having community media on this side of the spectrum, on the side of Strategy. Strategy is the side that picks up information and makes a plan, and then they make it operational through the public media [and other channels].... And besides we are of the conception that … communication goes beyond mediated communication.[523]

In this statement we can see an educated resistance to the idea of top-down communication but, at least in his role as a Vice Minister of Communications and Information, his alternative vision is limited to merely flipping the direction of verticality. In this vision, community media are still cast as a tool of the state. That state arguably incorporates greater participation, but only in the form of a more robust feedback channel. As such, decision-making concerning the state's communications strategy would remain restricted to appointed officials and the framework for governance hardly shifts at all.

In other moments, however, community media practitioners exhibit considerable clarity regarding their vision for the future, as illustrated by the following remarks from an Assistant Director of Catia TVe:

One understands that in other countries, or even here before the revolutionary process, to be dependent on the state was bad, to be connected to the state was bad. Now at Catia TV we talk about taking the state. More than that, we are in the process of taking power and destroying the state to construct a popular one. To be independent of a state that is a revolutionary state is a right wing position; it's a reactionary position, no? (Schiller 2009, 136)

We have seen that ANMCLA has been an early and a particularly vociferous proponent of this ethos. As the community media sector expanded and struggled to establish itself under the regulations and in conjunction with the Chávez administration, common practical difficulties pointed with greater

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[523]"*Los medios comunitarios estaban al lado de la operatividad, porque la visión que se tiene - digo que se tiene porque se tiene otra vez - es que 'Yo utilizo los medios comuntarios para difundir mensajes.' … Una forma de difundir mensajes, como una herramienta más, como un megáfono más…. Una concepción de la comunicación verticalista. Nosotros cambiamos a estrategia los medios comunitarios con la intención de que fuera al revés…. Están en el terreno y nos permita a nosotros tener información. Nosotros podemos utilizar toda esa información para enseñar estrategia y conseguir potencial…. Porque la estrategia comunicacional - Y eso tampoco lo resolvimos, no? Es una tarea que quedó pendiente. - ha sido fundalmentamente reactiva… Si la oposición dice algo, yo le respondo. Pero nunca ha sido ofensiva…. Muy pocas veces ha sido ofensiva. Y parte de eso es porque no conocemos tampoco nuestra potencial, nuestra gente, nuestro movimiento, las capacidades. Entonces, ese era la idea de tener los medios comunitarios de este lado del espectro, del lado de la estrategia. Estrategia es la que recoge información y hace un plan, y despues lo operatizen por los medios públicos [y otros canales]…. Y además nosotros somos de la concepción de que… la comunicación va más allá que la comunicación mediatizada.*"

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consistency toward a more refined and increasingly shared vision of autonomy that does not require independence from the state, as the liberal model of civil society would have it, but the conjunction of state resources with civil governance, as in a Gramscian civil state. As we will discuss below, this vision has motivated calls for a restructuration of the legal and political-economic framework for Bolivarian community media. Before turning to that discussion, however, we must conclude our review of the obstacles faced by the sector under the regulations with a look at difficulties related to the internal organization of individual media outlets, as well as their relationships with the communities they serve.

Dependency on government allocated resources is a primary factor in the internal difficulties of community media organizations, especially television broadcasters. Not all funding comes from the government, of course. As we saw with TV Rubio, some outlets have been able to attract significant advertising revenue. Some receive private contributions, whether in cash or in-kind, from workers or supportive community members; several television stations, for example, operate on land or in buildings ceded in this manner. Some partner with outside organizations or governments; just before the RVMC split with AMARC in 2007, for example, it had entered into an agreement that would have brought financing for a series of projects. Nonetheless, for many outlets, the government is the primary source of resources. As we have seen, however, funding and equipment tend to arrive in a boom and bust cycle, with the timing dependent on multiple factors including the policies of the current Minister of Communications and Information, the calendar of government publicity campaigns (including elections), institutional funding cycles and interpersonal relationships with government officials (especially in relation to one-off "projects"), and membership in regional or national associations (like ANMCLA and the RVMC). The result of this inconsistent allocation of resources is that community media outlets are unable to maintain a constant rhythm of activity, both in terms of training new producers and producing content. Nor are they able to count on a consistent budget for projecting future investments and planning for growth.

Teletambores offers a clear example of the irregular rhythm of funding for community television

stations. As noted above, the collective found its first homes in borrowed houses, with the second and more permanent belonging to a founding member. That location endured until mid-2004, when a storm once again toppled the antenna. This setback motivated the collective to find a site of their own. They were first able to procure a 750 m^2 piece of land in commodatum (a limited duration loan free of cost) from the Housing Institute of Aragua (*Instituto de la Vivienda de Aragua*). Funding for the construction of the installations was acquired from CONATEL via a project proposal. Construction of an office space, a small kitchen, a control room, and a recording studio / activity room began in September of 2005 and was completed in March of 2006.

Meanwhile, in 2004 Deronne had acquired funding from the European Union (EU) for an elaborate project called International Neighborhood News (*Noticiero Internacional de Barrios* / NIB). The EU provided 70 percent of the funds, which covered salaries, video equipment, supplies, and living expenses for the production of a series of documentaries. Meanwhile, each participating country was required to appoint a partner institution that would cover the remaining 30 percent. [524] CONATEL, as Venezuela's partner institution, directed its contribution toward the construction of a main site for NIB activities on the grounds of Teletambores. The grant also provided additional production equipment, including an editing station, camera, and accessories. Although NIB participants, including Teletambores, began producing documentaries as early as 2004 and the EU financing lasted only until November of 2006, CONATEL did not deliver the equipment until January of 2008 and construction did not commence until that July. CONATEL funding covered materials only, however, meaning that members of Teletambores and other volunteers provided the labor for the construction of a multi-post editing room, a

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524The NIB was conceived and proposed by Deronne and a Belgian colleague. Participating countries included France, Spain (working in Bolivia), Colombia, Venezuela, and Brazil. In Venezuela, resources from the project were allocated to Teletambores, Catia TVe, and Camunare Rojo TV (a rural broadcaster that has was established as the result of a workshop given by Deronne in 2003 and which has been especially focused on agricultural issues [Rodner 2008, 37; Durán 2011]). The goal of the project was to create documentaries on single themes, such as water or illiteracy. Each participating collective would contribute a short video piece that engaged the theme in relation to its community or region. For each theme, the short pieces were then edited into a completed work (Flores 2011). At least 18 documentaries were produced through the work of the NIB. (Fundación Teletambores, nd)

meeting room, a dormitory for accommodating overnight guests at workshops and other activities, and an outdoor multi-use space (Fundación Teletambores, nd). Construction on the new installations was finally completed in 2009 (Flores).

For several years, NIB funding covered the "salaries", which Flores categorized deprecatingly as "an economic contribution" (*un aporte económico*). of four of the six principal members of Teletambores. Another such salary was acquired through projects funded by CONAC. [525] The sixth member, Flores himself, did not receive a salary from Teletambores, but continued to work at the metropolitan wholesale market (*mercado mayorista metropolitano*). During that period, Deronne coordinated the visit of a mayor from France, which helped Teletambores establish a relationship with the mayor of their own municipality, Francisco Linares Alcántara, that led to financing for various projects, including the production of short videos on the history of the community. In 2007, however, the mayor's political party, Podemos, openly broke with Chávéz and his newly created umbrella party, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (*Partido Socialista Unido de Venezuela* / PSUV). Teletambores was thus linked to Podemos in the public eye and, as Flores explained, "there were also people, … enemies of the television station … that have spread the idea that we belong to Podemos." [526] As a result, and even though Teletambores actively supports the Bolivarian revolution, they were no longer able to procure funding from the local government after the PSUV won the mayorship in the 2008 municipal elections.

In the years following the end of EU funding for the NIB project and the loss of support from the mayor's office, salaries were only consistently available while Eekhout was Minister of Communications and Information and publicity income was steady. Teletambores obtained funding from Venezuela's Grand Marshal of Ayacucho Fund (*Fundación Gran Mariscal de Ayacucho* / Fundayacucho), which supports higher education, for a series of workshops for students of the new Bolivarian University of Venezuela (*Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela* / UBV), as well as through the National Autonomous Center for

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[525]CONAC was displaced by the creation of the Ministry of Culture in 2005 and formally liquidated in 2008.
[526]"*también ha habido gente, … enemigos de la televisora … que han metido la cizaña de que nosotros somos de Podemos*"

Cinematography (*Centro Nacional Autónomo de Cinematografía* / CENAC) for community audiovisual workshops. According to Flores, however:

> the projects that are put in [submitted], are put in for training and to buy equipment, here there are no ... sustainable projects, for a year, for example. On the part of the government, there aren't any, because they don't want [to give the impression that] the television station has passed to the state. So, well, for salaries there's nothing. [527]

In this quote we find another facet of the shifting and ambiguous understandings of the state held by community media practitioners, as Flores finds himself lamenting government efforts to preserve the autonomy of his own collective. When pressed, he admitted that the preservation of autonomy was indeed positive, but he concluded this admission by noting that "neither do they give you the propaganda [contracts] that can maintain you."[528]

Flores was interviewed in mid-2011 and, given the context, was perhaps predisposed to articulate this perspective. Since MINCI had shifted to a new administration and ceased providing steady publicity contracts, Teletambores had fallen on hard times. The lack of funding had made it extremely difficult to maintain an active network of community producers. Meanwhile, the core group of producers that had always maintained the station was suffering from infighting and fatigue, even as tension with community members was manifesting. As Flores, summarized:

> In the television station there's a crisis of participation. Many people have had to assume other commitments. The television station hasn't found itself to be sustainable … independent of the publicity of the state. We have to look for another form of subsisting without the help of the state. There are few [people] that are coming... [529]

Briceño, for example, had been with the collective since his teenage years but had recently resigned the presidency of the foundation, ceased working with the station, and taken a job with the government of the

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527"*los proyectos que se meten [se proponen], se meten para formación y para comprar equipos, aquí no hay proyectos… sustentables, por un año por ejemplo…. Por parte del gobierno no lo hay, porque ellos no quieren [dar la impresión de que] la televisora ha pasado al estado. Entonces, bueno, para salarios no hay.*"
528"tampoco te dan [los contratos de] propaganda que te puede mantener"
529"*En la televisora hay una crisis de participación. Mucha gente ha tenido que asumir otros compromisos. La televisora no se ha encontrado ser sustentable … independiente de la publicidad del estado, los aportes que da el estado. Tenemos que buscar otra forma de subsistirse sin la ayuda del estado. Hay pocos que estamos viniendo….*"

neighboring municipality where he lived.[530]

At the beginning of the year, the station's server ceased operating, so they had been limited to transmitting material from DVDs. They were not producing new content and, since they were operating from a limited library of recorded material, programming was frequently repeated. Since community media outlets do not have the funds to repair electronic equipment, the state has provided licensed broadcasters with access to maintenance services via Transmission Networks of Venezuela (*Red de Transmisiones de Venezuela, C.A.* / Red TV), a state-owned enterprise created in 2005 to service state-owned media networks. Red TV had taken the server in for repair, but it had come back to Teletambores in June "even more damaged".[531]

Flores believed that the lack of steady resources had much to do with the problems facing Teletambores, which is why he lamented the loss of the steady publicity contracts from MINCI. At the same time, however, he expressed optimism about the station finding other sources of funding, but he felt that his colleagues were not enthusiastic about this idea. Once again displaying the shifting perception of the state, Flores switched to the opposite side of the question of autonomy when he remarked that "there are people that are in the television station that don't believe that we can be autonomous.... There are some that believe that we have to depend on the, as they say, on the teat of the state." This attitude manifested "in apathy. When [we say] 'Let's do a project." [they say] 'No, why? For what?'"[532] Here the emphasis is on economic, not political, autonomy. After years of arming one-off projects that have not brought financial security, several of the small core of diehard Teletambores workers have resigned themselves to the idea that a whole new system is necessary.

The history of financing at Teletambores is unique but exemplary. It is unique, and arguably

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530Briceño's rational was only partially related to economic concerns. Tensions within the television station and with community members also seemed to play a role.

531Several community television producers complained about delays and quality of service in relation to Red TV, whereas other reported relatively timely service and good results.; "*más dañado todavía*"

532"hay gente que está en la televisora que no cree que nosotros podemos ser autonomos.... Hay algunos que creen que tenemos que depender de la, como se dice, de la teta del estado."; "en la apatía. Cuando [decimos] 'Vamos a hacer un proyecto.' [dicen] 'No, porqué? Para qué?"

privileged, because of the participation of Deronne, whose background, contacts with sympathetic Europeans, and elevation to a powerful position in ViVe have facilitated funding and resources that would have been much more difficult for other television broadcasters to acquire. This privilege, however, only serves to reinforce the reality of the general scenario that community television broadcasters have not found financial sustainability sufficient to maintaining rigid autonomy, as well as planning for and investing in future operations. On the whole, community television broadcasters have operated day to day and hand to mouth.

As with Teletambores, most community television stations are the result of the extraordinary dedication and sacrifice of a small group of activists. In some cases this group is to a greater or lesser degree held together by family ties.[533] Often this core group rotates the official positions of the community foundation, although members are usually adamant that these positions are for legal purposes only and that decisions are made collectively. With some exceptions, such as Catia TVe, there is an informality to organizational structure and decision-making that results from the tight knit bonds and small size of the core group.[534] Decisions deemed to be of especial significance are often made in larger assemblies that include participants and community members outside of the core group. Stations have established rules for determining who gets a voice and/or a vote in these assemblies. In Canal Z, for example, participants must be active in the station for three years before earning the right to vote in an assembly (Manuel Hernández 2011). In Teletambores, "active" members, defined as those who have participated for two years, have the right to vote, whereas "associate" members have only the right to speak, but not vote, in assemblies (Flores 2011).

533In Teletambores, one core member was Briceño's cousin. The core members of Canal Z included three siblings from one family (whose father hosted a regular show), as well as two sisters from another family, one of whom was married to another core member. The founders of Camunare Rojo TV are the Durán sisters (Rodner 2008, Durán 2011). Montaña TV is sustained by the resources and labor of the Chacón family (primarily the father, mother, and two of the three sons). Perijá TV (Zulia) was located in the residence and depended on the labor of a single family.

534In 2004, when Catia TVe began broadcasting from its new headquarters, "[t]he station was divided into separate departments of Production, Transmission, and Community Outreach, Administration, Volunteer Production, Equipment, and Security. A second wave of participants, who had became involved in the project over the previous few years, was hired to fill these departments" (Schiller 2009, 94).

The informality of organization and decision-making affects community television groups in ways both positive and negative. On the positive side, the fluidity of such organizations provides the flexibility necessary for stations to quickly adapt to changing circumstances or unexpected contingencies. It can also enable internal democracy, as the lack of a rigid hierarchy can allow participants to express their views within an open process of deliberation. As Fernandes (2010) points out, however:

> ...at times the lack of a formalized structure can itself lead to the emergence of an informal de facto leadership. The absence of explicit and formally structured work teams may encourage the emergence of informal cliques and concentrate power in a few leaders of the organization. (184)

Fernandes (*ibid*., 279 n17) and Schiller (2009, 252 - 296), looking at Caracas community radio stations and Catia TVe, respectively, found this concentration of power expressed in gender imbalances. This is not uniformly the case, as Canal Z has relied on strong female leadership, but decision-making authority is frequently invested in the core group based on the longevity of their service, thus creating the potential for multiple forms of imbalance.

When funding for "salaries" is available, it is meager and generally divided according to a shared recognition of committed labor among members of the core group. In most cases, there are no contracts and core members are aware that there may be no funds available during certain periods. [535] Inarguably, core members do not remain committed to the stations for monetary gain. In this context, new participants, even those who commit wholeheartedly to the project and offer consistent labor, will generally not receive any type of financial compensation for some time. One volunteer at Canal Z, for example, reported working regularly for eight months before receiving what he referred to as an "incentive". The result of this informal organization and limited revenue is that paths of entry into the core group are not clearly established nor well incentivized beyond ideological commitment.

Attracting and retaining committed participants becomes difficult, especially in impoverished communities. There are two particularly common avenues for attempting to do so. The first is by

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[535]Catia TVe is again an exception. Schiller (2009) reports that "staff members earned minimum wage and receive food stamps (*cesta tickets*) that totaled about $400 monthly. As Director, Ricardo received a higher salary of around $500 a month" (94, n36).

coordinating internships with universities. The second is by offering audiovisual production workshops. A common lament among core members is that both interns and workshop participants view their time at the community station as a mere stepping stone toward finding paid work in the commercial sector or at state broadcasters.[536] Estafanía Morao, of Tarmas TV, explained that, "we've trained many compatriots in the area of audiovisual production and they almost always end up migrating to institutions or businesses that offer them better working conditions" (Milano 2008b).[537] Méndez, of TV Petare, expressed the same idea with greater concision: "The voluntary worker has an expiration date."[538] Catia TVe has gone so far as to screen applicants for its workshops and reject those "who they suspect want to take the workshop primarily to gain skills that might improve their chance for employment", although many sincere activists from impoverished areas are simultaneously interested in expanding their employment opportunities (Schiller 2009, 115). Given the difficulty of retaining new workers, core members are often burdened with a greater set of responsibilities than they can accomplish. This creates something of a vicious cycle in which core members struggle to maintain the day to day operation of the station even as they recognize that they are not attending to the planning, investment, and growth (in terms of revenue, personnel, production, and community engagement) that are necessary to overcome the very obstacles that make day to day operation so difficult.

As we saw with Teletambores, one of the significant difficulties that comes with a limited staff working with limited resources is the ability to continue producing new, quality content. Of course, the framework established in the regulations is meant to ensure that content production is primarily carried out by community members, not the station staff itself. Further below we will look more closely at how that has played out in relation to community television, but for now it is sufficient to reiterate that the

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536This is not unique to Venezuela nor to contemporary media markets. Berrigan (1981) noted that although the Audiovisual Production Center for Training (*Centro de Producción Audiovisual para la Capacitación* / CEPAC) had trained 94 persons, "[a]t present, there are thirty extension personnel working full-time with CEPAC on production and application. Some of those trained have moved to better job offers, or been absorbed by the broadcast industries. Others do not do any audiovisual work" (33).

537"hemos capacitado a muchos compatriotas en el área de producción audiovisual y casi siempre terminan emigrando a instituciones o empresas que les ofrecen mejores condiciones laborales"

538"[e]l voluntariado tiene fecha de vencimiento."

customary obstacles to attracting community participation are only exacerbated by the constraints of limited resources. This is certainly not to say that community producers are nonexistent, but stations seem to have proven incapable of covering the percentages specified in the regulations without frequently rebroadcasting programs. One common effect of producing television with limited resources (whether or not the producers are station staff or community producers) is that programs tend to mimic commercial models for live studio content; usually this involves one or two moderators interacting with one or more guests. Rodner (2008), for example, describes her visit to Lara TV as follows:

> On the day I arrived at Lara Tve, I got to sit in on their production meeting. There were all sorts of people, ranging from youngsters to people their fifties, and of different work, educational, economic and religious backgrounds. They must prepare their programs before coming to the studio: organize props, guest speakers and video footage. All the programs I saw had similar formats but very different themes, varying according to the interest and background of the producers. The format is "in studio", the producer is usually also the moderator, and sits facing the cameras, talking about the subject matter or event. Producers or hosts sometimes have a guest who may or may not be an expert on some theme, and they chat to the audience at home. (43-4)

In Canal Z, producers attempted to intercut pre-recorded clips with the live talk. For example, a program called "Cayapa Comunicacional", which was produced and hosted by the station's staff, featured guests discussing current topics of interest to the community but also regularly included "man-on-the-street" interview segments presenting community members' views on those topics.[539] Nonetheless, a programming line-up which relies heavily on a rotation of talk shows with non-professional moderators and often hastily scheduled local guests would has a difficult time attracting an audience that has become habituated to a diversity of commercial offerings with much higher production values.

Within the studio format, stations make an earnest attempt to present an array of programs that address diverse populations within the community. Montaña TV (Tachira) has been especially focused on this goal (Chacón 2011). In 2011, the studio programs on its schedule included: "Electrónica para Niños" (Electronics for Children), a science-themed Saturday morning show for children; "Entropando", hosted

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[539] *Cayapa*, a word particular to Venezuela, is defined by the Royal Spanish Academy as a "Group of persons that, jointly, carry out an unpaid task" (*Grupo de personas que, conjuntamente, realizan un trabajo no remunerado*). A more literal translation of the program's title might be "Communicational Workgroup". More figuratively, "Communicational Barn Raising" might express the idea.

by a group of university students who seek to "deconstruct" celebrity news; "Opinión Ciudadana" (Citizen Opinion), hosted by a lawyer who offers advice to callers; "Harmonia Vital" (Vital Harmony), hosted by a respected doctor who gives advice on using natural medecine; "Cocina Popular – Sazón a Pueblo" (Popular Kitchen – the People's Taste), highlighting popular cooking techniques; "Unidos para Educar" (United to Educate), hosted by a teacher who addresses educational issues; "Rompiendo Barreras" (Breaking Barriers), hosted by two sisters with disabilities who discuss issues pertaining to people with disabilities; "Historia Local" (Local History); and "Conversando con Luis" (Chatting with Luis), an opinion program on current issues that took live callers.

As of May, however, few of those shows were being produced regularly. "Electrónica para Niños" had had a steady run as a live show in 2006-7, but its host had moved on to other pursuits when the local government withdrew its sponsorship and now only delivered taped programs irregularly; "Entropando" had ceased production when the university semester began and the producers became busy, but they were hoping to resume production during the upcoming vacation; "Opinión Ciudadano" was not in production as the producers were "reorienting"; "Harmonia Vital" was no longer in production; "Cocina Popular – Sazón a Pueblo" required funding for ingredients and had ceased production when MINCI stopped offering publicity contracts; "Unidos para Educar" aired only sporadically, as the host had recently changed jobs and ceased to arrive regularly; "Rompiendo Barreras" was suspended because the hosts had been dealing with sickness due to recent heavy rains. Meanhwile, "Historia Local" and "Conversando con Luis" were relatively new programs. The former was hosted by a core member of the station (the mother of the central family) and had only produced four episodes, while the latter was co-hosted by a core member (the father) and had only been on the air since February. [540]

Like other stations, Montaña TV made up for these difficulties by rebroadcasting old programs

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[540]In addition to these studio programs, Montaña TV also produced "Resumen de Noticiero Comunitario" (Recap of Community News), which featured an average of ten news segments per week, all shot in the street and "Educación Bicentenaria" (Biscentennial Education), a basic educational program for children shot in a local school. These were also suspended. The former had been produced by two core members, one of whom had ceased working after entering university and the other of whom had shifted to other duties in the station. The latter had been suspended when the station's loanable camera broke.

and by supplementing its schedule with material produced by state institutions. Some community television stations also show documentaries, animation, and films produced abroad. At some stations, the lack of programming and demands on the limited staff can also result in an informality regarding the broadcast schedule, meaning that programs do not always begin at regular intervals and that the schedule may vary from one day to the next.

Additionally, the most regular programs tend to be produced by core members or community producers whose consistency is motivated by a commitment to the ideological project of the Bolivarian revolution. Thus, while many stations are truly open to and make a sincere effort to present a diversity of themes, much of the content is either directly or indirectly related to the Bolivarian revolution and, frequently, government initiatives. This, of course, enhances the perception that community television in Venezuela is dependent on and thus controlled by the state, as discussed above. Indeed, some programs can take on the tint of propaganda. One edition of "Cayapa Comunicacional", for example, took place after heavy rains had left many impoverished families living on the outskirts of Maracaibo homeless. The guests were officials from the Ministry of Housing (*Ministerio de Vivienda*) who promoted the government's efforts to construct new homes for the displaced families. The program had not actually begun, however, so the time was spent discussing promises of how many homes were going to be built, why this was so necessary, and what the benefits would be. This was intercut with clips of residents expressing how grateful they were to the government.[541]

At the same time, community television producers understand the Bolivarian project to encompass a popular process that goes far beyond the government and they readily recognize (as their own experiences with CONATEL and MINCI have demonstrated) that the government does not always

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[541]Schiller (2009) offers a similar example in relation to Catia TVe: "The program that Jhonny, a volunteer, was editing just a few computers down from Evencio was far more representative of the kinds of material Catia TV volunteers most often produce. Jhonny's video production featured the state oil company's efforts to rebuild a woman's house after a recent heavy rainfall had destroyed it. Jhonny was not from the woman's neighborhood. Instead, the cooperative of engineers employed by PDVSA contacted Jhonny, asked him to "cover the news." His five minute program included an emotional expression of gratitude addressed to Chávez personally from the woman whose house was being rebuilt. The woman was positioned as a victim of previous government's neglect and as a passive and thankful beneficiary of the current government's benevolence." (127-8)

act in the best interests of the people. Most core members will recount with pride that they have produced segments and programs that have been heavily critical of the government. Canal Z, for example, produced a series of news segments documenting environmental destruction and social discord within indigenous communities as a result of natural resource extraction carried out by state enterprises despite prohibitions from Chávez himself. TV Petare, meanwhile, had been critical enough of the local Bolivarian mayor that he had publicly denounced the stations as "esqualidos" (squalid ones), an epithet used by *chavistas* to refer to members of the opposition (Méndez 2011).

We have seen that limited resources play a significant role in the difficulties of attracting and maintaining community television producers. To understand the relationship more clearly, we must examine the basic model for training and coordinating the work of those producers. This model seems to have originated at Catia TVe, which has promoted the use of Independent Audiovisual Community Production Teams (*Equipos Comunitarios de Producción Audiovisual Independiente* / ECPAIs). These teams are meant to be comprised of four to seven volunteers that "[c]arry out community work of any type in their community, either by belonging to some grassroots social group or as a collaborator" (Catia TVe, nd B).[542] In Catia TVe, prospective members of the ECPAI must go through an interview with a member of the Community Office (*Dirección Comunitaria*) in order to be approved for participation in one of their free workshops. Successful completion of the workshop establishes the ECPAI as a community producer and enables it to borrow recording equipment and use the station's post-production facilities. Other community television stations have applied this same model. The group that took over the Canal Z project in 2002, for example, began its work with the station as an ECPAI (even before it was on the air).

On one level, ECPAIs were meant to respond to the regulations' requirement that community producers account for at least 55 percent of each day's content, but they were also meant to ensure that the

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542"*[r]ealizar trabajo comunitario de cualquier tipo en su comunidad, ya sea perteneciendo a algún grupo social de base o como colaborador*"

voices of the "organized community" were channeled through the station. As a notice posted at Catia TVe explained, ECPAIs favor not only "the organized distribution of work" but also:

> ...the conscientious discussion of material to produce … because the construction of the contents to disseminate are [sic] carried out directly by the community team, and don't obey an 'editorial line', as happens in the private media, where the owner of the medium (and the mercantile interests that (s)he obeys) is who decides what content to broadcast. (Catia TVe, nd A)[543]

As defined by Catia TVe, ECPAIs were meant to actualize a community not merely as those living within a particular geographic location, but as people working together as a civil society to shape outcomes related to shared issues. The ECPAI:

> "[i]s Community because the group of persons come from a specific sector with common interests and characteristics where they necessarily have socio-community relations based on fortifying the organization of their surroundings. When we say community we are not referring only to *barrios*, but also to student, worker, professional, artistic, athletic, and other communities." (*ibid.*)[544]

Here we can see an attempt to expand on the understanding of community established by the regulations and move further toward the construction of an articulated, interdependent civil society that would provide the basis for a Gramscian civil state. To the extent that community media outlets serve to foster and channel the self-representation of popular organizations, they play a crucial role in the articulation of those organizations with one another and with the wider community. By mediating and representing the role that self-organization can play within a community, community media demonstrate and thus enhance the possibilities for civil society governance. In other words, community media outlets can best function as a central node within an articulated, or networked, popular civil society to the extent that other nodes within that network (the civil society organizations themselves) participate in the production of texts that engage the issues with which they are primarily concerned.

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[543]"*la distribución organizada del trabajo*"; "*...la discusión conciente del material a producir … porque la construcción de los contenidos a difundir son realizados directamente por el equipo comunitario, y no obedecen a una 'linea editorial', como pasa en los medios privados, en donde el dueño del medio (y los intereses mercantiles a los que obedece) es quien decide sobre los contenidos a emitir*"

[544]"*[e]s Comunitario porque el grupo de personas provienen de un sector específico con intereses y características comunes en donde tienen necesariamente relaciones socio-comunitarias en función de fortalecer la organización de su entorno. Cuando decimos comunidad no nos referimos solo a los barrios, sino también a comunidades estudiantiles, obreras, profesionales, arísticas, deportivas, etc.*"

There is no reason, of course, why geographically identified ECPAIs can not also work to articulate civil society organizations. What's more, ECPAIs that are not associated with a particular organization may be more free to address a wider range of issues, take on more artistic projects, or present more critical points of view. Nonetheless, they may have a more difficult time representing the capacities and concerns of civil society organizations than ECPAIs functioning within those same organizations. There is clearly space for both types of production teams within a robust, counter-hegemonic system of community media. Indeed, not all of the ECPAIs trained by Catia TVe have formed within civil society organizations. Schiller (2009), for example, describes a workshop that featured one group of workers from a Mission, one group of communications students (enrolled through a Mission), and two groups identified by their neighborhood of residence (115-6). The two other Catia TVe ECPAIs that she mentions were also identified by geography, not organizational affiliation (126, 128). Meanwhile, stations like Teletambores and Canal Z have focused more exclusively on geographically identified ECPAIs.

The greatest weakness of the ECPAI system has been the extreme difficulty of maintaining a significant number of consistently functioning teams. This is partially caused by a limited availability of resources, as discussed above. ECPAIs must have ready access to cameras and other recording equipment, as well as functioning post-production facilities. We have already seen that the stations themselves have had difficulties obtaining and maintaining equipment for their internal use; the problems are only exacerbated when they attempt to serve multiple production teams. Some core members in Teletambores, for example, were reluctant to lend their cameras for fear that they would be broken or stolen. Learning to efficiently and effectively edit on a digital workstation, meanwhile, requires more than can be delivered in one or even several workshops. For volunteers with little or no knowledge of computers and/or English, the experience can be overwhelmingly frustrating. As Schiller points out, "[a]fter a period of time away, it was difficult for people to begin participating again because the English-only editing program requires frequent practice to maintain fluidity" (128).

Other obstacles to the maintenance of active ECPAIs are the limited interest and time of their

members. Many ECPAIs are formed while members are enthusiastic about learning new creative skills in an exciting medium. Some members will then lose interest after the initial workshop, in large part due to the realization that competent video production requires a considerable amount of labor. Meanwhile, many of those that would otherwise be inclined to exert that labor find themselves unable to do so as a result of work, family, or other obligations. Schiller offers a concise summary of a common process:

> … Evencio had enrolled in a free video production workshop offered at the station. Together with six people from his neighborhood, he formed an [ECPAI].... As with most volunteer groups at Catia TV, a few months after the workshop, Evencio's team dispersed. They were too busy to participate or had lost interest. (126)

Given that Catia TVe is the most resource rich community television station in Venezuela, it is not hard to understand why many stations across the country faced the same problem. Flores, of Teletambores, observed that in relation to the ECPAIs they had trained:

> Reality overcomes fiction, as they say.... Either they dissolve under their own pressure, or they leave there, they go to a state television station.... That type of organization, volunteer like that, is difficult. Audiovisual [production], you have to give it time. It's not like in radio. In radio one hour is an actual hour. In a television station, half an hour of [content] requires doing a week of work. It takes up a lot of the ECPAI's [time], then.... and the cost of a television station is rather expensive. You have to have cameras... to buy tape... We sometimes provide it, but it's not enough for [maintaining consistent production].

> In July of 2011, Jesús Suárez, the Director of Catia TVe, reported that the station had trained

some 120 ECPAIs, but that only 5 or 6 were currently active. He estimated that they were only able to fill around 30 percent of the daily broadcasting schedule with community produced content. Referring to the quota established by the regulations, he explained that:

> ...you would have to have at least 60 production teams … [that] dedicate themselves weekly to a program [in order to fill] at least 72 hours.... 70 percent becomes, in a way, a lie to sustain in a system like this.... The problem isn't the 70 percent, but thinking that that 70 percent is going to be volunteered.[545]

545Suárez later confirmed that his understanding of the regulations is that content produced by the station itself does not count toward the 70 percent daily quota of community production, which is a misinterpretation of the regulations (see chapter 4). Suárez also reported that Catia TVe was broadcasting 14 hours per day, which would mean a total of 98 hours per week. 70 percent of this total would be 68.6 hours. 55 percent (the true minimum for outside community production) would be 53.9 hours.; "*...tendrías que tener por lo menos 60 equipos de producción ... [que] se dedican semanalmente a un programa [para llenar] por lo menos 72 horas.... 70 por ciento se vuelve, por un lado, una mentira de sostener en un sistema como este.... El malo no es el 70 por ciento, sino pensar que ese 70 por ciento va a ser voluntariado.*"

Suárez was keenly aware that the community media sector needed to find a way to sustain outside production teams and that the current funding model was wholly insufficient.

Ostensibly, ECPAIs formed within civil society organizations (as per the Catia TVe ideal) might draw resources from those organizations, but community media practitioners had not actively pursued this option and, in any case, those organizations were more than likely to have funding issues of their own and thus be disinclined to support in-house television production. In the case that they did, the question of autonomy would immediately resurface. Civil society organizations might conceivably fund productions that furthered their own ends but would be unlikely to fund critical or aesthetic projects. Such projects are necessary to a truly counter-hegemonic community television system. As Suarez explained, his vision is for a network of ECPAIs focused on producing "a creative program, not any old opinion program." He recalled that at one point ECPAIs had produced much more regularly, but their programs "looked alike. They were almost the same, in the format.... like a single format. In other words, an opinion program.... Three seats, a moderator, the questions, the problematic, you know." [546]

Suarez, like most committed community television operators, had an alternative and audacious vision for a counter-hegemonic system. He wanted to see community producers working in "all the genres that you can produce in television, that could help you.... Fiction, animation, telenovelas, [etc.] … You say, 'Hey, I need, at least to make a fiction, I need more time. To produce weekly I need, whoooo, I need [lots of resources] to produce." [547] Suarez was quick to point out that his vision did not emerge from a mere desire to produce popular entertainment, but from an understanding that counter-hegemonic media must be attractive in order to successfully contribute to a process of social change:

> Everyone likes fiction.... The different genres that television and cinema have invented are good. Well, some. The content in those genres isn't the best in some cases, but there are genres that are interesting and … we can use them, they would help us in many things, since, understanding that it's not a battle for ratings, but for the possibility that people think

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[546]"*...se parecían. Eran casi iguales los programas, en el formato.... un formato como que único. O sea, programa de opinión.... Tres sillas, un moderador, las preguntas, la problemática, sabes.*"

[547]"*todos los generos que puedes realizar dentro de la television, que te podrían ayudar.... La ficción, la comiquita, la novela, [etc.] ... Tu dices, 'Oye, necesito, por lo menos para hacer una ficción, necesito más tiempo. Para producir semanalmente necesito, wooooo, necesito [muchos recursos] para producir.*"

about what's happening in their reality.... Some are fighting to separate you from your reality and others are fighting to bring you to your reality.... [But] in both cases you need a hook to attract people.[548]

Within the framework established by the regulations and the forms of support currently offered by the Bolivarian government, such a system remained out of reach.

In this section we have reviewed a series of interrelated difficulties within the Bolivarain community media sector, some of which are especially pronounced in relation to community television. One early difficulty was a significant fissure within the alternative and community media movement that was represented by the RVMC on one side and ANMCLA on the other. We noted that this division expressed itself partly in relation to a more ready acceptance by the RVMC of a liberal regulatory model and a significant degree of state control. While that framework – in conjunction with the motivation produced by the attempted coup and polarized political climate – produced significant growth, it proved insufficient for the construction of a robust counter-hegemonic community media apparatus that would operate in accordance with a Gramscian civil state. Nonetheless, the alternative and community media movement, including RVMC members, came to recognize this state of affairs and the internal division began to disappear as the movement turned its collective attention toward establishing a new framework that would address the significant practical problems of the sector.

Our review has focused on two of the most significant problem areas in the sector. We looked at the relationship between community media and the state, noting first that the sector had become dependent on institutions that exhibited both inefficiency and inconsistency. These flaws were especially significant in relation to the provision of resources. Community media outlets, especially television stations, found themselves unable to subsist on private revenue, yet the sources of state revenue proved insufficient to enable robust production, vital community engagement, and planned growth. At the same

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[548]"*A todo el mundo le gusta la ficción…. Los diferentes generos que han inventado la televisión y el cine son buenos. Bueno, algunos. Los contenidos en esos generos no es [sic] lo mejor en algunos casos, pero hay algunos generos que son interesantes y … podemos utilizarlos, nos ayudarían en muchas cosas, pues, entendiendo que también que es una batalla no por los ratings, sino por la posibilidad de que la gente piense en lo que está pasando en su realidad…. Algunos están peleando por separarte de tu realidad y otros están peleando para llevarte a tu realidad…. [Pero] en los dos casos necesitas un gancho para atraer la gente.*"

time, however, dependence on state resources made tenuous the sector's claims to autonomy and thus made it vulnerable to attacks from a political opposition wielding liberal ideals. We also saw that limited resources significantly constrained media outlet's ability to attract and maintain community participation, especially in terms of articulating a broad civil society. Difficulties related to community engagement were not entirely caused by a lack of resources, however. The regulations' narrow focus on community producers as the sole link between community media outlets and their communities, which has been primarily instantiated within the community television sector through the use of the ECPAI model, has produced a situation in which community media outlets are expected to provide all of the resources necessary for production as well as distribution. In effect, by downplaying (if not casting aside) the possibility that the community itself would sponsor production, the system served only to exacerbate the problem of limited resources experienced by community media outlets.

By 2008, if not earlier, not only the alternative and community media movement but also the Bolivarian government had come to recognize that a new framework was in order. We will examine their attempts to establish that new framework in the final section of this chapter, focusing specifically on efforts to pass what came to be known as the Law of Popular Power Communication. In order to make sense of those efforts and the legal proposal that they produced, however, we must first take stock of some significant changes that took place within the Bolivarian revolution as it shifted to an open rhetorical embrace of "Socialism for the 21st Century". Most specifically, we will be interested in the gradual institution of a new framework for Popular Power that has been centered on the establishment of a communal structure whose basic unit of governance is the communal council.

Communal Councils, the New Geometry of Power, and the Path Toward a Civil State

In the previous chapter we saw that Chávez's Bolivarian movement has always rhetorically endorsed widespread citizen participation in governance, but that during the early years of his administration Chávez failed to implement a radical restructuring toward this end. The *Plan Bolívar 2000*

and the Missions all incorporated participatory elements yet nonetheless remained largely centralized and hierarchical. The Bolivarian Circles and the worker cooperatives were less centralized and hierarchical, but they were limited in scope and not integrated with the existing system of social governance. The CTUs and Water Advisory Councils showed much greater promise for citizen participation in governance, but they too were quite limited in scope.

In the year following the attempted coup, Chávez and his Bolivarian movement scored several important political victories that consolidated their hold on national power. In 2004 he prevailed in a recall referendum, with 58 percent of voters electing to keep him in office; in 2005 the opposition boycotted the parliamentary elections, thus ceding full control of the legislative branch to the Bolivarians; and in 2006 Chávez won a second six-year term with a 62.8 percent landslide. These victories seem to have emboldened Chávez to take a more radical approach toward the institution of citizen governance. As early as January of 2005 Chávez made his first public call for the construction of "21st Century Socialism" and during that year the government began a pilot program for the implementation of Communal Councils which, as we have seen, had already been mentioned in the 2002 Law of Local Councils of Public Planning and the 2005 Fundamental Law of Municipal Public Power.

In 2006, however, the Communal Councils assumed a prominent position on the national stage with the passage of the Law of Communal Councils, whose second article defines them as:

> ...instances of participation, articulation, and integration between diverse community organizations, social groups, and citizens, that permit the organized people to directly exercise the management of public policies and projects oriented toward responding to the necessities and aspirations of communities in the construction of an equal and socially just society.[549]

The law specifies that in urban areas each council should represent between 200 and 400 families grouped into a citizens assembly (a*samblea de ciudadanos y ciudadanas*).[550] The communal council itself is

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[549]“...*instancias de participación, articulación e integración entre las diversas organizaciones comunitarias, grupos sociales y los ciudadanos y ciudadanas, que permiten al pueblo organizado ejercer directamente la gestión de las políticas públicas y proyectos orientados a responder a las necesidades y aspiraciones de las comunidades en la construcción de una sociedad de equidad y justicia social.*”

[550]Rural communal councils must represent a minimum of 20 families. The minimum number of families in indigenous communities is ten.

comprised of an executive body (*órgano ejecutivo*), a unit of financial management (*unidad de gestión financiera*) (also known as the communal bank [b*anco comunal*]), and a unit of social oversight (*unidad de contraloria social*). The executive body is comprised of spokespeople for the various working groups or committees created by the community. Examples of committees suggested in the law include those dedicated to health, education, land, housing, water, the popular economy, culture, security, recreation and sports, and media. The spokespeople for these committees, as well as the members of the units of financial management and social oversight, are all elected to two year terms by the assembly. The citizens assembly is also the maximum authority for any decisions taken or projects proposed by the executive council.

The executive council is expected to create a Community Development Plan (*Plan de Desarrollo de la Comunidad*) and, based on that plan, propose specific projects to be carried out or overseen by the working groups. Among its other duties, it is also expected to "[a]rticulate with the social organizations present in the community and promote the creation of new organizations where necessary, in defense of the collective interest and integral and sustainable development of the communities". Beyond managing the assembly's finances, the duties of the communal bank include overseeing a participatory budget for the community, promoting the creation of cooperatives to carry out community projects, and offering a yearly public accounting to both the assembly and the National Communal Councils Fund (*Fondo Nacional de los Consejos Comunales*). The unit of social oversight is expected to audit the activities of the executive council and the communal bank.

Once established, Communal Councils may obtain resources from a number of sources, including the institutions of the municipal, state, and federal governments. The law specifically established, however, a National Communal Councils Fund to finance projects presented by the communal councils. Over one billion dollars were disbursed to community councils during 2006 and another five billion in funding was announced in January of 2007 (López Maya & Lander 2011, 74; Duffy & Everton 2008, 119). While the onus for the formation of a community council lies on the community itself, this funding

added practical incentive to ideological motivation. A national study carried out in 2008 concluded that "this organizational form has been extended successfully in all of the country" (Machado 2009, 115).

The communal councils had clearly become the Bolivarian movement's organizational form of choice for instituting participatory civil governance. They manifested a turn away from top-down and centralized institutions, such as the Missions, as well as economistic organizational forms, such as the cooperatives. Nonetheless, detractors "argued that the president was trying to legislate participatory democracy from above and feared that the new networks of councils, whose priorities would be funded directly by the national executive, would develop into new patronage networks beholden to the political class" (Hellinger 2011, 37). This criticism rests on the assumption, however, that the communal councils would remain in a direct relationship with the national executive. This relationship appears to have been conceived as a temporary solution for funding the communal councils without making them dependent on municipal governments. Whether because they were often not controlled by members of his political movement or because they were holdovers of fourth-republican representational democracy, Chávez admitted in August of 2007 "that he had 'misgivings regarding established local authorities' and had greater faith in the capacity of the people at the local level" (Ellner 2009). Chávez's ultimate goal was to displace, or perhaps replace, the existing system of municipal and state government with a "new geometry of power".

Significantly, this new geometry of power was not articulated in the "Guidelines of the National Social and Economic Development Plan 2007 – 2013" (Lineas Generales del Plan de Desarrollo Económica y Social de la Nación 2007 – 2013), which were publicly released during the 2006 presidential election campaign. The 2007 Guidelines do define "directives" (*directrices*) of development designed to orient the country "toward the construction of Socialism for the 21st Century" and one of those directives, entitled "New National Geopolitics" (*Nueva Geopolítica Nacional*), calls for "a new socio-territorial organization coherent with the new Socialism for the 21st Century", but it is primarily concerned with the deconcentration of what it refers to as a historically "dependent" and "extractive"

economy focused on the shipment of petroleum products through coastal port cities (31).

The changes proposed under the new geometry of power refer less to fundamentally economistic concerns than to the reorganization of political power. Chávez proposed them in 2007, following his electoral victory, as a package of constitutional amendments that would be put up to a national referendum.[551] Ambitious in its scope, the reform package proposed to establish an additional co-equal branch of government, called the "popular power" (*poder popular*), alongside the five established by the 1999 constitution (the executive, legislative, judicial, electoral, and citizen powers). Popular power was defined as a system of self-government based on a federated structure of geographic areas in which "communities" would be grouped into "communes" that would, in turn, be grouped into "communal cities" (*ciudades comunales*) (articles 16 and 136). While the reform would not have abolished the municipalities and states of the old geometry of power, it would have discarded the smaller parishes and made the new communal city the "primary political unit of the organization of the national territory" (article 16).[552] The communities envisioned as subcomponents of the communes would have been governed not only by the communal councils, but also by councils representing interest groups; examples listed in the proposal include workers, artisans, fishers, students, youth, athletes, the elderly, and people with disabilities (article 136).

The functional details of this system were to be spelled out in a fundamental law, and the reforms themselves left "unanswered ... the question of how the [communal councils], charged with developing spending priorities for local projects financed by the central government, would relate to existing state and local governments" (Hellinger 2011, 36). Communal cities, for example, were specified as "all population settlements inside the municipality", suggesting that municipalities and states would exert control over them (article 16).[553] Meanwhile, the reforms also specified that communal cities were to be constituted by presidential decree, and that the President could also decree the creation of other

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[551] In August of 2007 Chávez called for amendments to 33 articles. In October of 2007 the National Assembly proposed amendments to an additional 25 articles.

[552] "*unidad política primaria de la organización territorial nacional*"

[553] "*todo asentamiento poblacional dentro del municipio*"

geopolitical entities, including federal municipalities, provinces, and cities, as well as "functional districts" (*distritos funcionales*). These various entities were specified, more or less explicitly, to be under the control of the national government without diminishing the constitutional status of the states and municipalities, thus leaving the exact functioning of this new geometry of power quite indeterminate.

The reforms encompassed much more than the new geometry of power, so it is not clear to what extent that particular plan was rejected in the referendum that was held in December of 2007, but the reform package was indeed narrowly rejected by the voters.[554] This result left the Law of Communal Councils as the only standing element of the new geometry of power, but the reforms confirmed that the Bolivarian vision for the communal councils was that they form the basis of a much larger system of participatory governance. Without further detail, however, the reform proposal left unresolved the question of to what degree the new geometry of power would simply concentrate control within the national government, especially the executive branch, and to what degree it would serve to establish a framework of civil governance that would underpin a truly viable Gramscian civil state.

The shift toward a broader basis for participatory governance certainly did not mean an abandonment of initiatives focused on work and economic production. Already in 2007, "Chávez picked up the idea of 'socialist workers councils,' which was already being discussed by many rank-and-file workers and by existing councils and workers' initiatives", though the concept met resistance in state institutions. In 2009, however, government institutions began promoting Enterprises of Communal Social Property (EPSC), which "create local production units and community services enterprises" that are held as the "collective property of the communities, which decide on the organizational structure of enterprises, the workers incorporated and the eventual use of profits. The EPSCs have been described as the Bolivarian movement's "most successful attempt at a democratization of ownership and

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554The proposed amendments also included reforms to the presidential term limit, campaign financing, specified economic entities to be promoted by the sate, the autonomy of the central bank, the categorization of property, and the composition of the military. The reforms were divided into two "blocks" of amendments, each to be determined by a separate vote. With 94 percent of votes counted, 49.34 percent of voters were in favor of block A and 48.99 percent of voters were in favor of block B.

administration of the means of production" (Azzelini).

The push to expand the burgeoning communal council system took a seemingly significant step forward in March of 2009, when the Ministry of the Communal Economy (*Ministerio de la Economía Comunal*) and the Ministry of Social Participation and Protection (*Ministerio de Participación y Protección Social*) were combined to create the Ministry of Popular Power for Communes and Social Protection (*Ministerio del Poder Popular para las Comunas y Protección Social*). More significantly, in 2010, the government passed a series of laws which implemented many facets of the new geometry of power, including the Fundamental Law of Popular Power, which defines Popular Power in article two as "the full exercise of sovereignty on the part of the people ... through their diverse and distinct forms of organization, which make up the communal state". Other laws passed in 2010 included: the Fundamental Law of the Communes (*Ley Orgánica de las Comunas*), the Fundamental Law of Public and Popular Planning (*Ley Orgánica de Planificación Pública y Popular*), the Fundamental Law of Social Oversight (*Ley Orgánica de Contraloría Social*), the Fundamental Law of the Comunal Economic System (*Ley Orgánica del Sistema Económica Comunal*), and the Fundamental Law of Municipal Public Power (*Ley Orgánica del Poder Público Municipal*). Taken together, these laws were meant to accomplish much of what had been proposed by the constitutional reform package. The opposition, meanwhile, has protested that they are unconstitutional, as the "popular power" framework is not recognized in the 1999 constitution.

As ever, Bolivarian legal initiatives must be measured by their real world outcomes and it remains too early to assess the degree to which the popular power framework has been translated into an expansion of participatory civil governance. One thing that is clear, however, is that the tension between top-down and bottom-up decision-making persists, as is evident by the perception that:

> the Ministry of Communes turns out to be one of the biggest obstacles to the construction of communes.... Only the growing organization 'from below,' especially the self-organized network of commune activists that brings together about 70 communes could bring enough pressure on the Ministry of Communes to start changing its politics at the end of 2011. They forced the ministry to register some 20 communes. In return, the communes had to

> set up the registration sheet since the Ministry of Communes not only did not register any communes in the first three years of it's existence, but one year after the law on communes had been released, it had not even created an official procedure for the registration of communes. (Azzellini)

Meanwhile, the Bolivarian movement has continued to lean heavily on a charismatic mode of linkage with Chávez and centralized institutions, including the establishment of multiple "Great Missions" (*Grandes Misiones*) beginning in 2011. Significantly, the stability of that charismatic linkage has diminished considerably.

To a certain extent, the failure to pass the reforms in December of 2007 marked the beginning of a decline in Chávez's political power. Although the result of the reform referendum was extremely close, the population had begun to signal that it was less concerned with a precipitous march forward to socialism than with the more immediate problems of violent crime and a slowing economy. The opposition, meanwhile, which had been reduced to impotency by its own internal fragmentation, had begun to regroup under a unified banner. While Chavéz continued to enjoy majority support, Chavistas found their control over the national assembly, as well as state and local offices, diminished as the result of subsequent elections. The most severe blow to the Bolivarian movement, however, was dealt by Chávez's long battle with cancer, news of which first became public in June of 2011. Chávez managed to win a third term in the presidential elections of October of 2012, but passed away in March of 2013, leaving his hand-picked successor, Francisco Maduro, as interim President. Maduro, who lacks Chávez's aura and intimate identification with "the people", won the Presidency in April of 2013 with only 50.6 percent of the vote. He has since been forced to deal with an inflation rate that his risen above 50 percent, a continued crisis in relation to violent crime, and an opposition that sees the the loss of Chávez as a window of opportunity for regaining control of the national government.

The history outlined above provides the context for our subsequent discussion, in which we will review efforts by both the government and the community and alternative media movement to restructure the legal framework of the community media sector. As we will see, the tensions between top-down and

bottom-up decision making were evident there also, both in the process of proposing solutions as well as within the proposals themselves. Key to our discussion, however, is the degree to and manner in which the movement has sought to integrate with the new geometry of power as expressed in the commune system. Since the communal councils were the only part of that system to have been significantly instantiated during the process, they were the primary focus of such proposals and will thus be the primary focus of our investigation.

Bolivarian Community Media and the New Geometry of Power

As we have seen with ANMCLA, some elements of the Bolivarian community media sector have long held that the liberal framework of the regulations is insufficient for the establishment of a truly counter-hegemonic participatory media system. It is therefore difficult to pinpoint the moment when the alternative and community media movement, as a whole, unified around the need to restructure the community media sector. Nonetheless, the call for a "Communication Mission" (*Misión Comunicación*), which emerged shortly after the enactment of the Law of Communal Councils in 2006, provides a salient point of departure.

The concept of a Communication Mission was put forth by the Venezuelan Block of Alternative Press (*Bloque Venezolano de Prensa Alternativa* / BVPA) in an essay principally authored by Miguel Ugas (Bloque Venezolano de Prensa Alternativa 2006).[555] In utilizing the term "mission" the BVPA sought to rhetorically align itself with the institutional framework of the Bolivarian revolution, but it was not calling for the creation of a formal state institution dedicated to communication. Rather, the idea of the Communication Mission was presented as a call to arms, expressing the need to defend the Bolivarian revolution by countering the commercial media hegemony with popular participation. The Mission itself was described as "the massive incorporation of the people in the communicational duty", a collective

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[555]The BVPA article, published on the aporrea web site on June 26, 2006, had ten signatories representing 13 print and digital outlets; Ugas was the the first name listed. Ugas (2006a) had already described the concept in an article published on the same site on May 11. From July through September, also on aporrea, Ugas published a four part essay on Bolivarian communication policy (2006b, 2006c, 2006d, 2006e) that incorporated language from the BVPA article.

effort toward "the reconstruction of communication practice in such a manner that, literally, the entire people participates, becomes active, gets involved in a new communicational social relation". [556] In this sense, it only re-articulated the ideology of the alternative and community media movement as it had cohered following the attempted coup of 2002.

Several elements of the proposal did, however, signal a shift within the movement. To begin, the document clearly expressed a sentiment that the existing state of affairs was insufficient to the movement's goals. On the one hand, this was linked to the fact that the state communications apparatus "does not manage to cover the urgent communicational necessities of the transformational project". [557] This failure was expressed in no uncertain terms:

> The ideological debility and/or political incomprehension of the conjunction of a good part of the functionaries responsible for attending to this significant area, has a determinative impact on the persistence of a situation that has been indicated on many occasions but never resolved. The limited or spasmodic support that is dispensed to [community media], is an emblematic expression, as well, of the grave failure that is dragged along by the communicational policies of the Bolivarian Government.[558]

This sentiment had already been expressed by ANMCLA, but its inclusion within the BVPA text signaled that frustration within the movement as a whole was reaching a tipping point.

The BVPA's "manifesto" was not only critical of the Bolivarian government, but also the sector itself, noting that community media "as a social movement still have not achieved an optimal level of political nor organic articulation". [559] In this context, the document explicitly recognized the goal of growing community media into not only a counter-hegemonic force but a truly hegemonic media system. Moreover, it matched this goal with three relatively specific vectors of action. First, it called for greater

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556"*la incorporación masiva del pueblo al quehacer comunicacional*"; "*a reconstrucción de la práctica comunicacional de tal manera que, literalmente, todo el pueblo participe, se active, se involucre en una nueva relación social comunicacional*"
557"*no logra cubrir las exigentes necesidades comunicacionales del proyecto transformador*"
558"*La debilidad ideológica y/o la incomprensión política de la coyuntura de buena parte de los funcionarios que les corresponde atender esta sensible área, incide de manera determinante en la persistencia de una situación que ha sido señalada en muchas oportunidades pero nunca resuelta. El apoyo limitado o epasmódico [sic] que se les dispensa a los MAC, es expresión emblemática, también, de la grave falla que arrastra la política comunicacional del Gobierno Bolivariano.*"
559"*como movimiento social aún no han logrado un óptimo nivel de articulación política ni orgánica*"

government support:

> [Community media] are, as of today, an inarguable media reality that advance each day in their coverage, their listenership, their readers, with the proposition of displacing or supplanting the traditional or conventional private media. Certainly this will occur within the frame of another context, in which they will shift from alternative to usual. For the materialization of this goal, conceived in the mid-term, the decisive, systematic, and consistent support of the Bolivarian Government is required." [560]

Second, it called for the integration of community media with Bolivarian civil society:

> Despite the significance of these social movements in the present circumstances, almost in their entirety none of these movements possess a communication medium that serves as a mouthpiece as much to the inside of the movement itself as to society as a whole.... The implementation of the Communication Mission is happening so that each social movement, at different levels, has its respective communication media whether print, radio, television, or digital. [561]

Third, it recognized the vital role to be played by the integration of community media with the newly

codified communal council system:

> The people, in the Communal Councils, will have the opportunity to re-appropriate the communicational act. To search for, to construct the truth produced by all. It will no longer be the truth of a few. It will be the truth of many, the truth of all. The truth that will be possible in socialist society.... The Communication Mission will have in the Communal Councils a natural, extraordinary space for its concretion and development. [562]

In sum, the call for a Communication Mission was tantamount to a call for community media to become a

primary articulating element of a Gramscian civil state.

This was hardly the first time such a call came from within the alternative and community media

movement, but it was significant for the level of specificity with which it pointed to the need for

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560"*Los [medios comunitarios] son, hoy por hoy, una realidad mediática indiscutible que cada día avanzan en su cobertura, su sintonía, sus lectores, dentro del propósito de desplazar o suplantar los medios privados tradicionales o convencionales. Ciertamente esto ocurrirá en el marco de otro contexto, en el que pasaran de alternativos a usuales. Para la materialización de ese logro, concebido a mediano plazo, se requiere el apoyo decisivo, sistemático y consecuente del Gobierno Bolivariano.*"

561"*Pues a pesar de la significación de estos movimientos sociales en la presente coyuntura, casi en su totalidad ninguno de estos movimientos posee un medio de comunicación que le sirva de portavoz tanto a lo interno del movimiento propiamente como a la sociedad en su conjunto.... La implantación de la Misión Comunicación pasa porque cada movimiento social, a diferentes niveles, disponga de su respectivo medio de comunicación bien sea impreso, radial, televisivo o digital.*"

562"*El pueblo, en los consejos comunales, tendrá la oportunidad de reapropiarse del hecho comunicacional. De buscar, de construir la verdad producida por todos. Ya no será la verdad de unos pocos. Será la verdad de muchos, la verdad de todos. La verdad que será posible en la sociedad socialista.... La Misión Comunicación tendrá en los Consejos Comunales un espacio natural, extraordinario para su concreción y desarrollo.*"

integration between community media, social movements and organizations, and the new communal

council system. It was also significant in that it was taken up as a representative position of the alternative

and community media sector as a whole. For example, the "Political and Programmatic Declaration"

(*Declaración Política y Programática*) produced during the National Meeting of Alternative and

Community Media in November of 2006 included a section entitled "We Propose The Communication

Mission" (*Proponemos la Misión Comunicacíon*) that incorporated text from the BVPA document

(Encuentro Nacional Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios 2006). Then, in February of 2007, the

community and alternative media movement organized a march in Caracas in which they delivered a

document to William Lara, then Minister of Communications and Information, as well representatives of

the office of the Vice President. That document affirmed the movement's support for both the non-renewal

of RCTV's broadcast license and the concept of the Communication Mission (Movimiento de Medios

Alternativos y Comunitarios 2007).

Probably as a result of his leadership role in the alternative and community media movement,

Ugas was made Director of DGMAC in mid-2007. Significantly, however, his appointment did not result

in significant and measurable progress toward the goals that he had endorsed under the concept of the

Communication Mission. This is perhaps not surprising, considering that the Communication Mission

endorsed the integration of community media with social movements and the community councils, yet

offered no concrete steps for achieving this goal. In fact, the BVPA document evidenced some confusion

regarding the organizational structure of a hegemonic participatory communication system:

> The idea, of course, is that each Communal Council have a media outlet or outlets through
> which to express itself, whether print, radio, television, or digital. In which there is space
> for all the members of that community as much in the conception, development,
> production, design, diffusion, etc., of information. The Independent Audiovisual
> Community Production Teams (ECPAI) of Catia TVe are a good example of the route to
> follow in this sense.[563]

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[563] "*La idea, por supuesto, es que cada Consejo Comunal disponga de un medio o medios a través del cual
expresarse, bien sea impreso, radial, televisivo o digital. En la que tengan cabida todos los miembros de esa
comunidad tanto en la concepción, elaboración, producción, diseño, difusión, etc., de la información. Los
Equipos Comunitarios de Productores Audiovisuales Independientes (ECPAI) de Catia Tve son un buen ejemplo
del camino a seguir en ese sentido.*"

As we have seen, however, the ECPAIs are not media outlets in and of themselves, but are only small production teams attached to media outlets, specifically television broadcasters. Was the conception of the Communication Mission therefore that each communal council have one or more full-fledged media outlets? It seems hardly plausible, of course, that 200 to 400 families would need more than a bulletin or website; it certainly makes little sense to imagine that they would need a television station unto themselves.

Perhaps we are nitpicking the wording of the document, but serious organizational and economic questions remain nonetheless. How many communal councils should be served by any one community media outlet? Should community councils have a single media unit producing material for all forms of media, or should they create units dedicated to specific media? To what degree would these units be under the authority of the council and to what degree would they operate as independent enterprises? However these units are organized, how might they join together at the commune, state, regional, or national levels to take on more ambitious projects? Who should fund the media units within communal councils: community media outlets or the councils themselves? How should they allocate any revenue that they might generate? These are some of the questions that the call for a Communication Mission entirely elided; some of them were also applicable to social movements and other civil society organizations.

Symptomatic of the bureaucratic churn discussed above, however, Ugas did not have much time as Director of DGMAC to implement his vision; he was replaced after Andrés Izarra was reappointed as Minister of Communications and Information in December of 2007. In his second term as head of MINCI, Izarra oversaw the formulation of a National Public System of Popular, Alternative, and Community Communication (*Sistema Público Nacional de Comunicación Popular, Alernativa, y Comunitaria /* SPNCPAC) that marked something of a turning point in the state's rhetoric, if not actual policy, toward the community media sector.

The Bolivarian government had reiterated it's support for community media in its official development plan for 2007 – 2013. The third section of that document, entitled "Revolutionary Active

Democracy" (*Democracia Protagónica Revolucionaria*), called for the state to "[f]ortify the network of alternative communication media" as a sub-component of "[d]eveloping an efficient network of informal channels of information and education toward the people" (21). [564] Meanwhile, the goal of "universalizing access to different types of communication" included sub-components that called for "[f]acilitating community access to communication media" alongside "[f]ortifying State communication and information media and democratizing its communication spaces" (23). [565] These statements, however, did not present a vision for integrating community media into the new geometry of power that had been initiated by the communal councils, nor did they specify the role the state would play in its support for community media.

The SPNCPAC, however, was touted as a "new phase" in state support that would seek to "unify public policy directed toward this sector, creating suitable spaces for the activation of the communication power of the people" and "[i]n parallel, from the alternative and community media outlets themselves, develop an organizational model integrated with the strategy of creation and fortification of Communal Councils, Water Advisory Councils, Land Committees, and other initiatives for the construction of Popular Power" (Milano 2008a). [566] These statements suggested that the SPNCPAC would make good on the vision of the Communication Mission, which had called for increased state support and the construction of a hegemonic participatory communication system in conjunction with the communal councils and Bolivarian civil society. Moreover, in March of 2008 DGMAC oversaw a process of popular consultation designed to ensure that the SPNCPAC would accord with the desires of the alternative and community movement, as well as representatives from communal councils and other Bolivarian civil society organizations. The consultation process comprised 13 regional meetings, the results of which were

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[564]"*[f]ortalecer la red de medios de comunicación alternativa*"; "*[d]esarrollar una red eficiente de vía de información y de educación no formal hacia el pueblo*"

[565]"*[u]niversalizar el acceso los diferentes tipos de comunicación*"; "*[f]ortalecer los medios de comunicación e información del Estado y democratizar sus espacio de comunicación*"

[566]"*unificar la política pública dirigida hacia este sector, creando espacios propios para la activación del poder comunicacional del pueblo*"; "*[e]n paralelo, desde los mismos medios alternativos y comunitarios, desarrollar un modelo organizativo integrado con la estrategia de creación y fortalecimiento de los Consejos Comunales, Mesas de Agua, Comités de Tierra, y otras iniciativas de construcción del Poder Popular*"

compiled and summarized by a "Follow-up Commission" (*Comisión de Seguimiento*) (MINCI 2010).

The resulting document presented six "guidelines": "training", "content production", "technological platform", "interrelation of actors", "sustainability", and "institutional articulation" (*ibid.*, Benítez 2008, 78).[567] For each guideline, the document included explanatory text and a numerical list of items for its "implementation" (*implementación*). Nonetheless, many of these items exhibited problems similar to those of the Communication Mission; lacking specific and concrete steps for actual implementation, they read more like statements of principals or desired outcomes than action steps. For example, the first "implementation" item under "content production" called for the:

> [p]roduction of an educational, informative, and recreational program made by popular communicators united in a region and their communities and communal councils, in order to show the local history and the particularities of latin american reality, transmitted over a national broadcast. (16)[568]

The questions of how this regional production would be organized or who would finance it were left open and the generality of the other guidelines did not provide truly adequate responses.

The first action item under "interrelation of actors", for example, presented only a grab bag of organizational possibilities:

> Establish as instance of participation [sic] assemblies of spokespeople of popular communication and communication councils, circuits, functional communes, commissions, committees, promotional teams, work groups, and other forms of relation in popular alternative, and community communication. (23)[569]

Which of these were to be used in what capacity and how any of these were meant to work together was not addressed. The first action item under sustainability was similar in this regard:

> Interchange of services: Concerns a diversification of the [services offered by alternative and community media] beyond publicity spots and the establishment of an offering of services between public institutions of the Venezuelan State, beginning with proposal such

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567"*formación, producción de contenidos, plataforma tecnológica, interrelación de actores, sostentibilidad, articulación institucional*"

568"*[p]roducción de un programa educativo, informativo y recreativo, realizado por los comunicadores populares unidos en una región y sus comunidades y consejos comunales, a manera de mostrar la historia local y las particularidades de la realidad latinoamericana, transmitido por una señal abierta nacional.*"

569"*Establecer como instancia de participación [sic], las asambleas de voceros de la comunicación popular y mesas de comunicación, circuitos, comunas funcionales, comisiones, comités, equipos promotores, mesas técnicas y demás formas de relación en la comunicación popular, alternativa y comunitaria.*"

as: facilitation of workshops, creation of Web pages, consulting services, conferences, courses, editing and reproduction of [Point of Purchase] material, mural campaigns, posters, development of research guidelines. Which places us before a harmonious relationship of construction and work, without breaking with the ethical precepts of popular communication. (27)[570]

The list of unanswered questions here is long, but these suggestions certainly seem to have the cart before the horse, inasmuch as they suggest that the sector might acquire additional resources by offering services for which it did not currently have sufficient resources to provide. Other action items for sustainability, meanwhile, were perhaps more sound yet remained beyond the power of MINCI to enforce. Examples include "[f]inancing on the part of the Communal Bank, to projects directed to the promotion and formation of the media outlet and community" and "[f]inancing to projects of expansion, physical modification, equipment, and training (under the method of the Participatory Budget) to present before [state and international] financing entities" (28). [571]

Some of the action items listed in the document were more properly under MINCI's purview, however. One example is the second action item under "interrelation of actors": "Development of permanent fora, seminars, dialogues, and meetings at local, municipal and regional, national and international level [sic] for the interchange of experiences in popular, alternative, and community communication" (23). [572] Another example is the eighth item under "sustainability":

> Centralization of Publicity Spots: Concerns centralizing and making coherent the traditional mechanism since the 19th century [sic] for the maintenance of communication media of a mercantile nature, "the publicity spot". During this nine (9) years, the State has maintained this mechanism, but lacking political and economic criteria adjusted to the

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[570]"*Contraprestación de servicios: Se trata de una diversificación de la oferta [de servicios] de los [medios alternativos y comunitarios] más allá de la pauta publicitaria y el establecimiento de una oferta de servicios entre las instituciones públicas del Estado venezolano, a partir de propuestas como: la facilitación de talleres, elaboración de páginas Web, asesorías, conferencias, cursos, editorial y reproducción de material POP, campañas muralistas, pancartas, desarrollo de líneas de investigación. Lo cual nos coloca ante una relación armónica de construcción y trabajo, sin romper con los preceptos éticos propios de la comunicación popular.*"

[571]"*[f]inanciamiento por parte del Banco Comunal, a proyectos dirigidos a la promoción y formación del medio y la comunidad*"; "*[f]inanciamiento a proyectos de expansión, adecuación física, equipamiento y formación (bajo el método del Presupuesto Participativo), para presentar ante entes [estatales e internacionalesde] de financiamiento*"

[572]"*Realización de foros, seminarios, conversatorios y encuentros permanentes a nivel local, municipal y regional, nacional e internacional para el intercambio de experiencias en comunicación popular, alternativa y comunitaria.*"

nature of [alternative and community media]. (29) [573]

Left unclear in the document, however, is to what extent the results of the popular consultation were meant to direct state policy. MINCI did not publish a print version of the document until August of 2010, nor did it issue a more refined plan for the construction of a national "system" of community media.

Meanwhile, at least one contingent of the alternative and community media movement manifested opposition to MINCI's notion of a national system. In early March, just as MINCI was initiating the consultation process for the SPNCPAC, a group of 420 "popular communicators" (*comunicadores populares*) from some 200 alternative and community media collectives established the National Movement of Alternative and Community Media (*Movimiento Nacional de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios* / MoMAC) during a "National Constituent Assembly" (*Asamblea Nacional Constituyente*) held in Caracas. Among the 13 members of the National Directorate (*Dirección Nacional*) elected during that assembly were Miguel Ugas and another of the principal signatories of the BVPA's call for a Communicaton Mission and, as might be expected, promoting the Communication Mission was the first of the "programmatic bases" (*bases programáticas*) listed in the assembly's final declaration.

Beginning in April, several members of the National Directorate authored public denunciations of the SPNCPAC that were in the tradition of ANMCLA's criticism of the state. Luis Salazar (2008), who hosted programs on both Catia TVe and Radio Negro Primero, wrote that:

> [f]or no one is it a secret that the communicational apparatus of the state-government is in the hands of the right, that the 'institutional' vision, developed from government press offices, by action or omission obey the parameters of the fourth republic, not to mention the disdain manifested toward [alternative and community media]. [574]

Carlos Machado (2008), in an article titled "What can MINCI's famous SNCPAC [sic] be hiding?",

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573"*Centralización de las Pautas Publicitarias: Se trata de centralizar y darle coherencia al mecanismo tradicional desde el siglo XIX [sic] para el sostenimiento de los medios de comunicación de naturaleza mercantil, "la pauta publicitaria". Durante estos nueve (9) años, el Estado ha mantenido este mecanismo, pero carente de criterios políticos y económicos ajustados a la naturaleza de los [medios alternativos y comunitarios].*"

574"*[p]ara nadie es un secreto que el aparato comunicacional de estado-gobierno está en manos de la derecha, que la visión "institucional", desarrollada desde las direcciones de prensa gubernamentales, por acción u omisión obedecen a los parámetros de la cuarta república, sin dejar de mencionar el menosprecio manifiesto a los MAC.*"

described the plan as one "in which orwellian visions clearly appear to have prevailed in its final elaboration".[575] Ugas, despite – or perhaps because – of his recent service as Director of DGMAC, affirmed that the community media sector was allied with the state, but insisted that "we are not going to accept that this State, which is penetrated by the fifth column and many of whose members respond to imperial policy, claims to assume control of the social movement" (Prensa MoMAC 2008) [576] Shortly after MINCI published the SPNCPAC text, in October of 2010, MoMAC's "Central Council" (*Consejo Central*) (which included 8 members of the 2008 Directorate) authored the "Catia Manifesto", in which they called once again for the Communication Mission and rejected once again the SPNCPAC, referring to it as "[a]mong the most evident symptoms of the incomprehension of [a] state bureaucracy" that fails "to understand the facilitator role that, rather, falls to it, in this stage of transition, in the construction of the revolutionary subject" (MoMAC 2010).[577]

MoMAC did not specify to which of the SPNCPAC's "implementation" items it objected, but some of them certainly suggested a heavy state presence. One example is the first item under "training", which called for the:

> [c]reation of a training School: of a permanent character, oriented toward 'training trainers', community producers, communication spokespeople of the communal councils, [national independent producers], and other popular communicators. The area of the School, it is proposed [sic] that it be regional to amplify its coverage and centralize common experiences.... The [National Institute of Socialist Training and Education (Instituto Nacional de Capacitación y Educación Socialista / INCES)] are proposed as educational entities [sic] to provide service to popular communicators, in a constant and permanent manner. (13)[578]

Another is the third item under "content production", which called for the "[u]nification of an editorial

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575"*Qué puede ocultar el famoso SNCPAC [sic] del MINCI ?*"; "*en el que a todas luces parecen haber prevalecido visiones orwelianas en su elaboración final, por decir lo menos, luego de una atropellada consulta nacional.*"

576"*no vamos a aceptar que ese Estado, que esta penetrado por la quinta columna y muchos de cuyos integrantes responden a la política imperial, pretenda asumir el control del movimiento social.*"

577"*[e]ntre los síntomas mas evidentes de la incomprensión de la burocracia estatal*"; "*entender el papel facilitador que, más bien, le compete a éste, en esta etapa de transición, en la construcción del sujeto revolucionario*"

578"*Creación de una Escuela de formación y capacitación: de carácter permanente, orientada a "formar formadores", productores comunitarios, voceros de comunicación de los consejos comunales, PNI y demás comunicadores populares. El ámbito de la Escuela, se propone sea regional para ampliar su cobertura y centralizar experiencias comunes.... Se proponen los INCES como entes formativos para prestar el servicio a los comunicadores populares, de manera constante y permanente.*"

line to defend communicational sovereignty in a forceful manner, at the same time as offering direct and agreed responses to the community. Measure [sic] that serves as an impetus for the sense of belonging of the community and as a link with different local and regional experiences" (17). [579]

Other examples suggest the possibility of state control over important hubs, though they might just as easily be understood to suggest popular control. Examples include the first action item under "technology platform", which called for the "[i]nstallation of a Situation Room with the fundamental technology platform, according to specific necessities of each region of the country, to guarantee the effective interconnection between actors committed to the exercise of a communicational sovereignty" (19), as well as the seventh item under "interrelation of actors", which called for the "[c]reation of regional production centers that imply the generation and distribution of news, experiences, and communicational products..." (24). [580] Likewise, the first item listed under "institutional articulation" might signify an increase in either control or efficiency: "[p]romotion of Regional Offices of Information (regional MINCI offices) and it is proposed [sic] that CONATEL also make offices of this type … to guarantee efficient attention and de-concentration toward the regions, of administrative processes only carried out from the central office located in Caracas" (31).

While these items signaled the possibility of overt state control, they remained for the most part ambiguous and it remained to be seen what direction MINCI's implementation would take. On their own, they seem insufficient to motivate MoMAC's immediate and vehement opposition. What else accounted for it? To begin, although the SPNCPAC document had been informed by representatives of the alternative and community media movement and other elements of Bolivarian civil society, many members of the movement felt that the consultation had been insufficient. Machado referred to it as

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579 "*[u]nificación de una línea editorial para defender la soberanía comunicacional de forma contundente, a la vez de ofrecer respuestas directas y consensuadas a la comunidad. Medida que sirve de impulso para el sentido de pertenencia de la comunidad y de enlace con las diferentes vivencias locales y regionales.*"
580 "*[i]nstalación de una Sala Situacional con la plataforma tecnológica fundamental, según necesidades específicas de cada región del país, para garantizar la interconexión efectiva entre los actores comprometidos con el ejercicio de una soberanía comunicacional.*"; "*[c]reación de centros de producción regional, que implique la generación y distribución de noticias, experiencias y productos comunicacionales...*"

"rushed" and many community media practitioners had not participated for several possible reasons, including a lack of response to MINCI's invitation, "the government's interest in cherry picking 'allied' [community media producers,] ... [and] a boycott by some ... practitioners, who, after a few initial meetings, felt their voices ignored and overrun by a preset governmental agenda" (Fuentes-Batista & Gil-Ergui 2011, 271 n12). Nonetheless, much of the document actually coincided with the vision of the Communication Mission that MoMAC strenuously endorsed. To truly understand MoMAC's opposition, we might look to the figure of Andrés Izarra for further clarification.

Izarra's uncle had been jailed for leftist political activities in the 1970s and his father, a Lieutenant Colonel in the Venezuelan Air Force, participated in Chávez's 1992 coup attempt and became "one of the chief theorists" of the Bolivarian revolution, but Izarra was hardly groomed to be a *chavista*. As a child, "he attended public schools in [Massachusetts] while his parents did graduate work at Harvard" and his mother, a retired professor, would go on to become a critic of the Bolivarian movement (Agustín 2010, Romero 2007). As a young man, Izarra spent five years in the United States working for CNN and NBC before he became a production manager for RCTV in Venezuela. His outrage at that station's manipulation of information during the attempted coup of 2002 led him to resign that post, but he remained in commercial news, working for CNN in Caracas. In 2003, however, he began working in Venezuela's US Embassy and shortly thereafter was hired to produce "Alo Presidente", Chávez's Sunday television show. This set off a rapid rise to power; in September of 2004 he was appointed to his first term as Minister of Communications and Information and he would go on to serve as President of both VTV and teleSUR over the next several years.[581]

As a result of his career trajectory, many within the alternative and community media movement view Izarra as possessing a hierarchical and professionalized conception of communication that befits large commercial and state television networks. Thus, while he frequently invokes Gramsci, they remain

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[581]TeleSUR is an international television network headquartered in Caracas and primarily distributed in Latin America. It is funded by a consortium of Latin American states, with Venezuela as the chief financial contributor.

skeptical that he shares their goal of participatory civil governance. In January of 2007, while President of Telesur, Izarra's notion of Bolivarian "communication hegemony" already included "a national system of community and alternative media" (cited in Uribarrí 2009, 169). Then, when the SPNCPAC emerged early in Izarra's second term as Minister of Communication and Information, it did so nearly simultaneously to the formulation of a "National System of Public Media" (*Sistema Nacional de Medios Públicos*), thus adding weight to the interpretation that Izarra viewed these sectors in similar terms, as tools for state control over Bolivarian messaging (Urbina 2012, 42). Nonetheless, little progress was made during Izarra's second term, which lasted only one year, until December of 2008. As will be discussed below, the SPNCPAC would not return to prominence until Izarra's third term, which began two years later, in December of 2010. In the meantime MINCI was headed by Jesse Chacón, who led CONATEL during the formulation of the regulations, and Blanca Eekhout.

Having emerged from within the alternative and community media movement, Eekhout was not likely to share Izarra's approach. In fact, during her one year tenure as Minister, beginning in April of 2009, MINCI endorsed a very different model for integrating Bolivarian community media with the new geometry of power. The Popular Communication Council (*Consejo Popular de Comunicación* / CPC) was conceived as a grassroots organizational entity comprised of perhaps 40 representatives from community media outlets, community councils, and other units of Bolivarian civil society, "the goal of which is to produce territorial communicational policy, that goes from local to regional, based on the analysis of the reality that presents itself" (Eekhout 2010). [582] The CPC would, in other words, serve as a governance mechanism by which Bolivarian civil society would be able to jointly guide the community media sector.

The CPC concept originated in Catia TVe, in part as a response to the limitations of the ECPAIs. On the one hand, the formation of CPCs would encourage other organizations to provide resources to the

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[582]"*cuyo fin es elaborar la política comunicacional territorial, que va desde lo local hasta lo regional, partiendo del análisis de la realidad que presenta*"

community media sector. In effect, the CPCs would become responsible for creating and maintaining the ECPAIs, thus alleviating the burden on the television station. At the same time, however, the CPCs would integrate other community media outlets and facilitate community production teams working in multiple media, taking advantage of the resources at hand and utilizing whichever media were most appropriate to the goals for a particular project. The Catia TVe staff felt that they did not have resources sufficient to carrying out the plan, however, so they brought the idea to Eekhout, who facilitated its incorporation into the strategic plans of both ViVe and MINCI (Almao 2011).

In late 2009, MINCI's DGMAC oversaw what Triviño described as a "pilot program" (*prueba de piloto*) in which CPCs were created across the country. This first group of CPCs was then brought together for the First National Congress of CPCs (*I Congreso Nacional de CPC*) in December. The creation of CPCs was facilitated by ViVe, acting through its regional centers, according to a three stage process that was designed to take place over several months. The first stage involved identifying and dialoguing with prospective members, as well as offering a series of workshops designed to familiarize them with the concepts of participatory communication. The second stage encompassed the creation of the CPC, workshops designed to impart specific skills, and the creation of a communicational plan that would respond to the needs and/or desires of the community. In the third stage, the facilitators assisted the newly formed CPC in carrying out the plan.[583] As of June 2010, 49 CPCs had been created and 100 more were reported to be in preparation, but in August of 2011 Gil reported that ViVe had established 60 and Catia TVe had created another 18 (Medios alternativos y comunitarios consolidarán... 2010; Gil 2011).

The CPCs were meant to articulate community media outlets, local production teams, and Bolivarian civil society, including the communal councils. Triviño provided the following example: "If we have a commune and in that area there is a social production business where there is a Factory

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[583]These three stages are outlined in an undated "Guide for the Formation [of] Popular Communication Counsels" (*Guía para la Conformación [de] Consejos Populares de Comunicación*) made available publicly from Eekhout's profile on the PSUV webpage. This document suggests that the communicational plan be developed in the third stage. Triviño, however, gave a slightly different account, in which the communicational plan would be created in the second stage, to National Radio of Venezuela (Van Arcken 2009).

Council, and if in addition to the Communal Councils we have a radio, a television station, and a newspaper, all those organizations begin to meet and to discuss a communicational policy". [584] In this sense, the CPCs are a mechanism for grassroots governance focusing on specific areas. Nonetheless, Triviño also envisioned them functioning as a network and in that manner carrying out unified campaigns: "imagine, we would have thousands of CPCs in the whole country carrying out a campaign, that is more or less the operation and the policy of the CPCs". [585] As examples, he suggested campaigns in opposition to US military bases in Colombia and in favor of the Fundamental Law of Education, both of which were hot button topics at the time (Van Arcken 2009). In this vision, the CPCs are presented less as venues for debate and localized decision-making than as outlets for propaganda, illustrating how the Bolivarian conception of hegemony tends to slip between popular democratic control and centralized messaging. While Triviño's vision had less to do with a message imposed from above than an assumption that all committed Bolivarians would share a "correct" view on important issues, it nonetheless suggested that he did not view CPCs as venues for open debate, inclusive of oppositional viewpoints. This, in conjunction with the promotional roles played by MINCI and ViVe, may have reinforced the alternative and community media movement's ever-present skepticism toward state-led efforts, with the result that, as Triviño explained, "many [community media producers] believed that we were creating the CPCs to be able to take control of community media outlets." [586] This distrust never coalesced into sustained opposition, as with the SPNCPAC, but illustrated once again the tensions inherent in using state institutions to enable civil society governance.

ViVe continued to facilitate the creation of CPCs at least through 2011, although with greater or lesser commitment depending on the region (Manrique 2011). MINCI, however, ceased to support the

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584 "*Si tenemos una comuna y en ese ámbito hay una empresa de producción social donde hay un Consejo de Fábrica, y si además de los Consejos Comunales tenemos una radio, una televisora y un periódico, todas esas organizaciones comienzan a reunirse y a discutir una política comunicacional.*"

585 "*imagínate, tendríamos a miles de Consejos Populares de Comunicación en todo el país haciendo una campaña, ese es más o menos el funcionamiento y la política de los CPC*"

586 "*muchos [productores de medios comunitarios] creían que nosotros estabamos creando los CPCs para poder apoderarse de los medios comunitarios*"

CPC model once Triviño was replaced in June of 2010, two months after Eekhout's departure. MINCI gave no official cause for this policy shift, but Lidice Altuve, who served as Vice Minister of Media Management (*Vice Ministra de Gestión de Medios*) during Izarra's third term as Minister, believed that the CPC was not necessary within the new geometry of power. The CPC, she said:

> ...takes you out of the model.... You have to strengthen what exists.... I insist, I don't want to think of closed models, but evidently if you have a structure of popular government – because what is a communal council? What is a commune? Just as the state, the national government, has a president, a body of ministers, you understand me? The communal council has its committee, the commune, the bank of the commune, it has a comprehensive development plan, that is shaped by the projects, it establishes a maximum instance of deliberation which is the assembly, and what is constructed can't be at the margin of this model..... What we say is, 'Goodness, if you are birthing a societal model that has a specific nature, you [do] it in the communal structure, the instruments of communication have to place themselves in the service of that. To fortify it, to inform it, to incubate it, to generate consciousness.' I bet more on an impulse of communal communication that supports that model. (Altuve 2011)[587]

In other words, the commune, as the organizational entity that gathers communications spokespeople from all communal councils in its area of governance, should properly determine communications policy for that area.

Supporters of the CPC model, however, would argue that it is more representative because it allows for the participation of not only the spokespeople of the communal councils, but also staff members of community media outlets, community producers, and representatives from other entities of Bolivarian civil society, whether social movements, professional associations, user groups, cooperatives, etc. Within the commune system, the interests of all of these diverse groups would have to be channeled through the communications spokespeople of the communal councils and they would have less opportunity to directly influence policy decisions. Of course, it remains to be seen whether these groups

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[587]"*...te sale del modelo.... Tu tienes que potenciar lo que existe.... Insisto, no quiero pensar en modelos cerrados, pero evidentemente si tu tienes una estructura de gobierno popular – porque qué lo que es un consejo comunal? Qué es la comuna? Así como el estado, el gobierno nacional, tiene un presidente, un cuerpo de ministros, me entiendes? El consejo comunal tiene su comité, la comuna, el banco de la comuna, tiene un plan de desarrollo integral, que lo conforman los proyectos, establece una instancia de deliberación máxima que es la asamblea, y lo que se arma no puede estar al margen de ese modelo.... Lo que decimos es, 'Cónchale, si tu estás pariendo un modelo de sociedad que tiene una especificidad, lo [?] en lo comunal, los instrumentos de comunicación tienen que ponerse al servicio de eso. Para fortalecerlo, para informarlo, para incubarlo, para generar conciencia.' Yo apuesto más a un impulso de la comunicación comunal que soporte este modelo.*"

would desire such a level of participation or to what degree a CPC would influence policy if it did not exercise direct authority over funding decisions. The bottom line, of course, is that such conjecture means little outside of an operational commune system because these open questions must ultimately be addressed through experimentation and resolved through experience. In this context, the CPC model can be seen as an attempt to "jump start" popular governance over participatory communications, since although many communal councils had been established by 2011, few of them had either joined together as communes or committed themselves to funding community media.

Prior to serving as Vice Minister, Altuve had served as Director of DGMAC from 2005 into 2007 and subsequently as Vice Minister of Communal Economy (*Vice Ministra de Economía Comunal*) in the Ministry of Communes. She reported that the communal councils have not proposed projects related to community media since "[t]he dynamic of the communal councils from their beginnings has been [oriented] more toward … projects that have to do with their materiality in the immediate term" (*ibid.*).[588] Illustrative of this point is a 2008 survey of communal council members which found that of the represented councils 33 percent had undertaken a project related to housing, 21 percent had addressed water and sewage, 15 percent had improved roadways, and 14 percent had augmented electricity provision, while communication and media were not among the top nine categories (Machado 2009, 118). Community media producers recognize and to a large degree empathize with these choices. As Mendez, of TV Petare, explained, "[t]he people don't see the economic benefit of having a camera, a newspaper, none of that stuff. And besides there's a historic debt, which is the cinder block, the cement, the rebar, all that. The people resolve their problems first!"[589]

While community media producers understand that the immediate economic priorities of the communal councils may not include community media, they have nonetheless been frustrated by their seeming lack of concern for constructing a participatory communications system. The primary evidence

588 "*[l]a dinámica de los CC desde sus incicios ha estado [orientado] más a … proyectos que tienen que ver con su materialidad en [el plazo] inmediato.*"
589 "*[l]a gente no le ven el beneficio económico a tener una cámara, un periódico, nada de esa vaina. Y además hay una deuda histórica, que es el bloque, el cemento, la cabilla, eso. La gente primera resuelven sus peos!*"

for this has been the lack of media spokespersons and their corresponding committees within the councils.

Flores, of Teletambores, lamented that "[t]he reality of many communal councils is that they lack that committee, now it's called 'committee of media and propaganda'.... Some 98 percent don't have the committee."[590] The lack of this committee is the primary reason given by community television practitioners for the inability to form ECPAIs within communal councils (although if the councils are unable to provide funding, then the television stations are still faced with the problem of how to maintain volunteer ECPAIs). The result has often been that the councils expect the community television stations to cover their meetings, projects, and activities, instead of producing their own coverage, as the television stations would have it. As Flores expressed it:

> The communal councils haven't placed any importance on that propaganda committee … which is for their own benefit in any case. They expect the community television station to record all [of their activities]. Imagine, therefore, ten communal councils for a community television station that doesn't have resources and has few personnel for that. Therefore we end up dividing ourselves and not doing anything. Without resources, we can't...[591]

For Flores, the sad result of all of this is that "[m]any neighbors … watch television, but they don't see what [the communal councils] are doing" and the system thus loses a valuable opportunity to reinforce or grow its support.[592]

The problem does not necessarily lie entirely within the communal council, however. Many community media outlets have had years to establish entrenched modes of operation. We have already seen that resource constraints, among other reasons, often impel community television stations to depend on the dedicated efforts of a core group of practitioners. Altuve described how this has sometimes led to tension and confrontation:

> ...because the media outlet is born before the communal council, … before the commune.... Now there are tensions... that are legitimate, in some cases the media outlet as

590"*La realidad de muchos CC es que carecen de ese comité, ahora se llama 'comité de medios y propaganda'.... Un 98% no tiene el comité.*"

591"*Los consejos comunales no le han dado importancia a esa comisión de propaganda ... que es para el beneficio de ellos en todo caso. Se dedica a que la televisora comunitaria les grabe todo[s sus actividades]. Imagínate, entonces, diez consejos comunales para una televisora comunitaria que no tiene recursos y cuenta con poco personal para eso. Entonces terminamos en dividirnos y no hacer nada. Sin recursos, no podemos…*"

592"*Muchos vecinos … ven televisión, pero no ven lo que [los consejos comunales] están haciendo*"

a foundation has closed off.... Where the media outlet had much communal inclusion … it has been … transforming, but in other places where that inclusion and that articulation with the community wasn't so strong, so consolidated, to the extent that the communal council develops there exists a level of tension about who controls the radio station, if it's the communal council and it supplanted the foundation, or the foundation closed off more and faced off, apart from the communal council. Which has to do with us as regulatory entities of this policy and of a process of accompaniment, that that isn't a mechanism of community division.[593]

In actual practice, MINCI's DGMAC does not have the capacity to monitor the relations between hundreds of community media outlets and their surrounding communal councils, and thus can only intercede when situations reach an absolute crisis. In the meantime, these tensions play out at the local level.

Such was the case with Teletambores in July of 2011. As discussed above, the station itself had reached a crisis point due to a lack of funds, malfunctioning equipment, and a staff that had been reduced to a demoralized core group of six. This core group had been hoping for months to revitalize the station through better integration with the surrounding communal councils but had met with little success. By July, it had become necessary to elect a new board of directors for the community foundation and the core group was hoping that representatives from the communal councils would participate. Toward that end, it called a meeting to discuss the options. Not all of the community councils sent representatives to the meeting and only one had actually elected a media spokesperson, but some 25 people attended the meeting. Several of the attendees had previously been active in Teletambores and were now participating in their communal council, but none of the core group of Teletambores staff was active in a community council.

This was the first open meeting on the topic, but Teletambores had been offering workshops to

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[593]“…*fueron dinámicas distintas … porque el medio nace primero que el consejo comunal, … que la comuna…. Ahora hay unas tensiones… que son legítimas, en algunos casos el medio como fundación ha cerrada…. Donde el medio tenía mucha inserción comunal … ha ido … transformando, pero en otros lados donde esa inserción y esa articulación con la comunidad no era tan fuerte, tan consolidada, en la medida que el consejo comunal se desarrolla existe un nivel de tensión de quien controla la radio, si es el consejo comunal y suplantó a la fundación, o la fundación se cierra más y se enfrenta, aparte del consejo comunal. Que nos toca nosotros como entes rectores de esta política y de un proceso de acompañamiento, que eso no sea un mecanismo de división de la comunidad.*”

and holding discussions with individual community councils previously, so the producers were aware that some of the councils held grievances. One complaint was that Briceño had been serving on the foundation's board, most recently as President, but that he now lived outside the station's coverage area, thus violating article 21 of the regulations. Briceño, who had spent over two decades working for Teletambores and its precursor projects, and who had moved away in order to purchase land for a house at a more affordable price, took this criticism as a lack of respect for his efforts and it was one of the motivations for his decision to leave Teletambores and take a job with the municipal government near his new home. Flores and his wife, who was also an active member of the core group, had recently had a child and moved to the same area as Briceño, also to take advantage of less expensive lots. They were thus not eligible to serve on the board either.

Another complaint was that Teletambores did not always cover events when requested to do so by community councils. This complaint resurfaced in the meeting when a member of one council stated that Teletambores "is not carrying out the principal function of a community television station." [594] He cited an example that had occurred two months earlier, when a local high school had requested that Teletambores record an event on global warming. The station, he said, could not respond "because it's broke." [595] Members of Teletambores, however, saw the same situation quite differently. They did not believe that it was the function of the station staff to respond to requests for coverage, but to train community producers to carry out those tasks. For them, the onus was on the communal councils and other organizations to provide volunteers and even funding to make that possible.

The majority of the discussion at the meeting, however, concerned the issue of integrating members of the community councils into Teletambores. Some members of the councils had previously suggested that representatives of the councils should sit on the foundation's board, but core members of Teletambores felt that this would cede too much power to individuals who were unfamiliar with the

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594"*no está cumpliendo la función principal de una televisora comunitaria*"
595"*porque está quebrada*"

history, philosophy, and operations of the station. In the meeting, they therefore appealed to the foundation's bylaws, which restricted membership on the board, as well as voting rights in board elections, to members who had participated actively for at least two years. Some members of the councils argued, however, that if they could not serve on the board nor vote in the elections, they were effectively barred from participating. Teletambores producers, backed by other members of the councils (especially those who had previously participated in the station), responded by pointing out that their offers of workshops and calls for participation had gone unheeded by council members, which is why they were now not in a position to vote or serve on the board.

The meeting concluded with an informal compromise. On one hand, the Teletambores staff agreed that the bylaws should be revised to speed the process of incorporation of new members into positions of leadership. In calling for this approach, María Santini, a founding member of the station, acknowledged that the current bylaws did not accord with the ethos of "active participation" (participación protagónica) that lies at the heart of the Bolivarian revolution. On the other hand, various members of the communal councils pledged to work harder to participate in the daily work necessary to operating the station and producing content. The question of funding was left unresolved.

This snapshot of tensions between Teletambores and its surrounding communal councils suggests the difficulties encountered in the process of integrating community media into the burgeoning Bolivarian civil state. The Communication Mission, the proposal for a SPNCPAC, and the CPC model had all sought to remedy this situation, but none had decisively taken hold by 2011. In relation to all three proposals the alternative and community media movement had signaled that it felt capable of constructing a truly participatory system and that what it therefore needed from the state was not guidance but the consistent allocation of resources with which to consolidate and expand. Many within the movement felt that this required a re-structuring of the sector's legal framework that would definitively surpass the liberal model of the 2001 regulations, fundamentally reform the sector's relationship with the state, and define the organizational model by which the sector would integrate with the commune system. This desire did

not emerge in reaction to the models discussed above but had been developing alongside them over the course of several years.

The alternative and community media movement's desire to reform the regulations began to coalesce in 2008. In January of that year, Chávez himself publicly called for such a reform (Movimiento Integrador de Medios Alternativos y Comunitario 2009). Then, when MoMAC formed in March and declared its "programmatic bases", they included "[r]aising the banner of the Law of Alternative and Community Media".[596] Just a couple of weeks later ANMCLA published a call for "a new Law of Telecommunications that advances toward indoafroamerican socialism" (ANMCLA 2008).[597] Later that year, ViVe hosted a meeting of community media practitioners in order to generate proposals for a new law (Manrique 2011).

In April of 2009, the Ministry of Popular Power of the Office of the President (*Ministerio del Poder Popular del Despacho de la Presidencia* / MPPDP) hosted a meeting of community media practitioners in Caracas. The "central proposal" to emerge from that meeting was the "[c]reation and promulgation of the 'Fundamental Law of the National Public System of Socialist Alternative and Community Popular Communication' as a legal framework consonant with current reality" (Informe sobre 3er encuentro... 2009).[598] Following this meeting, community media practitioners held regional meetings to discuss the specific points they wished to see incorporated in the law. In July, practitioners brought these regional proposals to the Bolivarian National Congress of Alternative and Community Media (*Congreso Nacional Bolivariano de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios*) in Maracaibo (Zulia), the sole purpose of which was to formulate a proposal for the new law.[599] In attendance at the meeting were

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596"[l]evantar la bandera de la Ley de la Comunicación Alternativa y Comunitaria"
597"*una nueva Ley de Telecomunicaciones que avance hacia el socialismo indoafroamericano*"
598"*propuesta central*"; "*[c]reación y promulgación de la 'Ley Orgánica del Sistema Nacional Público de Comunicación Popular Alternative y Comunitaria Socialista' como marco jurídico cónsono a la realidad actual*"
599The Congress was organized by the Office of Alternative and Community Media (*Dirección de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios / DMAC*) of the municipality of San Francisco, Zulia and funded by its municipal government. San Francisco borders Maracaibo, the capital of Zulia, to the south. Whereas the municipal government of the wealthier municipality of Maracaibo has been controlled by opposition parties, San Francisco's less wealthy, working class population has consistently voted for parties aligned with the Bolivarian revolution. San Francisco was the first municipality in the country to have an office dedicated to community

Rosario Pacheco and Israel Sotillo, PSUV members of the National Assembly who were then serving on Commission of Science and Technology's Sub-commission of Media, thus giving the community media sector confidence that a law was forthcoming. No bill was produced in the Assembly, however, ostensibly due to the election of new representatives in September of 2010 (Almao & Macol 2011).

Through 2010 and into 2011, the alternative and community media movement continued to organize around a new legal structure for the sector. In October of 2010, the Catia Manifesto reiterated MoMAC's call for what was now referred to as "the Law of popular communication" (*la Ley de la comunicación popular*). In November, the movement held a Working Session for the Construction of Socialist Popular Communication (*Cayapa para la Construcción de la Comunicación Popular Socialista*) in the state of Yaracuy that produced proposals for a new law. Meanwhile, although the elections of 2010 had disrupted the first attempt to pass a law, they had also given the movement a powerful ally within the National Assembly, as Eekhout had not only been elected to represent her home state of Portuguesa, but had also been named Second Vice President of the Assembly itself.

In 2011, Eekhout facilitated two meetings (the first on March 30th and the second on May 4th) between representatives from the alternative and community media movement and members of the Permanent Commission of Popular Power and Communication Media (*Comisión Permanente del Poder Popular y Medios de Comunicación*).[600] At the first of these, the Commission named several of its

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media. The DMAC was created in late 2008 in response to a petition submitted by community media practitioners. As of 2011, it employed six salaried workers, six contracted workers, and four interns (Hernández 2011).

600 Various representatives of the community media sector indicated that Eekhout facilitated the legislative process (Miguel Hernández 2011, Macol 2011, Manrique 2011). Eekhout, however, insisted that she played a minor role in the process: "I'm convinced that yes, it would have been discussed [without her intervention], Within the idea of the 'people as legislator', if it wasn't arriving by this route the people would have managed to make their proposal by another.... Perhaps I pushed it a bit. It might be, due to my interest, because I come from that experience and I know it, it might be. But I'm sure that it would have been done, if not right now a little bit further ahead. But of course. If the people have a proposal, this assembly would have picked it up and is picking it up.... It's listening to the proposals of the people.... Maybe a little, the fact of my proximity to many of these colleagues accelerated [it]... but it wasn't determinative" (Eekhout 2011).; "*Estoy convencida de que sí, se hubiera estado discutido [sin su intervención]. Dentro de la idea del 'pueblo legislador', si no venía por ésta vía por otra el pueblo habría llegado a hacer su propuesta.... A lo mejor yo lo empujé un poquito. Puede ser, por el interes, porque vengo de esa experiencia y la conozco, puede ser. Pero estoy segura de que se hubiera hecho, sino ahorita un poquito más adelante, pero claro que sí. Si el pueblo tiene una propuesta, ésta asamblea la habría recogido.... Está eschuchando las propuestas del pueblo.... Tal vez un poco, el hecho de mi cercanía a*

members to a special "Directorate of Community and Alternative Media" (*Dirección de Medios Comunitarios y Alternativos*). At the second of these, which was also attended by representative from CONATEL and Rukleman Soto, then Director of DGMACS, the community media representatives presented their proposals as a "Popular Initiative of Legislation" (*Iniciativa Popular de Legislación*) (Macol 2011, Dirección General de Investigación y Desarrollo Legislativo 2011). The agreed strategy was to pass the law using a process that is referred to by Bolivarians as the "People as Legislator" (*Pueblo Legislador*). In this context, it refers to making use of article 204 of the Bolivarian constitution, which specifies that a bill may be initiated by a petition of one-tenth of one percent of registered voters.

On May 30th a "Commission on the Law of Community Media" (*Comisión sobre la Ley de Medios Comunitarios*), which included representatives from the alternative and community media movement, as well as "liaisons" (*enlaces*) from the Directorate and members of the Technical Commission (*Comisión Técnica*) of the National Assembly, met to formulate a plan for creating a draft bill (*anteproyecto*).[601] They agreed that the National Assembly would sponsor twelve regional meetings over the course of one month, from early June to early July, that would be "open to organizations in general" and which would produce "twelve principal documents that systematize the proposals discussed as much in these events as in other avenues for the generation of proposals." [602] A web page was also to be created to allow the public to submit proposals. Following the regional meetings, representatives from the movement would meet to consolidate all of the proposals into a single draft bill that would be delivered to the National Assembly. Meanwhile, representatives in each region would be assigned to oversee the process of collecting signatures of voters in support of the draft bill. [603] Once the signatures were approved

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muchos de estos compañeros [lo] agilizó... pero no fue determinante."

601 The minutes of this meeting document the presence of representatives from the following list of associations: "Non aligned (*No Alineados*), ANCLA [sic], AMCLA, [sic], Network of Television Stations (*Red de Televisoras*) [sic], Bolivarian Block (*Bloque Bolivariano*), MoMAC, Network of Collectives (*Red de Colectivos*)".

602 "*abierta a organizaciones en general*"; "*doce documentos principales que sistematizan las propuestas discutidas tanto en estos eventos como en las otras vías de generación de propuestas.*"

603 In 2011, citizen initiatives required a minimum of 17,793 signatures to meet the 0.1 percent threshold. Moreover, the National Electoral Commission (*Comisión Nacional Electoral*) was required to approve the submitted signatures. 33,854 signatures were ultimately collected (Llevarán a primera discusión Proyecto de Ley de Comunicación para el Poder Popular 2011).

and the draft bill delivered, it would be refined into proper legal language by "technicians" (*técnicos*) from the National Assembly and submitted to the two discussions that are required to pass a law in that body.

Further below we will examine the content of the sector's proposals and their evolution within the legislative process. Before we do, however, it is worth noting certain aspects of the "People as Legislator" process in relation to our previous discussion of autonomy vis-a-vis the Venezuelan state. As we have seen, the alternative and community media movement simultaneously recognizes the Bolivarian state as an ally in its efforts to establish a hegemonic participatory media system and a potential obstacle to establishing citizen control over that same system. In relation to the Communication Mission, the SPNCPAC, and the CPCs, civil society control over community media was of paramount importance for practitioners. Advancing the proposed law as a citizen initiative provided a rhetorical claim to popular legitimacy that was backed by a consultative process which included not only the twelve regional meetings, but also the results of the 2009 National Congress and many other previous meetings, as well as proposals submitted by various associations of community media practitioners. Nonetheless, certain aspects of the process called into question the nature of its popular legitimacy.

The consultative process was limited in two ways. First, though perhaps not unexpectedly, the regional meetings were clearly intended to solicit input from committed Bolivarians only. Of course, this is common practice in a highly polarized political system in which the opposing sides do not only disagree about policy issues, but about the framework of governance itself. Bolivarians would argue that anyone not aligned with the Bolivarian cause would have little to contribute to a law designed to enmesh with a new geometry of power and the communal structure. Advocates of a liberal model of community media, in other words, would find little common ground from which to offer proposals. Nonetheless, opening a regional meeting by singing not only the national anthem, but also that of the PSUV, as occurred in Maracaibo on June 17th, belied the rhetorical ideal of a plural and broadly inclusive popular consultative process.

The process was also limited in the degree that it represented Bolivarian civil society. While the strategy devised by the Commission on the Law of Community Media sought broad participation from social movements and organizations, the reality was that the vast majority of participants in the regional conferences were community media practitioners. The collected proposals, therefore, reflected the desires of the Bolivarian alternative and community media movement, not those of community councils, associations of workers, or other civil society entities. This is not to say that the process was not open to representatives from such organizations, and their lack of participation is partly a reflection of the ongoing difficulty of engaging Bolivarian civil society in relation to the issue of participatory communications, which is neither widely understood nor prioritized. Nonetheless, the rapid pace of the consultation process and its dependence on existent communication networks within the alternative and community media sector also played a significant role in limiting participation.

Arguably, greater participation by individuals representing organizations outside the community media sector may have yielded few significant proposals, as they would have been unfamiliar with the theoretical and practical context of the issues at hand. Ostensibly, however, the process of collecting signatures in support of the proposed bill presented an additional opportunity for generating broader public debate on these issues. In actuality, though, signatures were solicited prior to the preparation of the draft bill, meaning that signatories were unable to review the specifics of the proposal. In other words, they were at best registering their support for participatory media but not the substantive content of the proposal itself. When signatures were solicited in public spaces, such as when Catia TVe set up a table in the Plaza Bolivar in downtown Caracas, the willingness of passersby seemed to have more to do with their affinity for the Bolivarian revolution in general than with any particular concern for or even curiosity regarding community media.

Given these limitations, the labor and resources invested in the "people as legislator" process do not seem to have effected a broad public debate. As a result, the draft bill that was ultimately produced reflected almost entirely the concerns of the alternative and community media movement itself, and many

of those concerns had been established prior to the process, whether through national associations, regional meetings, or the 2009 national congress. Nonetheless, the process did allow for the further refinement of specific proposals, as we will discuss in detail below. Speaking at the July 20th ceremony in which the draft bill was officially presented before the Permanent Commission of Popular Power and Communication Media, Eekhout stated that "almost 3,000" individuals representing 321 community media outlets had participated in the regional meetings and that an additional eight proposals, received from groups including ANMCLA and the National Movement of Community Television Stations, had been incorporated into the proposed text. Shaping the mass of collected proposals into the text of the draft bill, however, required that a "systematization team" (*equipo de sistematización*) reduce them to a set of discrete articles.

Upon presenting the draft bill at the July 20th ceremony, Rosiris Berroteran, a producer for Tatuy TV (Merida), claimed that the systematization team had been composed of representatives from each of the 23 Venezuelan states. Nonetheless, Miguel Hernández, a "promoter" (*promotor*) in the Office of Alternative and Community Media (*Dirección de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios*) of the municipality of San Francisco (Zulia), reported that the systematization was carried out by members of the Commission on the Law of Community Media that had been selected in March. Originally this commission included 12 representatives from the alternative and community media movement, but only five were able to be in Caracas to participate in the systematization. In addition to Hernández and Berroteran, they were Fermín Sandoval, of Radio Petare, Meylin Chung, formerly of Catia TVe and at the time employed by ViVe, and Miguel Ugas (Miguel Hernández 2011). Chung conceived the CPC while at Catia TVe and then been hired at ViVe to oversee its promotion (Almao 2011) and we have seen that Ugas had been largely responsible for theorizing and publicizing the Communication Mission. In addition to these representatives, the systematization team included three technicians from the National Assembly, two members of Eekhout's staff, and one representative from both MINCI and CONATEL (Miguel Hernández). Decisions made during this process necessarily created an additional filter and may have

reflected the predilections of the team members.

Of course, once the draft bill was submitted to the Assembly, control over the text was entirely out of the hands of the movement. In recognition of this, upon concluding her presentation to the Commission of Popular Power and Communication Media, Berroteran asked "that it be respected as much as possible."[604] As we will see, however, the legislators ultimately introduced considerable changes.

As noted above, representatives from the alternative and community media movement met with those from the Office of the President in April of 2009 to formulate a strategy for passing a "Fundamental Law of the National Public System of Socialist Alternative and Community Popular Communication". The document they created outlined eight themes to be addressed by the new law: 1) Conceptual Aspects 2) Sustainability and Stability of Financing 3) Entity of Articulation [with Bolivarian Civil Society] 4) Authorization, Transmission, and Radio Spectrum 5) Infrastructure, Services, and Transport 6) Socio-Political Training 7) Social Security 8) Reception of Graduates [from Mission Sucre and the Bolivarian University of Venezuela] and Platform (Regional – Local) of National System of Public Media (Informe sobre 3er encuentro...).[605] For the National Congress held in July, these were condensed to four areas that served as the basis for proposals created by separate "working groups" (*mesas*): 1) Conceptual Aspects from the New Socialist Ethics 2) Training from Popular Power for the Creation of Communicational Policies 3) Sustainability in the Socialist Productive Model 4) Participatory and Active Democracy (Conclusiones y propuesta finales 2009).[606] Participants in the regional meetings of the 2011 "people as legislator" consultative process were also divided into four "thematic axes" (*ejes temáticos*): 1) Diagnostic and Principals: Socialist Ethic of Communication 2) Participatory Democracy: Popular Power

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604"*que se respete lo más posible*"

605*1) Aspectos Conceptuales 2) Sustainability and Stability of Financing 3) Órgano de Articulación [con la Sociedad Civil Bolivariana] 4) Habilitación, Transmisión y Espectro Radioeléctrico 5) Infraestructura, Servicios y Transporte 6) Formación Socio Política 7) Seguridad Social 8) Recepción de Egresados [de la Misión Sucre y la Universidad Bolivariana de Venezuela] y Plataforma (Regional – Local) de Sistema Nacional de Medios Públicos*

606*1) Aspectos Conceptuales desde la Nueva Ética Socialista 2) Formación desde el Poder Popular para la Creación de Políticas Comunicacionales 3) Sustentabilidad en el Modelo Productivo Socialista 4) Democracia Participativa y Protagónica*

for Communicating 3) Training in Alternative and Community Communication 4) Sustainability (Plan de Discusión del Anteproyecto... 2011).[607]

Taken together, these themes express the breadth of topics considered fundamental to the restructuration of the legal framework for Bolivarian community media and provide a sense of their relative weight within the multi-phase consultative process. As a thorough review of each of these themes is beyond the scope of our analysis, this shorthand must suffice for a general understanding of the many issues at play. Here we will focus on two key areas: organizational structure and sustainability. This choice stems from our discussion of the difficulties faced by the sector under the 2001 regulations, as well as the necessity and difficulty of integrating with the new geometry of power.

By examining proposals for a reformulation of the sector's organizational model we can gain insight into the developing logic of participatory civil society governance within the communal structure. As we saw, a general lack of resources has been a major obstacle not only to the development of this governance structure, but to the autonomous consolidation and expansion of the sector more generally. Jointly reviewing proposals for financial sustainability and civil society integration will help us to understand the vital relationship between funding and autonomy within "socialism for the 21st century", which we have understood as a transition toward a Gramscian civil state.

In terms of sustainability, the report produced by the April 2009 meeting hosted by the Office of the President called for the creation of:

> a financing fund for [community media outlets] and popular communication, with contributions from the Fund of the RESORTE Law, [the Fundamental Law of Science, Technology, and Innovation (*Ley Orgánica de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación* / LOCTI)], resources from the national budget and publicity line items from public entities." (Informe Sobre 3er Encuentro...)[608]

607*1) Diagnóstico y Principios: Ética Socialista de la Comunicación 2) Democracia Participativa: Poder Popular para Comunicar 3) Formación y Capacitación en Comunicación Comunitaria y Alternativa 4) Sustentabilidad*
608Both the RESORTE Law and the LOCTI included provisions requiring businesses of a certain size and within certain sectors to contribute to funds earmarked for public initiatives.; "*un fondo de financiamiento para los [medios comunitarios] y la comunicación popular, con aportes del Fondo de Ley RESORTE, [Ley Orgánica de Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación (LOCTI)], recursos del presupuesto nacional y partidas de publicidad de los entes públicos.*"

Once established, "permanent and constant mechanisms for the distribution of resources" from this fund would finance "annual socialist operating projects, that include payroll, equipment, new revenues and development, duly endorsed by Communal Councils or other instruments of social control."[609] Assumedly, the intent was to replace the burden of constantly applying for project funding from a multiplicity of public institutions with a single annual application to a unitary source. Additionally, the report called for "[p]romoting the elimination of publicity spots as a mechanism of commercialization of communication that reproduces [the] capitalist model."[610] Additional elements related to sustainability included no cost provision of public services, including electricity, telephone, and Internet, for community media outlets, promotion of "a financing system for the acquisition or provision of vehicles", and the inclusion of community media practitioners in the public social security system, which includes medical insurance, basic food subsidies, and access to the pension system.[611]

The report was much more vague regarding a new organizational model for the sector. It called for:

> [p]romoting the creation of a linking instance or council, as an organic structure expressing the popular power for the participation, integration, and articulation of community media outlets, communication committees [in the Communal Councils] and user committees, students and graduates in the area. This being, [sic] a mechanism of deep organization, self-regulation, planning, and administration, that takes into account plans for technological development and serves as a social platform of community media outlets with socialist principles.[612]

This was basically a re-articulation of the impulse expressed in general terms in relation to the Communication Mission and SPNCPAC, and more specifically in the model of the CPC.

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609 "*mecanismos permanentes y constantes para la distribución de recursos*"; "*proyectos operativos anuales socialistas (POAS), que contemplan nómina, equipos, nuevos ingresos y desarrollo, debidamente avalados por Consejos Comunales u otros instrumentos de control social*"
610 "[i]mpular la eliminación de las pautas publicitarias como mecanismo de mercantilización de la comunicación que reproduce [el] modelo capitalista"
611 "*un sistema de financiamiento para adquisición o dotación de vehiculos*"
612 "*[p]romover la creación de una instancia vinculante o consejo, como estructura orgánica y de expresión del poder popular para la participación, integración y articulación de los medios comunitarios, comités de comunicación y usuarios, estudiantes y egresados en el área. Siendo este, [sic] un mecanismo de organización, autoregulación, planificación y administración del fondo, que contemple planes para el desarrollo tecnológico y sirve de plataforma social de los MAC con principios socialistas.*"

These proposals provided the basis from which community media practitioners proceeded during the National Congress in July of 2009. As noted above, participants of the Congress were divided into various working groups, each of which was tasked with agreeing on proposals for a different aspect of the proposed law. Nonetheless, there was some overlap between the working groups. Group Three, tasked with formulating proposals related to "Sustainability in the Socialist Productive Model" followed the rubric laid out in the April report by calling for the "National Executive" to create a "Permanent Support and Financing Fund for *the direct distribution of resources* to [community media outlets], to guarantee their normal functioning, by the assignation of annual operating resources" that would be "under the responsibility of *an articulating council designated by the [alternative and community media outlets]* and supervised by the Social Oversight of the [community media sector]" (my emphasis). [613] Group Three's proposal also follows the April report in calling for the fund to be drawn from the funds established by the RESORTE Law, the LOCTI, and the national budget, but it specified that the fund should also receive "45 percent of the line items for publicity, of public entities and assignations of the National Executive". [614]

Meanwhile, whereas the April proposal implied that the national fund would end the sector's dependence on short term projects funded by multiple institutions, Group Three specified that the sector's financing "should come from projects". [615] Also, whereas the April report called for the elimination of publicity campaigns as a form of financing community media, Group Three proposed that the sector "will be able to make publicity in accordance with the [RESORTE Law] and the regulations". [616] Finally, Group Three mentioned the potential for "the participation of members of the communal councils in the sustainability" of the sector and further suggested the possibility that the community councils would

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613All quotations related to the proposals formulated at the National Congress are taken from "Conclusiones y Propuestas finales" (2009).; "*Ejecutivo Nacional*"; "*Fondo de Financiamiento y Sustentación Permanente para la distribución directa de recursos a los [medios alternativos y comunitarios], para garantizar su normal funcionamiento, mediante la asignación de recursos operativos anuales*"; "*a cargo de un consejo articulador por los [medios alternativos y comunitarios] y superviado por la Contraloría Social del [sector de medios comunitarios]*"

614"*el 45 por ciento de las partidas de publicidad, de los entes publicos [sic] y asignaciones del Ejecutivo Nacioanl [sic].*"

615"*debe ser contra proyectos*"

616"*podrán hacer publicidad de acuerdo a lo esablecido en la Ley [RESORTE] y el reglamento*"

facilitate "reimbursable credits".[617]

This set of proposals suggest that the alternative and community media movement was indeed focused on a national fund as the primary source of financing, but it nonetheless held tight to the flexibility provided by projects and publicity, both familiar sources of revenue. More significant, however, is the extremely limited degree to which sustainability was envisioned as integral to the new geometry of power of the communal system and other forms of Bolivarian civil society. The fund would be centralized at the national level and its resources distributed directly to individual community media outlets, with decisions taken by a council composed entirely of representatives from the community media sector. In this formulation no other elements of Bolivarian civil society would play a role in decision-making or social oversight, although such possibilities certainly existed. For example, representatives from other sectors of civil society might sit on the council overseeing the national fund. Alternatively, the fund might be distributed through the communal system, so that funding decisions would ultimately be made at regional and local levels by elected spokespeople responsible to their community assemblies. Rather than integrating the fund with the communal system, however, Group Three included only vague language that positioned communal councils as peripheral sources of funding.

Although Group Two was tasked with formulating proposals related to "Training from Popular Power for the Creation of Communicational Policies", its suggestions bear on the issue of sustainability. It called for requiring every community media outlet to create a "Committee of Technical and Socio-Political Training" composed of at least three members, a "General Coordinator", a "Finance Coordinator", and a "Training Spokesperson".[618] These committees would then be able to apply for project funding to a national "Permanent Fund for the Committees of Technical and Socio-Political Training, whose resources will be accounted for in the Annual Budget Law of the Nation" and which would be administered by "the Interdisciplinary Commission of Alternative and Community Media". [619]

617"*la participación de los miembros de los consejos comunales en la sustentabilidad*"; "*creditos retornables*"
618"*Comité de Formación Técnica y Socio-Política*"; "*Coordinador(a) General*"; "*Coordinador(a) de Finanzas*"; "*Vocer(o/a) de Finanzas*"
619"*Fondo Permanente para los Comités de Formación Técnica y Socio-Política, cuyos recursos estarán*

Significantly, this commission would be tasked with "guaranteeing the equitable distribution of said fund in the diverse areas: training, equipment, [and] projects", which suggest that Group Two envisioned this fund as the primary funding source for community media in general, not only in relation to training. [620] The Interdisciplinary Commission would be composed of seven members, although two contrasting methods for their election appeared in the proposal. One called for them to be "elected in an assembly of the alternative media, by distinct geographic axes", whereas a different section called for them to be "elected in a National Assembly of Alternative and Community Media, which must be attended by a delegate from each media outlet". [621] In either case, however, control over the national fund was placed entirely under the community media sector, with the implication that the sector would be formally organized into a federated structure holding regular decision-making assemblies.

Group Four, which was asked to develop proposals related to the theme of "Active and Participatory Democracy", called for the creation of CPCs. Its vision of the CPC, however, was distinct from the model that was soon to be actualized by MINCI and ViVe. In the model proposed by Group Four, the CPC would operate at the municipal level and be comprised of all of the "parish councils" (*consejos parroquiales*) operating within its municipality. These parish councils would include:

> a) the communications spokespersons of the communal councils of the parish b) representatives from [the alternative and community media outlets] c) communication students of the parish d) representatives from the users committees e) and representatives from all the social organizations that are linked with [the community media sector] and that operate within the parish space. [622]

contemplados en la Ley de Presupuesto Anual de la Nación"; "*la Comisión Interdisciplinaria de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios*"

620 "*garantizando la equitativa distribución de dicho fondo en las diversas áreas: formación, equipos, proyectos*"

621 Though not directly pertinent to our discussion of sustainability, it is worth noting that Group Two specified that eligibility for election to both the Training Committees and the Interdisciplinary Committee would require at least one year of active membership in the community media outlet as well as "having a politico-ideological profile coherent with the revolutionary socialist vocation of the alternative and community media movement". How such a determination would be legally evaluated was, of course, not specified.; "*[t]ener un perfil politico-ideológico coherente con la vocación revoucionaria socialista del movimiento de medios alternativos y comunitarios.*"; "*electos en asamblea de los medios alternativos, por los distintos ejes geográficos*"; "*electos en Asamblea Nacional de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios, a la cual deberá asistir un delegado por cada medio*"

622 "*a) los voceros y voceras de comunicación de los consejos comunales de la parroquia b) los representantes de los [medios alternativos y comunitarios] c) los estudiantes de comunicación social de la parroquia d) los representantes de los comités de usuarios e) y representantes de todas las organizaciones sociales que estén*"

The tasks of the parish councils were defined to include "[p]romoting and supporting the creation, organization, and functioning" of alternative and community media outlets, "[e]stablishing [their] norms of self-regulation", "[p]lanning and distributing external or internal resources [sic]", and "[e]stablishing [their] policies of participation, interaction, and articulation". [623] Finally, each parish council was to form a "parish committee" (*comité parroquial*) with an unspecified number of representatives from both the community media sector and Bolivarian civil society whose responsibility would be to administer funds according to the decisions made by the council.

While the proposals from Group Four clearly embrace integration with the communal system, they make use of "fourth republican" parishes and municipalities to determine geographical boundaries, instead of keeping to the communal council and commune framework. Assumedly, this was because very few communes had actually been created as of 2009 and the familiar geopolitical zoning structure was deemed more trustworthy, at least in the short term. Meanwhile, the role of the municipal-level CPC is left undefined, although it would ostensibly serve as a mechanism for coordinating policy amongst the parish councils and perhaps carrying out municipal-level projects. Most significantly, we should note that the assignment of decision-making authority over funding to the parish councils places this set of proposals at odds with the design of the national funds proposed by Groups Two and Three, making some sort of reconciliation necessary.

In relation to our areas of focus, the proposals created during the 2009 National Congress can be summarized as follows. Regarding sustainability, the alternative and community media movement indicated a clear preference for the establishment of a national fund as a primary funding mechanism. This fund would be administered by the Bolivarian community media sector and financed by taxes on the private sector (via the funds already established by the RESORTE Law and the LOCTI), the publicity budgets of state institutions, and a direct contribution from the annual public budget. Additional sources

vinculadas con los MACs y que hagan vida dentro del espacio parroquial"
623"[p]romover y apoyar la creación, organización y funcionamiento"; "[e]stablecer [sus] normas de
    autoregulación"; "*[p]lanificar y distribuir los recursos externos o internos [sic]*"; "*[e]stablecer [sus] políticas
    de participación, interacción y articulación*"

of revenue, including projects, publicity, and contributions from communal councils, were acknowledged but not prioritized. Regarding organizational structure, the movement suggested the creation of a federated system of participatory civil governance that would draw on but exist parallel to the communal system, thus allowing a wider range of Bolivarian civil society to participate more directly in the governance of the popular media system. Significantly, however, there was no direct mention of how community producers would fit into this framework.

Following the Congress, the Office of Alternative and Community Media of San Francisco led an effort to consolidate the proposals of the various groups into a single document. This led to a working paper that evolved through three drafts but remained nonetheless an unfinished product. As such, it offers little additional insight into the vision of the alternative and community media movement in relation to our current focus areas. In the section on sustainability, however, the addition of the following language, which was not in the group proposals generated during the Congress, is worth noting: "Governmental institutions should be obligated in the new Law to advertise in the alternative and community media and should be prohibited from advertising in commercial media." [624] Thus, whereas the report generated by the April 2009 meeting with the Office of the President called for eliminating publicity entirely, the movement opted to maintain the possibility of commercial advertising and proposed to convert state publicity budgets into a guaranteed subsidy.

The proposals generated at the 2009 National Congress, in conjunction with those formulated at regional meetings, were incorporated into the document that served a basis for the discussions that took place during the 2011 "people as legislator" process (Miguel Hernández 2011). This document, entitled "Draft Bill of the Law of Alternative, Community Media and of Popular Communication" (*Anteproyecto de Ley de Medios Comunitarios, Alternativos, y de la Comunicación Popular* / LMCACP), was printed by the National Assembly in June and distributed at the 12 regional meetings. It was then revised by the

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[624]"*Las Instituciones gubernamentales deben estar obligadas en la nueva Ley a pautar en los medios alternativos y comunitarios y deben tener prohibido pautar en medios comerciales.*"

systematization team based on the proposals collected during the process and submitted to the Assembly's Commission on Popular Power and Media in August as "Draft Bill of the Law of Communication for Popular Power" (*Anteproyecto de Ley de Comunicación para el Poder Popular* / LCPP). That document was then lightly revised, retitled as the "Law of Popular Communication", and submitted to the full Assembly. The Venezuelan legislative process requires that a bill be subject to two separate discussions. The first of these serves to introduce the bill and allows for general remarks. Most bills easily pass the first discussion. The second discussion is where strenuous debate occurs, with amended articles being subjected to votes. The Law of Popular Communication was approved in a first discussion in November and submitted for a second discussion in December. Significant changes were made to the bill's text in the interim. We will continue to focus on the issues of sustainability and organizational structure as we follow the evolution of the drafts throughout the above process.

In line with the proposals of the 2009 National Congress, the draft bill that accompanied the regional discussions of the "people as legislator" process prioritized the creation of a national fund. This fund was to be assigned to the office of the Vice President, provided with an annual budget the sources of which were not specified, and administered by an "ad hoc Technical Commission" comprised of "a spokesperson for each communicational expression: Radio, Print, Television Stations, Murals, Internet, Telematics and a representative of the State, who will preside over said Commission." The community media sector would thus continue to control the fund, although its members would represent distinct media, not the geographic areas suggested in the National Congress proposals. Also, for the first time a representative of the state would be included in the administrative body.

The June draft bill also called for all state entities to direct 50 percent of their publicity budgets "to be distributed with criteria of proportionality, equity, justice, and transparency, via institutional publicity spots, between all Alternative and Community Communication Media Outlets, legally and duly established in the national territory." Whereas the 2009 National Congress proposal had called for 45 percent of publicity budgets to be directed to the national fund, here the amount was increased and

directed to the community media sector as an additional source of revenue, above and beyond the national fund. Meanwhile, the June draft bill followed the Congress proposal in explicitly authorizing commercial publicity in accordance with the regulations established by the RESORTE Law, though it included language an article which attempted to mitigate the range of that publicity. Much of the language in that article, however, was legally untenable. For example, "[p]articular attention will be placed on the content of publicity that shows modes of life contrary to the values that are promoted and defended, such as: consumerism...".

A separate article listed additional sources of potential revenue, including the provision of various services. Significantly, although this article mentioned the "collection of donations from the community", the June draft bill included no language linking the sustainability of community media to the commune system. In fact, it hardly mentioned the commune system, even in an article entitled "Organization and Participation" that specified the creation of CPCs "in every Commune in construction and in each social movement, as a basic instance of organization for the active participation of the people, in the cultivation, diffusion, and practice of Popular Communication." The article did not specify the role of a CPC nor who was to participate within it. In fact, in calling for the creation of CPCs "in each social movement", it displayed a misunderstanding of the structure of the CPC, which should draw representatives from social movements, not be embedded within them. Moreover, the reference to communes "in construction" signals that the authors of the draft were focused on the contemporary state of the commune system, not the structure envisioned by the new geometry of power.

At the time of the regional discussions in 2011, the alternative and community media movement had been seeking to integrate with the communal council system for five years. The sparsity of the vision it had so far developed can not be ignored; it appears to testify to the difficulty of understanding community media in terms of organization, as an articulating element of an inclusive and hegemonic civil society, as opposed to in terms of content, as a mechanism for producing counter-hegemonic messages. It remained easier, in other words, to specify what kind of advertising content should be avoided than to

describe mechanisms for establishing a participatory system of decision-making. A certain degree of mistrust was also involved in the lack of emphasis on civil society governance. For example, a significant number of participants in the regional discussions believed that the sustainability of community media outlets should depend primarily on the communal councils and communes, as opposed to a national fund or institutional publicity. They thus proposed that the law should require community councils and communes to direct a small percentage of the budget of all approved projects to a local fund for popular communication that would be accessible by community media outlets and community producers. Part of the rationale for this proposal was that community media would play a role in the promotion and social oversight of these projects, and was thus entitled to a percentage of their budget. Supporters of this proposal also pointed out that it produced a greater degree of local control over decision-making relative to a national fund, although supporters of the national fund countered that it could be structured so that block grants were distributed through the communal system and decisions regarding individual projects would be made at the local level. The most common objection to requiring funding via the communal councils, however, was that the system was not yet fully operational and would thus be insufficient to the consolidation and growth of community media. Given this context, most participants preferred the option of a national fund that would depend on the executive branch and provide greater resources more immediately.

Indeed, the revised draft bill that was presented to the National Assembly in August maintained the national fund as the primary source of revenue for the community media sector. Whereas the June draft specified that the fund would be administered by six representatives from the sector and one from the state, the August draft called for:

> a board of evaluation of projects presided by a representative from the Executive Vice Presidency of the Republic, a representative from the Ministry of Popular Power for Planning and Finance, a representative of the Ministry of Popular Power for Communication and Information, [and] four spokespersons of the Communication Media of Popular Power.[625]

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[625]"*una junta de evaluación de proyectos presidida por un representante de la Vicepresidencia Ejecutiva de la*

Obviously, this composition invested much more control in the state, though the community media sector retained the majority presence. The the 2009 National Congress proposals had made clear the alternative and community media movement's preference for total control. The 2011 regional meeting in Caracas, meanwhile, proposed that the fund be controlled by an autonomous institution with representation from the community media sector and other social movements. The introduction of representatives from state institutions therefore appears to have been imposed by the systematization team, perhaps under the guidance of the legislative staff and/or the representatives from MINCI and CONATEL. Hernández, who served on the team, explained that they had viewed this as a compromise. They recognized that MINCI, as the institution that housed the DGMAC and supported the community media sector, deserved to be represented in the administration of the fund, but only as one voice among many, "because they have always chosen [to provide funding for] whoever they wanted." The representatives from the alternative and community media movement were confident, in other words, that they had established a framework within which the sector itself would maintain control over funding.

Although the administration of the fund had been opened to representatives from state institutions, it had no representatives from civil society organizations beyond the community media sector, although this had been proposed at the regional meeting in Caracas. When asked specifically why the communal system was not represented, Hernández explained that "they can't be there.... They are going to be included inside [the media outlets], as a controller … for the programs … [and the] content.... They will have voice and vote when they organize themselves in the media outlet that is close to their house."[626] Bolivarian civil society, in other words, would only be represented at the local level of decision-making. He went on to express a concern that if representatives from the commune system played a role in the administration of the fund, they might choose to divert the financing to other types of

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Republica, un representante del Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Planificación y Finanzas, un representante del Ministerio del Poder Popular para la Comunicación e Información, [y] cuatro voceros de los Medios de Comunicación del Poder Popular."

[626]*"ellos no pueden estar allí.... Se van a incluir dentro, como controlor ... para los programas ... [y el] contenido.... Ellos van a tener voz y voto cuando ellos se organicen en el medio que queda cerca a su casa."*

projects. He also expressed an additional worry that members of the opposition could participate in the communes and thus influence the allocation of the resources. These fears seem quite unfounded: it would be simple enough to mandate that the fund be used solely for community media no matter who controlled its allocation, while a democratic selection process within the communal system would ensure the selection of Bolivarian representatives, so long as the majority of electors insisted upon that ideology. Hernández's concerns were perhaps less indicative of actual obstacles than a lack of vision regarding the integration of the community media sector with Bolivarian civil society and a persistent mistrust of a communal system that had yet to become deeply rooted in Venezuelan society. In this context, the alternative and community media movement remained convinced that only its members sufficiently understood its needs. While this perspective may have been accurate in the short term, it led the movement to propose a law which ceded greater decision-making authority to the state apparatus than it did to other elements of Bolivarian civil society.

Unlike the June draft bill, which had called for the national fund to draw on funds established in the RESORTE Law and the LOCTI, the August draft bill required that publicity and telecommunications companies contribute two percent of their profits to the fund. The draft bill also called for the fund to receive annual contributions from the profits of the public banking system and state enterprises, though it did not specify the amount. Additionally, it specifically authorized donations to the fund from any natural or legal person.

As noted above, the June draft bill had called for 50 percent of state publicity budgets to go toward community media outlets. This was consistently supported by participants at the regional meetings who were outraged that the state would contribute such a significant amount of money to a commercial media system that sought to undermine it. Nonetheless, the August draft bill removed the 50 percent specification, leaving a weak article which stated that community media outlets "will be able to receive … a percentage of resources earmarked for publicity" within the budgets of state institutions. [627] Given the

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[627] "*podrán recibir … un porcentaje de los recursos destinados para publicidad*"

movement's widespread support for mandating a 50 percent contribution, its removal in the august draft

seems likely to have been suggested by state representatives who recognized it as untenable.

One of the more intense vectors of debate during the regional meetings of the "people as

legislator" process was over commercial advertising. Many members of the movement felt that it had no

place in a popular communication system, whereas others felt that it remained a necessary evil, at least

until other sources of funding proved consistently reliable. Like the June draft bill, the August draft

specifically permitted commercial advertising, though it required that no more than 40 percent of that

advertising pertain to persons or businesses outside of a media outlet's service area. This was probably a

compromise solution, as it advanced the limitation of the 2001 regulations, which had set the maximum at

50 percent. The August draft also dropped the language of the June draft that had attempted to mitigate

the type of advertising permitted, perhaps because much of it was recognized as untenable, but also

perhaps because it belonged more properly in the regulations that would follow the law. The August draft

also followed the June draft in specifically recognizing additional sources of revenue, including

"[d]onations [from] and agreements with public and private institutions". [628]

The June draft bill had included the CPC as an organizational model designed to integrate the

community media sector with Bolivarian civil society more generally, but it was dropped from the August

draft. This decision was perhaps influenced by the presence of a representative from MINCI, which in

2011 did not support the CPC model. In any case, two new articles pointed to the communal council

system as the primary mechanism of integration. One specified that:

> [d]irect members of a popular communication media outlet, will have to stimulate and
> assist in the formation and activation of the Alternative and Community Media
> Committees of the Communal Councils in the territories neighboring its location, as well
> as contribute to the fortification of other organizations of Popular Power. [629]

The other declared that "[t]he citizens of the community where the media outlet functions, constituted as

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628 "*[d]onaciones [de] y convenios con instituciones públicas y privadas*"
629 "*[l]os integrantes directos de un medio de comunicación popular, deberán impulsar y coadyuvar en la
conformación y activación de los Comités de Medios Comunitarios y Alternativos de los Consejos Comunales en
los territorios aledaños a su ubicación, así como también contribuir con el fortalecimiento de las demás
organlzaciones del Poder Popular.*"

an assembly, will exercise social oversight over their communication media, in order to guarantee the participation of the community" in their functioning. [630] The language in these articles is barely tenable, as it merely suggests integration with the communal council system without specifying viable and legally enforceable mechanisms by which this should occur. It might have, for example, required that communication spokespersons from the communal councils have a voting presence within the general assemblies and/or administrative boards of community media outlets, or that each community media outlet deliver an annual report of its activities to the communal councils in its service area. The lack of such enforceable mechanisms signaled once again the movement's difficulty in envisioning and articulating a concrete mode of integration with the communal system.

Significantly, the August draft bill introduced language that specified the coverage area for community media broadcasters. Whereas the regulations had limited this area to a single municipality, the draft bill specified only that "[c]overage will depend on the social and cultural characteristics of the determined geographic zone, of the community organizations that promote the media outlet, and of the technical characteristics of the transmission equipment." [631] This meant that there were essentially no limits on the reach of a single broadcaster and implied that the movement endorsed a system in which the broadcasters themselves would not be responsible for producing the majority of the content. Although it was not explicitly stated, the implication was that the consistent financing provided by the national fund, perhaps in conjunction with a more developed commune system, would finally enable community producers, such as the ECPAIs, to deliver content on a regular and timely basis.

In brief, the draft bill that had been created via the "people as legislator" process and which was presented to the Commission on Popular Power and Media in August of 2011 established a national fund as the primary source of financing for the community media sector, mandated a tax on advertising and

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[630] "*[l]os ciudadanos y ciudadanas de la comunidad donde funcione el medio, reunidos en asamblea, ejercerán la contraloría social de sus medios de comunicación, a fin de garantizar la participación de la comunidad*"

[631] "*[l]a cobertura dependerá de las características sociales y culturales de la zona geográfica determinada, de las organizaciones comunitarias que impulsan el medio y de las características técnicas de los equipos de transmisión.*"

telecommunications companies as the revenue source for that fund, and included only vague language encouraging an integration of the community media sector with the communal system. Although it had been retitled as the Law of Popular Power Communication (*Ley de Comunicación del Poder Popular* / LCPP), the bill was largely unchanged when it was submitted for its first discussion in the National Assembly. In relation to our current areas of focus, the only substantial change was to the mechanism by which the national fund would be financed. Telecommunications companies would no longer be subjected to the two percent tax, leaving only advertising companies as the source of revenue for the fund. The bill was approved following its first discussion on November 10th, with representatives from the PSUV and the Communist Party voting in favor, and opposition representatives voting against. [632]

By December 16th, when the National Assembly opened the second discussion on the LCPP bill, it had been considerably altered by Bolivarian legislators acting without the input of the alternative and community media movement. The national fund, now called the Fund for the Development of Popular Power Communication (*Fondo para el Desarrollo de la Comunicación del Poder Popular*), was retained, although the corresponding tax on the advertising sector had been altered to one percent of the annual gross revenue where that revenue was greater than 20,000 Tributary Units (*Unidades Tributarias*).[633] Meanwhile, references to other sources of revenue for the community sector were removed entirely, which is not to say that they were prohibited; assumedly they were meant to be addressed in the law's subsidiary regulations. The major changes to the bill, however, resulted from the reintroduction of the CPC as the basic unit for the organizational and administrative structure of the entire sector.

The December LCPP bill defined CPCs as "organizational instances of Popular Power, whose object is to develop popular communication in its geographic or sectoral area, in correspondence with the policies and strategies designed collectively and issued from the National Council of Popular

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632 In August, the four opposition members of the Commission on Popular Power and Media had circulated a counter-proposal, entitled "Principles and Proposals for the drafting of a Law on public service, non-profit community media" which was based on recommendations published by AMARC and thus hewed to the liberal model of community media (Pillieri et al. 2011).

633 Venezuelan laws specify financial amounts in multiple of Tributary Units, the value of which is adjusted periodically to account for inflation.

Communication."[634] The National Council, meanwhile, was assigned to the Vice Presidency and charged

with "the coordination and collective and articulated development of policies related to the promotion,

formation, and financing of the instances and organizations of Popular Power Communication, through

the Fund for the Development of Popular Power Communication."[635] In this system, therefore,

administration at the national level was integrated with an organizational model that functioned at

subsidiary levels. The result was a vision for a robust structure of participatory communications that

would be integrated with not only the communal system but also other manifestations of Bolivarian civil

society. This vision was more comprehensive than any that had been previously proposed and represented

a considerable advance toward civil society governance of a potentially hegemonic media system. At the

same time, however, it remained incomplete and proposed a distribution of power at the national level the

balance of which favored the state over the community media sector.

The National Council was tasked with the following responsibilities:

1) Designing, formulating, and coordinating policies and strategies that consolidate the model of Popular Power Communication in correspondence with the Plan of Economic and Social Development of the Nation 2) Organizing, directing, and administering the Fund for the Development of Popular Power Communication 3) Approving the projects to be financed with resources from the Fund for the Development of Popular Power Communication, based on an evaluation of their viability and feasibility 4) Designing and promoting training programs in Popular Power Communication 5) Coordinating and supervising the functioning of units of training and production of content 6) Promoting citizen participation in Popular Power Communication 7) Articulating the distinct instances of Popular Power Communication 8) Registering and conferring legal personality to the diverse actors of Popular Power Communication 9) Signing agreements with organs and entities of Public Power, for training, technical assistance and technological upgrade 10) Promoting the interchange and spread of knowledge and technologies at the national and international level, preferably with plans for Latin American and Caribbean integration to strengthen Popular Power Communication 11) Establishing its internal rules of operation 12) Supervising and controlling the efficient use, the administration, and the correct execution of authorized resources 13) Any other established in the present law and its regulations[636]

634"*instancias organizativas del Poder Popular, cuyo objeto es desarrollar la comunicación popular en su ámbito geográfico o sectorial, en correspondencia con las políticas y estrategias diseñadas colectivamente y emanadas del Consejo Nacional de Comunicación Popular.*"

635"*la coordinación y el desarrollo colectivo y articulado de políticas relacionadas con la promoción, formación y financiamiento de las instancias y organizaciones de la comunicación del Poder Popular, a través del fondo para el desarrollo de la comunicación del Poder Popular.*"

636 "*1) Diseñar, formular y coordinar políticas y estrategias que consoliden el modelo de comunicación del Poder*

The National Council was to be composed of 15 individual members, eight of which would correspond to the state and seven of which to the community media sector. Those corresponding to the state included representatives from the Vice Presidency, as well as the ministries responsible for Citizen Participation, Communication and Information, Science and Technology, Planning and Finance, Culture, Education, and Higher Education. The community media sector, meanwhile, was to select a spokesperson from the CPCs within each of seven geographic regions (grouped by state). As the National Council's decision were to be decided by a simple majority, this distribution of the 15 members meant that the state representatives would be able to overrule those from the community media sector in the event of a split between them.

> The CPCs were tasked with the following responsibilities:
>
> 1) Formulating plans, programs, projects, and actions of Popular Power Communication in their geographic or sectoral area in accordance with the directives of the National Council of Popular Communication 2) Promoting in their geographic or sectoral area active participation for the creation of the liberating model of communication 3) Articulating Media Outlets, Units of Training and Production for Popular Communication, and Community Producers in their geographic and sectoral area 4) Exercising social oversight 5) Any other that is attributed to it [sic] in the present law and its regulations. [637]

As for the internal composition of the CPCs, the bill specified that they would be composed of spokespeople serving two year terms, with the procedure for their election to be specified in the

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Popular en correspondencia con el Plan de Desarrollo Económico y Social de la Nación 2) Organizar, dirigir y administrar el fondo para el desarrollo de la comunicación del Poder Popular 3) Aprobar los proyectos a ser financiados con recursos del fondo para el desarrollo de la comunicación del Poder Popular, previa evaluación de su viabilidad y factibilidad 4) Diseñar y promover los programas de capacitación y formación en comunicación del Poder Popular 5) Coordinar y supervisar el funcionamiento de las unidades de formación y producción de contenidos 6) Promover la participación ciudadana en la comunicación del Poder Popular 7) Articular las distintas instancias de la comunicación del Poder Popular 8) Registrar y otorgar personalidad jurídica a los diversos actores y actoras de la comunicación del Poder Popular 9) Celebrar convenios con los órganos y entes del Poder Público, para la capacitación, formación, asistencia técnica y actualización tecnológica 10) Promover el intercambio y difusión de saberes, conocimientos y tecnologías a nivel nacional e internacional, preferiblemente con los esquemas de integración regional en Latinoamérica y el Caribe para potenciar la comunicación del Poder Popular 11) Establecer su normativa interna de funcionamiento 12) Supervisar y controlar el uso eficiente, la administración y la correcta ejecución de los recursos otorgados 13) Cualquier otra establecida en la presente ley y su reglamento"

[637]*"1) Formular planes, programas, proyectos y acciones de la comunicación del Poder Popular en su ámbito geográfico o sectorial de acuerdo a las directrices del Consejo Nacional de Comunicación Popular 2) Promover en su ámbito geográfico o sectorial la participación protagónica para la creación del modelo de comunicación liberadora 3) Articular los Medios de Comunicación, las Unidades de Formación y Producción para la Comunicación Popular y las Productoras y Productores Comunitarios en su ámbito geográfico o sectorial 4) Ejercer la contraloría social 5) Cualquier otra que se le atribuya en la presente ley y su reglamento."*

corresponding regulations. Decisions were to be taken by simple majority. Significantly, this conception of the CPCs was quite distinct from that promoted by ViVe and (during 2009 and 2010) MINCI. The original CPC model focused on geographic areas and allowed for open membership, so that anyone might join. The CPC proposed by the LCPP bill, however, could represent either a geographical area or an organized sector of society, whether a trade association or a social movement organization, and its membership would be restricted to elected spokespersons. It became, in other words, a much more formal unit of policy making and coordination.

In the absence of the accompanying regulations, it is difficult to understand how the CPCs were meant to interact with each other. The bill specified that they "will be able to constitute systems of aggregation between themselves, with the purpose of articulating themselves in the development of Popular Communication", but this does not address important questions. For example, what is the proper geographic zone of a CPC? Were they to be constituted at the level of the communal council, the commune, the municipality, the communal city, and/or the state? If they were to be constituted at multiple levels, then were they to be hierarchical, with representatives from lower level CPCs forming the membership of higher level CPCs? To what degree would higher level CPCs exercise authority over lower level CPCs? How would sectoral CPCs fit into this structure? How would overlapping zones of influence be resolved?

The LCPP bill did imply, however, that CPCs would exert a guiding influence over community media outlets, units of training and production, and community producers. Community media outlets were retitled as "Popular Power Communication Media" (*Medios de Comunicación del Poder Popular*) and defined as "providers of popular communication services, and non-profit, under the legal figure of communal direct social property enterprises that will function in the territorial, national, state, or communal area" that would be governed by the norms "established in the law that regulates the communal economy."[638] With this language, community broadcasters were freed from two of the

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638"*prestadores de servicios de comunicación popular, y sin fines de lucro, bajo las figuras jurídicas de empresas*

restrictions established in the 2001 regulation. They were given a new legal personality, rooted no longer in the liberal civil code of the fourth republic, but in the communal economy of the new geometry of power. As defined by the Fundamental Law of the Communal Economic System, communal direct social property enterprises are to be created and managed by communal councils, communes, communal federations, or communal confederations. As such, they were no longer limited to covering no more than a single municipality, but could now conceivably cover the entire country.

The "Units of Training and Production" (*Unidades de Formación y Producción* / UFPs), a creation of the December LCPP bill, were defined as "organizations registered to the National Council of Popular Communication, dedicated to the training and support of Popular Power communication producers in their diverse modalities: print, audio, audiovisual, electronic, digital, muralist, or others." The Popular Power communication producers, meanwhile, were defined as "content producers, certified by the [UFPs]." The absence of the accompanying regulations also makes the intended nature and interrelation of these entities less than clear. For example, were the Units of Training and Production meant to cover regions, states, or more local areas? What was clear, however, is that the media outlets themselves were now formally detached from the content production teams. Unlike under the ECPAI model, a television station would now be able to focus entirely on programming and distribution. It might still have its own internal production team (ostensibly also requiring certification from a UFP), but the UFPs would be responsible for training and supporting production teams formed in association with elements of Bolivarian civil society.

Unfortunately, the December LCPP bill did not paint a complete picture. It presented only the outline of a Bolivarian system of participatory media. We have seen several of the gaps above; others existed in relation to the distribution of the national fund, as it remained unclear which of the various entities would be eligible to apply for funding and to what degree funding decisions would be

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de propiedad social directa comunal, que funcionarán en el ámbito territorial, nacional, estadal o comunal";
"*establecido en la ley que regula la materia de economía comunal.*"

decentralized. For example, were CPCs meant to apply to the National Council for funding alongside media outlets, UFPs, and content producers? Or would they be recipients of block grants which they would in turn distribute to media outlets, UFPs, and content producers operating in their geographic or sectoral area? Such question are crucial because to the extent that individual funding decisions were decentralized, especially considering the concentration of state power within the national fund, the Bolivarian participatory communication system would exhibit a greater degree of civil governance.

Nonetheless, the December LCPP bill represented a relatively mature vision of a potentially hegemonic system of participatory media because it provided a stable framework for its integration with the communal system. Whereas the August bill contemplated this integration only at the local level, and in vague terms, the December bill enabled specific mechanisms of integration at multiple levels. We have already seen, for example, that participatory media outlets (the Popular Power communication media) could be established and managed at any level of the commune structure. Though less clearly stated, it seems that CPCs could also be created at any level of the commune system, although these could also be affiliated with Bolivarian civil society outside of that framework. Content production teams seemed to have the same flexibility. All of these entities would therefore be embedded within some component of Bolivarian civil society (generally, but not always, within the commune system). Assumedly, they would draw their primary resources from whichever civil society organization (e.g. a communal council, a commune, a trade union, or an interest group) had created them.

At the same time, the media outlets, CPCs, and content producers would also be able to apply to the national fund for special projects, equipment, or other needs. Via that and other mechanisms, such as control over the UFPs, the national council would sit atop a parallel system of policy formation and coordination. Meanwhile, the CPCs would be free to organize on their own, thus enabling a third axis of policy formation. What the December LCPP bill established, therefore, was a structure of interdependent but autonomous systems of civil governance for the production and distribution of participatory media. This is not to say that the proposed structure was ideal; we have already reviewed various points of

uncertainty and signaled the seeming over-concentration of state control within the national council. Nonetheless, the bill's integration of participatory media with the emerging framework of Bolivarian civil society provided an innovative and robust vision for a potentially hegemonic system of participatory civil society as a functioning component of a Gramscian civil state.

The National Assembly's failure to pass the LCPP means that we do not know how this system would have worked in actual practice. The first five articles were approved on December 16 th, but the second discussion of the bill was suspended until the following parliamentary session, in 2012 (Queda pendiente Ley del Poder Popular 2011, Vidal 2012). The discussion was not resumed, however, and no rationale was provided publicly. The alternative and community media movement continued to express optimism that the Assembly would take up the bill again, holding a Forum on the Bill of Popular Communication (*Foro sobre el Proyecto de Ley de Comunicación Popular*) in Caracas at the end of March.

The movement was not entirely in favor of the December LCPP bill, however. In June of 2012 it marched through Caracas in attempt to draw support for the sector. Members read a document addressed directly to Chávez which, among other points, declared that:

> the organized community and alternative media, we have been reflecting on the proposal of a Popular Communication Bill, that is being revised and modified in the National Assembly. We believe that this bill, though it does contain undoubtedly progressive aspects, still doesn't transfer control to the Popular Power, the organized people, of which the alternative and community media form a part, inasmuch as it foresees the formation of a National Council of Popular Communication with the State as a majority in its composition and neither is proposed the redistribution of the radio spectrum to lead us toward the predominance of popular communication above corporate and private communication, as corresponds to socialism. As such, we are soliciting that it be analyzed in the light of the [Proposal of the Candidate of the Fatherland Comandante Hugo Chávez for Bolivarian Socialist Adminsitration 2013 – 2019] and that the discussion of this bill be democratized much more, since we understand that participatory and active democracy must go far beyond simple discussion and must guarantee the real influence of the organized people, and in this case, the real incidence of popular communication media involved in the issue, in the final synthesis that is going to be approved. We think that, beforehand, it must be endorsed and approved in democratic debate with the social subjects of the process.[639]

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[639]In June of 2011, at the outset of the "people as legislator" process, the alternative and community media

Although the LCPP lay dormant throughout 2012, in January 2013 a group called the "National Council of Community Media" (*Consejo Nacional de Medios Comunitarios*) published a proposed revision of the LCPP that addressed the state's concentrated power within the national council.

The 2013 counterproposal called for a Socialist system of Popular Communication (*Sistema Socialista de Comunicación Popular*) in which each federal entity would create a "State Council of Participation and Planning of Popular Power Communication" (*Consejo Estadal de Participación y Planificación de la Comunicación del Poder Popular*) among whose responsibilities would be the allocation of financing from the national fund as well as policy formulation within its geographic area. Each state council would be represented by two spokespersons within a National Council of Participation and Planning of Popular Power Communication" (*Consejo Nacional de Participación y Planificación de la Comunicación del Poder Popular*) among whose responsibilities would be oversight of the funding process as well as national projects developed by the state councils. State representation within the

movement was largely unified in its adamant demand that the new law divide the radio spectrum into thirds, with equal parts being dedicated to the public, private, and community broadcasting sectors. Although this demand was reiterated throughout the regional meetings, it was not included in the August draft bill prepared by the systematization team. The reasons for this omission were not clear (see Urbina 2012, 51-3). Throughout the deliberative process, PSUV representatives sitting on the Commission of Popular Power and Media suggested that the demand was not viable from a legal and/or political perspective. (From a legal point of view, any change to spectrum allocation would have also required a change to the LOT. Politically, the division of the spectrum would have incited ardent protest from the opposition on the pretext of a repression of the freedom of speech.) The division of the spectrum was therefore perhaps left out of the LCPP bill due to pressure from Bolivarian officials. By August, however, a counter-logic had gained traction within the movement. Many practitioners had begun to argue that the division of the spectrum into thirds would actually impose a limitation on the sector, since in a truly socialist society 100 percent of the spectrum would be in the hands of the organized people. It may have been the case that the revolutionary validity of this argument was employed to justify a decision that was entirely or in part motivated by legal and/or political concerns.; "*los medios comunitarios y alternativos organizados, hemos venido reflexionando en torno a la propuesta de un Proyecto de Ley de Comunicación Popular, que está siendo revisando y modificando en la Asamblea Nacional. Opinamos que ese proyecto, si bien contiene aspectos indudablemente progresivos, no termina de transferir el control al Poder Popular, al pueblo organizado, del cual forman parte los medios comunitarios y alternativos, por cuanto prevé la formación de un Consejo Nacional de Comunicación Popular con mayoría del Estado en su composición y tampoco se plantea la redistribución del espectro radioeléctrico para encaminarnos hacia el predominio de la comunicación popular sobre la comunicación corporativa y privada, como se corresponde con el socialismo. Por lo tanto, estamos solicitando que se analice a la luz de la [Propuesta del Candidato de la Patria Comandante Hugo Chávez para la Gestión Bolivariana Socialista 2013 – 2019] y que se democratice mucho más la discusión de ese proyecto de ley, pues entendemos que la democracia participativa y protagónica debe ir mucho más allá de la simple discusión y debe garantizar la incidencia real del pueblo organizado, y en este caso, la incidencia real de los medios de comunicación popular involucrados con el tema, en la síntesis final que vaya a ser aprobada. Pensamos que, previamente, debe ser refrendanda [sic] y avalada en el debate democrático con los sujetos sociales del proceso.*"

national council was thus removed and the power of the council was largely shifted to the state councils.

The 2013 counterproposal also altered the organizational structure of content producers and distributors. While it maintained the Units of Training and Production, it assigned oversight of these to the state councils, as opposed to the national council. The counterproposal removed the distinction between distributors and content producers, however, conflating these within a single category of "Units of Popular Power Communication", which were defined as "collectives that promote non-profit Popular Power communication, as a tool for the construction of Bolivarian Socialism in a defined territorial area where sectors and forms of self-government coexist."[640] These collectives were further specified as being composed of "communicators that come from diverse social and/or sectoral movements." The ultimate authority of these collective was invested in "spokespersons assembly councils" (*consejos asamblearios de la voceras y los voceros*), which were to be "comprised of two spokespersons from each of the organized Sectors, Movements, and Collectives of Popular Power." How these "sectors, movements, and collectives" were to be officially recognized was not specified, nor was it clear if this designation was meant to include the organizational entities of the communal system, such as the communal councils and communes; this ambiguity represented a significant weakness of the counterproposal. An additional drawback of the counterproposal was that it restricted the definition of units of popular power communication to geographical areas, thus making it impossible for them to be represent dispersed interest groups or social movements.

While these points are of significant theoretical import, they proved moot in relation to the development of the Bolivarian community media sector. Despite the interest of the movement, the LCPP never moved further in the legislative process. Conceivably, this may have been related to the especially tense political climate of 2012, in which the gravity of Chávez's struggle with cancer became increasingly apparent even as he campaigned for and won the October presidential election. The tension turned to

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[640]"*Unidades de Comunicación del Poder Popular*"; "*colectivos que impulsan la comunicación del Poder Popular sin fines de lucro, como herramienta para la construcción del Socialismo Bolivariano en un ámbito territorial determinado donde conviven sectores y formas de autogobierno*"

turmoil in 2013, as Chávez proved unable to attend the inauguration of his third term in January and passed away in March, leaving Maduro to serve as interim president until he emerged victorious in the special presidential election held in April. Regardless, the LCPP has not advanced in the year since Chávez's death and the movement's silence seems to indicate that it has accepted the failure of the initiative.

MINCI, meanwhile, gave no indication that it prioritized passage of the law. Rather, following Izarra's return for a third term as Minister of Communications and Information, it resumed promotion of the national system. In April of 2012, Izarra himself announced the official "launch" of the re-baptized "Fabricio Ojeda National System of Alternative and Community Media" (*Sistema Nacional de Medios Alternativos y Comunitarios Fabricio Ojeda*).[641] Izarra described the system as having three "pillars": the nationwide interconnection of community radio stations across a network maintained by National Radio of Venezuela (*Radio Nacional de Venezuela*), a training program anchored by the "recuperation" of the Latin American School of Image and Sound (*Escuela Latinoamericana de la Imagen y el Sonido*), and a "more articulated and constant" accompaniment of the sector on the part of MINCI (Izarra anuncia la creación del sistema nacional... 2012, Alguieda 2012). Each of these was state directed and no mention was made of integrating the community media sector with the communal system.

Less than a year later, in March of 2013, Maduro appeared alongside the new Minister of Communication and Information, Ernesto Villegas, to announce the launch of the Bolivarian System of Information and Communications (*Sistema Bolivariano de Comunicación e Información* / SiBCI), which would "encompass all state and community media outlets" in an apparent merger of the previously established public and community media systems. One journalist reported that:

> [i]t is unclear how exactly the new system will work, but Villegas explained that it will be conformed of three different types of 'communicational units', from the level of community media up to those who run the national state media outlets. These 'communicational units' will apparently be in constant contact to carry the news directly to

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[641]Fabricio Ojeda was a Venezuelan journalist and politician who became a leftist guerrilla fighter and died in 1966 while in the custody of the Venezuelan armed forces.

the communities... (Carlson 2013)

Villegas explained that his objective in including community media within the state system was to combat "the false information that is spread by private media sources" (*ibid.*). The focus, in other words, was not expanding civil governance of communications but extending the reach of the state's propaganda apparatus.

SiBCI seems to have had little impact on the Bolivarian community media sector, which appears instead to be continuing in its familiar mode of operation. Since the appointment of Delcy Rodriguez as Minister of Communications and Information in August of 2013, the alternative and community media movement and MINCI's DGMAC have held at least two national meetings by which they sought to formulate a "National Plan of Community and Alternative Communication 2014-2019" (Célula de Comunicación e Información / CDP Táchira 2014, Pearson 2014). At the second of these meetings, held in Caracas in January of 2014, participants were divided into working groups that addressed four themes: training, content production, sustainability, and the "responsible use of the national radio spectrum" (Célula de Comunicación e Información / CDP Táchira 2014.)[642] The proposals emanating from those groups focused on sustainability indicated that the movement's prior emphasis on a national fund had shifted to seeking resources through integration with the communal system. As one group of participant reporters explained:

> advances were made on ideas long elaborated by the popular communication sector in Venezuela, where productive projects in alliance with the communes in construction, with the communal councils in each of the communities where… areas of development will be promoted that strengthen the productive as much as the communicational, in sectors such as tourism [and] gastronomy, among others. (*ibid.*)[643]

Whether the communal system has matured sufficiently to make this feasible, or whether other aspects of the five year plan will come to pass, only time will tell. What is certain is that the Venezuelan community

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642 "*uso responsable del espectro radioeléctrico nacional*"
643 "*se avanzó en ideas largamente trabajadas por el sector de la comunicación popular en Venezuela, donde proyectos productivos en alianza con las comunas en construcción, con los concejos comunales en cada una de las comunidades donde ... se impulsarán áreas de desarrollo que potencien tanto lo productivo como lo comunicacional, en sectores tales como turismo [y] gastronomía, entre otros.*"

media sector continues to operate under the outmoded framework established by the 2001 regulations and has yet to succeed in transitioning to a third historical phase.

The Bolivarian revolution has so far not succeeded in establishing a truly viable counter-hegemonic participatory media system, much less a hegemonic system functioning as a component of a Gramscian civil state. This is not to say, of course, that the alternative and community media movement, with considerable support from the Bolivarian government, has not accrued many successes. Our historical review has largely neglected the many powerful moments of empowerment and collective knowledge production that have marked the decades of struggle and motivated the continual sacrifices of those working within the sector. These deserve to be celebrated. If we have in this chapter focused instead on the difficulties of the second phase and the various attempts to transcend them, it is not to render a verdict of failure. Rather, it is because the movement's search for solutions, even if so far unsuccessful, provides invaluable lessons for those willing to observe carefully.

The LCPP bill, for all its ambiguities and despite its worrisome concentration of state power, represents the most robust framework for a hegemonic system of participatory media that has so far been advanced as part of a national political project. Rather than cast it aside as totalitarian, as opposition politicians did, or naively utopian, as even sympathetic observers are bound to do, we should explore its logic and draw out whichever examples and principles might be of service to the construction of participatory media systems in distinct contexts. We will take up this task in the concluding section of this work.

Conclusion: Toward a Heterarchical Public Sphere Theory as a Basis for the Structuration of a Participatory Democratic Media System

In the first chapter of this work we reviewed the history of community media studies since the emergence of that subfield in the 1970s. We noted three overlapping but distinct discursive modes: participatory development, counter-hegemonic liberation, and alternative discourse within a liberal representative democracy. An inability to integrate these three discursive modes has been responsible for considerable confusion within the subfield, as evidenced by longstanding debates over the proper conceptualization of 'alternative', 'participation', and 'community'. As we have seen, however, since the turn of the millennium scholars have signaled a potentially cohering theoretical framework by re-situating community media within a broader discussion of civil society. Expanding on this impulse, we noted that community media can properly be understood as an articulating mechanism of civil society. We also noted that describing the mechanics of this articulation will require a reconceptualization of public sphere theory, especially as it relates to community media. Here we will attempt to further develop this theoretical framework and then illustrate its potential by drawing on the history of participatory media in Latin American socialist states that we reviewed in chapters two through five.

Throughout that history we did not explicitly address the question of the public sphere, but it was implicit in our continual discussion of civil society and democratic deliberation. We can illustrate this interrelation by returning to Marx's critique of bourgeois civil society, which he viewed as merely a conveyance for the ideology of the capitalist class. It is easy enough to recognize this view of civil society as part of a more general critique of the liberal public sphere and its domination by elites. That larger critique recognizes the proletariat's restricted access to not only civil society, but also the formal political institutions of the state, such as the parliament. Marx, in other words, viewed civil society as one among several components of the public sphere in which political deliberation was restricted to the capitalist class.

Marx believed, of course, that the necessary response to this situation is a proletarian revolution

that will facilitate the consolidation of a communist society. As discussed in chapter two, Gouldner has

identified two variants of Marxist thought that differ in their conception of this revolution. Scientific

Marxism, holding to the determinist logic of historical materialism, has argued that the contradictions of

the capitalist system must bring about its own implosion. Critical Marxism, meanwhile, has posited that a

revolutionary vanguard can successfully motivate a proletarian revolution via the dissemination of a

counter-hegemonic ideology. In either case, however, Marxists tended to envision the state as the primary

structuring apparatus for subsequent economic production and political deliberation. State control over

political deliberation was deemed necessary due to Marx's view of civil society as merely "a transmission

belt for ruling-class values and as mechanisms for the control of the working-class" (Gouldner 346). This

focus on the negative effects of civil society led Marxists to believe that it, like the capitalist productive

apparatus, must be subsumed by the socialist state.

Gouldner insists, however, that this over-reliance on the capacity of the state to stand in for civil

society and thus wholly embody a deliberative public sphere has been Marxism's fatal flaw:

> For in emphasizing that socialism required the expropriation of private property, it was led to turn the management of that property over to the state. The new state then develops a vast managerial bureaucracy to control both the economic *and* the political spheres. The bureaucracy effectively becomes a new stand, i.e. a ruling class whose political and personal privileges are united, whose actual power is disguised by an ideology that asserts that a bureaucracy is not an 'actual' class, but only a creature of such actual classes, and then decorates this new false consciousness with the outrageous myth that the new 'actual' ruling class (under socialism) is the humiliated proletariat itself. (307, original emphasis)

> Since the state is defined (in the primary paradigm) as the instrument of the ruling class - then, when the bourgeoisie is overthrown and replaced by the working class, the latter are now defined as the new proprietary class. The state is then seen as the proletariat's 'executive committee,' as the agency of the majority class in society and, thus, as not needing to exploit the majority. The state then *presumably loses its partisan political character and becomes a fully public realm devoid of its own special exploitative interests....* In effect, the Marxist theory of the state and of the ruling class, here interwoven, had misled Marxist politics by profoundly underestimating the dangers to human emancipation inherent in the state bureaucracy and its capacity to be a new ruling class. (345, my emphasis)

The tendency toward this mistake, Gouldner tells us, is more pronounced in relation to Scientific

Marxism, since:

> Scientific Marxism's impulse is to reduce politics to the struggle for power in the state. It thus neglects the importance of protecting and rebuilding the dense infrastructure of communities, institutions, organizations, and groups [i.e. civil society] within which, even now, some of its own needs could be supplied through self-help and mutual aid, by which its own anxieties can be controlled, and its dependency reduced. (345)

Conversely:

> one of the historical functions of Critical Marxism is to develop the morality of socialism, or a moral socialism in which the pursuit of human emancipation is not derailed by the industrial build-up of the state's power; in which consumerism is not confused with either culture or contentment; in which there is an enrichment of social structures and of groups autonomous of the state [i.e. civil society], which can enable people to use rather than be used by the state and which, being close to everyday life, can enforce a living moral code with knowledge and compassion, without a ponderous and plundering bureaucracy. (219)

Unfortunately, Marx's preoccupation with the control of bourgeois civil society by the capitalist class and its resulting role in the production of false ideology led him to leave the necessary "enrichment of social structures and of groups autonomous of the state" drastically under-theorized, such that the Soviet and Cuban projects, which Gouldner identifies with Critical Marxism, had little basis for envisioning, much less actualizing, the structuration of an alternative civil society in the service of a truly democratic public sphere. We have seen that it was Gramsci who provided a more robust theoretical basis by pointing toward a civil state in which the state apparatus is (partially) subsumed by a popular and democratic civil society. This Gramscian ideal became the basis for a neo-Critical turn in Latin American socialism that has been articulated in a loose set of ideas known as 21st Century Socialism.

A primary goal of this work has been to demonstrate the development of that neo-Critical turn, both broadly and in specific relation to participatory media, across national-level socialist projects in Cuba, Chile, Nicaragua, and Venezuela. We have seen that even in Venezuela, where the Bolivarian administration has enjoyed the benefits of prior experiences and maturing theorization, as well as substantial oil revenues and relative longevity, the structuration of a participatory civil society as the basis of a radically democratic public sphere has remained elusive. Within the community media sector the tendency toward state control and vanguardism remains strong. What has been lacking is a more profound theoretical framework for conceptualizing the public sphere. Such a framework will allow us to better

envision the role played by civil society in facilitating public sphere deliberation within a civil state and, in turn, enable us to more precisely specify the mechanics by which community media can serve as an articulating mechanism for a democratic civil society. We are looking, in other words, to describe the interrelationship between the public sphere, civil society, and community, and more specifically the role of the media therein.

Habermas (1991) notes that in the liberal framework of the 17th and 18th centuries, "[t]he public sphere as a functional element in the political realm was given the normative status of an organ for the self-articulation of civil society with a state authority corresponding to its needs" (74). The public sphere, in other words, was conceived as a forum for rational deliberation among private individuals who recognized themselves as a civil society. Initially, this deliberation was aimed at mitigating the decisions of the monarchical state, but it became – in the democratic ideal of the American and French revolutions – the legitimating basis for the authority of the state. As Habermas puts it, "[t]he bourgeois idea of the law-based state, namely, the binding of all state activity to a system of norms legitimated by public opinion (a system that had no gaps, if possible), already aimed at abolishing the state as an instrument of domination altogether" (82). The question of "gaps" in the system is, of course, far beyond parenthetical importance since, as Habermas recognizes, "[t]he public sphere of civil society stood or fell with the principle of universal access. A public sphere from which specific groups would be *eo ipso* excluded was less than merely incomplete; it was not a public sphere at all" (85).

Habermas has been criticized for insufficiently recognizing the extent to which the bourgeois public sphere fell short of establishing universal access. Such criticism is not entirely undeserved, but Habermas does recognize those limitations when he notes that "[t]he social precondition for this 'developed' bourgeois public sphere was a market that, tending to be liberalized, made affairs in the sphere of social reproduction as much as possible a matter of private people left to themselves and so finally completed the privatization of civil society" (74) and, further, that:

the 'private people' on whose autonomy, socially guaranteed by property, the constitutional

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> state counted, just as much as on the educational qualifications of the public formed by these people, were in truth a small minority, even if one added the petty to the high bourgeoisie. Incomparably more numerous were the 'common people,' especially the rural population. (84)

As a result, "[f]rom the very start, indeed, the parliament was rent by the contradiction of being an institution opposing all political authority and yet established as an 'authority' itself" (233). In recognizing the property-based limitations of this authority, Habermas is of course echoing Marx's critique of the bourgeois public sphere. Others, however, have pointed out that considerations of property and education were and continue to be thoroughly imbricated with those of race, gender, and other markers of identity-based social difference in restricting access to the dominant public sphere. This is the basis for Fraser's (1992) identification of the need to recognize the role played by "counterpublics" in the politics of liberal societies.

However incomplete Habermas' critique of the 18th and early 19th century bourgeois public sphere may be, his interest is not in its restoration but in the achievement of its unfulfilled ideal of universal access. Toward that end, he turns his analysis toward the inadequate public sphere of "the welfare-state mass democracy" that, as it developed through the late 19th and 20th centuries, steadily supplemented parliamentary deliberation with an increasingly complicated process of power-brokerage that incorporated "parties[,] … politically influential mass media[,] and special-interest associations", which he characterizes as "institutions of societal power centers whose actions are oriented to the state - private organizations of society that exercise public functions within the political order" (208). Habermas argues, in other words, that the various limitations of the bourgeois parliamentary system resulted in an expansion of civil society as a field of public opinion formation that operates outside of the formal mechanisms of public governance. In some cases, exemplified by dominant political parties, oligopolist media corporations, and well-entrenched labor unions, this civil society activity manifests attempts by institutionalized bourgeois interests to consolidate their representation of "the" public within the parliamentary system. In other cases, such as minority political parties, alternative media outlets, and

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social justice advocacy organizations, it manifests attempts by marginalized groups to achieve increased representation for counterpublics within the parliamentary system.

For Habermas, the ideal of universal access to the public sphere requires that this broad civil society be integrated into the formal process of political deliberation. This "democratization of societal organizations engaged in state-related activity" (210) requires that:

> their inner structure must first be organized in accord with the principle of publicity and must institutionally permit an intraparty or intra-association democracy - to allow for unhampered communication and public rational-critical debate. In addition, by making the internal affairs of the parties and special-interest associations public, the linkage between such an intraorganizational public sphere and the public sphere of the entire public has to be assured. Finally, the activities of the organizations themselves - their pressure on the state apparatus and their use of power against one another, as well as the manifold relations of dependency and of economic intertwining - need a far reaching publicity. This would include, for instance, requiring that the organizations provide the public with information concerning the source and deployment of their financial means. (209)

Whether these recommendations are in fact sufficient for the democratization of civil society is imminently debatable but beyond our immediate concerns. We have reviewed Habermas' argument not to judge it's ultimate adequacy but because it suggests much about his conception of the public sphere that, though he did not make it explicit, is of considerable importance for developing a theoretical framework that can guide the structuration of a hegemonic system of participatory media.

First, we must note his acknowledgement that "intraorganizational public spheres" operate alongside "the public sphere of the entire public". Habermas thus recognizes the existence of multiple public spheres; significantly, however, these are not presented in terms of a dominant public and its associated counterpublics. This is not to say that counterpublics do not exist, for they certainly do. Rather, we are noting that the interrelationship of distinct public spheres need not be a simple opposition, as is implied by the public / counterpublic binary. In pointing out that intraorganizational public spheres are part and parcel of a larger, total public sphere, Habermas suggests that we are not simply dealing with multiple publics standing side-by-side but, rather, a multiplicity of interpenetrated publics. He recognizes that each civil society organization (parties, mass media outlets, and special interest organizations, among

others) necessarily establishes its own (intraorganizational) public sphere, that the national parliament is another type of public sphere (which was once presumed to offer universal representation), and that all of these are subsumed by an ideal typish public sphere that is "the public sphere of the entire public".

Second, we can find in the distinction Habermas draws between intraorganizational public spheres and the "the public sphere of the entire public" an indication of Fraser's much more explicit distinction between "strong" and "weak" public spheres. As discussed in chapter one, Fraser (1992) pointed out that there are strong spheres, which are explicitly tasked with channeling opinions toward concrete decisions, and weak spheres, in which opinions are exchanged outside of any structured path toward concrete and binding decisions. Once again, we will refer to these two types not as strong and weak public spheres (in part to avoid the value judgement therein implied) but as decision-making and meaning-making public spheres (which has the added benefit of identifying the functional distinction between them).

The explicit recognition of these two general categories of public spheres enables a better understanding of the "modular interpenetration" that describes the structural relationship between the multiplicity of public spheres that make up a society. As noted in chapter one, the term is drawn from Keane (1998) and Braman (1996), who both recognize that public spheres do not stand apart from one another but intersect and interact. Thinking in terms of meaning- and decision-making spheres can help us to understand this interrelation.

Meaning-making spheres are ideal, in the sense that their existence seems obvious but their boundaries and participants can not be determined with precision. What Habermas refers to as "the public sphere of the entire public", which is what those who refer to "the" public sphere usually have in mind, is a meaning-making sphere. Such a public sphere certainly exists in relation to a nation-state, but who exactly are its participants? All citizens of the nation-state? What about those whose participation is restricted or prohibited? Or non-citizens who nonetheless influence or participate in public debates? Or citizens who engage in public debate in relation to certain issues but are apathetic regarding others? The

boundaries of a meaning-making sphere are always in flux and impossible to pin down with exactitude.

It is easy enough to conceive of meaning-making spheres populated by persons with common interests, such as fan communities or those affected by a particular disease, but it would be impossible to draw up an exact list of the names of those who participate in such a sphere, in part because participation is irregular both in terms of intensity and frequency, but also because the boundaries of the sphere change in relation to the context in which it is invoked. We might conceive, for instance, of a meaning-making sphere in relation to HIV. Depending on how we circumscribe that sphere, we might include a doctor working toward a cure, an advocate working in an NGO dedicated to HIV awareness, someone with an infected friend who occasionally exchanges personal anecdotes with their social contacts, and someone who has no intimate connection to the disease but who sometimes voices prejudice against carriers. Some conceptions of a meaning-making sphere defined in relation to HIV would include all of the above, but some would not.

Unlike meaning-making spheres, decision-making spheres are formally structured and their membership is thus precisely defined. A national parliament, for instance, is a decision-making sphere meant to correspond to an imagined national meaning-making sphere. The boundary of the latter is fuzzy; that of the former is not. In a parliament, a certain number of representatives are empowered to vote in a formal decision-making process meant to express the will of the national meaning-making sphere that they represent. We have already indicated the imperfections of this system, but we can recall here that the intent is to establish a one-to-one correspondence between a particular meaning-making sphere and a particular decision-making sphere.

The relation between meaning- and decision-making spheres is not, however, always one-to-one. An NGO dedicated to HIV awareness, for example, seeks to wield influence within meaning- and decision-making spheres, but it does not pretend to establish a decision-making sphere entirely representative of a particular meaning-making sphere. It does, however, establish a formal, intraorganizational decision-making sphere whose members purport to act in representation of a subset of

the members of one or more meaning-making spheres. In the contemporary context, that intraorganizational decision-making sphere is likely to be hierarchically organized and to offer only limited opportunities for the participation of those it represents.

There is much more to be said in relation to these two types of public spheres, but here we are particularly concerned with emphasizing that the modular interpenetration of public spheres is partly the result of definite decision-making spheres standing in imperfect representation of indefinite meaning-making spheres. Habermas' concern, if we recast it using the vocabulary we have developed so far, was how to best structure this modular interpenetration in order to maximize the democratic representation of the national meaning-making sphere by formally organized decision-making spheres. As we have already noted, his response was to call for the democratization of civil society in a vein similar to Gramsci's call for what we have termed a civil state. For Habermas, this depended on intraorganizational democracy, which we have understood as the democratization of the decision-making spheres of civil society organizations.

Habermas' recommendations did not end there, however. He not only called for "making the internal affairs of the parties and special-interest associations public" in order to assure the "linkage" between the decision-making spheres of civil society and the national-level meaning-making sphere, but also for "a far reaching publicity" of "the activities of the organizations themselves". Again, we are less concerned here with the adequacy of these recommendations than with the general impulse that they represent. That impulse, it seems fair to say, moves toward a communication system that publicizes the operations and actions of civil society organizations and in so doing links, or articulates, the decision-making spheres of civil society with the meaning-making spheres of the citizenry of the state. If we acknowledge, however, that the citizens of the state (especially those of a civil state) are simultaneously participants in civil society, then we can understand this communication system to be articulating the decision-making spheres of civil society organizations by making information available to multiple meaning-making spheres in order to enable a democratic system of checks and balances on social

governance. To the extent that communication within this system is mediated, we are describing a media system that serves as an articulating mechanism for civil society, which is precisely the definition that we attached to community media in chapter one. In other words, as the media of a democratic civil society, community media are a vital element in the democratic structuration of the multiplicity of modular, interpenetrated, and dual-type public spheres that comprise "the" public sphere.

Why, though, are community – as opposed to other types of – media essential to a democratic civil society? Having recognized the distinction between meaning- and decision-making public spheres, we are in a better position to respond to this question. We are, in fact, also in a better position to respond to the persistently troublesome question of just what is meant by the term "community" in this context. We can begin to illustrate this point by recalling once again that the liberal democratic impulse was to establish a national parliament that, functioning as a decision-making sphere, would adequately represent the national meaning-making sphere. This has not been the case, however, as access to the decision-making sphere has been severely limited or non-existent for most participants in the meaning-making sphere, thus producing a significant representational imbalance. Of course, it would be entirely impractical for every member of a meaning-making sphere to participate in a corresponding decision-making sphere, but a more perfect democracy nonetheless requires that representation be distributed more evenly. What is required, therefore, is a more tailored relationship between meaning- and decision-making spheres.

We can find in federated political systems an impulse toward the above goal. In the United States, for example, meaning-making spheres are matched at the state, county, and municipal levels with representative bodies acting as decision-making spheres. The question of which decisions should be taken at which level is, of course, highly contentious. In the Jeffersonian democratic tradition the rpeference is for authority to remain decentralized so that the responsibilities of governance are vested as locally as possible. This principal, known as subsidiarity, holds that the degree of an individual's participation in a decision-making process should be directly proportional to the degree to which that individual will be

affected by the outcomes of the decision in question. If we reflect that meaning is produced as individuals and groups live with the outcomes of human decisions, then we can see that subsidiarity becomes a structuring principal for the organization of meaning- and decision-making spheres in a democratic society.

It would be easy enough to apply the principal of subsidiarity if the outcomes of decisions were neatly bounded, but this is not the case. Decisions have multiple outcomes that function at multiple levels. Take, for instance, the decision to build a factory. Two obvious and frequently debated outcomes, the creation of jobs and pollution, will have distinct effects at the local, regional, national, and transnational levels. They may have a greater impact on the local community and thus influence local meaning-making spheres much more extensively, but how might we adequately reflect the proportionality of this influence in the construction of decision-making spheres so as to maximize democratic participation in the myriad decisions that, stretching across time and space, ultimately determine the construction of a factory or the manifestation of any other social process? In other words, how might we incorporate the principal of subsidiarity into the modular and interpenetrated structuration of meaning- and decision-making spheres that is a complex and multi-leveled society?

Habermas and Gramsci agree that the federated, hierarchical structure of representation in the liberal republic is insufficient for this task and they both point to the democratization of civil society as a necessary supplement. A democratic civil society, in other words, must operate alongside a system of representative government in order to allow for a more granular "subsidiarization" of decision-making, since the structure of meaning-making spheres is only partially captured by thinking in terms of geographic scale (i.e. municipal, state, national). To be sure, the impact of outcomes is often enough distributed according to geography, so a spatial organization of decision-making spheres makes some sense. Outcomes also determine meaning across geographic areas, however, which means that other organizational axes are necessary for the relation of meaning- to decision-making spheres. This is where the notion of community becomes useful.

In chapter one we noted that the subfield of community media studies has struggled to define just what is meant by community media. This is only symptomatic of a broader confusion regarding the definition of community that is evident throughout more than a century of literature in sociology and other fields. Debate has often revolved around two different conceptions of community: place and interest. Communities of place are just that – communities determined by the propinquity of residents, one to another, within geographic space. Alternatively, communities of interest are determined by their members' shared focus on things, events, or ideas, independent of their geographical relation. Another point of contention has been the boundedness of communities (of either type), especially in an age of rapidly advancing communication and transportation technologies. Discussing communities in terms of shared outcomes offers a path forward that bridges place- and interest-based definitions of community while also accounting for the fuzzy scalability of community boundaries. In taking this approach, Laudeman (2005) has provided a definition of community that reinforces our framework of modular and interpenetrated public spheres:

> Communities, like other aggregations, exist to mediate outcomes for an individual. In effect, each person has her or his own unique, personal "community": the set of social and economic ties that shape and afford that person's particular outcomes. The nexus of multiple personal "communities" gives rise to a fuzzy set of persons interrelated by outcomes within a geographic area and "communities of interest" overlapping in a "community of place." Rather than simply being an aggregation of individuals, a community is an aggregation of aggregations of individuals within a particular locale. (42)

In Laudeman's view, conceptions of community based on place and interest are at once subsumed within each individual's particular "idio-community" and recreated as "fuzzy set[s] of persons interrelated by outcomes" that are "aggregations of aggregations." In other words, for any particular analysis of an outcome or set of outcomes, the "unit" of analysis will be the particular community of persons who have an interest in that outcome.

Hopefully it is clear that this notion of community maps nicely onto the notion of a meaning-making public sphere, as both are determined by the mutual relationship of a set of individuals to one or more particular outcomes. Moreover, both are fuzzy and scaleable, in constant flux and open to different possibilities of boundedness, and interpenetrated. The complex structure of these forms (communities and

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meaning-making spheres) is ultimately unmappable, yet democratization depends on a structuration of decision-making spheres that best approximates that complexity. From this perspective, we might say that decision-making spheres are to meaning-making spheres as digital code is to analog waveforms, where in each case the former makes use of fixed values (binary digits or formal decisions) in order to represent a fluid process (of oscillation or communication). This is an incomplete analogy, however, since meaning- and decision-making spheres are not different descriptions of the same phenomenon (as with digital and analog signals), but are dialectically determinative (with formal decisions influencing subsequent meaning-making and vice versa).

Democracy thus requires not only matching decision- to meaning-making spheres in as close an approximation as possible, but also facilitating the dialectic interaction of decision- and meaning-making through the flow of information. This is why Habermas calls for "a far reaching publicity" and also why community media is so essential to a system of civil governance as envisioned by a Gramscian civil state. Civil society organizations buttress the formal, representative decision-making bodies of democratic states by providing additional decision-making spheres that allow for a more granular approximation of meaning-making (loosely akin to a higher sampling rate for the digital conversion of an analog signal). Community media, to the extent that it articulates these decision-making spheres, accomplishes this more granular approximation by facilitating a more robust dialectic interaction between them. This is why it is incorrect, or at least misleading, to understand the role of community media as simply representing particular communities of place or interest. Its role, rather, is to link or articulate public spheres, both decision-making spheres (functioning within formal civil society organizations and government institutions) and meaning-making spheres (understood as more or less stable communities of individuals linked by their relationship to shared outcomes of natural phenomena and human decisions).

The question remains, however, as to why a system of community – and not public or commercial – media is necessary to effect this articulation. The answer has everything to do with the notion of

community and the relationship of decision- to meaning-making spheres that we have outlined above. Only a system of community media reflexively manifests the very dialectic that it means to facilitate outside of that system. To understand why this is so we must first recognize that the creation of a media organization (as with the creation of any organization) necessarily involves the creation of a decision-making public sphere and thus begs the question of who should participate in that newly created sphere. By applying the principal of subsidiarity we can conclude that those who should participate are those who will be affected by the outcomes of decisions made within that sphere. From a certain perspective, therefore, the media organization actually creates a new fuzzy community, or meaning-making sphere, of those individuals who will be affected by the outcomes that it partially determines. Of course, the goal of community media is to match this new meaning-making community as closely as possible with an existent one (whether it be place or interest based) and to place itself in the service of meaning-making processes that interact dialectically with other decision-making spheres. Participation in the decision-making sphere of the media organization should therefore be open to all members of the fuzzy community it serves and, ideally, be accessible by them to the degree that they are affected by the outcomes of those decisions. Public and commercial media organizations do not strive to meet this condition, but community media organizations do. This is precisely why participation and access are fundamental to the notion of community media and why community media organizations are uniquely capable of providing "a far reaching publicity" to the intraorganizational decision-making processes of not only other civil society organizations, but also of themselves as civil society organizations. It is this reflexive nurturing of a participatory relationship between a decision- and a meaning-making sphere that makes community media a necessary component of a hegemonic system of civil governance.

In the preceeding paragraph we have merely utilized a new theoretical framework and vocabulary to describe the local role of community media outlets. While our language may be more precise, the goal it describes was clearly identified within the subfield of community media studies many decades ago. The

real benefit of thinking about community media in terms of civil society and interpenetrated, dual-type public spheres is that it allows us to describe structural models which enable a "scaling-up" of community media from the micro- to the macro-level. The goal of this scaling is to establish and/or maintain the participatory reflexivity between decision- and meaning-making spheres, which presumably exists within local community media outlets, at all levels of an expansive media system. We can draw out some important lessons for this endeavor by applying our developing theoretical framework to the history of participatory media initiatives within socialist administrations in Latin American that we have discussed in previous chapters.

Our discussion of the historical shortcomings of the critical Marxist approach to civil society, which in the Soviet and Cuban cases was tethered tightly to the state, has already suggested the problem with the vanguardist mentality in relation to the public sphere. To recast this problem in terms of dual-type public spheres, we might say that vanguardism, because of its certitude regarding ideology, distorts the structural reflexivity between meaning- and decision-making spheres that is necessary to democratic practice even as it rhetorically endorses that very reflexivity. Vanguardist rhetoric, in other words, endorses popular participation in both meaning- and decision-making spheres, but the vanguardist mentality actually restricts participation in decision-making spheres to those who hold to a more or less narrowly circumscribed set of views that have been deemed correct on an *a priori* basis. As we saw in Cuba, this restricted access to decision-making spheres, manifested partly in party control over civil-society institutions and media outlets, results in insufficiently critical meaning-making spheres, which in turn limits the capacity of decision-making spheres to address vital issues.   The shortcomings of the Cuban state-centered approach have propelled a neo-critical turn in Latin American socialism in which emphasis has shifted toward civil governance. This shift was visible in the growing popular emphasis on participatory media in Chile during the Allende administration, as well as in state-supported attempts to institutionalize participatory media under the Sandinista administration in Nicaragua. In Chile, the lack of

state resources meant that participatory initiatives remained relatively feeble. In Nicaragua, however, the provision of state resources resulted in a corruptive state influence over the decision-making spheres of the burgeoning participatory media apparatus. In Venezuela, therefore, one major goal of the community and alternative media movement has been to procure institutionalized state support for a participatory media system without ceding decision-making authority to the state.

An initial attempt to achieve this goal, manifested by the Law of Telecommunications and its attendant regulations, attempted to combine the legal recognition of the state with private sector resources, in line with the existing liberal model of community media. The community and alternative media movement, as well as the Bolivarian government, soon recognized, however, that private sector financial support was insufficient for effecting a determinative role in meaning-making spheres. They also recognized that if private sector support became sufficient for that task, it would most likely be accompanied by control over the intraorganizational decision-making spheres of community media organizations such that their intervention in meaning-making spheres would be unlikely to support Bolivarian ideals. In other words, the liberal model of participatory media, like the vanguardist model, also produces a distortion of the structural reflexivity between meaning- and decision-making spheres that is necessary to democratic practice. The response of the Bolivarian government, which was accelerated and intensified by deep political polarization and generally endorsed by the community and alternative media movement, was to increase public financial support for the community media sector. In the absence of a restructuration of the regulatory framework of community media, however, state support threatened to only swing the institutional balance back to the distortions of the vanguardist model. Though this has not occurred to the degree lamented by critics of the Bolivarian community media sector, dependence on state resources in the absence of a defined and replicable structure for efficient and effective civil governance has nonetheless made the sector vulnerable to such criticism while also mitigating its opportunities to grow into a viable counter-hegemonic system. In recognition of this problematic, the

movement has sought to enact a new regulatory structure that will institutionalize a democratic structural reflexivity between meaning- and decision-making spheres. While this goal has not been achieved, the history of efforts in that direction provides valuable insight into what such a structure might look like.

The crucial feature of Bolivarian efforts to establish a counter-hegemonic participatory media system has been its integration with the commune system, precisely because the commune system offers the potential for allocating state resources according to a system of civil governance. In concrete terms, this has so far meant the provision of federal grants to local community councils. We have seen that in actual practice, community councils have not yet prioritized participatory media projects. Nonetheless, the sector's general vision for the interaction between community councils and community media organizations provides us with a relatively concrete example upon which to apply our developing theoretical framework of interpenetrated, dual-type public spheres.

We can begin by recognizing that community councils are designed to function as a democratic decision-making sphere that responds to the desires of an assembly comprised of 200 to 400 households (in an urban context) which have recognized themselves as a community in light of their geographic proximity and thus their shared relationship to a particular set of outcomes. In other words, a community council creates a formal decision-making sphere in which participation is limited to the members of a bounded meaning-making sphere who are understood to be most affected by the outcomes of its decisions. Suppose, then, that a community council chooses to create a community media outlet. This necessarily entails the creation of another decision-making sphere, i.e. the intraorganizational decision-making sphere of the community media outlet itself. In this scenario we have two decision-making spheres, both primarily in the service of a single local meaning-making sphere, although simultaneously influential on numerous other meaning-making spheres. This not only provides a simple example of the modular interpenetration of multiple, dual-type public spheres, but also illustrates how multiple decision-making spheres can function together to provide a more granular, and thus more democratic,

approximation of a particular meaning-making sphere. This is so because the conjunction of two decision-making spheres within a single meaning-making spheres provides increased opportunities for citizen participation in civil governance. In other words, members of the community may participate in the decision-making process of the communal council, in which resources are allocated, as well as in the decision-making process of the community media outlet, in which projects making use of those resources are executed. Given this double opportunity for community input, it becomes more likely that the meanings engendered by the inherently dialogic process of the community find expression in the organizational structure and content of the community media outlet.

We must recognize, of course, that community media outlets are far from the only civil society organizations that might exist within the community in question. Where other such organizations exist, other intraorganizational decision-making spheres will also exist, thus adding to the multiplicity of public spheres and the granularity of their representation of the meanings produced within the whole of the community. In this light we can better appreciate the double role played by community media outlets, since they operate as one among many decision-making spheres but also take on the task of mediating the flow of information between all members of the community and thus articulating all manifestations of civil society. Thus, while no single member of the community can participate in all of the various intraorganizational decision-making spheres that contribute to the determination of outcomes within that community, community media outlets offer a democratically structured mechanism for circulating pertinent information among all of those decision-making spheres, which means that the decisions they take are more likely to accord with the consensus view (to the extent it exists) of the meaning-making community at large.

In the Bolivarian system, various community councils can choose to unite as a commune. As with an individual community council, the establishment of a commune implies the creation of a formal decision-making sphere that responds to and is open to the participation of members of a bounded

meaning-making sphere. The multiple decision- and meaning-making spheres of the various communal councils are, of course, encompassed by the decision- and meaning-making spheres of the commune that they comprise. This nesting provides another illustration of the interpenetration of dual-type public spheres, but it also provides a framework for the scalability of a community media system. To see how this might work we need only consider that the decision-making sphere of a commune is responsible for allocating mutual resources of the community councils that comprise it. Just as in the lower level community councils, communes might choose to create or support any number of civil society organizations, including community media outlets. These outlets would then be in a position to articulate the various civil society organizations at the commune level in the same manner as we discussed above in the context of communal councils.

Here, of course, we are describing a federated system of decision-making spheres that is distinct from the liberal representative model. A discussion of the mechanics of this system and its differences with the liberal model would extend far beyond the scope of our present concerns, but there is one aspect of the system that is of particular import to our analysis. Let us imagine that a particular commune has established a community television station. Meanwhile, each of the community councils that make up this commune has established an audiovisual production group whose primary objective is to produce content pertaining to their corresponding communal council for broadcast on the communal television station. Now let us suppose that one of these audiovisual production groups has decided to produce a series of investigative reports on corruption within its corresponding communal council and that, as a result, the communal council has (formally or informally) withdrawn funding from the production group.

Were we describing a purely hierarchical structure, in which the production group could only draw funding from its own communal council, the decision to withdraw funding would spell an end to the production group's operations. Within the federated structure of the Bolivarian system, however, the production group is not entirely dependent on its communal council. It might, for instance, appeal for

funding to the communally-funded community television station or to the commune itself, and it might well acquire that funding since the other communal councils that make up the commune would have a compelling interest in uncovering corruption within a communal council whose conduct partially determines the outcomes of the commune as a whole.

This example illustrates the importance of rejecting a purely hierarchical structuration of dual-type public spheres in the service of a democratic community media system. Were the relationship between decision-making spheres purely hierarchical, the dependency of community media organizations on the funding decisions of a single decision-making sphere would create opportunities for abuse. The structure of the Bolivarian communal system, however, mitigates the dependence of any particular civil society organization on any particular funding body. Moreover, the community and alternative media movement has explicitly sought to further diminish opportunities for dependence by proposing the creation of popular communication councils (*consejos populares de comunicación* / CPCs), which establish yet another set of interpenetrated participatory decision-making spheres and thus contribute to the granular approximation of social meaning-making within the formal decision-making apparatus of civil governance. Participatory media production and distribution organizations thus enjoy multiple potential sources of funding and guidance without sacrificing their autonomy.

This capacity for community media organizations to operate simultaneously within and outside of hierarchical structures of governance illustrates a crucial concept for the structuration of democratic systems of civil governance. We have already recognized the hierarchical structuration of the commune system. Communal councils, which operate as the basic organizational unit, are grouped together into communes, which operate at a "higher" level. As of this writing, the Bolivarian commune structure has not established a functioning third level; in operational terms, the communes link directly to the executive branch of the federal government (and exist in an ambiguous relationship to the municipal and state governments that still operate within the "fourth republican" federated hierarchy of the liberal tradition).

The proposed constitutional reforms of 2006, however, indicate that the vision for the Bolivarian commune system involves higher levels of grouping that would ostensibly reduce to a single body at the national level. The core structure of civil governance within the Bolivarian commune system, in other words, is a hierarchically organized federation of nested decision-making bodies.

Of particular interest, however, is that the Bolivarian community media sector has envisioned the establishment of a parallel structure of civil governance focused specifically on participatory media.

As discussed in chapter five, this parallel structure was most explicitly formulated within the 2011 proposal for a Law of Popular Power Communication (*Ley de Comunicación del Poder Popular* / LCPP), which identified the CPCs as the primary unit of civil governance for the sector. We have seen, of course, that imbalanced representation of the executive branch of the state within the National Council of Popular Communication, which would have imperiled the authority of civil governance, most likely contributed to the failure to pass the LCPP. Here, however, we are less concerned with the particulars of the proposal than with the general impetus to create a parallel system of civil governance, also organized as a hierarchically organized federation of nested decision-making bodies (the CPCs), but with a scope of concern restricted to the functioning of a system of popular communication. Crucially, this would have allowed a single community media organization to simultaneously operate within two different hierarchically structured systems of civil governance (the Commune and the CPC systems).

This incorporation of parallel hierarchies would have made community media a formal element within a Bolivarian system of civil governance that functions as a heterarchy. Crumley (2005) notes that heterarchy is "a fundamental organizational principle of complex systems" (np) and has provided a general purpose definition by contrasting hierarchies, "the elements of which are ranked relative to one another", to heterarchies, "the elements of which are unranked, or possess the potential for being ranked in a number of different ways, depending on systemic requirements". Heterarchy, in fact, "is the more general category"; hierarchy is just a particular type of heterarchy (2008, 469-70). Kontopolous (2003), in

a fascinating, dense, and lengthy treatise on the heterarchical logic of social structure, posits that "[t]he semiautonomy of each level [of a social structure] is the central dogma of heterarchy" (301). He emphasizes this point when he writes that "[a]ny theory that speaks of levels of phenomena that are semiindependent from each other and entangled with each other in other than totally ordered, asymmetrical ways, that is, levels that are partially ordered or nonlinearly ordered, is a heterarchical theory" (226). This "semiautonomous" and "entangled" nature of levels within heterarchies suggests that heterarchic theory bears great potential for the analysis of the structuration of public spheres and the role of community media therein.

To actualize this potential we must first recognize that, as Kontopolous demonstrates at length, society is already structured according to the logic of heterarchy. We have, for instance, noted above that the federated structure of representation in the liberal republic operates as a hierarchy, but Kontopolous reminds us that federal, state, and local jurisdictions are "a 'contextual' hierarchy (belonging) in geographical terms but a heterarchy in juridical and economic terms" (229). In other words, economic actors at the local level need not pass through a state level decision-making body in order to interact with other economic actors at the national level; they may interact directly, outside of a hierarchical order and across structural levels, along innumerable vectors of connection. Indeed, Kontopolous refers to the national economy (presumably of a capitalist state) as providing "an intuitively clear understanding of a 'heterarchy' as an entangled system of level-structures each of which imposes constraints on the workings of the others" (230).

In a like manner, the structuration of multiple, dual-type public spheres is a manifestation of heterarchic entanglement, which we have referred to above as modular interpenetration. As we have seen, we can recognize fuzzy meaning-making spheres that correspond to a hierarchical structuration of geographic areas within a federated nation-state. It makes sense, in other words, to recognize the meaning-making sphere (or community) of Illinois as distinct from that of Chicago, Cook County, or the

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United States. We would not say, however, that any such geographically bounded meaning-making sphere is wholly dependent on the operations of the meaning-making spheres below or above it in that hierarchy. Such meaning-making spheres are, especially in the highly mediated contemporary context, deeply entangled with numerous other meaning- and decision-making spheres, yet they operate semi-autonomously.

In and of itself, this observation is anything but revelatory. Whether we refer to modular interpenetration or heterarchic entanglement, it is clear that the structuration of meaning-making public spheres is deeply complex and difficult, if not impossible, to map with any degree of specificity. The value in recognizing that public spheres interact according to a heterarchic logic, however, is that it invites us to respect and think in terms of heterarchy as we envision possible structural models for participatory media systems, especially in relation to the formally bounded decision-making public spheres that are much more amenable to mapping than their meaning-making counterparts. This is particularly crucial in relation to participatory media, where there exists a longstanding resistance to "top down", "vertical", and "hierarchical" organizational structures, but where insistence on "bottom up", "horizontal", and "consensual" organization has a tendency to impede the productive efficiency, institutional stability, and scalability that seems necessary for the displacement of dominant media systems. As noted in chapter one, Dervin & Huesca (1999), as well as Rodriguez (2001), give expression to this tension, as does Portales (1981), in a different context and from a different perspective, when he laments that "[v]ertical communication could well be a contributing factor in horizontal and multidirectional communication processes" but "there is no articulation between vertical and horizontal communication, which diminishes the dynamism of the communicational process and reduces the subject to the role of a spectator" (64).[644] The logic of heterarchy responds to this problematic by suggesting that hierarchical organizational models can indeed play a principal role in the structuration of a participatory

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[644] *"[l]a comunicación vertical bien podría ser un factor coadyuvante de los procesos de comunicación horizontal y multidireccional"*; *"no ha articulación entre comunicación vertical y horizontal, esto resta dinanismo al proceso comunicacional y reduce al sujeto a la calidad de espectador"*

media system that nonetheless opens space for dialogic and "horizontal" modes of communication. Indeed, such logic is at work in the Bolivarian attempt to resolve that tension through the structural model proposed within the LCPP.

We have already observed that the LCPP proposed the creation of a hierarchically organized structure of CPCs in parallel to the existent and also hierarchically organized commune system. We have also already considered that one potential benefit of this structural model was to offer local community producers multiple avenues for acquiring resources for projects so that they would not be dependent on a single communal council for resources. Within the hierarchical structure of the Bolivarian commune system they would, for example, have the opportunity to acquire resources from the commune to which their "originating" communal council belongs, even if the communal council itself refused to provide resources. They would thus be making use of their semi-autonomy in order to skip over a level of the hierarchical system. They would also, however, be able to draw on the parallel hierarchical structure of the CPCs as a potential source of funding, thus bypassing the communal system altogether. They would this be making use of their semi-autonomy in order to participate in a distinct hierarchical system (within which they might also operate at multiple levels).

The heterarchical structuration of decision-making spheres thus opens up more fluid possibilities for the dialectic representation of meaning-making spheres. The idea, in other words, is that the intentional application of heterarchic logic to the structuration of decision-making spheres within a system of civil governance enables an extremely granular approximation of the meaning-making public spheres in which public opinion is forged. This increased reflexivity between meaning- and decision-making, in conjunction with increased opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making spheres, increases the democratic quotient of society.

Unfortunately, this analysis remains largely speculative. We have reviewed the difficulties of constructing hegemonic participatory media systems and tracked the development of a proposal to

overcome them within the Bolivarian project, but that proposal has not been instituted. Nonetheless, we have been able to analyze it in general terms from the perspective of a heterarchic, dual-type public sphere theory in an attempt to draw out lessons that will be applicable beyond the context of socialist projects or even governments explicitly supportive of community media. There is significant space for civil society activity within liberal social orders and capitalist market economies, and those interested in the expansion of civil governance can find opportunities to put these lessons into practice. Attempts to do so will provide empirical evidence upon which our theoretical model might be further refined, but the theoretical and empirical histories we have reviewed in this work suggest the framework that we have outlined above.

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