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Abstract: In the general context of the transformation of Chilean society in the last thirty years, this essay focuses on the Chilean independent and not-for profit station Radio Tierra. More specifically, I will posit that Radio Tierra makes evident the emergence of a new form of social communication which, in contrast to the traditional liberal model of communication of and for information, is more attuned to the new functions of culture in the expansion and implementation of citizenship under conditions of globalization.

Key Words: Radio Tierra, not-for-profit radio broadcasting, globalization, public journalism, neoliberalism, feminism, Chile

Culture, Neoliberalism and Citizen Communication: the Case of Radio Tierra in Chile

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Introduction

In the general context of the transformation of Chilean society in the last thirty years (as seen by two distinguished Chilean sociologists,) this essay analyzes the Chilean independent and not-for profit station Radio Tierra. More specifically, I will posit that Radio Tierra makes evident the emergence of a new form of social communication which, in contrast to the traditional liberal model of communication of and for information, is more attuned to the new functions of culture in the expansion and implementation of citizenship under conditions of (neoliberal) globalization.

This will require some preliminary historical work. In the first section I explain, Manuel Antonio Garretón's concepts about an epochal transformation in the context of the relationship between culture and neoliberalism in Chile. The next section of this essay situates the current Chilean media scenario, while the third will conclude the contextual and conceptualizing work

with a discussion on Public Journalism and alternative communication in Latin America. Having laid the groundwork, the rest of the paper then specifically focuses on the communicational, political and cultural work of Radio Tierra.

1. Neoliberalism and Culture in Chile

Manuel Antonio Garretón develops an interesting macro-sociological framework to describe the political and cultural situation of Latin America in times of globalization. He distinguishes a) a transition from one type of society to another (from industrial society organized around labor and production to post-industrial society structured by the axis of consumption and communication) b) three big epochal changes involved in that transition and affecting the principles of individual and collective action, the concept of citizenship, and the idea of the social totality. Finally, c) this new epochal configuration implies four challenges: the construction of truly democratic politics, the democratization of the social, the definition of the development model and thus, of the model of modernity, in which the national society seeks to inscribe itself. (Garretón, 1999.)

For the first challenge, the dangers are now less military coups than the quality of participation, representation and citizen satisfaction. The second challenge involves articulating “the dual and complementary dimensions of equality and sociocultural diversity” (13) in order to redistribute economic capital, but also cultural capital, political power and the ability to exercise agency and pressure. The redefinition of the development model implies overcoming the limits of the neoliberal one, imposed in the continent with the help of authoritarian regimes. While “the so-called first generation economic reforms --identified with the adjustments, privatizations, deregulation, reduction of state spending, opening to external markets, etc.”(15)-- sought to impose revolutionarily a model of society based on the market and the privatization of the public

realm [“lo público”]; with the more recent second generation reforms, democratic governments have tried to correct some of the social effects of neoliberalism, especially acute poverty, without truly changing the nature of the model or making the political reforms that would return to the state its leading role and to society its agency as an ensemble of actors.

For Garretón, those transformations and processes have brought a radical change in the relationships between state and society, which he calls “a transformation of the matrix constituting society.” For my purposes here, the most important transformation is the relativization of the role of politics as society’s cement (insofar as it integrated, gave access to goods and grounded the meaning of collective and individual lives) and the new role of culture. Politics, in the traditional sense, stops being the only politics and becomes only one of the multiple manifestations of the political while culture, “understood as the search for meanings and as the ensemble of symbolic representations, values and lifestyles, acquires a consistency and a density of its own, irreducible to politics or economics.” (25)

Early on, during the 1980’s, another Chilean sociologist, José Joaquín Brunner, had described what can be called the cultural contradictions of the neo-revolutionary neoliberalism the Chilean military dictatorship had used to refound the country. According to Brunner, Chilean culture of the second half of the twentieth century was led in its three revolutionary incarnations, --(the so called revolution within freedom of the Christian Democrats (1964-1970), the socialist revolution of Salvador Allende’s Unidad Popular (1970-1973) and the military revolution of Augusto Pinochet (1973-1990)-- by the “overdetermining power of politics.” (Brunner, 1988:48) Brunner’s use of the concept of revolution here alludes to the efforts of those three vast attempts of political imagination to recreate society ex-nihilo. The first two experiences coincide centrally with the arrival of modern mass culture in the country. Everyday life and the

specialized production of cultural messages are transformed in the period that begins with the 1960s: schooling increases, television expands, processes of social integration are intensified both at the level of consumption of mass mediated messages and at the level of the political project. Challenging this deep democratization of culture, the dictatorship offered, contradictorily, different mechanisms to counter its effects. The new repressive military state abandoned its role promoting culture “turning, as far as possible, the regulation of communicative processes over to the private circuits coordinated by the market” (105) while simultaneously keeping for itself “the functions of ideological control and administration of said processes, thus actively intervening in the reorganization of the main cultural apparatuses.” (105) From this moment on, the liberalization of cultural markets by the private sector went hand in hand with the efforts of the military and intellectual elites to counter its potentially subversive effects in the moral and social values realms. Control and subjection were functions the military state entrusted both to its repressive apparatuses and to the privatizing forces of the market and massmediated national and international culture, which itself came to replace the previous national-popular culture. Around 1980, in Brunner’s view, the Chilean culture of resistance to dictatorship discovered that the strategy of testimonial and memory-based resistance, of denunciations and nostalgic identitarian affirmation, was incapable of confronting the structural force the new privatized mass culture had acquired in the country. “Culture was thus transformed into a system of private satisfactions (and its associated expectations of order, security, well-being and mobility.) The mass cultural receptor was an individual consumer of material and symbolic goods. Public space gave way to the sphere of publicity”, i.e. commercial advertisement, not the Habermasian exploration of civil society and public sphere. (107)

A few years later, Brunner radicalized his hypothesis concerning contradictions, by pointing out that the seeming opposition between authoritarian social disciplining and cultural modernization was not real. The strict social control and the violent de-articulation of political forces (political parties, unions, local forms of association, etc.) were the necessary conditions and the opportunities to “liberalize” and privatize the economy, displacing the social coordination produced by the state by a coordination generated by “the market community.” Thus, authoritarianism and neoliberalism shook hands. What at first sight may have seemed a preordained failed collaboration, ended up being a transformation supported simultaneously and ‘successfully’ by disciplinary repression and the opening of society to markets. Administration of people on the one hand, freedom for things, capitals and goods, on the other.” (Brunner, 1994:251) The complementary side to this *dispositif* was that many of the dictatorship functionaries who, from the state, privatized public companies and services (electric power, steel, sugar, airline, phones, telecommunications, etc.) were to emerge later, in the nineties, as members of the boards of directors of many of those same companies and, more generally, in high positions within the new economic holdings constituted during the dictatorship. (Mönckeberg, 2001:21-59) This situation, as I will shortly show, was to have a strong impact on the possibilities of democratic communication in Chile.

Therefore, both Brunner and Garretón see the changing relationships between politics and culture as crucial to the explanation of central aspects of the epochal transformation of the country during the years of dictatorship and its social project. In 1990, along with the transition to democracy, Radio Tierra (RT) was born in Santiago as an independent station. Using its trajectory, I will try to concretely show some important connections between globalization, neoliberalism and culture in contemporary Chile.

Patricio Marchant, a Chilean philosopher, has referred to the 1973 military coup d'Etat, which frames the periodization of contemporary Chile (before, during and after), as a “coup against representation,” as a radical perturbation of the forms of thinking and speaking of the social. This break of signification, Idelber Avelar, Alberto Moreiras and Nelly Richard have insisted, defines the space of post-dictatorship and posits the challenge of finding another language as an alternative to the answers already offered: the expert and accommodating responses of the social sciences, the communist efforts to refurbish epic past languages or the indifference of consumers in the market.

For Richard that language is provided by the artistic and literary Chilean avant-gardes which respond to the categorical disaster of the coup and the loss of meaning of the social with an insistence on, at the very least, holding fast to the meaning of the loss itself. RT has tried to take another step forward in such a rearticulation of a social language capable of escaping speechlessness and confronting the challenges the new space, defined by the neoliberal project and impacted by globalization, has created in Chile.

In what follows, I will first establish the current Chilean media context. Then I will discuss the concept of public journalism and will end by presenting the project and practice of Radio Tierra.

2. Media Context

Radio broadcasting has always been and continues to be, with some restrictions, one of the most diversified communicational spaces in Chile. In contrast, in the written media there are two companies (El Mercurio and Copesa) which concentrate the ownership, the income generated by publicity (69.1% and 16.64% respectively) and the readerships (64% and 35.6%) in Santiago; and in broadcast network TV there are four channels (Televisión Nacional de Chile,

Corporación de Televisión de la Universidad Católica, Megavisión, and Chilevisión) which concentrate more than 89% of the investment on publicity and more than 90% of the audience in Santiago and the rest of the country, according to 1998 data. On the other hand, a partial count of the most populated regions of the country in 1998 produced 336 radio stations, 55 of which were located in the Metropolitan Region (which includes Santiago) while 66 were in the Eighth Region. A national sampling in 1996 referred to 832 radio stations in the country. (Secretaría de Comunicación, 1996:42) This relatively high number of radio stations and the relatively low operational costs of a station in Chile, would, in principle, ensure a competitive and diversified market. Nevertheless, of the three types of companies present in this market in the country -- foreign holdings, national business and institutional stations-- the first had a 47% share of the FM market in Santiago and something similar happened in the other regions of the country¹⁶.

Oswaldo Sunkel and Esteban Geoffroy summarize the situation as follows: “From the viewpoint of participation in the market for Santiago audiences [by far the most significant one, with around 40% of the total national population], foreign companies have acquired a clearly dominant position; national companies, while in a secondary position, have a significant portion that keeps them competitively in business; and institutional stations are left in a clearly marginal position (Sunkel and Geoffroy, 2001:75) Moreover, this means a significant change since international consortiums [US and Venezuelan capitals (Grupo Cisneros) in the case of the Iberoamerican Holding; Colombian capital (Cadena Caracol and Grupo Santo Domingo) in the case of the Consorcio Radial de Chile] have been operating in the country only for a few years and have already reverted the long-standing domination of the market the other two traditional actors had enjoyed. With a strategy aimed at capturing audiences, defined as segments differentiated by their musical preferences, the consortiums have imposed a very precise concept

of broadcasting as an entertainment industry. This is in sharp contrast with the previous importance of local and institutional radio stations which operated with a broader concept that included other social functions, such as the formation of public opinion and the expression of institutionalized social groups.

As Brunner before them, Sunkel and Geoffroy also highlight the constitutive role the Chilean state has had in the current configuration of radio broadcasting and written press markets. After the military coup d'Etat, the dictatorial government closed off the so-called "political press," that is, all except for the two currently hegemonic consortiums (El Mercurio and Copesa.) It also closed all left wing radios, while it kept a strict ideological control over these two communicational realms. After 1990, the Democratic state decided to intervene as little as possible in the alleged free play of the market thus constituted. This has meant, in practice, the disappearance of almost all the alternative press developed during the last period of the dictatorship. This, combined with the already described hegemony of broadcasting consortiums and their model of radio programming as entertainment, points to serious difficulties for the future preservation of cultural and political diversity in the country. The situation is further compromised by the peculiar way in which the Chilean right wing political and economic groups have confronted the cultural contradictions of national capitalism. The process of heavy concentration of media ownership has been accompanied by a marked ideological monopoly which is felt not just in the realm of the ideas thus communicated, but also in pressures over the purchase of advertisement and control of distribution networks. "Our hypothesis – conclude Sunkel and Geoffroy- is that the roots of the problem are to be found in the Chilean business people. They are an ideological homogenous group, educated in a neoliberal economic matrix and in a set of conservative values. Those who escape this

characterization are clearly the exception to the general tendency. This includes not just the media owners but also the full set of advertisers (Sunkel y Geoffroy, 2001: 115)»

If this has been the reaction of economic powers, at the level of the general population those contradictions have manifested themselves in a “diffuse social discomfort” within what Norbert Lechner calls the “paradoxes of Chilean modernization.” (Lechner, 2000:101) Through the PNUD (United Nations Program for Development) surveys, it has been established that some of the predominant traits of the contemporary Chilean social imaginary are: fear of exclusion (from social security and pension plans, health system, and education); the fear of the other (“the fear of delinquents, far higher than actual delinquency rates, is a metaphor for other fears” (102)); fear of conflict, along with the withdrawal into the private sphere; and finally, the fear of the lack of meaning “which shows life itself as a chaotic process (102).

Lechner’s hypothesis is that “the individualization in process demands a reconstruction of the social” realm, which itself involves “paying attention to the emerging forms of collective life.” If seen from the perspective according to which the national state was in charge of producing social integration into an organized modernity, those emerging forms, in their flexibility (or even lightness or fugacity) and freed from or lacking their customary ties, would be difficult to recognize. According to Lechner then, the challenge of Chilean modernity is to make development and subjectivity compatible, finding a form of collective unity that makes it possible to rescue and deploy individual differences in a post traditional world. In a world where social aspirations, risks and responsibilities have been privatized “there are not enough opportunities of ‘codifying’ dreams (...) codification that often takes place in social interaction and conversation.” (Lechner, 2000:110) In this task, the role of public journalism as exemplified by Radio Tierra may be crucial.

3. Public Journalism and Alternative Communication.

The ideological hegemony of Chilean elite groups makes the existence of alternative ways of communication particularly important. Since 1997, Ana María Miralles has developed, in the context of the Voces Ciudadanas project, taking place in and from the Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana de Medellín, Colombia, a very important reflection on the concept of public journalism which I want to explore here. For Miralles it is fundamental to distinguish between the classic concept of liberal citizenship and the kinds of journalisms hence derived, and a new concept of citizenship which inspires public journalism. Instead of accepting the space demarcated by the liberal myths about the citizen (which portray her as an individual, oftentimes apathetic and disinformed, whose political participation is limited to voting in elections or, alternatively, as a model of highly rational and politicized individual), public journalism wants to “make politics closer to the citizen” (“ciudadanizar la política,” as Lechner said) working with actually existing citizens not just to inform them but to actively build publics and make their agendas visible. This implies abandoning or correcting many of the founding tenets of liberal philosophy which ground regular informative journalism. Starting from a vision that makes information most central for the citizen, the latter was often in practice relegated to the status of a passive consumer of information deemed objective, distanced, apolitical and non-committal. The press itself was placed as a fourth power whose fundamental role was to oversee, criticize and distrust the state. Limited to the role of making visible what political power does, the press conceived of citizens as witnesses or victims of those actions and thus constituted a very limited agenda which was said to represent (an equally limited) public opinion. Instead of the passive consumer of news (i.e. of what already happened), civic journalism wants to actively co-participate in the deliberate shaping of the public agenda, while counting on a similarly active

participation from its publics. Instead of the news --which under the American idea of the six Ws (what, who, where, when, how and why) reduces all information to the same format-- public journalism wants, at a minimum, to combine information with deliberation, the news with debate. Instead of the classic criteria which determine what is news (the unprecedented, the shocking, the spectacular, all reducing the citizen to a consumer), public journalism is concerned with developing civil and journalistic agendas centered not on the supposed asepsis of objective description but on contextualized narrative, conversation and participatory dialogue. While “information can be delegated to the professional activity of the journalist -- thus, encouraging a culture of experts-- participation is non-transferable. (Miralles, 2002:59) In the end, it is a question of direct participation by new actors whose voices are visibilized in the acknowledgment of their capacity to produce public discourse. This means not simply representing their voices but allowing them access to a dialoguing and debating position. This, in turn, implies adding to the classic spheres of power and its protagonists, and to the mass media and its preferred actors (i.e. those whom the journalists can recognize as sense makers or as purveyors of meaning), new subjects, under the stimulus of the question “Who hasn’t spoken yet who should speak.”(Miralles, 2001:80) Public journalism, thus, attempts to make visible and help construct that civil/citizen agenda and to set it in dialogue with the agendas of politicians and the media. In order to do this, it privileges topics, not authorized sources; the acknowledgment, for a plurality of discourses, ways of knowing and forms of expression, of the right to deliberate. Finally, public journalism highlights not the isolated and shocking news but following up and deepening them. In this way, public journalism seeks to escape from the confines of the classic scheme where information is the main indicator of the quality of public opinion, in order to make the need for news grow organically from the processes of participation.

4. Radio Tierra and the Rearticulation of the Public.

In the general context of the relation/opposition between market and culture in the long thirty years of dictatorship, transition and democracy, radio broadcasting is particularly important since, although equally sensitive to the ratings that so directly affect TV programming, the Chilean radio industry, in general, has been unable to modernize its forms of evaluating audiences and advertisement. In fact, the only company (Megatime) which measures advertisement investments and expenditures in mass media does not measure ads revenues in regional markets, and in Santiago, it does it only for TV and the written press, excluding radio. In this sense radio is always seen --and this can be both a blessing and a burden-- as a kind of poor cousin of TV. This strategic second rate status as a mass medium is relevant here in at least one more sense. As James Baughman (1997) points out, American radio in the fifties adapted to the impact of the advent of TV by specializing itself in the discursive aspects to which TV paid less attention. One of the most obvious effects here was that radio abandoned the big and costly productions of the past in order to concentrate itself, among other things, on those where it had a comparative advantage, music broadcasting, for example. The expansion of TV, then, is from early on auspicious for the reemergence of local and independent stations which now did not need to compete with the big networks expanding in the market. This dual residuality of radio broadcasting in the context of mass media, makes it a particularly apt space for the manifestation of that cultural residuality about which Jesús Martín Barbero and Raymond Williams have written. It must be understood here that this residuality, in the case of RT, has two sides to it: the one already referred to in relation to TV and dominant commercial radio broadcasting, and secondly, a residuality that concerns RT's specific way of articulating what is popular (as in the Spanish sense 'of the people') and the political. In the active residuality of that other form of

politics, RT, following the logic of social movements and public journalism, aims at expanding the logics of micro articulation and deliberation into the macro sphere of national mass media.

Placing itself half-way between codification and decodification of mass mediated messages, in Stuart Hall's two famous poles, RT strives to make the functions of formatting and articulating mass mediated messages which are legible, comprehensible and powerful, two of its defining traits.

The logic of RT in this task seeks to balance the specificity of its independence *vis a vis* the dominant forms of codification of mass mediated messages while, simultaneously, keeping in mind that the radio encyclopedia of the listeners, their radio competence, has produced generic expectations that cannot be easily replaced by an enlightened discourse of ideological or knowledge diffusion. A brief excursus through the station's history may illustrate this point.

RT was born at the beginning of the 1990's with funding from the Dutch agency KULU, given to the Corporación Feminista La Morada in Santiago. Right from the start, a series of opposing views concerning the direction of the station manifested. While KULU wanted a radio station that belonged to multiple organizations, La Morada insisted on and finally won sole ownership. While KULU pressed for a direct incorporation of popular (lower class) feminist sectors to the management of the station, La Morada and the station's management team stressed a more specific feminism and a more specialized discursivity.

According to Claudia Barattini, a member of Corporación La Morada: "KULU always placed the emphasis on not letting the project fall 'under the control of the intellectuals' [of La Morada], as they said. KULU wanted a strong presence of popular sectors represented directly by organized women. That could be ensured, they added, not just through programming but centrally by giving them a space in the decision making process." (quoted in Araya, 1999: 14)

What was at stake here were not just the difficulties that any dialogue between academic intellectuals and activist intellectuals entails, but also different concepts about how to create a democratic radio station. In communicational terms, the problem was whether the medium expressed, carried, articulated or modulated a voice. For KULU it was an issue of direct and unmediated participation of the people's organizations in the management of the station, while for La Morada what was at stake was a proposal for the station's own voice, a communicational space for the reception and processing of RT's own discourse. At the founding moment of La Morada, even before the creation of RT, this same double insertion as intervention or articulation was already evident:

“La Morada, continued Barattini, was born to be the home of the feminists and the presiding concepts at the time were: to spread in Chile the ideas of feminism, to insert ourselves in the women's organized movement, to have an impact via our feminist discursive production through workshops, education, and political activism.”(in Araya, 1999: 13). These two activisms, a communicational one and an applied or socially grounded one, would take turns in the management of the station. For a while, the community-based activism dominated. In the end --and as a paradoxical result of the loss of momentum and relative disarticulation of social movements the arrival of democracy meant in the Chilean context-- the communicational activism was, nevertheless, the winner. In Barattini's words : “And there is a new perspective which holds, broadly speaking, that it is imperative to attempt a different reading of the new scenario emerging with democracy itself [she is referring to the de-mobilization that takes place in different social movements since 1990.] Thus, this view proposes that to do feminist politics in this new context involves being capable of generating public opinion, of having an influence in certain sectors of cultural production in the country, privileging, for instance, the penetration

of our ideas in the universities (...) Our current option has sided with this perspective, because to insert ourselves at the micro social level, at the level of grass roots organizations, in a context where the strength that gave them origin is waning, implies too high a cost. We cannot willfully take on the construction of social organizations because in the end, we are left with their dependence on us, which doesn't generate autonomous organizational capabilities. And when we insists on supporting them, we end up with 'satellite women' who, while coming from the people, have no real organization behind them. "(in Araya, 1999: 21)

5. Radio Tierra and its Broadcasting Practice Today

That was the situation in the mid-nineties. For a few years now, under the direction of María Pia Matta and Perla Wilson, RT has tried to find a different answer to that opposition between communicational and grass roots activism. The relative renaissance of Chilean social organizations during the last few years has made this possibility viable. In the new Chilean sociopolitical context, the station –which had been marked from the start by that tension between two types of activism, just when social organizations began to lose their momentum in the country- has been capable of rethinking that opposition and in so doing, its self-understanding too.

Along these lines, it seems appropriate to consider, briefly, some concrete examples of programming, projects and networking, since they may provide a more direct access to the real complexity RT, and its cultural practices, present as objects of a study that attempts to think them in the context of the articulation of global, national and local discourses and resources in neoliberalized societies.

First, I am referring to the programmatic space Voces de la Ciudadanía (Voices of citizenship/citizenry) which has been broadcast since April 1, 2002 in RT, Monday through

Friday from two to five PM. With the original financial support of the European Union, Voces de la Ciudadanía, first, trains communicationally and, then, broadcasts a series of three programs developed by a social organization in the areas of social, human and cultural rights. Among the organizations that have participated in this process are: the Agrupación de Familiares de Detenidos Desaparecidos (Association of Relatives of the Disappeared), the Corporación Ciudadanía y Justicia (Citizenship and Justice Corporation), the Movimiento Unificado de Minorías Sexuales (Unified Movement of Sexual Minorities), CIDE (education), PET (labor sector), CODEPU (justice), Chile Sustentable (ecology), etc. Each of these organizations had their own set of three programs with different thematic emphases, under titles such as: “Por el derecho a vivir en paz”(For the Right to Live in Peace), “Derechos en el aire”(Rights on Air), “Un Diálogo positivo”(A Positive Dialogue), “Triángulo abierto” (Open Triangle), “Voces de la escuela”(School Voices), etc. The communicational training consisted of the joined work of RT’s production team and the organizations’ representatives in three steps: defining thematically the cycle of programs, defining the production team and adapting the formats to be used (interview, open line, dramatization, etc...)” Many of these organizations have already participated in more than one cycle and some have been added to the regular programming of the station.

In this work, RT and its Voces de la Ciudadanía space come close to, and separate themselves from, the model of public journalism advocated by Ana María Miralles in her homonymous project in Colombia. In both cases the efforts are directed at creating citizen/civil communication to expand the range of actors, themes and their varieties of formatting and mediating in communication. The differences are at least two. The first one is that Miralles actively distinguishes between public journalism, which she promotes, and what is normally

called communication for development or community journalism. While the first draws on the heterogeneity of the urban social context and wants to create an autonomous public opinion, the second is based on the homogeneity or identity of a community, and it promotes it as way of endowing it with agency in order to confront challenges the state institutions, for example, are incapable of meeting. RT on the other hand, seeks to, simultaneously, help shape an independent civil/public opinion and to promote the communicational agency of those institutions, which addressing themselves to audiences and publics which are relatively homogenous and unified, have participated in, for instance, its Voces Ciudadanas space. Secondly, Miralles stresses that her public journalism project is aimed at ‘the common citizen,’ the citizen without institutional articulation, not the organizations of civil society. RT instead, focuses simultaneously on both types of publics/audiences through the active search for direct participation of the listeners, and, above all, through the organizations that communicate with the general and more specific publics via their participation in Voces Ciudadanas.

From this viewpoint, it is perhaps less important how many people listen frequently to RT than how many organizations are communicationally trained through the station. RT is thus transformed into something like a meta-social actor in charge of the discursive/communicational development of the agendas of other social actors. This also includes, of course, the traditional radio audience, but now conceived of as an actor among many, with its own problems of linguistic and discursive specificity. From an analytical perspective, this requires a change in the dominant forms of assessing the impact of a specific mass communication medium. In general, one can distinguish here two approaches. One, quantitative and dominant, according to which, even without the resources of television, radio stations attempt to quantify and socio-demographically classify their segment of the audience and develop the corresponding

programmatic strategy. A second, qualitative, approach, seeks to explore the forms of sense making at the everyday level by consumers now conceived of as cultural producers of meaning, endowed with their own experiences and forms of re-signification of the messages offered by the mass media. This dualistic logic, which opposes production to reception, the quantification of consumers to the work of cultural creation consumers are said to deploy, would indicate two classic and oftentimes counterposed forms of understanding the real impact of RT in the Chilean context. On the one hand, it would be a matter of measuring it with numerical indicators, on the other, of analyzing it ethnographically by interviewing its auditors. My own approach here, while valuing the intrinsic merits of each one of those perspectives, understands RT's impact, instead, by focusing on the station's ability to reach its publics in multiple ways including direct listening, but also by considering the station's indirect forms of articulating the communicational message of other social organizations and the practice of other communicational agents in networks of activism/communication that, frequently, involve contact with international and/or transnational discourses and agents. Renato Ortiz has mentioned how, under globalization, popular cultures that are regional and specific have potentially opened up to a liberation from nationalist and homogenizing pressures. It is perhaps there where RT locates itself: in the work of giving Chilean culture a new postnational thickness. From this viewpoint, RT carries out a "glocal" function, i.e. it articulates local logics, which are themselves always already the result of the changes globalization has brought to national life, to global logics and discourses such as feminism, multiculturalism, identity politics, ecological movements, international NGOs, etc. This new post-national Chilean culture may be capable, in its ideal model, of overcoming the tired oppositions between the global and the local, what is national and what is foreign, the

authentic and the false, and, simultaneously, capable too of leaving behind some of the impasses created by the neoliberalization of Latin American societies.

Thus, faced with the increasing segmentation of audiences and publics, targeted by the also increasing number of highly specialized radio stations, RT insists on simultaneously, a global understanding of the citizen-listener for whom nothing is foreign; and on a form of specialization that diversifies audiences/publics with programming addressed to, for instance, ethnic and sexual minorities. Therefore RT seems to be, at least in this sense, half way between the concept of the audience/public used by the communicational model of public responsibility (common in Europe) and the one used by the market economy (predominant in Chile.)⁶⁶ In this way, it combines the idea of specific subcultures or interpretative and consuming communities, defined by their affinity *vis a vis* a product or discourse being consumed, with the more encompassing idea of political communities of various ranges and scopes (urban, regional intranational, national, regional extranational, etc) for whom media consumption is a form of belonging to a political totality. The multiple deployments of the name ‘Tierra’ (Earth, ground) is here paradigmatic. In its holistic reach, ‘Tierra’ allows the station’s continuity phrases a very elastic horizon of reference. Highly globalizable in order to include in its program “Ritmos de la Tierra,” one day songs by Marc Anthony (the Puerto Rican singer), and the next day Nina Simone (the American jazz singer); Tierra is also local and precise enough to directly concern all Chileans and, more specifically, the inhabitants of Santiago, one of the most polluted cities in the world. One of the continuity phrases of the station declares: “Using the language of animals, forests, insects, rivers, winds, rains, creeks, sunrise and sunset, the Mapuche [indigenous] people created a way of dialogue it called Mapudungun: the discourse of the Earth. Radio Tierra constantly in movement...”

One of the most evident transformations of Chilean radio broadcasting during the last twenty years has been the displacement of audiences from the AM to the FM band. From the mid 1970's on, a massification of radio receptors with FM capabilities occurred. At first, and due perhaps to the remarkable sound quality distance separating AM from FM bands, FM stations in Chile aired, above all, classical and orchestrated music for an upper middle class audience. Later on, youth oriented stations, specialized in English-based rock and pop, emerged to cater to the taste of a broader segment defined by age. Finally, and since the mid 80's, it's possible to observe a massive displacement of the AM audience onto the FM band. If in 1976 AM stations had a 95% share of the general ratings, in 1996 they were down to 22%. During the same period, FM stations went from a 4.6% to a 54%. The process has been parallel to what could be called the FM appropriation of the AM format. In fact, most of the FM growth has been among the lower and middle sectors of the population who, first, impose, and, then, follow with a strong devotion, the displacement towards the FM band of the formats that once were exclusive of the AM band ("live broadcasting, a more informal style, the incorporation of news and even sports news") along with Spanish-based music and community service spaces. (Secretaría de Comunicación, 1996:16-22). Radio Tierra is located on the AM 1300 frequency. This location has been its most significant obstacle to increase its share of the market for audiences and publicity. The current managers of the station have singled out the original purchase of an AM frequency, precisely when this band was already showing its tendency to a decreasing reach, as one of the most significant management mistakes for the future of the station. Nevertheless, since early 2004 RT has had access --through the generosity of a Chilean businessman residing in Italy, and a likely admirer of the excellent Italian system of community and public radio stations-

- to an Internet server which has made possible a first experimental period of on-line transmission.^{viii}

If it is able to stabilize its digital transmission, RT will have to face the challenges inherent in both global communications and those that are specific to its own self-understanding. On the one hand, the supra-national aspects of its themes (universal justice and human rights, ecological causes, the rights of sexual and ethnic minorities) may make it possible for the station to reach not just a national audience but, potentially, a global or supranational regional one. The hemispheric regional dimension is particularly important for what can be called the articulating self-understanding of the station in the last few years. In general, the issue is to develop the highest possible degree of interconnectivity at the continental level. More specifically, the project is to create a digital network of Latin American stations and social organizations including some European ones (Chile, Colombia, Brazil, Argentina, Italy, Holland and France). The project @LIS, which recently and unsuccessfully sought funding from the European Union, was an effort “to create a radio portal for civil/citizen communication integrating, through new technologies, excluded communities, social organizations and independent media.”(Informe Radio Tierra: 2002) This project strove to produce “communicability” and “ciudadanización”(the process of expanding and activating citizenships), that is to say, civil/citizen communication and citizenship in/through communications. With that in mind, the project proposed to act on the circulation of self-representations by the social organizations participating in the portal, the appropriation of new technologies for free expression and “the participatory identification of subjects that help build public agendas.”(Informe Radio Tierra: 2002)

From the perspective of RT’s insertion in the Chilean context, it is possible to think of two important developments. Digital access makes it possible for a station with a limited and

sometimes weak signal in some zones of Santiago to be listened to with great sound quality not just in Santiago, but also in the whole country. Of course, this will depend in the end on at least two factors. First, on the degree of computer penetration in the Chilean context and a change in the use patterns of digital media. Along these lines and in the last two years, RT has oriented its efforts at expanding digital literacy and creating multimedia synergies. Following the successful model of projects for community and communicational development in Africa, RT has secured funding from OXFAM and the British Council to create a series of community infocenters distributed throughout Chile and housed by small community radio stations. The project seeks to generate a network of community infocenters, taking advantage of the actual community reach and scope of the stations involved, in order to expand digital literacy and improve communicational citizenship. The goal is “to give a new social edge” to technologies heretofore dominated by a commercial model of diffusion which has placed them beyond the reach of most of the population (Wilson, 2004a). Another RT ambitious project which would amplify and extend the logic of training and communicational multiplication through networks of the social organizations participating in Voces Ciudadanas is the creation of a multimedia laboratory to be housed at the station in Santiago. (Wilson, 2004a) Secondly, it is also possible to think that RT may be able to strengthen its position as a regional hemispheric actor entering into new forms of networked horizontal connectivity with similar actors in the continent and beyond. This is today one of the strongest development lines in RT. Its former director, María Pia Matta has already been the vice-president of AMARC Latin America and the president of AMARC-Chile. AMARC is the World Association of Community Radio Stations, “a non-governmental international organization helping the community radio movement, and encompassing about three thousand members associated in 106 countries.” (<http://amarc.org>). RT has worked for a

long time to create awareness in Chile about the problem and the possibilities of Latin American independent communication. To that end, it presents in their own voices and through their own sounds, other continental stations such as Radio Teja (from Uruguay), Radio La Tribu (from Buenos Aires), Radio San Miguel (from Honduras), etc. As one of its continuity phrases states: “RT promotes all voices that construct citizenship. Communication without borders.” Moreover, faced with the high cost and the ideological homogeneity of the dominant news agencies, RT has implemented a satellite connection with the ALER network of Latin American community radio stations.⁴⁸ In this way, for example, through the ALER news program “Contacto Sur” (“The Latin American situation with Latin American voices”) partially funded by the European Union and with the help of a local Caracas station, RT was capable of providing excellent live coverage of the Venezuelan presidential referendum on Monday the 16th of August, 2004. As Luis Gallegos has stated, “The choice is not between the local and the global. That is a fallacy, a misguided way of understanding and solving the contradiction. The real choice is between the global authoritarian monopoly and the local and global democratization of communications.” (Gallegos, 1999: 77). That is why Gallegos proposed to replace the concept of “local communication”--which falls short “Because it leads one to think on the micro, on the little (...) when, in fact, we are faced with a gigantic multitude of characters and an impressive multifocality”(71)-- by the alternative concept of “civil/citizen communication” that fits the complexity of the real phenomena better. It is obvious that this civil/citizen communication is strengthened when it occurs in networks of horizontal cooperation and coordination. These initiatives which gather individually limited efforts that, nevertheless, enjoy real local grounding, transform qualitatively the knowledge produced within the network. Thus, they open up the possibility of producing new local knowledges in other geographical locations.

What has been called the new “ontologically privileged [nature] of the communications media” as central producers of reality, i.e. the effective mediation of human experience now not only through the use of language and behavioral forms but also through the media themselves, involves a double performative nature of the media. (Mata, 1999: 87). On the one hand, the “knowing before” of the media transforms the old idea of the exclusive news flash (or “knowing simultaneously”) into a different type of social action which can later on be contrasted to the actual facts. Thus, opinion polls “produce” political results or, at least, strongly intervene on their actual occurrence. On the other hand, a less common possibility among the dominant media opens up. It concerns the transformation of the medium itself and its mediation of the social into a constitutive element of democratic reality. In this case, the communication medium is less a channel for participation or an instrument of communication than a space whose logic and materiality can be used to perform actual and effective citizenship. (Mata, 1999: 86-87). All of this is, of course, only one of the possibilities, and its occurrence depends not simply on the medium’s own characteristics, as a naïve technological determinism would assume, but on the legal frameworks, the social conditions and the will and agency of the actors involved. In this sense, the point has been made for the continental need to “demand coherence from the state regarding both the criteria for public communication, different from those used by the private kind, and the contradiction in the deregulation process that allows, on the one hand, the smooth privatization of the media while on the other, multiplies all kinds of obstacles for the legalization of the diversity of municipal, local, neighborhood-based radio and television stations that spring up today in our societies.” (Garretón, 2003: 201). Clearly, what is finally at stake are the relationships between the interests of the new transnational information-based capitalism, with its accompanying efforts to privatize and patent all knowledge, and the interests of the

nation states and communities of citizens/publics to make them publicly available. Cognitive-based capitalism is faced with the contradiction between the diffusion of the knowledges it promotes globally (access to the use and consumption of softwares, for example) and the socialization of those same knowledges (access to the independent production and reproduction of those same softwares) which it is so intent on strictly controlling. (Rullani, 2004:103) If for the information-based capitalists the key to economic profits is to accelerate the spread and slow down the socialization of that information, for RT, and for all public journalism media, the challenge is to reduce the temporal distance between those two processes. Information diffusion and participatory socialization are their two simultaneous objectives.

Conclusion

In 1992 José Ignacio López Vigil, at the time the coordinator for AMARC's Latin American office, pointed out, in relation to the challenges of the new century: "It is in this overwhelming neoliberal world where we have to construct a democratic radio." (López Vigil, 1993: 3) Then he added: "And one wonders: the programs produced in our centers and stations, have they been on air because of their quality or because of subsidies? Or to put it negatively: if our stations were to lose the subsidies, would they be able to resist the competition of commercial radio stations?" (4) His diagnosis concerning what must be done was threefold: "Personnel quality [professionalization], massive audience [entering the fight for ratings], modern programs [a non paternalistic understanding of the true complexity of the popular audience which must include polemics, playful, sentimental, humoristic programs, dynamic communication, fantasy, in addition to the classically political interests]" (9) Without a doubt, RT has already more than met the first challenge. After an initial stage in which good intentions were stronger than communicational capacity, the station has now a well developed journalistic

team, a sophisticated musical offering and the kind of coverage and international news quality provided by their access to the satellite network ALER. All of these factors are added to the already confirmed strength of the station's work with the social organizations which broadcast through it. In relation to the second challenge, it must be said that the undetermined nature of the station's audience has always been an obstacle to selling advertisement slots. Although the station may have nowadays an audience of 20,000 listeners, according to the calculations of its current director (Wilson, 2004a), its very recent transmission through the internet makes it more difficult to measure the transformation of audience into market, which is, for commercial broadcasting at least, the key step. In this sense, the logic of globalized diffusion does not lend itself easily to the direct conversion of audience into market. One may wonder then, in regards to the third challenge, what kind of products or services could RT "sell" to such an audience and whether that necessarily would involve turning the latter into a "market"? (in the sense in which commercial dominant radio broadcasting understands the expression.) Finally, concerning the third challenge, RT has developed an increasingly more complex vision of the diversity of interest and of the composition of its actual and potential audience. Having had significant international funding early on, RT enjoyed a strong degree of independence from commercial competition for ratings. On the negative side, this allowed a marked amateurism just when national broadcasting was opening up to the international consortiums. On the positive side, this situation has allowed the station to later combine its remarkable professionalization with the continuity and development of its option for public journalism.

Radio broadcasting in Chile became massified in direct connection with the social destinies of the lower and middle classes in the second third of the twentieth century. New audiences were perceived as publics who could be reached massively and at a low cost for the

promotion of the new goods and services characterizing modernization. At a more specific level, Chilean radio broadcasting acquired during the 1960's its more concrete profile at the confluence of three technological factors: "the commercial debut of transistor-based receptors, the beginning of FM broadcasting, and, finally, the emergence of television."³ In this context, it is possible to think that --in a new crossroads of said modernization, with publics and audiences diversely constituted who, moreover, discover and elaborate new and complex cultural needs; with technological developments such as digital broadcasting and Internet, potentially capable of radically transforming communicational scenarios-- public radio in Chile could become a key actor in the process of re-imagining the forms of the political and the social in the country. Radio Tierra could, thus, help to overcome the limitations of the neoliberal model of culture and to redefine the dominant styles of modernity and modernization.

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Notes

¹ This postindustrial society itself lacks a political organization and it only exists in historical practice associated to diverse types of politically organized societies, thus producing, perhaps, national postindustrial societies.

² Mönckeberg remarks: "...I focused my interest on the new economic groups which have made their appearance in Chile after the military dictatorship. Lead by agents incubated during the dictatorship, who were first advisors and government executives, who privatized companies – many of them only to privatize themselves with those companies later on-, who 'normalized' other companies and decided for all of us when there was no Congress and no freedom." (Mönckeberg, 2001:10)

³ The Sociedad Bio Bio Comunicaciones is an important anomaly here. Owned by a Chilean regional consortium (Nibaldo Mosciatti and his family) it has been very successful in the central-south zone of the country. See Sunkel and Geoffroy (2001)

⁴ Along these lines, Norbert Lechner has recalled Gino Germani's hypothesis about the ideological conservatism of the elite who "attempts to limit modernization to the economic domain at the same time that it seeks to reinforce the socialization of traditional values through the family and the school." (Lechner, 2000:103). Already in 1995, Carolina Rosetti, at the time the director of Radio Tierra pointed out in a report to KULU, the social cooperation Dutch agency which funded the creation of the station: "In an economy such as ours, the survival of communications media is linked to the amount of advertisement each medium is capable of gathering or to the subsidies other companies or interest groups may provide. In Chile, advertisement has an ideological bent, i.e. businessmen put their money not simply where they are guaranteed a good rating but where, in addition, their economic interests are not contradicted or threatened. In this way, a vicious circle occurs: independent media cannot grow because they do not have enough advertisement and advertisement does not flow their way because they are small and independent." (Araya, 1999:34)

⁵ One of RT's continuity phrases states: "Other stories, other truths. Radio Tierra."

⁶ "The space Voces de la Ciudadanía is the editorial axis of Radio Tierra. It aims at giving visibility to the organizations of civil society, it amounts to an independent and diverse

perspective in order to create more civil/citizen presence in communications” (www.radiotierra.cl). It is important to highlight also that Voces de la Ciudadanía is a multimedia project. The different summaries of the program with their specific organizations and themes are published regularly in the biweekly (printed) journal Rocinante.

⁷ In an evaluation prepared by RT itself and the Corporación La Morada, its owner, the journalist Rebeca Araya pointed out in 1999: “Of 3,506,352 possible auditors in the Metropolitan Region RT has, according to Search Marketing (1999) an audience of 0.2 points of rating, i.e. 6400 people” (Araya, 1999:3). And she concluded: “finally we think it necessary to point out that evaluating Radio Tierra is complex, because it involves identifying consistent parameters to measure an experience that is unprecedented in Chile and the world. Thus, one must reconcile indicators derived from the internal experience of an innovative project, with ‘traditional’ parameters regulating communications media within a political and economic system opposed to the cultural and social change proposal animating Radio Tierra. Nevertheless, the station must be able to compete for the financial resources that will ensure its continuity, that is to say, it must precisely reach high levels of efficiency within this system.” (Araya, 1999:5).

⁸ With the help of the Corporación El Encuentro and its micro business department. The signal is connected to the Internet through the Community Infocenters Plan of Telefónica Chile. (Wilson, 2004b)

⁹ Aler is the Asociación Latinoamericana de Educación Radiofónica (Latin American Association of Radio Broadcasting Education. Founded in 1972 it currently has 92 radio stations affiliated. Its internet site is www.aler.org.ec

¹⁰ *Perspectivas de la radio en Chile*, p. 5 (The quote refers to the work of Lasagni (1988))

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^x Perspectivas de la radio en Chile, p. 5 (The quote refers to the work of Lasagni (1988)