

Public Television in Andean America: History, ownership changes, and criticism from Argentina, Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, and Peru

This paper analyzes and describes public television in Andean America through the historical, hermeneutic, and non-participating observation method, carrying out a critical review of the literature, legal provisions, and official websites. The research reveals the appearance and precariousness of Andean-American public television, its financing, and particular forms of administration. Twenty-four stations were identified as having evidence of public ownership, of which only eight are close to the principle of public service TV. There is little evidence of the existence of public service television because of the political-ideological control of the public media by the various governments, especially by populist regimes. Also, public television in the Andean region suffers from the cultural contamination of banal commercial content and infotainment.

KEYWORDS Public television; public service TV; government; commercial television; misinformation.

From the first television broadcast in Latin America—in Brazil in 1949—there were two founding intentions: the global interest of hegemonic countries that created television technology, and the political power instituted in the countries of the region that were, in general, of a military-dictatorial nature:

Brazil, Mexico, Argentina, Venezuela, and Colombia began transmissions between 1950 and 1954; El Salvador, Uruguay, and Nicaragua in 1956; Peru and Chile in 1958; Honduras, Ecuador, and Guatemala in 1959. For the next decade, Costa Rica and Panama do so in 1960, Bolivia in 1969, and Paraguay in 1965. Not all countries broadcast private and public channels at the same time (Toussaint, 2017: 228).

The proprietary concentration of the traditional media was associated with family clans that related to political power: “a network of institutional interests and priorities that can bias government action in favor of certain groups in power, leaving citizens’ expectations in second place” (Villena Olivero and Vallejo Peña, 2018: 507). Both commercial and political power happen upon the arrival of this technology because of the concern about the control of the media structure (Becerra and Mastrini, 2011).

It is significant to note that public service television has two fundamental characteristics: i) ownership of the medium—it is constituted independently on the basis of the contributions of the citizenry, and ii) the function of the medium, which must be a “social service” through content that is primarily educational-oriented. These constitutive precepts are confused and buried from their very name (Ortega Dolz, 2010: 206).

Martín Barbero (2005) explained that there is still hope that public television will be the one to question and be decisively linked to the permanent renewal of the common bases of national culture and to the audiovisual recreation of the stories of the prevailing culture, independently of the intentions of political/commercial control. In this line, according to UNESCO (2019: 14-15), public television is:

(...) a forum where information, opinions, and criticism circulate. This is only possible if the independence, and therefore, the freedom of public radio and television is preserved from commercial pressures or political power (...) if the information disseminated by the public service is associated with the will of power, people will no longer believe in it. If the program offered by the public service is designed according to commercial imperatives, people will not understand why it is being asked to finance a service whose programs are not sufficiently different from the services offered by private broadcasters.

According to these theoretical bases, public television in Andean America will be analyzed concerning its history, the criticism of its content, and the prospects in each of the countries that make it up. For this study, the methodological procedure was formulated from the historical method, analyzing the objects in their chronological succession, and proceeds with the documentary review of Latin American literature on television. Likewise, the hermeneutic approach is used, through the study of the coherence of the norms and principles, carrying out a documentary review of legal dispositions of the Andean countries on the constitution of institutions and operation of the public television media. Thirdly, through the non-participating observation of the official websites of the national public television media, their contents and programming are identified. In general, the common historical features of the apparent public function of Andean-American television, its sources of funding, and its forms of administration will be examined.

Argentina: From Educational Media to Government Information Control

In 1951, during the Peronist government era, public television was born in Argentina with *Canal 7*, which began broadcasting in the service of the government. This state-run medium went through a series of stages, from technological experimentation to consolidation and atomization. At present, due to the legal reforms that have taken place, the channels of the television spectrum have been redistributed: 33% correspond to the social sector, 33% to the community sector, and 33% to commercial-private industry (Toussaint, 2017). After an intermittent tour of public television in the history of Argentina (*e.g.*, Brandy, 2014) in 2005, the public-educational channel called *Encuentro* was created as a form of public recognition and promotion of the nation's culture and as a proposal for quality television and public service. In this regard, with the advance of technology, the first public digital state channels were *Encuentro* and *PakaPaka*, both of which have educational media characteristics (Murolo, 2013).

According to Gerber, Mastrini, and Brant (2017), with the change in regulation to allow access to broadcasting licenses for non-profit entities in 2009, a process of the “democratization of the media system” is being promoted. The Audiovisual Communication Services Law [Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual] changed the rules of the game in the media sector, recognizing three types of media service providers: the state, private commercial, and private non-profit. This law applied until 2015 and then changed its meaning of service.

As of 2009, the single nationwide statist link was terminated, and a process of re-nationalization of the provincial public broadcasters began (Schleifer, 2018). As an example, channel 10 in the province of Rio Negro operates as a provincial public

television station, although its contents are closely tied to commercial logic and the ideology and management of the government in power.

At this time, there are 12 national-public television channels in Argentina. These migrated or were instituted in the digital television transmission system of Digital Terrestrial Television (DTT): “*Canal 7, Encuentro, PakaPaka, Tatetí* -suspended-, *INCAA TV, TecTV, Telesur, DeporTV, Tecnópolis, ACUA Federal* and *ACUA Mayor, Suri TV*”(Grzincich and Alaniz, 2017: 16). These channels, especially *INCAA TV* (from the National Institute of Cinema and Arts of Argentina) and *Encuentro* are assumed to be public service and educational television since they challenge the audience not merely as consumers, but as citizens with respect to their past and present, which constitutes the citizen’s “television memory” (Sirio Fernández and Torello, 2017).

The radio stations established during the government of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007–2015) continued during the government of Mauricio Macri (2015–2019). Some modifications are presented, converting them to a mixed financing system (public ownership and private sector contributions). By Decree No. 1222 of the Macri government, the structure of “Public Contents State Society” (Contenidos Públicos Sociedad del Estado) was created under the Federal System of Media, which currently manages and operates the signals *Encuentro, Paka Paka, Depor TV, Canal 7 Televisión Pública Argentina*, and other media.

The main educational and public channels because of their function in society are *Encuentro*, which began national transmission in 2007, and has international significance through digital technologies, whose objective is to contribute to equity in access to knowledge for all inhabitants of Argentina and other countries in the region. The second one, *Paka Paka* (which in the Quechua language means “hideout” or “children’s game”), started in 2010. This station is a children’s channel with a clear pedagogical and entertainment proposal. Among the objectives of these channels are to promote access to information and materials from various national and international sources that contribute to human development (González *et al.*, 2017).

The role of public television is relevant and significant in terms of citizen education. According to Murolo (2014), one of the exciting projects is *ACUA Federal* (Argentinos Cuentan Argentina) [Argentiniens Explain Argentina] and *ACUA Mayor*, which are public television proposals based on the autobiographical stories of the Argentinians, a way of perpetuating their historical memory. *ACUA Mayor* was established as the first public digital channel in Latin America dedicated to the elderly. However, these stations are currently not broadcasting.

Canal 7 TV Pública de Argentina is the first national television channel, which began broadcasting on October 17, 1951. According to the Observatorio de la Radiodifusión Pública en América Latina [Observatory of Public Broadcasting in Latin America]¹ (ORPAL, 2018), the state companies with direct public administration depend on the Radio y Televisión Argentina Sociedad del Estado (RTA-SE). Public TV currently reaches more than 20 million Argentinians through 295 over-the-air repeater stations, in addition to transmitting its signal through 99.5% of the cable and satellite TV systems. The programming can also be viewed online through each station’s official website.

In short, 6 active public TV stations use different channels and digital platforms that correspond to the national public television of Argentina, whose primary administrative control is the government through the Federal System of Media and Public Contents, as well as the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation of the Argentine Republic. The central social functions of these national public television stations are education, culture, science, and technology.

Bolivia: From Communication Decolonization to Populist Control

August 30, 1969, marks the historical date of the beginning of television in Bolivia. According to ORPAL² (Observatorio de la Radiodifusión Pública en América Latina), a severe economic crisis in 2009 forced the government of Evo Morales to close down the former Empresa Nacional de Televisión and create a new public television entity called Empresa Estatal de Televisión — *Bolivia TV (BTV)*. According to the official website of *BTV*, this is an audiovisual communication company with a strategic social vocation aimed at strengthening the process of change through the production and dissemination of plural content that informs and educates, integrating ethical, moral, and civic values of the various cultures of the Bolivian population.

Under the General Law of Telecommunications, Information and Communication Technologies (Law 164; 08-08-2011), the Government Media System was established, consisting of the newspaper, *Cambio*; the national network, *Bolivia TV*; the radio network, *Patria Nueva*; and the Bolivian Internet Information Agency. Likewise, the private media daily, *La Razón*, and the television network, *ATB*, would have direct links to the official sector. The government strengthened the centralized control of the official media and enhanced them through the indirect acquisition of some private press and television media, which were critical of the government, for the official use of propaganda and counter-propaganda beyond any election periods (Torrico Villanueva, 2011).

The media related to the government but not belonging to the public network, according to Peñaranda (2014), are called “the network of parastatal media,” which, although they are not state media, act as “government delegates,” aligning faithfully with the government’s purpose without being part of the public administration:

The government has deployed a strategy to control relevant media by buying them from friendly entrepreneurs or installing them directly. Among them are *ATB*, *PAT*, *Full TV*, *La Razón*, *Extra*, and the *Abya Yala* channel. The present investigation calls them “parastatals.” Their presence, which reduces independent voices, makes the quality of democracy decline (12).

Abya Yala TV, on its official website³, declares that it belongs to the Abya Yala Bolivia Foundation and that it has an informative, educational and cultural program. It was founded in 2012, thanks to the close relations between the governments of Bolivia and Iran, which decided to finance the installation of this channel with tendencies similar to the ideology of the government.

The media scenarios with progressive governments in the 21st century use renewed Machiavellian strategies whose architects are the current «spin doctors» or «political marketers» (De Almeida Santos, Cavadas Gormaz, and Timoteo Álvarez, 2017), which are based on media procedures formulated in past centuries by De La Boétie

(XVI), Mazarin and Gracian (XVII), and the Count of Shaftesbury and Baron de Holbach (XVIII). All of these people held that everything is beneficial to sustain power, and a good ruler who administers a state is obliged to:

Categorize and classify the media into official, unofficial, independent, opposing and enemy; to have a «centralized news office»; to a constant presence in all media (with energy and activism) so that the government has to maintain official and unofficial media (with little public influence, according to the author), must sustain independent media and must have bought and maintained enemy and opposing media (De Almeida Santos, Carvadas Gormaz and Alvarez, *op. cit.*:18).

Bolivia has had a long tradition of alternative radio media such as mining and community radio. However, there has been no evidence of national television media exclusively serving the public. In the case of university television media, they appear in the register as educational and cultural media. According to ORPAL, these were created in 1979 by the National Council for Higher Education on an experimental basis.

Currently, university television is called the *RUBI Network* (Red Universitaria Boliviana de Información) [Bolivian University Information Network], which does not have a single national signal. It is financed by the corresponding university institutions and supported by funding from external commercials and advertising.

A significant boost to Bolivian public television is the creation of the *TV Culturas* channel under the Ministry of Cultures and Tourism, which began its cable signal on July 15, 2013, in three Bolivian cities: La Paz, Santa Cruz, and Cochabamba. The resources for its maintenance come from 0.02% of the Direct Tax on Hydrocarbons (IDH). At present, *TV Culturas* has its signal in the rest of the Bolivian provinces through different channels.

Among the contributions to public television from culture and sports entertainment, the digital sports channel *Bolivia TV Deportes* was created in 2015 as an appendix of *Bolivia TV* with all of its accompanying prerogatives, and it operates in 7.1 in the DTT system.

Consequently, the control of public television is the responsibility of the state apparatus and the universities. The function of the media in its trajectory, notably the current *Bolivia TV*, is propagandistic and in service of the government's ideology to promote the political and social "process of change" in the country, except for the channels *TV Culturas* and *Bolivia TV Deportes*, which fulfill the public function of promoting art, tourism, and sports practice. In the case of *Abya Yala TV*, it is a medium that belongs to a private foundation, and that has cultural, educational, and informative characteristics, but always from the government's ideological perspective. The university channels' educational mission is almost non-existent since their social function is focused on entertainment and information.

Chile: The Privatization of University Media

Television in Chile started with a university impulse. The official public broadcast in 1959 was promoted by *Canal 13* of the Catholic University of Chile and *Canal 8* of the University of Valparaiso, and in 1960, the University of Chile's *Canal 9* began broadcasting. In April 1961, after the import of more powerful equipment, the second inauguration of *Canal 13's television transmission* was made (Hurtado, 1989). In 1967,

the Chilean government began to manage a state-owned channel, which became a reality on September 18, 1969, with the creation of *Televisión Nacional de Chile (TVN) Canal 7*. The university media developed mixed formats, with European public service tendencies on the one hand and those of North American commercial television on the other (Tagle, 2008). The initial proposal was original because it made political demands compatible with educational and cultural television, with a monopoly state channel controlled by the government.

Since the beginning of the activities of *TVN*, which expanded its radius of action in the whole territory (Santa Cruz Achurra, 2017) from 1969 to 1973, access to the television system of other channels was not allowed to the established ones, even refusing the license to new university channels. After the arrival of the dictatorship, the military government took over all the media, appointing military men to run the university channels, and the state channel became a simple dependency of the General Secretariat of Government. In the dictatorial period, at the end of the 1970s, *TVN* was forced to obtain its financing, following the abolition of state economic support. It led to the development of a mixed television system between rigid ideological control and the continual growth of an advertising market. This lasted until 1990 with the fall of Augusto Pinochet.

In 1992, during the first years of democratic life in Chile (Fuenzalida, 1998), *TVN* was assigned a fundamental role: to lead democratic political pluralism, balance the information media system, and encourage citizen participation. According to Fuenzalida (2005), in March 1992, two laws (No. 19.131 and No. 19.132) reformed the characteristics of the Chilean television system. They changed the National Television Council and transformed the administration of the public channel, modifying three substantial points for a quality public *TVN* that contains pluralistic information management. The Commission's role is to provide a forum for the exchange of information and experience between the different sectors of the public broadcasting system:

- *TVN* is legally transformed into a state-owned public station with political autonomy from the government, run by a pluralistic board of directors that includes the political minority.
- The station must be self-financing to have economic autonomy from the government.
- The station is administratively reformed to acquire efficiency and agility and, thus, compete economically with the other television stations.

In a relationship of *TVN* with the State in a legislative manner, without economic or political dependence, it is currently possible the Chilean public television, although very close to the commercial sphere. It is a model that is innovative among public service broadcasters with pluralistic information and a culture of programmatic segmentation (Santa Cruz Achurra, 2017). For example, in its collections, there are excellent productions such as *Los Archivos del Cardenal*, a story about the dictatorship that contributes to the consolidation of a type of collective historical memory about the value of democracy and freedom (Antezana Barrios and Mateos Pérez, 2017).

Educational television primarily came about with the launch of Chile's National Television Council (CNTV) in 2000, financed by law under the national budget and

external agencies. The educational channel is used by the educational system (Montt Fabres and Villarrubia Martínez, 2005). *CNTV Infantil* is currently being set up as the only public television initiative aimed at children and young people. In addition to its website, its contents are shown on regional open-television channels and cable. In Chile, the aim is for digital technology to encourage educational public television, with the advent of the digital standard for open television and the use of digital convergence.

An aspect that stands out as foundational and sustaining in time/space in its independence and plurality of information to be cataloged as national public channels are *TVN* and *C13 (Canal 13)* (Ortega, 2008). The mission entrusted to *C13* by the Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile (PUCCh) is to provide public service content, plurality, independence, and freedom of the press in the face of any attempt at government or commercial control. However, this medium changed its name. Its official website⁵ states that as of November 2017, it had a change in ownership and currently belongs entirely to the businessman Andrónico Luksic, closing an essential chapter in the history of the station linked to the PUCCh. Therefore, *C13* passes to the private television sector. In this line, Valerio Fuenzalida (2015) asks whether Public Television has any value at present for the citizens, and with medium certainty, he answers:

Neoliberalism said that private TV was enough. It is maintained that government propaganda TV is not at the service of the citizenry. A public TV, independent from the government, in a digital environment, can improve the quality of information for citizens-audience, and offer new programming (p. 31).

The panorama of public television in Chile is complex in its history and reality. Many national channels that were what was known as “of public origin” have been taken over by private companies, such as the latest case recorded with *C13*, which closes the circle of media privatization. It highlights the relevance and consolidation of *TVN* as the only public channel in Chile, with a unique administration according to the Chilean laws and its form of self-financing, to maintain its independence, plurality, and freedom of the press, as well as the management of national content, with educational and cultural trends, although with much attachment to commercial content of infotainment. According to the abovementioned Chilean authors, there is a strong hope that, through the segmentation of programs and the use of multiple digital platforms (such as the case of *CNTV Infantil*), they will find development in the public television offer according to the concept and essential social function.

Colombia: From public service television to privatization

Colombian television emerged under the military regime of Gustavo Rojas Pinilla in 1954, as a unique system of granting operating licenses to private producers for two years for the incorporation of programming. This mixed picture between the state and private financiers lasted four decades. In 1970, the state-owned Channel 7 *Señal Colombia* and regional community television stations such as *Telecaribe* were born, and it was in 1994 that private channels began to gain space (Toussaint, 2017).

Colombia has experienced complex moments in the definition of public, state, and private channels. The mixed nature of its constitutions has prevailed throughout its history (Garzón Barreto, 2015). These characteristic features are intertwined with the political

development and democratic culture of citizens interested in media service. There are four moments of state intervention in this task: (i) the civil-military origin of national television, (ii) the legislation for the operation of television, (iii) the «constitutionalization» of television, and (iv) the «re-government» of Colombian television. However, public television corresponds to the Colombian national television system according to its legal establishment:

(. . .) Decree 101 of 1955 which created the National Television. Then, in Decree 3267 of 1963, which gave rise to *INRAVISION*, the concept of public service was renewed with Law 142 of 1985, which restructured it and enabled the creation of regional channels. This approach was ratified in Article 1 of Law 182 of 1995, which created the National Television Commission (CNTV): “Television is a public service subject to the ownership, reservation, control, and regulation of the State, the provision of which shall correspond, by concession, to the public bodies referred to in this law, to individuals and organized communities.” According to this article, television is a public service that can be provided by individuals (García Ramírez, 2015: 33).

According to Arenas (2015), in 1970, *Canal 2* was inaugurated, and in 1995, *Cadena 3* was inaugurated. The latter eventually became *Señal Colombia*, a national television channel with an exclusively educational character. In 1985, the first regional channel in Colombia was born: *Teleantioquia*, and then in 1986, *Telecaribe* and *Telepacífico* were established. In 2004, *Canal A* became *Canal Institucional*. In 2010, the first official broadcast of the DTT signal was made on the three public channels: *Canal Uno*, *Señal Colombia*, and *Señal-Canal Institucional*. In 2011, the National Television Commission (CNTV) was eliminated, and in 2012, the ANTV (National Television Authority) was born. In 2013, the brand *Señal Colombia-Sistema de Medios Públicos* was created, which identifies and groups nine information platforms for different audiences, among them, *Señal Deportes* was created.

In this transit, public television signals have to make their way through the gap between government funding and the advertising they receive, a situation that conditions their survival, the quality of their content, and their editorial lines. According to García Ramírez (2015), the public channels in Colombia, between national and regional, are *Teleantioquia*, *Telecaribe*, *Telepacífico*, *Televisión Regional de Oriente*, *Telecafé*, *Teleislas*, *Canal 13*, and *Canal Capital*. These local channels have a mixed system of financing: The Fund for the Development of Television and Contents (FONTVC), managed by ANTV; contributions from the partners; advertising; and marketing. Funding is added to the national media: *Señal Colombia*, *Canal Institucional*, and *Canal UNO*.

In the face of a mixed picture in terms of financing, and despite the State’s contribution to FONTVC and the little educational and cultural content regarding people’s daily lives, according to Rincón (2015: 43), one should “stop calling State televisions public: they are not, since they respond more to the interests of specific governments than to public interests. We have failed to make public media for more than 50 years; we tried, and we could not de-governance them.” Also, Arenas (2015) explains that Colombian public television cannot be governed by the laws of the market, since the citizen must demand compliance with this right to free communication, adding that “whoever is interested in this country is interested in public television, which I wish was our best mirror and the most interesting and indiscreet of windows” (*op. cit.*: 50).

This is the demand in the whole continent, at least from the academic field⁴: In some countries, more than in others, there is hope that, with the emerging communication technologies, it will be possible to make visible the diversity in the regions and

neighborhoods of people's daily lives through local-public television on multiple digital platforms (Martín Barbero, 2015).

Ecuador: From U.S. Evangelical Church to Government Control

Television in Ecuador originated as an evangelical initiative on July 28, 1959, when American missionary Joe Springer managed to broadcast the first signal, and a film donated by the U.S. Embassy was transmitted. Later, as a family/private initiative in 1960, *Canal 4* was founded in the city of Guayaquil. It is considered the first television station of Ecuadorian nationality.

The history of Ecuadorian TV was a private experience for 37 years, until October of 2007 when the public channel *Ecuador TV (ECTV)* appeared. Its first broadcast was the inauguration of the National Constituent Assembly of the first government of Rafael Correa (Ortiz León y Suing, 2016). This channel is owned by the Ecuadorian government, whose mission is to provide citizens with television content that forms, informs, and entertains healthily, promoting and strengthening family, social, and cultural values and citizen participation. During this period, *ECTV* has received a lot of criticism, as it was described as an instrument of government propaganda, which was part of the governments of the progressive left linked to the model of “21st-century socialism” or “populist regimes” in the region (Venezuela, Nicaragua, Bolivia, Ecuador, Brazil, Uruguay and Argentina).

The state channel, Ecuador TV, was officially launched on April 1, 2008, as a public TV station. At the same time, the government decreed state control of the private companies — *Gama Televisión*, *TC Televisión*, and *Cablevisión* — because of their owners' debts to the state following the banking crisis (Checa Godoy, 2012). The companies seized by the State are still in operation but managed by the Ecuadorian Radio and Television System. In the case of *TC Televisión*, created in 1968, launched in 1969, and operated by the Ecuadorian Television Network since 2011, it is in force with generalist programming. In the case of *Gama Televisión*, which began commercial transmissions in 1977 (currently called *Gamavisión* and owned by Medios Públicos EP and the *Gamavisión* workers' trust), it is operated by Compañía Televisión del Pacífico Teledos and is broadcasting on multiple platforms.

Consequently, *Tele Ciudadana* was created in 2014, operated by the National Secretariat of Communication (SECOM), and served as the government's official appendix in the management of public policies and works, achievements, and social transformation for a new country. Furthermore, the *TV Legislativa* station was founded in 2013, managed by the National Assembly of Ecuador, to disseminate the activities of the legislature and become a scenario for the multicultural participation of citizens.

An important and essential means of educational public television created by the Ecuadorian state is the *Canal Educa*. According to the website of the Ministry of Education of Ecuador⁶, *TV Educa* is part of the Ministry of Education's TeleEducation project, which has been on-air and online since October 1, 2012, and broadcasts its programming on more than one hundred channels with national and regional coverage. As stipulated in the Ecuadorian Radio and Television Broadcasting Law, one of its

functions is to provide one hour of television with educational content. *TV Educa* is a non-profit Ecuadorian public broadcaster aimed at programming and disseminating educational, entertaining, informative, and quality audiovisual production.

Digital convergence is an exciting opportunity for channels to program educational content in a segmented way and to take advantage of new digital channels to generate public service television. An opportunity for this is the incursion of local channels to take advantage of local information in a preferential way and reach audiences (Ordoñez *et al.*, 2017), examples include usability, accessibility, mobility, and interactivity. These opportunities can be found on the websites of the channels in Zone 7 of Ecuador: *Multicanal*, *Ecotel TV*, and *Los Encuentros TV*.

The Ecuadorian Government still primarily finances the budget of its so-called “national public media,” and administers and controls them through various systems, including the mixed form concerning the media seized in 2008. However, only one media (*Educa*) meets the specific requirements of a public service outlet that benefits Ecuador’s education system, especially children and young people in training. In the case of general content for citizen training and participation, it is presented in a reduced manner with unitary programs; therefore, total programming of independent public TV content does not fully exist.

Peru: From a UNESCO Effort to Publicly Owned Media

Television is emerging in Peru with the first state-owned station to broadcast a signal in 1958. It was called Channel 7 *Garcilaso de la Vega OAD TV* and promoted by the Peruvian government under an agreement with UNESCO for the dissemination of educational and cultural content (Martínez, 2013). At present, Channel 7 is called *TV Peru* and belongs to the State through the control of the National Institute of Radio and Television of Peru (*IRTP*). According to its official website⁷, by Supreme Decree (No. 001-2012-PCM), the *IRTP* is linked to the Presidency of the Council of Ministers because of its multisectoral nature and its role as the agency responsible for promoting culture, information, recreation, and education for the population at the national level. Moreover, it is responsible for the dissemination of various activities of the branches of government and civil society, which contribute to the implementation of government policies.

This monetary unit of public TV and government undermines the service and independence of the media (Acevedo, 2016). Thus, during the government of Manuel Prado (1939-1945), it was decided that Channel 7 would be eminently educational. However, through the *IRTP*, the radio and television system has served the governments of the day as an instrument for promoting the image of the presidents and other authorities of the Executive.

According to the Peruvian Government’s Advisory Council on Radio and Television (CONCORTV, 2019), the statistical register contains data on a number of public media outlets, of which 1% belong to the national government, 1% to regional governments, and 7% to public universities. According to the registered data, it is evident that the only national public television broadcaster is TV Peru, which is owned, managed, and financed by the Peruvian State.

The economic resources with which the National Public Television System (TPN) operates, according to Supreme Decree (No. 056-2001-ED), come from the General Budget of the Republic of Peru. This constitutes the majority of its annual income. The central government allocates the corresponding resources annually through the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF). TVPN is also financed by commercial revenue offered; however, the collection is minimal (Fuentes *et al.*, 2016).

On July 2, 2016, the Peruvian Identity Channel (IPE) [*Canal Identidad Peruana*] was launched, a national television station focused on entertainment, culture, and education, especially for children and youth. IPE currently depends on the IRTP and has productions that are transmitted nationally by channel 7.4 of the DTT system and by subscription television operators. It also broadcasts its signal live on the internet and in Video on Demand IPE Play.

The hope for genuine public service TV in Peru is a pending task that has not yet been resolved. The debate continues for full conversion to be instituted. The state owns media such as *TV Peru*, “and the government in power controls it, an extensive network of television stations installed in key places in the territory. The purpose of the independent communicators is that this network becomes a space of genuinely democratic expression” (Gargurevich, 2015: 29).

Final considerations

After the beginning of the first TV transmissions, and as time went by on the continent, business groups and TV transnationals such as *Grupo Prisa* from Spain and *Albavisión* from Mexico/USA appeared. According to De Charras and Lozano (2017), at the end of the 1980s, these private media conglomerates and family businesses, to the detriment of the development of public television in Latin America, emerged in countries that had essential roots in society and politics.

Another detriment to the development of public service TV in Andean America is the control of the media by the governments that administer state institutions. In actuality, the public media are converted with relative ease into the media of the government of the day due to the official propaganda content that they broadcast on the state channels, which is the current characteristic of the governments of Andean America. According to Arribas and Barberá (2018), the Bolshevik political propaganda strategies of Lenin and then Stalin are in force among populist (leftist) governments such as those in Latin America, “until the disappearance of the USSR, persuasive communication techniques continued to be used. The masses had to be convinced through the state media, and the few attempts to bring in another type of press were persecuted” (*op. cit.*:56). In that sense:

One aspect of being discussed is that of pluralism. Although it is often proclaimed that these are state and non-governmental media, and no matter how much the example of the political neutrality of the BBC is invoked, in general governments have given their media an official tone (...) that is why public media have generally achieved limited penetration (Natanson, 2010: 64).

There is a debate about the concentration of media power between private commercial interest and the exercise of political control (Valdéz-López, Romero-Rodríguez, and Hernando Gómez, 2019). The struggle for media control continues today, and the concentration of media for the exercise of political or symbolic power is in place;

public television seems to be a cliché for exercising control over public opinion. Therefore, information is biased, which leads to the spread of disinformation to manipulate, control, and direct citizens to a particular ideological or commercial position (Romero-Rodríguez, De-Casas-Moreno, and Torres-Toukourmidis, 2016).

In this sense, the functioning of the alleged public TV in the region is not fulfilled in accordance with the fundamental concept. The government has been trying to make the public more aware of the importance of public service, but it has not been able to do so. However, 24 national public television media that have some elements close to the concept of public ownership can be counted in the Andean-American region, in which the majority disseminate pro-government information and entertainment. However, there are only a few cases that are actually close to public service television: *Encuentro*, *Tecnópolis*, and *Paka Paka* in Argentina; *TV Culturas* in Bolivia; *Señal Colombia*; *CNTV* in Chile; *Educa* in Ecuador; and *IPE* in Peru.

The models with less content contamination and political-government control in their administration are the Argentine one, with a Federal System of Media and Public Contents through the Ministry of Science, Technology and Productive Innovation; the Colombian one, with its Public Media System; and the Chilean one, which has the Law of the Republic that obliges the public media to self-finance to maintain their independence, plurality, and freedom of press and content. These three models, in cases with mixed administrations, constitute alternatives for approaching quality public television in the Latin American region.

The Latin American population is overwhelmed and silent in its hope that its rulers will be able to encourage and establish public television stations that comply with the fundamental concept: free, plural, educational, and providing a social service for the common good. Cultural change, in terms of human principles and values and respect for nature and life, is encouraged. In this regard, the population also has a mission that seeks change. Furthermore, it is hoped that digital technology in television can bring about the essential development of public service TV.

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Notes

1. “Observatorio de la Radiodifusión Pública en América Latina – ORPAL” (accessed January 1, 2020) <http://bit.ly/2CYr5i0>.
2. *Ibid.*, 66.
3. www.abayayala.tv.bo (accessed January 5, 2020).
4. Public service television has been an attraction for Latin American intellectuals such as Luis Ramiro Beltrán, José Marques de Melo, Guillermo Orozco, Raúl Fuentes Navarro, Antonio Pasquali, Mario Kaplún, Néstor García Canclini, Jesús Martín-Barbero, among others.
5. www.13.cl (accessed January 8, 2020).
6. www.educacion.gob.ec (accessed January 11, 2020).
7. www.irtp.com.pe (accessed January 19, 2020).

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