

TELESUR, IN THE ATTEMPT OF BEING A REGIONAL PUBLIC MEDIA

Master's Thesis

submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of

Master of Arts (M.A.)

awarded by the Philosophical Faculty of  
Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg i. Br. (Germany)  
and the

Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales - FLACSO (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

Submitted by

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from La Plata, Argentina

Sommersemester 2014

Social Sciences

# **TELESUR, IN THE ATTEMPT OF BEING A REGIONAL PUBLIC MEDIA**

Keywords: teleSUR, public television, Venezuela, Latin America, regionalism

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## **Abstract**

*La Nueva Televisora del Sur* (teleSUR) is a Latin American public TV news channel in Spanish, financed by the States of Venezuela (41%), Argentina (20%), Cuba (19%), Uruguay (10%), Bolivia (5%), Ecuador (5%), and Nicaragua (unpublished data). The channel broadcasts 24-hours over 7-days from its headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela. Through the transmission of informational and educational content, teleSUR aims to promote the integration of Latin America as an alternative source of information to mainstream media. This goal is reflected in teleSUR's slogan "Our North is the South".

Since its creation in 2005, there is a controversy about teleSUR as a public media surrounding the reflection of the diversity and plurality of Latin America on teleSUR's constitution, governance, editorial line, and programming. On the one hand, the channel is blamed for being a governmental media of Venezuela as a geopolitical diffusion platform for the "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism". On the other hand, teleSUR has been placed at a crossroads of what should be considered a public media and, even more, a regional public media. Despite teleSUR had already provoked a milestone in the media world order as the first regional public TV news channel financed purely by several Latin American States, it still faces a struggle for being recognized as a regional public media.

In order to understand teleSUR as a regional project and public media, the objectives of the thesis are to prove if the initial independence and plural background aimed for teleSUR was substantially eroded, and to realize if teleSUR replies to a specific Government or a long-term consensual project. The phenomenon of teleSUR is explored under the theoretical concepts of public media, regionalism, and counter-hegemonic globalization; employing a qualitative research methodology through content analysis of accessible publications and self-conducted interviews.

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## 1) INTRODUCTION

*La Nueva Televisora del Sur* (teleSUR) is a Latin American television news channel in Spanish about regional and world news, besides broadcasting a lower percentage of featured programs, such as documentaries and debates shows. The channel does not receive any commercial advertisement and it is financed by the States of Venezuela, Argentina, Cuba, Uruguay, Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua; holding respectively a 41%, 20%, 19%, 10%, 5%, 5%, and unknown percentage of teleSUR's shareholdings. Since 2005, the channel broadcasts 24-hours over 7-days from its headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela. It has an extensive network of correspondents within Latin America, with lesser representation internationally, and several digital news platforms.

Through the transmission of informational and educational content (teleSUR, 2014a), teleSUR aims to promote the integration of Latin America as an alternative source of information to mainstream media, either to concentrated media groups of Latin America and global northern networks. The slogan of teleSUR "*Nuestro Norte es el Sur*" (Our North is the South) reflects the identity of the channel towards regional cultural integration and development independent from core actors in America; giving voice to social sectors that are usually excluded and/or misrepresented from mainstream media.

The emergence of teleSUR has aroused a significant interest due to its uniqueness of being the first regional television channel purely financed by more than three Latin American States. In addition, the insertion of a joint-State financed regional channel was an outstanding novelty in a television market characterized by the strong presence of concentrated private media groups, composed of local and foreign capitals. At the moment of teleSUR's appearance, the regional news television market was uniquely fulfilled and led by *CNN en Español*, which broadcasts mainly from Atlanta, US. The singularity of teleSUR is also related to the fact of belonging to the worldwide boom in 2005 of 24-hours news channel financed by States, such as Russia Today and France 24. At the same time, the launch of teleSUR aroused strong expectations of its potentiality to break with the historical lack of tradition of public media in Latin America, where most of the television channels developed by the States have been operating as governmental rather than public media and, in some cases, as commercial stations.

In comparison to previous national initiatives of public television within Latin America, the initial framework of teleSUR of constitution and development was quite challenging

for any deviation from what is understood for public broadcasting (UNESCO, 2001). First of all, a joint-State financed channel without commercial incomes was a proof of the independence from private interests but also from any specific sponsoring country. Secondly, the institutional communication and all the initial official statements given by teleSUR's executives were appointing to create a regional public service broadcaster, as a common and plural space of meeting done from, by, and to Latin Americans. Thirdly, these aims were supported by an independent Advisory Council of teleSUR composed by a great deal of intellectuals of diverse nationalities.

However, teleSUR was no strange to the historical complex relation between public and Governmental media in Latin American. Since its creation in 2005, there has been a controversy about teleSUR as a public media surrounding the reflection of the diversity and plurality of Latin America on its governance, constitution, programming, and editorial line. On the one hand, the channel is blamed for being a governmental media of Venezuela directly aligned with former President Chávez and, to a certain extent, other sponsoring countries, as a geopolitical diffusion platform for the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism”. On the other hand, despite the praises for offering a novel perspective of Latin American current affairs, teleSUR has been placed at a crossroads of what should be considered a public media and, even more, regional; taking into account the current official statements on the channel to be a public broadcaster of Latin America.

Despite it had already provoked a milestone in the media world order as the first regional TV news channel financed purely by several States, teleSUR still faces a struggle for being recognized as a coherent and genuine regional public news television channel in relation to its governance, financing, programming, formats and editorial line. What is more, teleSUR is still facing an historical opportunity to break with the lack of public broadcasting tradition within Latin America. Given the fact of being an emerging channel and its official mission statement, it results adequate to conceive teleSUR as a regional process-project in the attempt of being a regional public media.

In order to find out this situation, the thesis explores the phenomenon of teleSUR, under the theoretical concepts of public media, regionalism, and counter-hegemonic globalization. Apart from providing a fact sheet of teleSUR, it is described the media and political regional landscape in which the channel emerged, the original controversy about teleSUR, and a deeper understanding of teleSUR as a regional public media.

## **2) RESEARCH QUESTION**

The research question of the thesis is:

*How can teleSUR be understood as a regional public media?*

By this way, the research aims to cover different interpretations on teleSUR as a regional project and news television channel; but considering as a premise that teleSUR defines itself as a regional public media (teleSUR, 2014a). The outcome of the research expects to provide a “photograph” of the channel after eight operative years, considering how it was established, how it is operating now, and how it will face its challenges. The results of this insight into teleSUR can be of interest to policymakers, academics, and journalists of the television industry, specifically from Latin America.

## **3) RESEARCH OBJECTIVES**

The general research objective of the thesis is:

*To contextualize the development of teleSUR as a news TV channel and regional project*

This one is explored by the following specific research objectives:

- 1. To prove if the initial independence and plural background of public media aimed for teleSUR has been substantially eroded. Why teleSUR has been criticized and/or praised by several journalists, scholars, Governments, and mainstream media? Does the current financing scheme of the channel represent a key determinant in teleSUR's governance, programming, editorial line and sustainability? How teleSUR should be defined: as a public, state, alternative, and/or counter-information television channel?*
- 2. To realize if teleSUR is a long-term regional project deliberated by all sponsoring States or it is a national project of a single Government with regional influences. The participation of the other Latin American sponsoring countries has any real impact besides their shareholding participation or Venezuela, as main sponsoring country, undermines their position? To what extent teleSUR represents a policy and process of the emerging regionalism in Latin America?*

#### **4) METHODOLOGICAL STRATEGY**

The research methodology employed is qualitative, in direct connection with the research objective, the ideological spectrum of voices to be found in the sources, and the insight and exploratory purposes of the research from a holistic view. Consequently, the research unit of analysis (the TV channel teleSUR) was covered as a “choral” construct, able to give diverse replies to the why’s and how’s of the aims of the channel to be a regional public media. Thus, it was applied an inductive reasoning from several sources in order to achieve an encompassing understanding of the phenomenon of teleSUR.

The data collection techniques for the research were content analysis of accessible publications and self-conducted interviews. Regarding the first source of information, it was content analysis of: 1) published newspaper articles, official documents, papers, and chapters of books about teleSUR, public media in Latin America, and regionalism; 2) published interviews to former and current teleSUR’s executives and journalists, and to persons of interest to the channel, such as intellectuals and academics in the topic; 3) teleSUR’s broadcasting and its news website, through a broad and not in-depth analysis.

The interviews were self-conducted and semi structured in-depth, including each of them a sort of similar thematic questions that allowed the further comparison of the replies. Some of the common questions were: how do you evaluate teleSUR after eight operative years?; why do you believe that teleSUR has been tagged as a controversial project?; how do you evaluate teleSUR’s performance in relation to the qualities assigned by UNESCO to public broadcasting?; the fact that many Latin American countries are not formal members, how does it affect to teleSUR in its governance, programming and agenda?; how do you describe the participation of teleSUR in a regional context where the States have emerged as communicative actors?; how does the counter-hegemonic role given to the channel affects to teleSUR? The selected interviewees were persons related to teleSUR’s governance, journalists, and academics.

- Patricia Villegas. Colombian. teleSUR’s President; current host of teleSUR; journalist. Informal emails and Skype messages exchange; April 1, 2014.
- Helga Malavé. Venezuelan. teleSUR’s Corporative Communication Director. Informal Skype conversation; April 9, 2014.
- Carolina Silvestre. Argentinean. Representative of the Argentinean National State in the Board of teleSUR. Informal email exchange; December 4, 2013.

- Ignacio Ramonet. Spanish. Member of the Advisory Council of teleSUR; President and Newsroom's Director of *Le Monde Diplomatique en Español*; journalist. Personal interview; March 15, 2014.
- Francisco Guaita. Spanish. Former teleSUR's correspondent and producer in Washington D.C. from September 2005 until March 2006; current TV news reporter of *Russia Today en Español*. Skype interview; March 3, 2014.
- Nelson Breve. Brazilian. President of *Empresa Brasil de Comunicação* (EBC). Email interview; March 3, 2014.
- Martín Becerra. Argentinean. Academic in communication policies in Latin America; researcher of CONICET (Argentina); and professor of *Universidad Nacional de Quilmes* (Argentina). Skype interview; March 4, 2014.
- Omar Rincón. Colombian. Academic in television and communication in Latin America; researcher and professor from *Universidad de los Andes* (Colombia); Director of *Fescomunicación Latinoamérica – Fundación Friedrich Ebert*. Skype interview; March 12, 2014.
- Carolina Matos. Brazilian. Journalist; researcher in Latin American media and communication; and lecturer of City University London (UK). Email interview; April 3, 2014.

The method of data analysis was exclusively orientated towards the interpretation, implying the simultaneous parallelism between the data collection and the data analysis' procedures. For the two data sources of the project (interviews and content analysis of publications) it was applied discourse analysis and thematic analysis, in order to identify common or parallel patterns, themes, topics, judgments, roles, among others. The discourse analysis allowed to unveil the purposes, the what's and the how's behind every idea, and the connections with explicit and implicit common patterns. At the same time, the thematic analysis was useful for linking all the information towards concepts, stanzas, macro and micro abstract ideas.

Regarding the limitations on the research, it emerges at a first glance the complex macro unit of analysis of the research, as it is a television channel. According to Crisell (2006), the television is so hard to analyze as a medium due to its ephemerality, quantity, authorship and accessibility: the television transmits a huge quantity of temporal information which is not easy to attribute its authorship to a single and specific person, neither it is easy to access to the huge mass of information transmitted day by day. "To



analyze it, one often has to ‘freeze’ it in both the physical and intellectual senses; but to freeze is to falsify the object of analysis” (Crisell, 2006, p. 1). These observations seem determinant to a TV news channel like teleSUR, owned by several Latin American States, that broadcasts 24-hours over 7-days since 2005.

Moreover, the scope of the unit of analysis does not comprise the digital operations of teleSUR (such as accounts in social networks like Facebook), despite that the thesis includes references to its news portal website. Since the focus of the research is on the development and management of teleSUR as a regional joint State-financed media, it does not provide an in-depth content analysis of the programming and bulletins.

Despite the aim to cover the view of each Latin American country implied in a regional media with the geographical magnitudes of teleSUR, the research was partly led from an Argentinean point of view; taking into account the nationality of the researcher, his familiarity with several local sources of information, and the complexity in time and space that would have implied to deepen in the vision of each Latin American country about teleSUR. This feature implies that the thesis includes mainly diverse Argentinean sources and examples of relevance to the research; apart from providing naturally facts and views about teleSUR related to other Latin American countries, such as Brazil.

A main limitation on the content analysis of publications about teleSUR was the lack of updated, accessible and substantial information. What is more, it results surprising that there is few available and updated official documentation on teleSUR, considering it is a joint State-financed public company. Moreover, a great deal of the found literature on teleSUR, either official or unofficial, is advocated to the beginnings of the channel and to some controversial facts of teleSUR during its launch in July 2005.

In the case of the self-conducted interviews, there was an attempt to contact with executives from teleSUR, such as Patricia Villegas, Helga Malavé and Carolina Silvestre. Despite their willingness manifested to be interviewed, the interview could not be properly conducted due to “an agenda problem” of the interviewees and the Venezuelan instable juncture in early 2014. However, it was achieved an exchange of messages, with informative value. In the case of Helga Malavé, we had a Skype conversation and not the desired interview; because, according to Malavé, she “was lacking the proper information” on the questionnaire previously sent.

## 5) THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

### 1. Public media

Despite the literature on the topic is very broad, the definition most accepted, balanced and cited by scholars is the one provided by UNESCO (2001) in joint with the World Radio and Television Council in the publication *Public Broadcasting. Why? How?:*

Neither commercial nor State-controlled, public broadcasting's only *raison d'être* is public service. It is the public's broadcasting organization; it speaks to everyone as a citizen. Public broadcasters encourage access to and participation in public life. They develop knowledge, broaden horizons and enable people to better understand themselves by better understanding the world and others. (UNESCO, 2001, p. 7).

Public broadcasting is described as a common and inclusive space for all that fosters debate in the public sphere, without exclusion of participants and topics. In comparison to private media, public media is not attached to corporate or investors interests, it has not the need to depend on ratings, and consequently, it is not pressured to offer only what is profitable in terms of audience and advertisement target. Public broadcasting is only attached to citizens, and there is where its significance for societies resides.

Public broadcasting is one key component of the existing media triad, in joint with private and alternative media. The polar opposite of public broadcasting is private media that is financed by individuals, through advertisements spots, for their own interests and needs, with the overwhelming aim of registering high ratings. In order to achieve this goal, the programming is in general in service to provide content already tested for its success in terms of audience, sacrificing in many cases quality content and novel formats to guarantee high ratings and, consequently, incomes from advertisements sales. Private media would reply to one of the predominant model that prevails in the mass communication, the utilitarian, which “justifies the existence of the media as a business strategy that requires a high rating and a sensationalistic programming” (Becerra, 2013, p. 37); relegating the society as an audience to a commercial customer position. Exemplars of private media go from media outlets such as CNN (Cable News Network) to concentrated groups of private media as Comcast Corporation.

In the middle of this triad, it appears alternative media, which is generally developed, managed and controlled by grassroots sectors of civil society, with a full independent vision, sustainability, and practices due to its rejection of private and/or State incomes,

their own agenda setting, and their no need to follow professional practices. However, alternative media share with public media the importance of participation from citizens in the public sphere around matters of public interest through their active involvement; but being alternative media more radical, segmented orientated, and/or less professional.

Following the analysis of Bailey, Cammaerts, and Carpentier (2007), alternative media can be studied taking into consideration four approaches: serving a community; as an alternative to mainstream media; linking alternative media to civil society; and alternative media as rhizome. Each approach frames the main goals, coverage and operative fields of alternative media, as it can be respectively fostering communities' interests; offering another voice different from the establishment; democratizing the public sphere; or being the medium of meeting and defense of several social movements. A successful example of an alternative media is *Radio La Colifata*, operated by patients of a neuropsychiatric public hospital in Buenos Aires, Argentina<sup>1</sup>.

According to UNESCO (2001), public broadcasting characterizes for having a threefold mandate to inform, educate and entertain; following the tradition imposed by John Reith to BBC, as its General Director from 1927 to 1938, which was replicated by many public broadcasters around the world (Arroyo et al., 2012). This threefold mandate is understood to mean that public media should offer content that differentiates from commercial media, in the sense that it should provide balanced information and offer new knowledge of interest by an attractive way that captures the audience, without limiting the entertain mandate to private media. In the same line, the missions of public media may depend on particular needs of the sponsoring country, but it should not present a limit to the four principles assigned by UNESCO (2001) as essential to public broadcasting: universality, diversity, independence, and distinctiveness.

By universality, it is understood that public media must address the whole society without excluding any voice, "as a meeting place where all citizens are welcome and considered equals. It is an information and education tool, accessible to all and meant for all, whatever their social or economic status" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 7). Moreover, the principle of universality stresses that public media must be accessible to the entire population, technically and factually in its consumption; otherwise it would be a contradiction: a public media without public. A requisite for making possible this point

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://www.vivalacolifata.org/> (retrieved April 10, 2014).

is that public media must offer a wide quality programming easy to be understood by the audience, neither broadcasting high elite culture targeted to a small audience nor making the mistake of transmitting the same popular commercial content as private media. “The interpellation to the massive in the taste represents a big challenge to public media because they cannot appeal to demagogy and follow trends, generally designed and managed by the market with the goal of profit” (Becerra, 2013, p. 43).

The principle of diversity goes hand in hand with the previous one, in the sense that public media should cover all the types of audiovisual genres and an encompassing spectrum of subjects in relation to the threefold mandate to inform, educate and entertain; offering a rich variety of programs to a wide audience and trying to converge public interest with the interest of the public, being already a challenging objective.

Complementary, independence represents a vital principle for public broadcasting, since it determines the commitment to the citizen in the grade that it is not influenced neither by commercial nor political forces. In order to guarantee this autonomous feature, public broadcasting should be managed as an autarchic entity free of state control, with financial sustainability, accountable, and regularly evaluated by competent bodies, such as Parliaments (UNESCO, 2001). Public media should not follow market trends towards programs with high ratings requested by advertisers, neither being a monothematic governmental mouthpiece controlled by a Government in power. Consequently, public media should represent a common space of meeting, where all the voices and points of view are equally welcomed, without any kind of exclusion, pressure and/or limitation.

A requisite for this scenario is the autonomous and sustainable administration of public broadcasters in the daily operation and in the configuration of the long-term policies. Thus, it is necessary a board of directors and managerial staff transparently appointed due to their professional experience and expertise (and not exclusively to political affinity) by the competent national audiovisual council, conformed by members of the State Administration, major and minor legislative parties, social movements, academics, among others. As a summary, in order to guarantee the plurality and independence of public broadcasters in a context of representative democracy, it is “crucial to decide who manages and how public media; which administrative structure they have; and which spaces of control and of audit are provided” (Arroyo et al., 2012, p. 120).

Financing represents a sensitive point to public broadcasting, considering the principle of independence from commercial and political forces. It is understood that public media is funded mainly by the State, with the allowance of a limited commercial advertisement (Becerra, 2013). Moreover, public broadcasting can be financed with license fees, content commercialization, and voluntary subscriptions. According to Banerjee and Seneviratne (2005), most of public media around the world has a mixed financing scheme, being few the ones with a single type of income. It is worthy to emphasize the need of an independent, adequate, sustainable, and predictable funding (UNESCO, 2001), able to support the operations of the broadcaster in the long term in concordance to the nature of a public broadcaster's needs, coverage and market; even more considering the fact that TV is an expensive industry which requires constant investments (like for technological update).

In relation to these points, the independence of public broadcasting is highly observed in the news and information area, where the relations between ownership and journalistic practices are put in evidence. Under the category of unbiased enlightening information, UNESCO (2001) recommends "enabling listeners to form the fairest possible idea of events; if not objective, the information should at least be unbiased. Such information will allow the different viewpoints to be expressed and foster an enlightened understanding of current events" (p. 17). By this way, public broadcasting should appeal without coercion to a spectrum of voices in order to reflect smartly a full contextualized panorama to citizens as participants of democracy. In the grade that the information reflected is not partisan or Governmental controlled, it will foster the importance of public broadcasting as an informative intermediary which enhances democracy.

Last but not least, public broadcasters should differentiate from commercial channels by the principle of distinctiveness; this would be what makes them unique, with "programs that leave their mark" (UNESCO, 2001, p. 19). In order to achieve this principle, public broadcasting should firstly guarantee the accomplishment of its desired universality, diversity and independence, as an enabling context for experimenting and taking the risks that other types of media would not dare due to commercial or political pressures. By this way, public media is considered to be the appropriate space for trying new attractive audiovisual genres, programs and sections that represent a challenge to those already established narrative forms, promoting the national audiovisual industry and in-house productions. Moreover, public media should differentiate for being the ideal

communicational space of free debate, giving voice and space especially to those marginalized, misrepresented, and minorities.

The best example of what it is expected for public media is led by the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC)<sup>2</sup>, whose pioneering tradition and commitment to the values of public broadcasting has been sustained since its first years of transmission, and reinforced by several European public broadcasters after the arbitrary manipulation of information during the Second World War (Becerra, 2013). In addition to the political autonomy of the BBC, its singularity resides in its “combination of ‘quality’ programming with the creation of proposals able to achieve certain ‘popularity’, and for that produced TV dramas, documentaries and informative programs whose distinguishable mark were their didactic attribute” (Varela, 2013, p. 76), never ignoring thus the BBC its interest in capturing the audience’s attention.

However, many “grey” zones have been appearing in the attempt of different countries to achieve the UNESCO’s conception of public broadcasting, and even more to reach an “archetype” model like the BBC. The “privatization” of public media prevailing commercial goals, the public media as governmental mouthpieces controlled by States, and the reframing of the generalist TV regime towards specific and segmented public channels, are some of the situations that have expanded the semantic fields and misconceptions of the original concept of public broadcasting.

In order to find a clue about the nature of a public media, it is interesting the approach provided by Arroyo et al. (2012), who identify three variables for the analysis of public broadcasting: what and how it is programmed?, who finances?, who controls? The reply to these questions will provide the various existing models of public media around the world, “that move towards or away from two extreme type of models: the purely commercial in private hands, guided by the market logic and the conquest of the audiences, and the purely governmental, paid, programmed and controlled by the political power” (Arroyo et al., 2012, pp. 22-23). As stated by Arroyo et al. (2012), “there is not an ideal model of operation of public media applicable to any context” (p. 24) due to the particular sociopolitical conditions, traditions and cultures of each country.

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<sup>2</sup> See <http://www.bbc.co.uk/aboutthebbc/insidethebbc/whoweare/> (retrieved April 10, 2014).

## 2. Regionalism

In order to understand what regionalism is, it is necessary first to explore the meaning of the inherent and attached concept of region, being a starting point from which regionalism and regionalization emerges. At a glance the term of region denotes a more static interpretation, due to the fact of equating the concept to explicit physical dimensions, generally facilitated by the type of landscapes and geographical accidents. Moreover, the presence of common socio-demographics indicators regarding language, ethnic and religion contribute to the conceptual idea of regions. Additionally, their study has been frequently analyzed in relation to delimited organizational spaces, such as provinces, counties, and departments; orientations that could be explained, according to Söderbaum (2005), by the Latin roots of the term, coming from the word *regio*, which means “direction”, and the Latin verb *rego*, which means “to steer” or “to rule”.

However, a more analytical and deep understanding of regions would consider them as a dynamic and transforming concept, far away from the ingenuous territorial scope, and closer to features like interaction, development and adaptation (Fawcett, 2005). By this way, the term of regions is inserted in a challenging and shifting environment like globalization, where spaces, times, actors and identities are constantly reframed, being regions a permanent process of construction. Many scholars agree with Söderbaum (2005), who says that “there are no ‘natural’ or given regions, but these are constructed, deconstructed and reconstructed – intentionally or unintentionally – from the outside or from within, by collective human action and identity formation” (p. 91). In the same line, Fawcett (2005) emphasizes their changing diversity nature, arguing that “there is no ‘ideal’ region, or any single agenda to which all regions aspire. Regions, like states, are of varying compositions, capabilities and aspirations. They may also be fluid and changing in their make up” (p. 26). Consequently, regions are not simple and static, but territorial units constituted by geographical proximity, functional interdependence, and cognitive factors, which may take administrative and political form.

The construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of regions is highly determined by its identity, configured by a multi-component of features like a common history, a background culture, traditions, languages, religions, among others; this would be what distinguishes that special region from others in relation to its particularities and similarities along the territorial unit and its members. The pulse of how this identity is

lived by the population towards the maintenance, adaptation or change is another factor that will affect the dynamics of a region. Indeed, Slocum and Van Langenhove (2005) differentiate between the regional identity of regions and nations, considered as geographical and political entities, and the regional identity of its people as citizens.

Consequently, if a region is the final and explicit outcome of this holistic and dynamic construction, regionalism would comprise the several actions that foster the creation, maintenance and stimulation of a region, through a wide scope of multiple activities towards interaction, integration and interdependence, with specific, different and changing goals. According to Hurrell (2005), regionalism is a complex and dynamic process which comprises “a series of interacting and often competing logics – logics of economic and technological transformation and societal integration, logics of power-political competition; logics of security (both inter-state and societal); and logics of identity and community” (p. 40), denoting thus the multidimensional and multilevel form of regionalism as a “blanket term” towards region-building.

However, scholars like Fawcett (2005) prefer to conceive regionalism as a policy and project rather than as a process, being regionalization the latter. Understanding regionalism as a policy and project gives emphasis on the impetus of actors (State and non-State) to promote a cooperation and coordination agenda for a region. Furthermore, the commitment by the implied actors to fulfill the expectations of common regional goals will denote the grade in which regionalism is adopted as a policy and project. It is also important to highlight that regionalism is encouraged by State and non-State actors, such as members of civil society and private companies, enabling a networking environment both “from above” and “from below” the State level. Indeed, Fawcett (2005) stresses that these inter-linkages between both actors and with other regions will definitely contribute to successful and enriching regionalisms.

Considering this point of view, Fawcett (2005) distinguishes between soft and hard regionalism: “it ranges from promoting a sense of regional awareness or community – soft regionalism, through consolidating regional groups and networks to pan- or sub-regional groups formalised by interstate arrangements and organisation – hard regionalism” (p. 24). The relation between both is not linear nor static, but involves norms, procedures, and institution-building able to converge on the particularities and values of a region, since the spread of different regionalisms around the world are also



“a product of the historical, social and political conditions, the strengths and weaknesses of any particular region” (Farrell, 2005, p. 8).

States and non-State actors engage in regionalism due to internal and external pressures regarding the competing logics mentioned previously by Hurrell (2005), specific motivations of actors, as well as a reply to the global governance failures to manage, regulate and enforce its authority. As a consequence, non-State actors and “governments have come to view cooperative decision-making as a crucial means to strengthen that sovereignty and to exercise shared authority in the framework of regional cooperation” (Farrell, 2005, p. 4), ensuring thus a feasible way to find solutions to common problems like the commitment to equal norms and values for all members, democratization, enforcement of human rights, accountability of States and institutions, among others.

In addition, regionalism can be the proper policy for State and non-State actors to deal with the global political economy in relation to the global governance crisis. According to Hurrell (2005), regionalism can be employed “as one amongst a range of contending world order projects and, in particular, as a conscious attempt to reassert political control over increased economic liberalisation and globalization” (p. 42), situation that may lead to overlapping competing regionalisms. Moreover, Hurrell believes that actors engage in regionalism as a direct way to replicate the neoliberal governance on a regional scale (such as the overdue Free Trade Agreement of the Americas); or on the contrary, as a contesting project from which emerges governance alternatives able to counter dominant and hegemonic policies of developed countries, like the regional organization ALBA (*Alianza Bolivariana para los Pueblos de Nuestra América*). In this sense, regionalism represents an effective beneficial platform for weaker states and their historical marginal positions in world forums, since they can speak up and spread their often unnoticed interests with the adequate regionalism diplomacy (Fawcett, 2005).

Last but not least, it is significant the attitude and performance of the responsible actors for the success of any regionalism project. Their increasing commitment to cooperation is vital for the real development of regionalism within a territorial unit, in spite of internal and external obstacles; otherwise “where suspicion, rivalry and competition are persistent, the prospects for cooperation are further reduced” (Fawcett, 2005, p. 34). Consequently, identity and institution building are great contributors to consolidate regional interdependence based on shared interests and values.

### **3. Counter-hegemonic globalization**

Understanding the globalization depends on which topics, actors, times, and spaces are covered. One of the most stable, adaptable, and broad definition of globalization is:

a process (or set of processes) which embodies a transformation in the spatial organization of social relations and transactions, assessed in terms of their extensity, intensity, velocity and impact – generating transcontinental or interregional flows and networks of activity, interaction and the exercise of power. (Held et al., 1999; cited from James 2005, p. 195).

In addition to the compression of time and space and thus the increasing interconnectedness as main features of the globalization, the key point in the approach of Held et al. (1999; cited from James, 2005) is the realization of the globalization as a process, as “something that is still going on”, and not as something concluded. As a consequence, the phenomenon of globalization would comprehend several parallel processes, such as the contests between the global and the local, the core and the periphery, among others.

Among these processes in parallel with the globalization, the counter-hegemonic globalization has been arousing increasing interest, even more considering the interpretation of the globalization as equal to the expansion of the neoliberalism order (Sousa Santos, 2005). This approach considers the globalization as the legitimizing tool for imposing a social, political and economical worldwide regime under the market rule, tagged as the “Washington Consensus”, strengthening the economic concentration, the private sector, the loss of power and authority of States, the wealth polarization and social exclusion.

Sousa Santos (2005) describes the neoliberal globalization as “an interconnected network of pragmatic ideas and cooperative patterns of behavior, shared by a group of selected actors and their interests, a self-activated network to deal with chaos” (p. 32), which assumes the responsibility for giving reply to the reigning crisis of popular sovereignty and popular participation. Sousa Santos (2005) states that “privatization, marketization, and liberalization” are the keys of this regime, while “the most important silences in the governance matrix are: social transformation, popular participation, social contract, social justice, power relations, and social conflict” (p. 35), being the State and excluded social sectors the two non-existing actors of neoliberal globalization.

As a reply to the neoliberal globalization and its increasing negative outcomes, the counter-hegemonic globalization has been representing an active and critical contest to the governance matrix of the former one; asking for more democratic representation, participation, and social justice towards an equal and fair development of the world and local communities. In Sousa Santos' (2005) words, the counter-hegemonic globalization comprises "the vast set of networks, initiatives, organizations, and movements that fight against the economic, social, and political outcomes of hegemonic globalization, challenge the conceptions of world development underlying the latter, and propose alternative conceptions" (p. 29). Similarly, Evans (2008) describes the counter-hegemonic globalization as "a globally organized project of transformation aimed at replacing the dominant (hegemonic) global regime with one that maximizes democratic political control and makes the equitable development of human capabilities and environmental stewardship its priorities" (p. 272).

In relation to the previous concepts of globalization and neoliberalism, the counter-hegemonic globalization represents a global parallel process which not only provides a diagnostic of the world, regions and local communities, but also proposes new transformative alternatives of liberation to the neoliberal status-quo; leading to change through the active and articulated participation of society, specially from grassroots and autonomous bottom-up movements, giving emphasis on citizens' empowerment. By this way, the increasing critical participation of civil society has been challenging the infamous phrase conceived by former UK Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, for which "there is no alternative" (TINA) to the neoliberal global project (Evans, 2008).

The additional particularity of the counter-hegemonic globalization resides in its broad application in several areas of governance, such as economical, political, social, and cultural. Also, the symbolic solidarity through every initiative contesting the hegemonic neoliberalism, stimulates consequently at local, national and transnational levels the networking and articulation of each initiative and their respective agendas, no matter their scale and grade of formality. The fact that the counter-hegemonic globalization is highly concerned for social inequity, provoked by an increasing neoliberal material and symbolic oppression, explains why it "is animated by a redistributive ethos in its broadest sense, involving redistribution of material, social, political, cultural and symbolic resources" (Sousa Santos, 2005, p. 29).

The importance of the “hegemonic” in the compound term is highlighted in the sense that the domination of powerful and core actors over the material and symbolic capital undermines the autonomy and self-development of those oppressed; enabling an unequal and dependent environment. However, this situation of domination could be altered by a long process of connected counter-hegemonic movements and initiatives, willing to defeat the ruling system and classes. Following Gramsci, Moraes affirms:

the hegemony presupposes the conquest of consensus and of cultural and political-ideological leadership by one class or block of classes that is imposed on others. It involves the ability of a given block to articulate a set of factors; which enable this block to lead morally, culturally and sustainably the society as a whole. (2011, p. 43).

Initiatives as the World Social Forum, South-South cooperation, and the Anti Summit of the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (The People’s Summit) held in November 2005 in Mar del Plata, Argentina, represent examples of the counter-hegemonic globalization, also referred as “alter-globalization”, “anti-globalization movements”, “countermovements”, “anti-systemic movements”, or “the movement of movements” (Evans, 2012). Drainville (2009) provides a particular approach, since he refers to the term as “resistance to globalization” and he makes a distinction of how this process is seen from the core and the periphery of the world economy; being the former the industrialized countries, plus institutions linked to their power such as the World Bank, and the latter the developing and underdeveloped countries.

From the core, counter-hegemonic globalization is seen as a “political movement with programmatic and tactical intents of its own, a proper –if insubstantial- subject of reference, as well as distinct and relatively coherent” (Drainville, 2009, p. 235). On the other side, resistance to globalization is seen as “a moment in history”, as an “historical relationship”, giving an idea that it is not a novel movement in peripheral countries, which are constantly oppressed by the wild capitalism and core/powerful actors. Moreover, following Drainville’s explanation, the struggle from the periphery against neoliberal domination is more heterogeneous, as well as, not so professionalized and articulated as the one commanded from the core of world economy. Consequently, the counter-hegemonic globalization from the periphery is understood as a social relationship, for which “resistance appears wider, more scattered, almost boundless” (Drainville, 2009, p. 244).

## **6) BACKGROUND INFORMATION**

### **1. Public television in Latin America**

Since the launch of the first Latin American TV channel on the 1<sup>st</sup> of September of 1950 in Mexico, public broadcasting in Latin America has to be contextualized in the contest of two television development models that were under the eye of local TV entrepreneurs and public officers at the time to decide which was the best model for the industry in each country: the European or the North American television model (Arroyo et al., 2012; Becerra, 2013; Igarzábal, 2013; Varela, 2013).

On the one side, the European TV model was based in a social and cultural mission to encourage an informed, critical and public-spirited society after the social, cultural, political and economical devastation provoked by the Second World War. Due to their mandate to enlighten the national identity and culture, European broadcasters addressed their audience as citizens with the right to be informed and formed with quality knowledge. By this way, the television in Europe was developed under the regime of inform, educate and entertain as a State monopoly, with enough control and regulation of competent bodies and civil society, but free of control and dependency of Governments and private sectors. However, since the '80s the European model allowed the entrance of the private sector with commercial aims in the industry, developing thus a dual public-private television system; in which the public television remained with the same kind of features as before, such as autonomy, independence and distinctiveness.

On the other hand, the North American model, led by United States, was based exclusively in commercial aims, conceiving the television as a merely business and meeting place of the interests of the industry's chain, such as owners of channels, TV manufacturers, and advertisers (main sponsors). Since the commercial model of television focus on maximizing profits, it is concentrated on achieving considerable audiences, translated in high ratings. Consequently, the audience for this TV model is considered as a customer in service to the advertiser's needs, disregarding the quality of the content to transmit. In general, the mandate of its programming is to entertain and generate impact. Despite that the US television model is run mainly by private ownership, it is left a secondary space to public media, which presents the same characteristics of quality and management as the European public broadcasting, but

without the joint goal of attracting audiences. This is the case of the Public Broadcasting Service (PBS), which has a “high reputation for its quality and contents”, but it is not massively watched as the US main private broadcasters (Arroyo et al., 2012, p. 30).

Given the panorama, Latin America followed a commercial model (Becerra, 2013) proliferating private TV channels around the hemisphere; partly due to the geopolitical closeness and convenience with United States. A great contribution to this situation was the injection of capitals during the 60’s from the main US television networks, such as ABC (American Broadcasting Company), NBC (National Broadcasting Company) and CBS (Columbia Broadcasting System), to the development of television business in Latin America (Varela, 2013). Additionally, there was a tight agreement between regional and US broadcasters for foreign content local consumption, despite the successful development of local genres, such as *telenovelas*. Following the North American model, the television media map of Latin America entered increasingly into a concentration ownership process, in which few traditional families of each country and members of the local and foreign establishment held the main channels of the region, being quickly part of the respective national audiovisual conglomeration created.

Moreover, this media concentration process within Latin America was highly stimulated during the neoliberal epoch in the region, especially in the 90’s (Arroyo et al., 2012). With the additional contribution of a beneficial legal framework, privatizations and internationalizations of TV channels, and agreements between local Governments and media owners in favour of the expansion of the latter, the media map of Latin America was configured by the leading presence of four strong groups: Clarín (Argentina), Globo (Brazil), Televisa (Mexico), and Cisneros (Venezuela); holding the four of them the 60% of total profitability of media and entertainment’s markets and audiences (Moraes, 2011). Indeed, according to Becerra (2013), in some countries of the region the television market is extremely concentrated, such as Brazil with one operator (Grupo Globo), and Mexico and Colombia with a duopoly (Televisa - Azteca TV and Caracol – RCN respectively), despite the existence of local public media. As a consequence, the commercial model of television, plus the indiscretion complicity of local Governments, has been encouraging a dominant position of a few in the regional info-communicational industry, with multiple assets like TV, radio, internet, film and telecommunications, in a context of convergence and globalization of the sector.

Despite the overwhelming commercial television model in the region, public media was early developed, considering the first public television experiences of Argentina (1951), Venezuela (1952), Colombia (1954), Peru (1958), and Uruguay (1963) in relation to the first TV transmission in Latin America by Mexico in 1950. On the other hand, the development of national public television in Latin America was not early successful in countries like Brazil, where the federal TV channel *Empresa Brasil de Comunicação* (EBC) was launched in 2007; Ecuador and Paraguay, with channels launched in 2007 and 2011 respectively. The same situation is not enthusiastic if it is analyzed how centralized and concentrated was (and keeps being in many cases) the production and reception of public television in the major Latin American urban cities, being the rest of the territory just consumers of television, besides their late reception experience or even lack of opportunities for reception (Becerra, 2013; Varela, 2013).

However, public media in Latin America has been more governmental or State media, far away from the worldwide recognized conception of public broadcasting by UNESCO (2001). "If we have to classify with rigor, probably there is not any single case in Latin America fully authentic and genuine of 'public service' truly nongovernmental" (Safar & Pasquali, 2006, p. 73). With few exceptions such as *Televisión Nacional de Chile* (TVN), the Chilean public television founded in 1969 (Fuenzalida, 2013), public TV channels in Latin America have been in service to the different administrations in power and their associated political parties, being generally a mouthpiece of the State scarcely controlled and evaluated, operated thus with a short term vision in concordance to the political project in the course. By this way, public media in Latin America has been adhering to a propagandistic communication model, that "justifies the usage of state media in favour of the message of one partiality, contingently in charge of the public administration and that impugns critical voices" (Becerra, 2013, p. 37), relegating society to a clientele position as political clients.

This regional television panorama with ownership concentration and governmental media rather than public is reflected in the fact that television in Latin America born associated with businessmen and politicians (Varela, 2013). For example, television was inaugurated in Mexico and Cuba in 1950 with an address from their respective President through a private channel entrepreneurship; in Argentina it was the same situation but in 1951 by the first emission of the national public channel; and in Brazil in 1950 through a private channel entrepreneurship with an address of its owner, who already had a

newspaper; similar situation as the owners of the first Mexican and Cuban TV channel, having a newspaper and radio respectively (Varela, 2013). According to Varela (2013), the history of media in Latin America can be conceived as the result of a mutual relation in which “businessmen obtains economical benefits and regulations ad hoc, as an exchange of a beneficial image construction for the Government of politicians” (p. 59).

Additionally, public television in the region has been considered to be limited to a subsidiary and unpopular role in relation to private media, understanding to be fated to transmit the “boring” and “unattractive” content of education and culture that commercial broadcasters avoided. Instead of looking creative and attractive solutions to the threefold mandate to “inform, educate and entertain”, many Latin American public broadcasters tried unsuccessfully, with the compliance of the competent authorities, to operate as another regular commercial television channel pressed by the markets in the search for ratings, forgetting their public mission. “Far away from guarantee and stimulate the social participation, the state media as propaganda dispositive that changes of register, contents and protagonists according to the successions of Governments, finally is relegated to a secondary role in the media system” (Arroyo et al., 2012, p. 42), in relation to audience’s fulfillment by commercial media. Regarding the patrimonial appropriation from States of public media, Becerra (2013) affirms that the several, intensive and even drastic changes of local Governments, inclusive of the governance in charge of public televisions, have been damaging the interesting public media initiatives aroused along the Latin American history, “weakening the public function of state media, influencing in their loss of credibility, deteriorating their audience and spoiling their message” (p. 38) due to their lack of sustainability.

From the 2000 decade, public television in Latin America has been perceiving a refreshing change in tune with the new homogeneous political landscape in power, center-left and left orientated, and critical of the previous reigning neoliberal years. The main feature that has been characterizing these Governments regarding media policies is the revival of the State in the configuration of media and telecommunication public policies, as an actor capable to “communicate” and to reframe the communicational sphere towards the media and speech democratization. Consequently, the State emerges as an “instance capable to protect the collective interest in the communicative processes, practices and dynamics, in comparison to the market’s plans and its management, reproduction and commercialization gears” (Moraes, 2011, p. 45). Becerra (2013)



describes this situation as an “original incursion” into a field historically considered “taboo” in the region, that is “the intention to modify the commercial media system by a simultaneous operation of new regulation making and of Governmental involvement as an important communicational operator” (p. 49).

As a reflection of this situation, several Latin American administrations have been developing new public television channels; either in those countries without previous public channels (such as Ecuador) and in those that already had them (such as Argentina with the creation of *Encuentro* and Venezuela with *Vive TV*), going from generalist to segmented national public and state channels. Also, several countries in the region developed and/or encouraged the formation of new public and communitarian-alternative radio stations, official newspapers, news agencies, audiovisual producers, co-productions, regional audiovisual and informative agreements, public investments in technology for the sector, and national laws against media concentration and in favour of local audiovisual development (Moraes, 2011).

These new initiatives have been opening the public sphere giving voice to those historically marginalized by attractive and modern formats, without making the mistake of transmitting “popular” content suitable for commercial media neither of being unattractive channels exclusive of culture and education content targeted to elites or small audiences. “The State has demonstrated that it can be producer of excellent and, at the same time, entertained contents with the esthetic modernization and the cultural profile achieved” (Becerra, 2013, p. 45). By this way, the State appears as a new, revitalized and attractive programmer that, with the potential benefits offered by digital TV channels, wants also to “capture” the audience which was historically relegated to private and concentrated media groups.

However, these new regional initiatives of public media and revitalized public channels, thanks to the reinsertion of the State as a communicative actor, are still far away from the conception of public media worldwide consented; following the historical tradition for Latin American public television channels to be more Governmental and State rather than public. According to Becerra (2013), these new Latin American media experiences, at least in the cases of Argentina, Bolivia, Ecuador and Venezuela, “are far from approaching the management of state media to the ideal of informative quality, editorial equidistance, cultural and political diversity and maximization of coverage that

characterizes the audiovisual public service” (p. 50), related to their crisis of audience, political legitimacy, and institution (Arroyo et al., 2012). In the attempt to challenge this situation, public television in Latin America should face the “virus of government, of boredom, and of elite content and aesthetics”, according to Rincón (2013), who affirms that “those who govern must stop using public television for evangelizing in the political struggle, dilute the excess of politicization in contents, avoid the educative and cultural trend, look for more connection with the popular” (p. 160). On the other side, Varela (2013) emphasizes that the debate consists in different conceptions of democracy and citizenship, going beyond the paradox for which Latin American should follow the exemplar of European public broadcasting while the local initiatives are criticized.

In the struggle for media democratization in Latin America, it has been of great importance the new legal regulations concerning the media and info-communication’s industry, replacing those inherited from dictatorships and neoliberal Governments that, in addition to their asymmetries and inequalities, were not updated to the current times of technological changes and global communications. Moraes (2011) stresses the significance of a “democratic regulation framework, which means to endow countries with legal mechanisms to stop the monopolistic concentration and commercialization, as well as, to update the rules of the concession and control of television and radio licenses” (p. 75). A common characteristic of the new media law of several Latin American countries, such as in Argentina in 2009, Bolivia in 2011, Ecuador in 2013 and Venezuela in 2004, is the equal distribution of broadcasting frequencies between the State, for public broadcasting service; the private sector, for profit-making and with social responsibilities; and the social sector, for non-profit entities and social movements independent of the State (Moraes, 2011).

These new regulations are notorious in a Latin American context of media concentration and privatization of public media enabled by the same Latin American States through beneficial laws and agreements; inclusive in some cases by the same authorities that first encouraged the described media system but then started to deal with it, such as the Argentinean case under both Kirchner’s administrations. Beside of the historical compliance between local Governments and media companies, the current dispute over the communication sphere has been lifting the veil over the supposed objectivity, impartiality and fair game played by local media groups, as well as, over the historical dark negotiations between the Latin American States and concentrated media; features

that explains the high participation and discussion of civil society within the region about media ownership and policies towards new media laws (Arroyo et al., 2012).

Last but not least, the revitalization of public media in Latin America has to be framed into the active communicative agenda of the current Presidents of Latin America, who are present directly and indirectly through multiple channels, either by television, radio, newspapers, internet platforms; no matter in what occasion, if it is a voting campaign, an official speech, or an inauguration of a hospital. Indeed, Rincón (2008) refers to the new wave of Latin American Presidents as the *tele-presidentes*: “being a president signifies to exhibit through media the passion for power” (p. 11). Their addiction and dependence to be “on air” and their big communication apparatus, charged in epic narratives, encompass a wide spectrum of politicians from the right, such as former President Álvaro Uribe from Colombia, to the left, as former President Hugo Chávez from Venezuela. According to Rincón (2008), we are attending in Latin America to the “spectacle of democracy” in relation to the current trend of mass mediation of politicians in Latin America, in which “politics gains in collective emotion but losses in arguments, dissent and modernity; citizens are converted in consumers and are invoked as spectators/viewers” (p. 9) through direct messages already packaged and emotionally charged, that do not need any more historical mediators such as journalists.

## **2. The rise of leftist Governments in Latin America**

The emergence of a factual integration in Latin America started to arise approximately since 2003, with the arrival of several progressive and left-wing governments constitutionally elected (Kozloff, 2008; Moraes, 2011; Tussie, 2009); including Néstor Kirchner (2003-2007) and Cristina Fernández de Kirchner (2007-2011; 2011-2015) in Argentina, Evo Morales (2005-2010; 2010-2015) in Bolivia; Luiz Inácio “Lula” da Silva (2003-2007; 2007-2011) and Dilma Rousseff (2011-2015) in Brazil; Michelle Bachelet (2006-2010; 2014-2018) in Chile; Rafael Correa (2007-2009; 2009-2013; 2013-2017) in Ecuador; Fernando Lugo (2008-2012) in Paraguay; Tabaré Vázquez (2005-2010) and José “Pepe” Mujica (2010-2015) in Uruguay; and Hugo Chávez (1999-2001; 2001-2007; 2007-2013) and Nicolás Maduro (2013-2019) in Venezuela.

A central cause that has been enabling a homogeneous political panorama in the region is the drastic consequences left by the neoliberalism as the dominant economical and political governance regime undertook in Latin America from 1970 until the first years

of the 2000 decade. Guided by the Washington Consensus, the former different local Governments followed the recipe for shortening the role and presence of the State in the most minimum grade in the design of public policies, allowing the privatization of national companies while opening without any control the local market to foreign interests and market pressures. Moreover, the application of the Washington Consensus in Latin America “played well at a time of conservative and timid democratization when the ‘excesses’ of the Left were blamed for having provoked the extreme violence that engulfed much of the region in the 1960s and 1970s” (Riggirozzi, 2012, p. 23). Additionally, the general poor performance of local politicians related to high corruption and lack of accountability contributed to the collapse of the system, in which poverty, social exclusion and wealth concentration increased considerably.

Despite the efforts done on the field by current administrations to overcome the neoliberal consequences, the impact is still powerful. According to ECLAC (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean), cited from Moraes (2011, p. 19), in 2010 it was registered that 34.1% of the population from the region lives under the line of poverty and a 13.7% in a situation of absolute poverty, which means to live with less than one US dollar per day. What is more, a report in 2010 of the HABITAT Programme from the United Nations (cited from Moraes, 2011, p. 19) revealed that Latin America is the region with greater inequality in the world: while the 20% of the richest population perceives 56.9% of regional incomes, the 20% poorest inhabitants lives scarcely with 3.5% from the total regional revenues.

After years of consolidation and hegemony, the last hours of the “party” of the neoliberalism in the region started to be felt with the economical and social crisis of several Latin American countries plus its respective devaluations, like were the cases of Brazil in 1999 and of Argentina in 2001. As a reply, “new and often contingent policies were introduced to rebuild and extend the role of the state in the regulation, provision, and distribution of economic resources” (Riggirozzi, 2012, p. 24); decisions facilitated in great part thanks to the new regional political environment of the early 2000’s and the active participation of social movements and civil society asking for social inclusion policies and popular participation from grassroots movements in the public governance. With an increasing capacity for autonomous deciding and not by foreign interests, most of the political leaders of each country started a joint struggle against the failures of the

system, challenging the prevailing status-quo by policies on social inclusion and human rights, and thus redefining the role of the State, public institutions and democracy.

Consequently, the current regional center-leftist and leftist Governments has been characterizing for strengthening the State as an “instance of strategic formulation, encouragement and regulation, committed to inclusive and sustainable models of development (...) able to define and discipline the function of the market in the economical life, and that induces growth over more equal bases” (Moraes, 2011, p. 16). In order to build this governance regime, it was necessary to win the vital support of social sectors historically marginalized (such as grassroots movements, indigenous and ethnic communities, labor unions), and of traditional parties and armed forces, such as Argentina and Venezuela respectively, in relation to each national political culture.

A fact that gave a clear understanding and picture of Latin America’s changing political landscape was the Summit of the Americas held in Mar del Plata (Argentina) in 2005, where it was supposed to be signed the Free Trade Agreement of the Americas (FTAA)<sup>3</sup>. In comparison to the neoliberal regional environment prevailing at the time when the FTAA’s negotiations were initiated at the Summit of the Americas in Miami in 1994, Mar del Plata was the opposite with the regional power-axis of Néstor Kirchner for Argentina, “Lula” da Silva for Brazil, and Hugo Chávez for Venezuela. The rejection of the FTAA from MERCOSUR’s (Common Market of the South) countries plus Venezuela and Bolivia was determinant against the desire of the NAFTA’s (North American Free Trade Area) countries; considering the FTAA as a long lasting US hemispherical project with a strong neoliberal agenda and domestic deregulation (Tussie, 2009). Indeed, the resistance from the region to the FTAA acquired great magnitude with the parallel and simultaneous Anti-ALCA Summit (ALCA, Spanish acronym for FTAA), organized mainly by former President Hugo Chávez, who shouted to the crowds “*ALCA, al carajo*” (“FTAA, to hell”) (“Hace 8 años”, 2013).

After Mar del Plata’s Summit and the FTAA’s death, “regional relations have turned into a complex, multi-layered arena where social forces, regional powers and contending political projects compete, a far cry from the simple and conceptually neat hegemonic project for market-driven integration initially conceived and spearheaded by the US” (Tussie, 2009, p. 188). In consonance with the political leftist administrations

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<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.ftaa-alca.org/alca\\_e.asp](http://www.ftaa-alca.org/alca_e.asp) (retrieved April 10, 2014).

within Latin America, new development and integration models have been emerging around features beyond economic integration, such as inclusive growth, democratic values, social participation, development, national sovereignty over natural resources, and independent policies of core actors. In addition to regional forums economically orientated, such as MERCOSUR and Andean Community, new regional processes alternative to neoliberalism have been joining an overlapping regional integration scheme; going from moderate projects like UNASUR (Union of South American Nations) to more radical and transformative processes like ALBA (Bolivarian Alliance for the Americas). The several crisis of neoliberalism along Latin America plus the emergence of the new left, “gave way to a redefinition of the regional space and regional politics of cooperation and integration” in which it is no more valid “a hegemonic single mode of political economy” (Riggirozzi, 2012, p. 17).

Besides the different ongoing regional processes, it is also a fact the diversity of the leftist political landscape in Latin America beyond their common concerns for social inclusion policies, development, and independent sovereignty of core actors. According to Bobbio (1995, cited from Moraes, 2011), it is understood that being of the left is that one who “defends equity, fights for a more equal wealth distribution, for a greater social justice” (p. 30). At a first glance, the current leftist political movements apply homogeneously to this category, going from the “national and popular model” evoked by both Kirchner to the “Bolivarian Revolution” led by Chávez. However, according to Moraes (2011), it can be differentiated two kinds of leftist governmental blocks depending on the social, economical and political conditions of each Latin American country, as well as, on the application of the rhetoric of each political project to reality.

On the one hand, Moraes (2011) analyses ALBA’s countries (mainly Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, and Venezuela), which hold an independent, breaking and radical agenda against foreign markets and core actors, based in solidarity and complementary principles between members and civil society, such as the ALBA’s Commercial Treaty of the People (TCP, Spanish acronym for *Tratado de Comercio de los Pueblos*). On the other hand, it appears a group composed by Argentina, Brazil, Chile, and Uruguay, marked by ambiguities and contradictions which “fluctuates between the defense of social inclusion and economical policies that, with variations, attend markets’ reasons and delay the structural reversion of poverty” (Moraes, 2011, p. 30); a situation partially due to their developed industry, historical commercial ties with United States,

consolidated middle class, and/or consolidated political class and democracy, among other causes. Regarding the latter leftist governmental block, named as “moderate anti-neoliberal”, Sader (2010; cited from Moraes, 2011, p. 31) identifies three pending and challenging topics which will determine if these governments represents real “structural alternatives to neoliberalism” beyond their rhetoric, being the hegemony of financial capital, the agribusiness model, and the democratization of communication media.

Considering the scope of this thesis, it is of interest the leftist approach offered by the radical and counter-hegemonic governmental block under their ideological doctrine of the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism”, conceived by former President Hugo Chávez for Venezuela, and followed by ALBA’s leaders, like Fidel and Raúl Castro for Cuba, Evo Morales for Bolivia, and Rafael Correa for Ecuador. Based in a great support of grassroots and social movements, and inspired by the integration ideals of South America’s Liberator Simón Bolívar, the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism” appeals to participatory and direct democracies sustained by the constitutional vote, popular mobilizations through votes by referendum, and citizen assemblies in order to build the “re-foundation” of national States towards more equal and human societies conscious of their ethnical origins and brutal neoliberal past (Kozloff, 2008). The reconstruction of a nationalistic and anti-neoliberal society has been taking several forms, local initiatives, and regional processes, which in some occasions other countries non-members of ALBA have been adhering or formulating, such as the Bank of the South and teleSUR.

From a micro observation, it can be mentioned the “Bolivarian Circles” in Venezuela, popular empowerment units which “seek to organize civil society, to raise political consciousness, to spur the community to participate in government, to mobilize against the opposition, and to press for the fulfillment of social needs” (Kozloff, 2008, p. 151). From a macro analysis, emerges at a first glance the counter-hegemonic model of integration represented by ALBA. Launched in 2004, “ALBA represents an unprecedented attempt to foster an agenda that is not based primarily on trade liberalization but actually on welfare cooperation and solidarity, placing a distinctive emphasis on civil society participatory practices in planning and administration” (Riggirozzi, 2012, p. 26). Despite that these initiatives have shown to be other models of development and regional integration, it is challenged how feasible these initiatives are as alternatives, and how rhetorically they are in a political narrative financed mainly by the revenues of an oil-rich Venezuela (Kozloff, 2008; Riggirozzi, 2012).

## **7) TELESUR, AS A REGIONAL PUBLIC MEDIA**

The analysis of teleSUR is organized in three sections. The first one "teleSUR at a first glance" provides a current fact sheet of the channel, comprising its mission and aims; operations and coverage; ownership, representation, and funding (with the illustrative membership case of Argentina); governance and management; programming, contents, and editorial line; distribution and audience.

The second section "The origins of the controversy about teleSUR" explores the initial context of development of teleSUR's inception, governance, and editorial line, in relation to the official expectations of regional public media claimed to the emerging channel. The association between how teleSUR was officially conceived and how it suddenly resulted seems to be the roots of the controversy provoked over the channel.

Realizing that the causal factor in the critics of teleSUR is its official attribution as a regional public media, the third section "Understanding teleSUR as a regional public media" gives a diachronic insight into teleSUR, considering the conception of public broadcasting by UNESCO (2001) through the questions on what and how it is programmed, who finances, and who controls (Arroyo et al., 2012). In parallel, this last section analyzes in what sense teleSUR is understood as an alternative, counter-information, and/or state-governmental media; and how these assimilations have been contributing to the seeming distortion of conceiving teleSUR as a regional public media.

### **1. teleSUR at a first glance**

*La Nueva Televisora del Sur* (known as teleSUR) is a Latin American TV news channel in Spanish, purely financed by the States of Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Venezuela. The channel broadcasts 24-hours over 7-days since 2005 from its studios headquarters in Caracas, Venezuela. In addition, it has several digital informative platforms in Spanish, English, and Portuguese. The TV channel is available along the American continent, Europe, North of Africa, and Middle East; free of access either by terrestrial, cable, satellite and digital television. Under the mandate to inform and educate (teleSUR, 2014a), the channel aims to promote the Latin American integration as an alternative source of information to mainstream networks.

According to teleSUR's website (teleSUR, 2014a), the channel defines itself, under its mission statement, as "a multimedia of Latin American communication of social



vocation orientated to lead and promote the union processes of the peoples from the south” and as “a space and voice for the construction of a new communicative order”. In addition, under its vision statement in the same website, teleSUR (2014a) affirms: “to be a multimedia and multiplatform of public service with global coverage that, from the south, produces and divulges informative and formative content for a wide and loyal base of users; with an integrative vision of the peoples”. The word “south” is stressed in uppercase in both occasions, defining it as “geopolitical concept that promotes the struggle of peoples for peace, auto-determination, respect for Human Rights and Social Justice”. In relation, the main slogans of teleSUR are “Our North is the South” and “The Informative Signal of Latin America”. Moreover, it is stated in the mentioned website that the “principles and values” under which teleSUR works are: commitment, excellence, team work, social vocation, social transformation, creativity, and ethic.

The channel first emission was on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July of 2005 with four daily hours of programming (Cano, 2009), broadcasting 24-hours over 7-days since November of 2005 from its studios headquarters in Caracas (“Telesur inicia transmisiones”, 2005). Until February of 2012, teleSUR had been operating in the same building complex of the Venezuelan public TV channel *Venezolana de Televisión* (Kozloff, 2008), after that date it began to broadcast from new studios in an independent building at the country’s capital (Nieves, 2012). In March 2014, Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro announced that the English channel of teleSUR will be inaugurated on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July 2014 (Rojas, 2014). Previously, President Maduro also announced the launch of the Portuguese and French versions in 2014 (“Telesur emitirá en”, 2013), in spite of not being feasible the inauguration of the last two mentioned channels in 2014.

The channel has a staff of 1000 persons approximately; including Latin American hosts from Argentina, Bolivia, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Venezuela and Uruguay (Helga Malavé, Skype interview, April 9, 2014), and a wide correspondent’s network among the Latin American countries, with operations in Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Cuba, Ecuador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, and Uruguay (“Telesur sigue creciendo”, 2013). Abroad the regional borders, the channel has correspondents in China, Egypt, Russia, Spain, Syria, and United States (“Telesur sigue creciendo”, 2013). Besides the television news channel, teleSUR has an extensive digital informative operation, including its updated news web portal, and several social networks accounts in Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube.

Moreover, some of these digital initiatives, like the news portal, are in languages different than Spanish, as English and Portuguese.

The ownership of the channel is public, created as an anonymous company on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January of 2005 with address in Caracas, Venezuela, under the domain of the Communication and Information Ministry of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela; and named *La Nueva Televisora del Sur C.A.* (teleSUR) by the Extraordinary General Assembly of Shareholders on the 20<sup>th</sup> of April of 2006 (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012). The company was created with an initial start-up investment of U\$S 2.5 million (Painter, 2007). In the search of Venezuela for Latin American countries as shareholders participants in teleSUR's initial capital, the channel achieved to have the initial financial support of Venezuela, Argentina, Cuba and Uruguay; holding respectively a 51%, 20%, 19%, and 10% of teleSUR's shareholding (Cano, 2009).

With the addition of Bolivia in 2006, the shareholdings turned to 46% for Venezuela, 20% for Argentina, 19% for Cuba, 10% for Uruguay, and 5% for Bolivia (Cano, 2009). However, since 2006, the financial participation of Uruguay is questioned due to a paralysis of the Uruguayan Congress for approving the original convention signed between Presidents Chávez and Vázquez in early 2005 (Cano, 2009; Painter, 2007). In 2007, teleSUR acquired its current financial and membership scheme with the latter two incorporations (Cano 2009): Venezuela (41%), Argentina (20%), Cuba (19%), Uruguay (10%), Bolivia (5%), Ecuador (5%), and Nicaragua (no published data)<sup>4</sup>. The convention on membership signed between Venezuela and the later countries (Bolivia, Nicaragua and Ecuador) was based on a share capital of U\$S 3 million (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2009). This increase was additionally set to any future incorporation from August 2009, while the shareholdings of the original members were remained within the initial share capital of U\$S 2.5 million (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2009).

It is remarkable that teleSUR does not receive any kind of financial private contribution and does not broadcast commercial advertisements, being only financed by the

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<sup>4</sup> These percentages may not apply to the present, due to the official financial regularization of Argentina in 2012 and Cuba in 2011 (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012; Presidencia de la Nación, 2012); the departure of Uruguay from the project after the rejection of its Congress in 2006 to approve the convention (Cano, 2009), despite that Uruguay is a "member country" of the Strategic Board of teleSUR (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012); and the unknown shares assigned to Nicaragua in 2007 (Cano, 2009). It is important to stress the lack of official, updated, and published information on teleSUR's shareholding scheme, as well as, the lack of reply to this issue from executives of the channel.

sponsoring Latin American countries. Actually, according to Painter (2007) and Cañizález and Lugo (2007), the main financial contributor to teleSUR is Venezuela, beyond the fact of being the major shareholder of the company. Painter (2007) states that the initial annual budget of teleSUR was of U\$S 10 million; totally provided by the Venezuelan Government through the national state oil company PDVSA (*Petróleos de Venezuela Sociedad Anónima*) and the Mining Ministry. However, former teleSUR's President, Andrés Izarra, stated in an interview conducted by Painter (2007) that "he needs an annual budget of U\$S 15 up to 20 million" (p. 17). Indeed, the Communication and Information Ministry of Venezuela officially assigned to teleSUR a budget of almost U\$S 15.500 million for 2014 (Amaya, 2013).

Besides their shareholding in teleSUR's capital stock, the participation of the other Latin American sponsoring countries seems limited to "provide some in-country logistical support for correspondents" (Painter, 2007, p. 17) and to the "definition of strategic objectives and in the editorial orientation" (Cañizález & Lugo, 2007, p. 57); despite that "most of the sponsoring countries have not fulfill their obligations of economical inversion" (Cañizález & Lugo, 2007, p. 57). Indeed, Carolina Silvestre, Representative of the Argentinean National State at the Strategic Board of teleSUR, affirms that, besides Venezuela, Cuba and Argentina are the two unique countries from the formal members that have regularized their situation at the Board of teleSUR (email exchange, December 4, 2013), in December 2011 and May 2012 respectively (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela 2012; Presidencia de la Nación 2012).

The Argentinean case reflects one way of how it can be the membership's dynamics and competences of the sponsoring countries. On the 1<sup>st</sup> of February of 2005, Venezuela and Argentina signed a convention on the purchase by Argentina of at least 20% from the initial shareholding capital of teleSUR, under the domain of the Secretary of Communication Media of the Chief Cabinet of Ministries of the Republic of Argentina (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012). According to that convention, valid for five years and automatically renewable for a same period of time, the shareholding of Argentina allows the country to:

- A) supply with one hundred of monthly hours of Argentinean content production, generated by the State, independents, communitarian, or by the National System of Public Media S.E.; B) collaborate with teleSUR in the permanent formation of human resources; C) establish communication through satellite link with Venezuela for the direct emission of news segments; D) finance the correspondent of teleSUR in

Argentina, its branch, its staff and infrastructure, whose selection and editorial direction will be proposed by the Secretary of Communication Media to the General Direction of teleSUR; E) promote the distribution of the satellite signal of teleSUR in the Argentinean territory, by cable, open/air, regional, alternative and communitarian systems television; F) designate the Argentinean representatives at the General Direction of teleSUR. (Presidencia de la Nación, 2005, p. 42).

As a consequence, among several actions related to the convention, in 2007, 2009 and 2010 it was formalized content collaboration, cooperation and assistance agreements between teleSUR and Argentinean public companies of media and communication, such as *Telam* and *Educ.ar* (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012); in December 2010 it was opened the Argentinean branch of teleSUR in Buenos Aires (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012); in May 2012 teleSUR approved the financial contribution of Argentina and thus the procedure to make effective the shareholding transference, indicating that, according to the current capital of the company, Argentina is competent of 14,17% of the shareholding capital (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012); and in July 2012 it was created the position of Representative of the Argentinean State in the Strategic Board of teleSUR, with range of sub-secretary under the Public Communication Secretary of Argentina, former Secretary of Communication Media (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012).

The everyday governance and management of teleSUR are supervised by the President of the channel, who is the legal representative of the company designated by the Assembly of Shareholder (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012). The presidency was firstly in charge of Andrés Izarra, former Communication and Information Ministry of Venezuela and principal developer of teleSUR's project ("Designan a la", 2011). In January 2011, he was replaced by Patricia Villegas, who has been the main journalist and host since the launch of the channel ("Designan a la", 2011). As a representative of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, the President of teleSUR presides the annual Assembly of Shareholders held in Caracas, and is in charge of the Board of Directors and the Strategic Board (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012).

The Board of Directors is the organism in charge of the operational and administrative management of the company; it is expected to hold meetings at least once every month in Caracas; and it is composed by the President, the vice-presidents of contents; of operations and technologies; of executive; of distribution, commercialization and international affairs; the general director of human resources; and the legal consultant (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012).

The Strategic Board of teleSUR is responsible for the strategic and political direction of the company; it is composed by the representatives of the member countries, of the associate countries, and independent directors; and it is expected to hold a meeting at least once every three months in Caracas (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012). A “member country” is the one that signed with Venezuela a convention on the purchase of shareholdings of teleSUR (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012); an “associate country” is the one that signed with Venezuela conventions on cooperation related to teleSUR that do not refer to the acquisition of shares (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2009); and an “independent director” is a member designated by the Assembly of Shareholders due to technical experience and know-how of interest (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012).

The three categories of members have right to voice and vote; but only a “member country” (Argentina, Bolivia, Cuba, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Uruguay) has the additional right to be in charge of the pro tempore vice-presidency of the Strategic Board during a year; a role to be designated among the members in the order that they have regularized their financial situation to the Board (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012). The most updated, published, and accessible report shows that in March 2012 the Strategic Board of teleSUR was composed by Patricia Villegas, as President; the Brazilian Carlos Alberto Almeida and the Venezuelan Yuri Pimentel, as independent directors; and the following representatives of member countries: Carolina Silvestre from Argentina, Waldo Ramirez de la Ribera from Cuba (holding also the vice-presidency), and Fernando Alvarado from Ecuador (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012).

Moreover, teleSUR has an Advisory Council, which includes many regional and international intellectuals, such as British Pakistani writer Tariq Ali, Argentinean President of *Radio y Television Argentina S.E.* Tristán Bauer, Nicaraguan poet Ernesto Cardenal, US activist and actor Danny Glover, Uruguayan writer Eduardo Galeano, US writer Saul Landau, Argentinean Nobel Peace Prize winner Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, editor in chief of *Le Monde Diplomatique en Español* Ignacio Ramonet (Spain), and Argentinean politician and filmmaker Fernando “Pino” Solanas (Cano, 2009).

According to Cañizález and Lugo (2007), this Advisory Council was necessary for teleSUR in its launch in order “to achieve penetration, acceptance and legitimacy among potential audiences” (p. 56), despite the composition of the council aroused

certain implication of the channel with the principal worldwide resistance movements. Ignacio Ramonet, member of the Advisory Council, affirms that this council was necessary at the beginning to establish an editorial line, “backing up with our experience” (personal interview, March 15, 2014). Now, he considers that it is not any more necessary because “there is a very good journalist team with a very good level”, praising the current President of teleSUR. In his opinion, the council is not activated and functioning since he has not been called for a Council’s meeting for a long time.

The programming of teleSUR is mainly composed by news programs due to the nature of the channel, including news bulletins almost every hour (Appendix, Table A1). Also, it broadcasts featured programs, such as in-depth interviews, debates, documentaries, investigative stories, and shows based in softer content, as culture, music, and health. Despite this thesis has not the objective to make an in-depth content analysis of teleSUR’s programming, the shows scheduled for April 2014 (teleSUR, 2014b; Appendix, Figure A1) suggests that approximately 64% of the programming is comprised by news programs with 15.5 daily broadcasting hours, while a 36% is composed by featured programs with 8.5 daily hours. This average is stressed during weekdays, but at the weekend the relation between news and featured programs is more equal, with almost 54% and 46% of the programming respectively (Appendix, Figure A1). Moraes (2011) states that “80% of teleSUR’s programming has informative content (news bulletins, round tables, interviews, documentaries, journalistic reports, dossiers, historic series, profiles). The other 20% is completed with films and independent documentaries produced in the region” (p. 63). According to Cañizález and Lugo (2007), only between the 20% and 30% of the spaces can be considered informative, while Painter (2007) affirms that 40% of the programming is news and information.

In general, the programs last 30 minutes (Appendix, Table A1), while few of them last one hour (like *Conexión Global* and *Edición Central*) and only one lasts two hours (*El Mundo Hoy*). The flagship program of teleSUR is its news bulletins *teleSUR Noticias*, with 13 emissions per day approximately (Appendix, Table A1), besides emissions out of schedule for any breaking news and/or developing story of interest. The featured programming (Appendix A) is headed by *Dossier*, an opinion program about international news and events, which is broadcasted three times every weekday and twice every Saturday.

Besides the news bulletins *teleSUR Noticias*, *El Mundo Hoy*, *Conexión Global* and *Edición Central*, the news programming (Appendix A) is completed with: *Conexión Digital*, news analysis through social media and news portals; *Impacto Económico*, focus on economical news; *Temas del Día*, about the more relevant world news story of the day; *Síntesis*, a weekend program on the more relevant news in Latin America and the world during the week; *Telesur Lenguaje De Señas*, similar as the channel's flagship program but with the simultaneous addition of sign language for deaf viewers; and the sport news programs: the central *Deportes teleSUR*; *Nuestramérica Deportiva*, specialized in sports news within the American continent; and *Goles al Bate*, focus on football and baseball.

The featured programming (Appendix A) consists of journalistic, opinion and in-depth analysis programs, including *Dossier*; *Documentaries*; *Mesa Redonda Internacional*, in which experts analyze current affairs; *Cruce de Palabras*, based in conversations and interviews with leaders of resistance; *Realidades*, about political, economical, social and cultural context analysis of Latin American peoples; *Reportajes teleSUR*, an in-depth investigative program of current affairs; *Entre Fronteras*, news about the migration phenomenon; *USA de Verdad*, stories about average US citizens behind the scenes of the "American Dream"; *Atomun*, about science and technology; *Congénero*, on female and gender stories; *Guía tu Cuerpo*, a health and prevention program; *Zona Verde*, about ecology and sustainability; *Mestizo*, on Latin American art history; *Mp3 Gira Latina*, about traditional regional music; and *Maestra Vida*, a biography program.

Beyond the inherent editorial line of every media, teleSUR focus on news and stories about Latin America, and also the world, stressing how the latter relate or impact on the region. Moreover, the channel emphasizes reports on regional summits, elections, conflicts, and social movements that are generally excluded, marginalized or not treated in-depth by mainstream media (Moraes, 2011; Painter, 2007). Consequently, teleSUR often manages to obtain first-hand information from a representative network of NGOs, political parties, unions, intellectuals, human rights defenders, minorities, among other active sectors of civil society (Gomez Mejia, 2010).

Important milestones of teleSUR were its recognized and exclusive live news coverage, such as the liberation of two FARC's (Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia) hostages to a Venezuelan commission in Colombian territory in January 2008 (Cano,

2009); the coup d'état against the President of Honduras, Manuel Zelaya, in June 2009 (Moraes, 2011); the attempt of coup against the President of Ecuador, Rafael Correa, in September 2010 (Moraes, 2011); and the demonstrations in support of Gaddafi during Libyan's "Arab Spring" in 2011 (Di Ricco, 2012). Concerning Honduras' case, Andrés Izarra, former teleSUR's President, stressed that "without teleSUR perhaps that coup d'état would have remained as a simple review on any page of an international newspaper fortnight later. teleSUR acted as an alternative in real time, giving viewers another source of knowledge and evaluation of events" (López San Miguel, 2009).

Furthermore about the content, teleSUR has several agreements with others television networks, such as BBC, Al-Jazeera and France 24 (Moraes, 2011), Russia Today (Painter, 2007), CCTV from China, and IRB from Iran (Gomez Mejía, 2010); in addition to those established with local public media from Latin American countries, such as *TV Pública* from Argentina (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012), former *TV Brasil-Canal Integración* (Moraes, 2011) and EBC from Brazil (Nelson Breve, email interview, March 3, 2014). According to Painter (2007), most of these agreements are "at the level of exchanging TV pictures to reduce their dependency on the two main providers, APTN (Associated Press Television News) and Reuters" (p. 19). In the case of the agreement with Al-Jazeera, it was enhanced with the opening in Caracas of the first Latin American bureau of Al-Jazeera and the agreement signed in 2010 concerning the training of journalists (Di Ricco, 2012).

teleSUR is mainly distributed as a free satellite signal (teleSUR, 2014c; Appendix, Figure B1), through the satellite NSS 806 (South & Central America), Satmex 6 (South, Central & North America), Galaxy 19 (Central & North America), Hispasat 1C (West Europe and North Africa), Astra 1L (West & East Europe and North Africa), and Hotbird 13B (Europe, Middle East, North Africa). Another way to watch teleSUR is by cable television (Appendix, Figure B2), despite teleSUR has been facing several problems with cable companies within Latin America due to their rejection to include the free channel among their cable offer (Moraes, 2011). This panorama seems more challenging in the countries where the local market is highly concentrated on cable television (such as Argentina) and even dominated by one cable operator, like the duopoly of *Televisa-Azteca TV* in Mexico. Consequently, teleSUR has registered a limited access in Brazil, Central America, Chile, Colombia, Ecuador, Mexico, Peru, and Uruguay (Painter, 2007).



Moreover, teleSUR is distributed as a free terrestrial channel in its sponsoring countries, but this kind of distribution is generally reduced to urban areas in relation to the telecommunications' infrastructure and market conditions of each country (Moraes, 2011). Some sponsoring countries of teleSUR have been retransmitting its programs by their respective local public channels (Cano, 2009), more frequently at the early times of teleSUR, when it did not have developed its current wide distribution system (Colonna, 2005; Sirvén, 2005). As an example, the educational TV channel of the federal government of Paraná, Brazil, has been broadcasting teleSUR's documentaries and journalistic programs subtitled or voiced-over in Portuguese, thanks to an agreement between both parts since October 2007 (Moraes, 2011). Moreover, sponsoring countries of teleSUR have been including the channel in the digital television system offered by States, with non-profit aims, such as Argentina (<http://www.tda.gob.ar/>). The news website of teleSUR and its social media accounts represent another free way to watch its live programming via streaming, and content already broadcasted on demand.

Regarding teleSUR's audience, there are different numbers registered at different times since the launch of the channel; however it is not proved their exactitude and reliability, even more considering the improvements made in teleSUR's distribution system along these years. Moraes (2011) states that teleSUR has an average audience between 5 and 6 million of viewers. According to Cano (2009), teleSUR has an approximate potential reach of 550 million viewers in Latin America, 50 million in United States and "another" additional million in West Europe and North Africa. However, the real audience in Latin America that actually watches teleSUR is estimated to be 87 million approximately, being terrestrial television the main way of access to the channel (Cano, 2009). Moreover, Cañizález and Lugo (2007) state that "teleSUR reaches as a maximum less than a half of millions of viewers in the whole Latin America" (p. 59).

## **2. The origins of the controversy about teleSUR**

Since the creation of teleSUR in 2005, there has been arousing a controversy about the channel as a regional public media surrounding the lack of reflection of independence, universality and diversity on its constitution, governance, programming, and editorial line (Cano, 2009; Cañizález & Lugo, 2007; Kozloff, 2008; Moraes, 2011; Painter, 2007; Sánchez, 2005). This controversy seemed to be provoked by the initial context of

development on teleSUR in relation to the official expectations of regional public media claimed to the emerging channel, questioning thus the identity of teleSUR.

First of all, according to its website stated on the previous section, teleSUR defines itself as a public media of Latin America, a description that does not differ substantially from what was published on its first web versions ([http://web.archive.org/web/20050601000000\\*/http://www.telesurtv.net/](http://web.archive.org/web/20050601000000*/http://www.telesurtv.net/)). Along with the institutional communication, many teleSUR's officials and persons of interest made declarations at the beginnings of the project concerning its genuine public nature. During the channel's launch on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July of 2005, Venezuelan President Chávez defined teleSUR by a phone call as “a project in favor of the Latin American integration” (Colonna, 2005), ensuring the independence of the project from any Government and “any prefixed line” (“Canal 7 transmitió”, 2005). Also, President Chávez claimed: “the mediums of communication cannot change the human minds; the key for teleSUR to enter in tune with the soul and mind of our peoples is to stick to the true” (“Canal 7 transmitió”, 2005).

Aram Aharonian, former teleSUR's General Director, stated that the channel “will be completely independent” and that it “will focus on doing the opposite of commercial television” (Kozloff, 2005); “with plurality of voices, variety of approaches; a space to recognize, understand and integrate each other” (Sirvén, 2005). Similarly, Fernando “Pino” Solanas, member of the Advisory Council of teleSUR and one of the main promoters of the project, affirmed: “a Governmental channel does not serve at all. It has to be created a Foundation able to receive diverse contributions that guarantee the journalistic, artistic and creative independence of the channel” (Blejman, 2005). More radical, the former President of the channel, Andrés Izarra, stated that “teleSUR breaks into a space almost completely dominated by the oligarchy and their Northern allies (...) this is an initiative against cultural imperialism and against any form of imperialism” (Colonna, 2005).

In relation to these statements, it can be interpreted the first symbolical slogans of teleSUR: “If the integration is the purpose, teleSUR is the medium”; “Our North is the South” (Cano, 2009, p. 135). By this way, teleSUR emerged as regional project of communication towards the emission of a voice from Latin America to Latin America, with two parallel goals: stimulate the Latin American integration and identity, and break the news and information hegemony led by mainstream media, both by foreign and

local media groups (Cano, 2009; Cañizález & Lugo, 2007). The novelty that brought teleSUR was the fact of being the first news regional channel developed, owned, and financed purely by several States (without any commercial input).

This milestone has to be contextualized with the lack of tradition of a genuine public media development in Latin America; the highly concentrated regional media market by few private groups; the biased coverage of the main Venezuelan private media in favor of the coup against President Chávez and the oil strike in 2002 (Painter, 2007); the consolidation of the communicative initiatives led by the Government of Chávez; the high revenues received by Venezuela for national oil sales; the emerging and rich process of regionalism among Latin American countries, independent of the historical US paternalism; and the increasing tensions between Venezuela and US President Bush.

Despite the initial character of regional public broadcasting aimed for teleSUR in its beginnings, its independence and plurality was put in doubt from the very beginning:

teleSUR was not going to be *Telechávez*. It was not going to be a propaganda station. It was not anti-American. Rather, it was going to be a ‘public service not dissimilar to the BBC’ which offered balanced and pluralistic coverage in its news. But most significant of all it was heralded as a regional channel. (Painter, 2007, p. 17).

Besides the hypothetical and asserted thinking that teleSUR would not have existed today without the leading impetus given by Venezuela, it can be attributed that the leading influence exerted by this country on the creation and development of teleSUR encouraged a notorious mutual relationship; calling into question the initial public, independent, plural, and regional background aimed for the channel in relation to its inception, governance, and editorial line.

Considering teleSUR’s inception, its historical starting point refers to the Congress of Latin American and Caribbean Journalists, held in La Habana in October 2001, in which came up with the general idea for creating a Latin American channel (Cano, 2009). However, one of the first declarations of the feasible creation of teleSUR was made on the 5<sup>th</sup> of January 2005 by Andrés Izarra, former Venezuelan Ministry of Communication and Information, during the famous TV show *Aló, Presidente* hosted by President Chávez and broadcasted by the national public channel VTV (*Venezolana de Televisión*) (Cañizález & Lugo, 2007). Since then, there had been “various official announcements in which it was mentioned the project of teleSUR as part of the strategy of communication of the Venezuelan Government” (Cañizález & Lugo, 2007, p. 55).

This statement is a fact with the creation of teleSUR as an anonymous company on the 28<sup>th</sup> of January of 2005 with address in Caracas, under the domain of the Communication and Information Ministry of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012). In addition, teleSUR had an initial start-up investment and annual budget provided by Venezuela (Painter, 2007). Despite Venezuela achieved quickly in 2005 the shareholding participation of Argentina (20%), Cuba (19%) and Uruguay (10%) (Cano 2009), Venezuela kept being for a long time the main financial contributor in addition to hold the major stake. While the contribution of Uruguay has never been formalized (Cano, 2009), Cuba and Argentina regularized their financial situation at the Board of teleSUR just in December 2011 and May 2012 respectively (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012; Presidencia de la Nación, 2012).

On the other side, apart from the following incorporation of Bolivia, Ecuador, and Nicaragua, it was significant the absence of other Latin American countries as initial legal members of the company; being Brazil and Mexico the most notorious cases due to their size, importance and leading role in the region. The Mexican absence can be attributed to its historical dependent relation of United States in terms of geographical vicinity, commerce, investments and foreign relations; as well as, to the isolation of Mexico from Latin America after the FTAA's death, contributing to tense diplomatic relations between Presidents Chávez and Fox ("Chavez and Fox", 2005).

Despite the political affinity between Chávez and “Lula” da Silva, Brazilian authorities decided to found in 2005 *TV Brasil-Canal Integración*, their own public media initiative (Sánchez, 2005), with 80% of Spanish broadcasting and the rest in Portuguese (Cano, 2009), but later the project was discontinued (Nelson Breve, email interview, March 3, 2014). Pignotti (2005) and Cano (2009) observed a kind of competition between both regional channels towards their audience and market's target in Latin America, besides the content agreement signed between teleSUR and the Brazilian channel (Moraes, 2011). Furthermore, Brazil considered initially the possibility of its membership in teleSUR, but it was eventually disregarded due to the “*mensalao*” local corruption scandals in 2005 (Carolina Matos, email interview, April 3, 2014). The case of Brazil reflects its historical autonomous foreign policy thanks in great part to its uniqueness of cultural tradition, physical size, relative strength, and level of development along the region (Hey, 1997), enabling Brazil to develop a foreign policy that “makes decisions according to perceived national, political or personal interests” (p. 641).

Moreover, Cañizález and Lugo (2007) affirm that Colombia and Peru changed their mind about participating at teleSUR due to the increasing tense relations with Venezuela; for which both countries did not allow the satellite and cable transmission of the channel. Colombia deserted because of the emission of one hour interview to Manuel Marulanda, commander in chief of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), during the first transmissions of teleSUR (Cañizález & Lugo, 2007). Peru disregarded the project after Chávez made biased public comments about the presidential candidates in Peru, situation that was categorized as an intrusion into domestic affairs by Peruvian President Toledo (Cañizález & Lugo, 2007).

From a symbolic view, teleSUR's first transmission was on the 24<sup>th</sup> of July of 2005, anniversary date of birth of Simón Bolívar, Liberator of Latin America in joint with José de San Martín from the Kingdom of Spain. "This is the product of the awakening of our peoples. It has arrived the hour of initiating a big change and teleSUR is part of that change. teleSUR is free to navigate through the waters of the true," stated Hugo Chávez by a phone call during the first emission of the channel (Sánchez, 2005); making allusion to the libertarian spirit of Bolívar, historical hero ideologically adopted to the discourse of the "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism".

However, the election of this date it does not differentiate from the historical tradition of public and private media to choose special occasions for launching their initiatives towards "the construction of an image of nation" (Varela, 2013, p. 60), allowing the "political utilization by political authorities as well as the reinforcement of symbols and national values" (Varela, 2013, p. 61). In addition to the mentioned cases of Argentina, Cuba and Mexico on the previous chapter, this association can be illustrated with the first TV broadcasting in Germany for the Olympic Games in Berlin in 1936, and in United States for the International Fair in New York in 1939 (Varela, 2013).

Considering teleSUR's governance, the leadership of Venezuela in the project can be reflected in the natural choice of Caracas for the location of the studios, taking into account the legal address of the company (Presidencia de la Nación, 2012); operating until February 2012 in the same building complex of VTV, the main Venezuelan public TV channel (Kozloff, 2008). The first President of teleSUR was Andrés Izarra, in charge until January 2011; who resigned to his previous Governmental position, Venezuelan Ministry of Communication and Information, three days after the launch of

teleSUR in order to guarantee the editorial independence of the channel ("Ministro renuncia para", 2005). In addition, Izarra was responsible for the TV production of *Aló, Presidente*, hosted by President Chávez (Kozloff, 2008). Previously, he worked for almost five years in United States at CNN and NBC; and at the Venezuelan channel *Radio Caracas Television* (RCTV) as news director, resigning after the biased anti-Chávez coverage of the short-life coup led by Carmona in April 2002 (Kozloff, 2008).

The leading role took by Venezuela in the development of the channel arose the concern for a potential threat to that initial independence and plural background aimed for the editorial line of teleSUR (Kozloff, 2005; Moraes, 2011; Sánchez, 2005; Sirvén, 2005). Jorge Enrique Botero, former News Director of teleSUR, replied that neither he nor his colleagues "come to make cheap propaganda or an official rag" to a question on a possible interference by Chávez (Pignotti, 2005). Although, Botero warned: "I am aware that there will difficult circumstances and it is legitimate that who put up the money to create the channel aspires to have any impact on it" (Pignotti, 2005).

Painter (2007) identified that the early advertisements of teleSUR "were not commercials but a mixture of self-publicity, public service announcements and spots stressing the success of the Venezuelan and Cuban governments' social programmes" (p. 17). Cañizález and Lugo (2007) affirmed that "teleSUR has been, from the beginning, a political project of the Government of Hugo Chávez, with the purpose of achieving international presence and geopolitical projection" (p. 55), besides its goal to promote integration and break the hegemony on information.

Consequently, some initial reactions to the challenging emergence of teleSUR in the media market contributed to feed into the controversy surrounding this new TV channel. The most resonating reaction was provoked by Connie Mack, a former US Republican Congressmen for Florida critical of Chávez's policies, who sent to the United States House of Representatives in July 2005 "an amendment to the Foreign Appropriations Act calling for rival broadcasts by a US government-funded station" (Painter, 2007, p. 19), alike *Radio and TV Martí* for Cuba (Sirvén, 2005). Despite that the proposal had not succeeded, Mack continued generating polemic after the content agreement signed between teleSUR and Al-Jazeera in January 2006, considering it as a promotion network of terrorism and freedom's enemies (Cano, 2009).

In addition to the tense relations with US, it was very difficult for the channel to achieve its accreditation in the Congress of United States due to the obstacles that the journalism commission of the Congress put against the approval of teleSUR (Francisco Guaita, Skype interview, March 3, 2014). According to Guaita, former teleSUR's correspondent and producer in Washington D.C. until March 2006, the channel was carrying an initial strong stigma of "*Tele-Chávez*", attached by US media professionals.

Moreover, several journalists of teleSUR had been suffering persecutions (Cano, 2009); such as Fredy Muñoz Altamiranda, former correspondent in Colombia, who was detained in November 2006 in Bogotá for being accused of being an active member of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC). Then, he was liberated in January 2007 (Cano, 2009).

The initial framework of the development of teleSUR on its inception, governance, and editorial line has been showing how the identity of the channel was put in doubt: it is a public media or a State / Governmental media as previous Latin American experiences? It is a regional channel or a Venezuelan media project? It is an alternative media or a counter-voice to mainstream media? The debate has extended to the grade of addressing teleSUR as "*TeleChávez*" and "*Al-Bolívar*" (Pignotti, 2005), "*Al Chavezeera*" (Kozloff, 2011), and the "*Anti-CNN*" (Obarrio, 2005); linking the channel with former President Chávez, the Arab network Al-Jazeera, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela, and the US network *CNN en Español* (main competence).

The explained origins of the controversy over teleSUR has been reflecting the incompatibility of the initial official statements of what was expected from the channel with its context as a novel and developing project. This would be the apparently incompatibility of what is understood for public media, considering UNESCO's conception (2001), with how teleSUR was planned and developed as a regional public media.

On the one hand, teleSUR has been placed at a crossroads of what should be considered a public media in Latin America, and even more, a regional public media that involves a joint ownership of several countries. On the other hand, the channel has been labeled as a geopolitical soft-power platform of Venezuela and, in less intensity, of other Latin American countries to diffuse the "21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism".

### 3. Understanding teleSUR as a regional public media

The application of the category of public media to teleSUR is placed according to the institutional definition of the channel; either official, as it is the website, or indirect, as statements done by executives, journalists and persons of interest to the channel. Also, this conception is supported by the nature of teleSUR of being financed only by several Latin American States without any commercial advertisement. However, there are three points that contribute to the distortion of conceiving teleSUR as public media: to assimilate teleSUR as an alternative, as a counter-information, and/or as state channel.

Besides that teleSUR may follow its own agenda and concerns in giving voice to grassroots movements, social sectors and minorities historically excluded, under or misrepresented by mainstream media (such as CNN), the channel scarcely adapts to the category of alternative media, in the approach as an alternative to mainstream media (Bailey, Cammaerts, & Carpentier, 2007), also considered as “a supplement to mainstream media or as a counter-hegemonic critique of the mainstream” (p. 15).

Following the authors’ analysis, teleSUR presents the opposite of what it is suggested for most of the characteristics of an alternative media: the channel uniquely depends on State financial inputs (in spite of not depending on private sector); it works on large-scale operations –“the biggest network of correspondents and journalists in the region,” stated Patricia Villegas (Respighi, 2011); it has a hierarchical structure –“the bureaucracy that the channel has it is impressive” (O. Rincón, Skype interview, March 12, 2014); it has financial stability –“to them it results efficient, they achieve managing it” (M. Becerra, Skype interview, March 4, 2014); it has professional practices; it targets a broad and wide audience –“you had not to speak about your country through a national way, if not you needed to have a view of the region and the continent” (F. Guaita, Skype interview, March 3, 2014); and it does not risk enough for formats and genres –“a bad done imitation of CNN” (O. Rincón, Skype interview, March 12, 2014).

On the other side, teleSUR can perfectly be considered as a “counter-information” channel. Under its slogan “Our North is the South”, the channel was conceived as a counter-hegemonic globalization initiative, broadcasting a point of view not transmitted by mainstream global media, such as *CNN en Español*: “teleSUR born as a strategic project orientated to counteract the hegemonic message from the North,” stated Aram Aharonian, first and former General Director of teleSUR (Argemí, 2014).



Becerra (Skype interview, March 4, 2014) highlights the efficient role and labor of teleSUR, as a counter-information channel, of response to the versions and the editorial line presented by media as CNN about the Latin American and world reality. Thus, teleSUR performs as a counter-information channel, also known as “contra or subaltern transnational media flow” (Thussu, 2007) generally originated from world’s peripheries. Thussu (2007) affirms that the subaltern news channels seek to “undermine the Anglo-American domination of news and current affairs”, despite they “are unlikely to have a significant impact on the American hegemony of global media cultures” (p. 24).

Offering a counter-voice could match up with public media’s principles of universality, diversity, independence and distinctiveness (UNESCO, 2001), since a counter-information channel could express a broader, contextualized, more inclusive and creative view in contrast to the voice of private media that replies to market interests. The delicate matter between being a “counter-information” channel and a public media arises when the emission of that voice different to commercial and dominant media takes a partial position, and even partisan, while it is State financed. Indeed, this relation, “whether it is legitimate to use public money to replace one set of bias with another” (Painter, 2007, p. 53), turns significant in countries like Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela where their leaders have initiated a struggle for media democratization.

The balance between being a “counter-information” channel and a public media has showed to not be stable along teleSUR’s history. On the one side, it was an exemplar its live and balanced coverage of the attempt of coup against Ecuadorian President Correa in September 2010 (Moraes, 2011). On the other side, the channel’s coverage of the conflict between the FARC and the Colombian Government was labeled in 2007 as “faltering and erratic” by Jorge E. Botero, teleSUR’s former News Director (Moraes, 2011). Thus, the distortion of conceiving teleSUR as public media will not have effect in the grade that as a counter-information channel does not interfere with public media’s principles (UNESCO, 2001), in order to avoid another “hegemonic” voice.

The role of teleSUR as a counter-information channel replicates, according to Martín Becerra, “a constitutive ambiguity in the ideology of the Venezuelan Government that expresses an anti-imperialist rhetoric which is not supported in the facts”, such as denouncing imperialism while it is one of the principal exporters of petroleum to United States and it participates in the World Trade Organization (Skype interview, March 4,

2014). Martín Becerra adds: “they are populist governments with big ideological contradictions”, including the Governments from Ecuador and Argentina.

Furthermore, Nelson Breve (email interview, March 3, 2014) argues that it is a tactically effective policy of teleSUR to fight “a hegemonic point of view by the increase of the space for another point of view” since it “can move faster the axis of the hegemonic opinion” despite its risky possibility to fail in the long term. However, he considers that it would be strategically effective, and most likely to success, “a public space for the mediation of points of views of society, not taking advantage of any of them, just addressing all with honesty and plurality; thus the society can take its own conclusions”. More critical, Omar Rincón (Skype interview, March 12, 2014) says that it is “terrible to believe that doing ‘good journalism’ is to change the other agenda without trying to integrate; they are making the same mistake that criticizes but to the other side, without counterparts, debate, nor dialogue”. Indeed, Rincón considers teleSUR “as bad as the other ones, because they turn the journalism in an agenda of propaganda and not in a place for public self-thinking”.

Last but not least, misunderstanding public media as State / Governmental media is not new in Latin America, since the region lacks a genuine tradition of public broadcasting, where there are mainly State / Governmental initiatives under the veil of public media. In addition, the initial controversy over teleSUR, explained on the previous section, contributed to its identity distortion. In order to find a clue about the public or governmental nature of teleSUR, it is interesting the application of the three variables suggested by Arroyo et al. (2012) for the analysis of public broadcasting: what and how it is programmed?, who finances?, who controls?; that goes hand in hand with the analysis of teleSUR around the public media’s principles placed by UNESCO (2001).

Regarding what and how it is programmed, teleSUR was created with the intention to be a generalist TV channel with a threefold mandate to inform, educate and entertain (Argemí, 2014). Later, it was mainly reduced to inform, creating “an antithesis of *CNN en Español*”, according to Aharonian (Argemí, 2014). The channel broadcasts Latin American and world news (plus informative content) about political, economical, social, cultural, sports, sustainability, and health issues; being the news bulletins the main show (Appendix A). Certain of the featured programs, which have a lesser representation than

news programs, confirm a lower presence of formative content, such as *Congénero*, *Guía tu cuerpo*, and *Mestizo*; but no presence of entertainment content (Appendix A).

The channel mission is to stimulate the integration of Latin America and to offer another voice, different from mainstream media; which is highlighted in the slogan “Our North is the South”: a common and plural informative space built by Latin Americans for Latin Americans. Indeed, the first promotional spots of teleSUR contrasted how Latin Americans asserted which was the capital of France, but failed with the capital of Honduras (Painter, 2007). “We had the scandalous case of an entire continent consuming a self-image produced outside of the sphere of its imagination,” affirms Ramonet (Moraes, 2011, p. 66), adding that “teleSUR constitutes the first attempt of audiovisual liberation and media decolonization” (Moraes, 2011, p. 66).

Becerra, Guaita, Rincón (Skype interview, March 4, 3, and 12 respectively, 2014) and Matos (email interview, April 3, 2014) praise the emergence of a new regional voice offering a different perspective from mainstream western media. In this sense, teleSUR is understood as a late reply to the UNESCO’s report *Many Voices, One World* (also known as MacBride Report)<sup>5</sup>, published in 1980, which called for a *New World Information and Communication Order* (NWICO) due to the already concentrated media world system dominated by Northern media flows (Painter, 2007). Moreover, the interviewees mentioned stress the successful role of teleSUR during tense regional episodes, being in many cases the unique media presence. “Thanks to media as teleSUR we can understand other things, it has opened the focus of view,” says Guaita.

Concerning the editorial line and news agenda, teleSUR seems to concentrate more in the information that is of interest to the Government of Venezuela and in Venezuelan ordinary affairs, proper to a local rather than a regional TV station. “I was surprised by the so Venezuelan approach that existed to a plural Latin America with different processes. If you think on balance, the content and force that had Venezuela was very unbalanced in relation to the other countries,” affirms Francisco Guaita (Skype interview, March 3, 2014). An evidence was when teleSUR broadcasted in its initial years a Sunday hour emission with the best of the official TV program *Aló, Presidente*, hosted by President Chávez (Gomez Mejia, 2010). Omar Rincón (Skype interview, March 12, 2014) believes that teleSUR is an ideological project rather than Latin

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<sup>5</sup> See <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0004/000400/040066eb.pdf> (retrieved April 10, 2014).

American, since it “imposed a local vision model of CNN” without recognizing the diverse forms of being in each society. Rincón argues that “the agendas and neurosis of each country are different, including those of the same wave of left revolution”.

Besides the argumentative fact of giving voice to historically marginalized social sectors, the editorial line of teleSUR seems to be in tune with the ideology of the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism” and, in particular, of the “Bolivarian Revolution”. “We do journalism with the levels and standards of the BBC. However, we have an editorial line (...) we do reflect a point of view, we accompany the processes of the region and we are a product of them,” replied Andrés Izarra, former President of teleSUR, to a question on the desire to strengthen a more independent and plural state channel as the BCC, and not partisan (López San Miguel, 2009). Similarly, Jorge Enrique Botero, former teleSUR’s News Director, claimed: “independence always, neutrality never” (Pignotti, 2005).

Cano (2009) affirms that in the coverage of several presidential elections in the region, the channel demonstrated sympathy for left candidates, highlighting the progress made by those who did not reach the presidency; in addition to have “a critical editorial line of the globalization process, the neoliberalism, the role of United States in the region” (p. 134). As an example, Francisco Guaita (Skype interview, March 3, 2014) affirms that during his labor as correspondent and producer of teleSUR in Washington D.C., from September 2005 until March 2006, it was complicated to show the positive features of the US economy, having serious discussions with the headquarters that demanded a more politicized journalism. In addition, Guaita says that the channel did not follow the original criterion for giving priority voice to US social minorities and immigrants.

It is of interest the case study done by Painter (2007), who tested the initial impartial and balanced information aims of teleSUR; applying four hypotheses, through in-depth content analysis of the evening central news program on three emissions in November 2006 and on four in December 2006. During that selection, Painter (2007) proved:

- 1) teleSUR in general selects information favourable to a pro-Chávez or leftist agenda (and in particular in favour of the Bolivian and Cuban governments, and against President Bush); 2) In its coverage of elections in the Americas, teleSUR favours pro-Chávez, anti-Bush or left-wing candidates. (p. 31).

In not absolute grade, Painter (2007) discovered that “3) teleSUR in its coverage of Venezuela has a pro-Chávez bias; 4) teleSUR uses a preponderance of left-wing

analysts and commentators” (p. 31); plus that the coverage of non-sponsoring Latin American countries seems to be more plural.

Painter (2007) concluded that teleSUR is a channel with an agenda, since it is not “consistently falsifying or excessively distorting the news” (p. 52). According to Carolina Matos (email interview, April 3, 2014), this agenda “in the end serves to undermine it and encourages criticisms from market liberals against the existence of public service media as well as the more reactionary stances which have come from the US”, assimilating teleSUR as an opposite ideological to *Fox News*.

On the other side, Ignacio Ramonet (personal interview, March 15, 2014) believes that there has been a great progress on the diversity and plurality of subjects and opinions covered since teleSUR was created. Ramonet emphasizes that “teleSUR is adding a plurality element” by giving voice to social and political sectors of many countries previously excluded in a media spectrum “where it can be watched the most conservative point of view such as CNN”. However, this idea falls in the argument for the “plurality of the system” (Becerra, 2013), that is used to defend the historical media landscape in Latin America: under the pretext of coexisting different kind of media projects in the regional market, the plurality inside the public channel is avoided, “allowing an appropriation of a resource that is a patrimony of the collective society by a specific group” (p. 37). Furthermore, Francisco Guaita (Skype interview, March 3, 2014), affirms that media like teleSUR pursue a global equilibrium and not inside them offering different points of views: “they put the equilibrium in a bigger photography, in which the equilibrium has to be done with the mainstream media, that are stronger, so your weight have to be even more bigger and politicized in order to counteract them”.

Considering teleSUR as a counter-information channel and its initial aims of creative experimenting (Pignotti, 2005), the narrative forms keep being the same as mainstream media, specially as *CNN en Español*, according to Aharonian (Argemí, 2014) and Omar Rincón (Skype interview, March 12, 2014). Rincón considers that teleSUR has not explored new genres and formats as a public media should do, even more considering the creative potential of teleSUR as a regional media: “the most negative is to think that it is enough changing from content, without modifying the narrative esthetics, the formats, and the forms of doing television”. Rincón adds: “It is sadly assumed that the formats have not ideology, that the format of information is neutral; that signifies to

assume the CNN model. It is a defect from the left to think that the problem is uniquely of content”. Not in vain, the former and recognized star-anchor of *CNN en Español*, Jorge Gestoso, joined teleSUR with an own TV space (“Jorge Gestoso, antes”, 2010).

There is no proper data on co-productions among the sponsoring countries, besides the retransmissions of some Argentinean public TV programs, such as *Visión 7 Internacional* (not currently) and *Mp3 Gira Latina* (Appendix, Table A1). Omar Rincón says that the co-productions are absent and would have represented the creative soul of the channel: “the aesthetic ideal would be that each country produces its part for the channel, under the model of cooperatives” (Skype interview, March 12, 2014). “We trust the people to make a revolution, but we are not confident of their taste and entertainment: they serve us on rhetoric but not on esthetic,” adds Rincón (2013, p. 164). Moreover, former teleSUR’s General Director Aram Aharonian said that “the information is primordially reactive and dependent of the informative and political agenda dictated by the North. And that is not the blame on the imperialism, if not on who copies their models and formats” (Argemí, 2014).

Considering the principles of diversity and universality in the audience of teleSUR’s programming, it is ambitious and novel in the history of Latin American media the attempt to reach the Spanish speaking regional community, and also from the world, like the US Hispanics. Moreover, it is remarkable the news bulletin dubbed with sign language for deaf viewers, broadcasted once every weekday (Appendix, Table A1). The main audience of teleSUR consists of adults since it is basically a news channel; a fact for which teleSUR was tagged as a “zapping satellite and cable channel” against its massive coverage, by the former General Director Aram Aharonian (Argemí, 2014).

Besides that there is a lack of updated and accurate audience studies, the universal usage of teleSUR has been banned by several main cable operators, such as *Cablevisión* of *Grupo Clarín* in Argentina until early 2014 (“teleSUR amplía su”, 2014). Cuba, original sponsoring country, represents a paradigmatic case: until January 2013 it was only possible to watch three daily hours of deferred programming and, since then, it is broadcasted 13 daily hours of live programming (“teleSUR ampliará sus”, 2013).

Despite the development done in the satellite and digital distribution system of teleSUR, it still faces problems towards the universal usage by Latin Americans and Hispanics. “United States is the country that makes more difficulties to spread teleSUR, though it

boasts of being the country of speech freedom. USA considers teleSUR as a subversive channel,” affirms Ignacio Ramonet (personal interview, March 15, 2014), lamenting that teleSUR is not spread with “the same openness as CNN”. On the other hand, Omar Rincón (Skype interview, March 12, 2014) blames the initial fear provoked by teleSUR itself, promoting the channel as “the Latin American Al-Jazeera” even before being launched; instead of promoting teleSUR as “a Latin American alternative TV proposal”.

According to the biased and governmental news service observed, it can be attributed to teleSUR the “fishbowl effect” (Fuenzalida, 2013): the historical lack of audience and credibility of State media has been producing “multiple transmitters that talk to little groups in environments cultural disconnected” (p. 94), far away from meeting diverse views as public media should do. Partially in this line, it can be understood the success of teleSUR in countries such as Ecuador and Bolivia, members of the regional organism ALBA, where the channel has been registering more influence, in Guaita’s and Rincón’s opinion (Skype interview, March 3 and 12 respectively, 2014).

On the other hand, Omar Rincón (Skype interview, March 12, 2014) says that the channel “almost does not exist” in countries as Chile, Colombia, Mexico and Peru: “The rest of Latin America than ALBA’s countries does not care at all about teleSUR. They [for teleSUR] have never presented as a Latin American alternative, if not within the Latin American perspective that they see”. This reflection can be illustrated with the Brazilian case, which, in addition to the language barrier to Spanish, the national audience is greatly composed by conservative sectors who prefer to watch US channels (Carolina Matos, email interview, April 3, 2014), while “teleSUR does not do itself justice and the fact that it is seen as political ends up alienating sectors of these more conservative middle class Brazilian audiences,” explains Matos. In summary, as F. Guaita says: “in teleSUR there is music heard very differently depending on the point of view, if it is Cuban, Colombian, Argentinean, etc.” (Skype interview, March 3, 2014).

“I am sure that Latin Americans look more similar to teleSUR and that teleSUR looks more similar to Latin Americans, than others pan-regional news channels,” replied Patricia Villegas, President of teleSUR, to a question on the impact of the channel on the self-perception of inhabitants from Latin America (Respighi, 2011). The regional integration goal set by teleSUR is challenging on a territory which its diversity and vastness already challenges the common sense of identity between different national

realities. “teleSUR has to be understood as a project that presupposes the existence of a common public sphere in Latin America” (Cañizález & Lugo, 2006, p. 54). This analysis matches with the changing diversity and identity of regions (Fawcett, 2005).

The question of “who finances” teleSUR as a public media was described on the previous sections. The channel depends exclusively on States, and thus it does not receive commercial advertisements, for which it does not depend on private pressures. However, the facts have shown that teleSUR does not rely on an independent joint-State funding, since it is supported mainly by the Venezuelan Government and its national petroleum company (PDVSA). “For the first time in the history of Venezuela the earnings of petroleum are reaching the people and the surpluses have given the opportunity to promote this Latin American project of communicational integration,” said former teleSUR’s General Director Aram Aharonian (Kozloff, 2006, p. 127).

On the other hand, thanks to the direct flow of funds from Venezuelan oil sales, the channel has a substantial financing in order to be technologically updated and to cover the natural needs for a broadcaster of such magnitude. “They have an efficient management amongst the editorial dependence of the Venezuelan Government,” says Martín Becerra (Skype interview, March 4, 2014).

Additionally, teleSUR’s funding scheme is not predictable as it is suggested for public media, due to the straight ties with the petroleum prices and a specific political party in power that can be democratically and constitutionally altered in a country as it is the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. These features contribute to the short-term vision of management attributed to governmental media (Becerra, 2013) that “breaks the stability of the ‘lecture contract’ built by media with the audience” (p. 41), due to their intense changes of governance in relation to who is in power of the country. Francisco Guaita (Skype interview, March 3, 2014), believes that “when the governments have a very clear intention, the transmission axis and conductor tie brakes, from the journalistic objectives to the governmental intentions of different countries; until it is not understood that the information is a very necessary public good”.

As a consequence, the unpredictable financing of teleSUR determines how sustainable the project is in the long-term. Both Becerra and Guaita (Skype interview, March 4 and 3 respectively, 2014) affirm that the editorial line will change for sure after the democratic alternation of power in Venezuela with a different political tune with the



current administration of President Maduro, in addition to the remote possibility of disappearance of teleSUR. “If they really assume it as a Pan-American project, it could be sustainable,” adds Rincón (Skype interview, March 12, 2014), but he says that “the channel is already enough politically tied and sold to a model”. This approach denotes the grade of commitment to the success of a regionalism policy from the implied actors.

Last but not least, there is not enough public information regarding “who controls” teleSUR. Taking into account that teleSUR is a public company, there is no updated, official and proper information on the members, attributions, and lengths of charges of the Board of Directors and Advisory Council of teleSUR. However, as it was previously stated, this council is not activated. Since the channel is a public company under the domain of the Venezuelan Ministry of Communication and Information, it can be stated that teleSUR could be controlled by CONATEL (National Commission of Telecommunications), which is the regulation entity on broadcasting in Venezuela, managed by the Venezuelan Ministry of Infrastructure (Safar & Pasquali, 2006). In addition, teleSUR has an internal audit unit, in charge of the control of the internal operation, efficiency, and effectiveness (Gobierno Bolivariano de Venezuela, 2012).

According to Safar and Pasquali (2006), the CONATEL’s commission is a political and dependent authority that holds a questioned impartiality and transparency since “its president and directors are designated by the President of the Republic, which confers discretion over the performance of the Commission” (p. 92). Aram Aharonian, former General Director, criticized the participation, equilibrium and transparency of teleSUR saying that “who signs the checks and manages the funds coming from the Government of Venezuela has the unique word, although there is some representative of other country in an almost imaginary directory” (Argemí, 2014). In the same line, Martín Becerra (Skype interview, March 4, 2014) affirms that the rest of the sponsoring countries, as well as potentials, do not have any involvement, “neither voice nor vote”.

As a conclusion, it has been shown that the UNESCO (2001) principles of public media regarding universality, diversity, independence and distinctiveness are partially fulfilled. On the one hand, teleSUR registers positive features, such as the goal to address to a wide audience as Latin America, the reflection of minorities and social movements, the independence from commercial pressures, and the creation of a regional joint public novel voice different from mainstream media. On the other hand, teleSUR seems to

interact mainly with a loyal segmented audience, it does not risk on new formats and genres, it has a financial and editorial dependence on one specific Government, and it does not differentiate from previous State initiatives under the veil of public media.

Dr. Martín Becerra, Argentinean expert in communication policies in Latin America, would define teleSUR as a State media, with “a very militant editorial line inclined to Venezuela”. However, he praises the original particularity and novelty of a joint-State financed media in Latin America; attributing to this feature “the difficulty of classifying teleSUR due to its novelty as experience”, acquiring thus a lot of value and importance (Skype interview, March 4, 2014). Becerra adds that the channel “does not represent Latin Americans, but it is a Latin American voice that it did not exist before”. He warns that teleSUR does not fulfill at all the standards of public media proposed by literature, such as relative autonomy to political power. Furthermore, Becerra says that “teleSUR is as controversial as Al-Jazeera, CNN, and TVE from Spain”.

Dr. Carolina Matos, Brazilian academic in Latin American media and communication, agrees that teleSUR does not follow in overall the principles and practices proposed by UNESCO (2001) to public media (email interview, April 3, 2014), since the channel has not followed “PSB remits and obligations regarding objectivity, impartiality and balance”. Otherwise, she remarks it “would be more respected and less open to criticism from the market media”, as well as, teleSUR would have contributed to the “ongoing and fragile process of democratization at Latin America”, in which several countries of the region are “seeking to fortify their public media platform”, such as Brazil with EBC.

Omar Rincón, Colombian researcher in television and communication in Latin America, affirms that teleSUR is a governmental media, and that “it should not be ashamed about that category since public media does not exist even at developed countries, where what still remains is a kind of poor imitation of the public” (Skype interview, March 12, 2014). He stresses that it is more coherent to assume for what they are –“to defend the agenda of the Government; having thus the possibility to adequately evaluate the governmental television in function to the national model/plan/project of development to be pursued by the Government”. More radical, Rincón describes UNESCO’s (2001) principles as “purist and criteria of good will, because they do not serve to evaluate the public television since they are standards of content”; while Rincón considers that the problem of television is narrative, of formats and esthetics.

## 8) CONCLUSIONS

The several conceptions and understandings of teleSUR confirms another time that the European model of public television is not replicated everywhere and that other worst or better models of television are possible. If it is already challenging the development of public media at a national level, even more it is at a regional scale. However, it results adequate to understand teleSUR as a regional project considering how it has been reflecting the initial and/or further commitment by several State and non-State actors towards a concrete, original and novel regionalism process and policy, in tune with the emerging political landscape from Latin America and needs from social actors after the influential consequences provoked by the neoliberal regime adopted in the region.

In line with the boom in 2006 of 24-hour news channels funded by States (Painter, 2007), the emergence of teleSUR in the Latin American and world media market has been arousing such an interest since its launch in July 2005 due to the uniqueness of teleSUR: a regional project of news television channel purely financed by more than five Latin American countries, with aims of public broadcasting service, which seeks the integration and identity-building of the region by offering a different voice to mainstream media. As it was analyzed along this thesis, the lack of match between the official identifications of teleSUR as a regional public media and what it is worldwide understood to be public broadcasting (UNESCO, 2001), it has been creating a challenging and interesting phenomenon of this regional television channel.

On the one hand, teleSUR has been praised for enabling another voice on the region offering a different perspective on Latin American and world current affairs; for creating a news agenda that has re-signified the meaning of diversity by giving space to social sectors historically marginalized and/or misrepresented by mainstream media; for developing a extensive coverage and journalistic network within Latin America; for defending democracy at several turbulent sociopolitical episodes on the region; and for its recognized and fast development as an emerging channel with eight years of existence. Moreover, it is quite symbolical the realization of a regional project in which the formal members do not share borders as a united single block. Also, teleSUR represents the materialization of a Latin American project conceived by Hugo Chávez and currently operative, in contrast to other “asleep” and/or “slow” regional processes

ideated by former Venezuelan President, such as the Bank of the South, the Grand Gas Pipeline of the South, and *Petroamérica* (Kozloff, 2008).

On the other hand, teleSUR has been criticized for being directly tied to the Venezuelan Government in relation to its governance, financing and editorial line; and for breaking with that initial aim of regional and independent public broadcasting service. Although, the leadership of Venezuela in teleSUR replicates a common feature of regionalisms, as it is the emergence of strong States with power-related interests (Fawcett, 2005). However, the long-term sustainability of teleSUR is put in doubt due to its dependence on the “petro-diplomacy” performed by Chávez and Maduro to develop regional causes aligned to the “21<sup>st</sup> Century Socialism” and the “Bolivarian Revolution”, thanks to the high revenues received by the Venezuelan petroleum company PDVSA (Kozloff, 2006). Moreover, teleSUR is criticized for neither developing new and creative formats, nor for addressing to a diverse and genuine Latin American audience.

Consequently, what was found along this thesis is an identity problem of teleSUR as a public television channel and as a regional project. After eight operative years, it would be appropriate to ask as a reflection if the North’s of teleSUR keeps being the South. If what they care is the coverage of Latin America through a diverse and plural view or through one narrative view as mainstream media usually does. If the channel’s programming, genres and formats represent the creative and diverse identity of Latin Americans; or they stimulate the centralization of content production, and the traditional practices and programming performed by Northern media. If teleSUR is developed, managed and governed as a regional or as national public media company. In other words, the question would be if the North of teleSUR, what it is appointing, keeps being the realization, self-awareness, development and integration of the South.

Regarding this identity problem, it can be distinguished two alternatives for teleSUR in order to gain more credibility and reputation as a news channel. One of them is to appeal for the initial aims of regional public TV channel (currently supported by the institutional communication of teleSUR), and consolidate its programming, editorial line, and governance in relation to what is expected from a media of such nature. The second option is to claim to be a governmental counter-information TV news channel (alike Russia Today), supported by the Government of Venezuela and joint-State minor partners; fostering the goal to defend national interests with a regional extrapolation to

Latin America. By this way, teleSUR does not have to stick to all the implications that take to be a public media, even more, regional. Consequently, the channel would carry a clear “label” of who it is and not any veil for hiding of. Moreover, as Omar Rincón says (Skype interview, March 12, 2014), calling teleSUR a governmental media would imply taking out the purist pressures from the public broadcasting conception.

Meanwhile, despite teleSUR has a performance more similar to the second option, the channel keeps in the attempt of being a regional public media. This status is proved under the several official statements, as well as, under the channel’s vision provided in its website. “teleSUR is the public sector. But it is a very particular public sector, since a single country has not the control,” says Ignacio Ramonet, member of teleSUR’s Advisory Council (personal interview, March 15, 2014).

Furthermore, this attempt to be a regional public media is related to conceiving teleSUR as a process in which it is not few what has been done until now after eight years of operative existence: it developed a joint State-funded TV news channel in a region that was lacking a similar experience; it achieved the most extensive network of correspondents on the region; it has broken the leadership of *CNN en Español* as the unique regional news channel; it has been presented at tense sociopolitical episodes that pose a risk to regional democracies; it developed a digital multimedia platform; and it will expand with an English brother channel in July 2014.

At a glance, the main problems to be faced by teleSUR along this process ahead seem to be its funding and representation. For achieving a substantial, independent and predictable financing, it would be suitable for the channel to pursue a real commitment to regularize the financial participation by the already sponsoring countries; an equal shareholding distribution among the parts; the commercialization of in-house content productions without the necessity to sold them massively; and/or the participation of a third actor neither private nor State, like UNASUR (Union of South American Nations).

Regarding the representation, it is assumed that the aim of teleSUR is to achieve the legal membership from most of the Latin American and Caribbean countries. This desire would go hand in hand with conceiving teleSUR as an autarchic communication organism of UNASUR, taking into account the structural and institutional development of this regional organization from Latin America. Also, in this sense it can be understood teleSUR as a regionalism process open to new members. In parallel, it

would be necessary a more accountable joint-State governance and the reactivation of the Advisory Council. These methods would enhance the evaluation and control of the running of teleSUR as a regional public media, giving it more credibility.

In spite of the achievements of teleSUR to date, the channel is still missing a vital opportunity in its attempt of being a regional public media: to break with the lack of tradition of public broadcasting in Latin America, where the media financed by States have been generally ending as a mouthpiece controlled by Governments in power. Consequently, it was corroborated an initial genuine attempt of teleSUR to cover this goal, such as the statements provided by former executives; but apparently it was not fulfilled, as it was proved along the section of the controversy about the channel. On the other hand, it is remarkable that if teleSUR had not been created, the region would not have developed a public joint-State television channel with the magnitude of teleSUR.

It is clear that if teleSUR had avoided simple controversial facts as its first studios headquarters next to VTV (to not say Caracas) and its first President who was also a Venezuelan Minister, teleSUR would have been more respected as a regional public channel. In the end, these points have been showing who has been mainly financing the development of the project. In the same line, if there had been enough updated public information on the channel as a public company, it would not have been so criticized teleSUR's performance. Despite all these facts, it does not mean that it is late or impossible for teleSUR to make a substantial change towards a genuine public news TV channel. Taking into account that the supposed impartiality and "objectivity" claimed by Latin American private media has been also questioned; the attention is concentrated naturally in public media since it is mainly financed with citizens' contributions.

Considering the milestone achieved as the first regional news television channel purely financed by more than five countries, the debate over the phenomenon of teleSUR has been challenging a traditional concept as public broadcasting and has been reflecting that there are other ways of regional identity and integration-building in Latin America. The time ahead and the political sustainability of the channel will prove how effective it is as a policy and process of the Latin American integration, as well as, a plural democratic meeting space of Latin American citizens.

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## 10) APPENDIX

### Appendix A

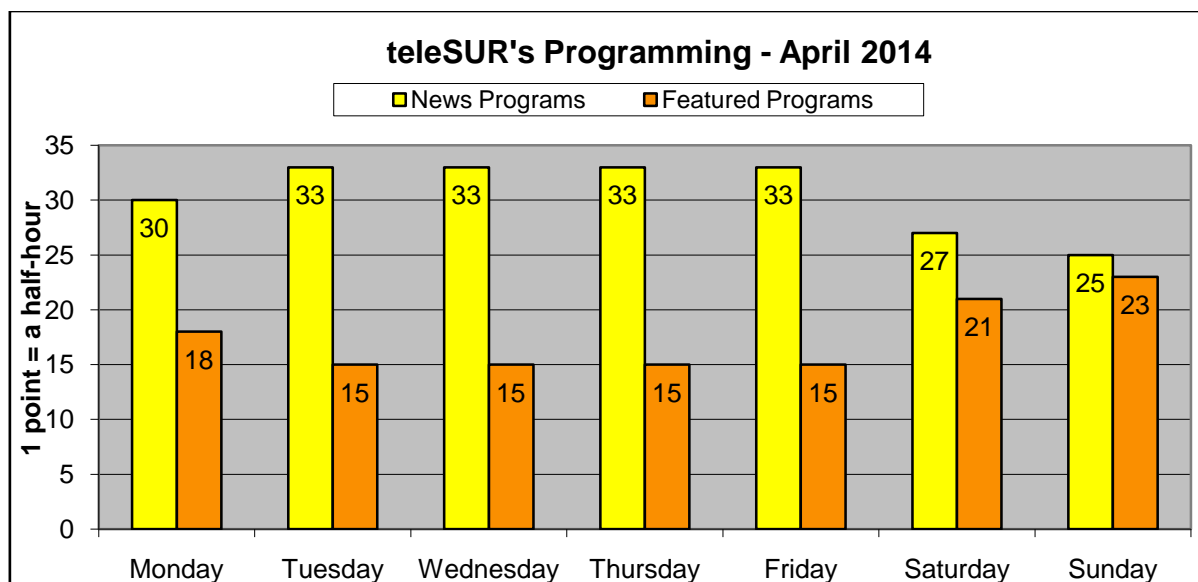


Figure A1. Distribution of news and featured programs in the programming of teleSUR scheduled for April 2014. Source: teleSUR (2014). *Programación*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from <http://www.telesurtv.net/programacion>

News programs (12): *Conexión Digital*; *Conexión Global*; *Deportes teleSUR*; *Edición Central*; *El Mundo Hoy*; *Goles al Bate*; *Impacto Económico*; *Nuestramérica Deportiva*; *Síntesis*; *teleSUR Lenguaje De Señas*; *teleSUR Noticias*; *Temas del Día*. Approximate average of coverage: 64% of the programming (15.5 hours per day), 68% during weekdays (16 hours per day), 54% during the weekend (13 hours per day).

Featured programs (21): *Atomun*; *Causa Justa*; *Congénero*; *Cruce de Palabras*; *Documentales*; *Dossier*; *Entre Fronteras*; *Guía tu Cuerpo*; *Maestra Vida*; *Mesa Redonda Internacional*; *Mestizo*; *Mp3 Gira Latina*; *NAD Mundo Especial Fútbol*; *No Son Tuits, Son Historias*; *Programa especial*; *Realidades*; *Reportajes teleSUR*; *USA de Verdad*; *Vidas*; *Voces de Cambio*; *Zona Verde*. Approximate average of coverage: 36% of the programming (8.5 hours per day), 32% during weekdays (8 hours per day), 46% during the weekend (11 hours per day).

**teleSUR's Programming - April 2014**

News Prog.	Featured Prog.
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Source: TeleSUR (2014). *Programación*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from <http://www.telesurtv.net/programacion>

	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
00.00	Vidas	Atomun	Guía tu Cuerpo	Zona Verde	Entre Fronteras	Congénero	Síntesis
00.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
01.00	Causa Justa	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico
01.30	N. Mundo Esp.	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	N. Mundo Esp.
02.00	Mp3 Gira Lat.	Conex. Digital	Conex. Digital	Conex. Digital	Deportes TS	Conex. Digital	Mp3 Gira Lat.
02.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
03.00	Reportajes TS	USA de verdad	Causa Justa	Reportajes TS	Realidades	Cruce Palabras	Mestizo
03.30	TS Noticias	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	TS Noticias
04.00	Goles al Bate	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS
04.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
05.00	Realidades	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Mp3 Gira Lat.
05.30	Reportajes TS						Causa Justa
06.00	Entre Fronteras	Cruce Palabras	Causa Justa	Reportajes TS	Realidades	Atomun	Guía tu Cuerpo
06.30	El Mundo Hoy	El Mundo Hoy	El Mundo Hoy	El Mundo Hoy	El Mundo Hoy	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
07.00						Mestizo	Im. Económico
07.30						Guía tu Cuerpo	Síntesis
08.00						Goles al Bate	Goles al Bate
08.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
09.00	Atomun	Guía tu Cuerpo	Zona Verde	Entre Fronteras	Congénero	Zona Verde	Vidas
09.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	Síntesis	Síntesis
10.00	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Congénero
10.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
11.00	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS
11.30	Conex. Global	Conex. Global	Conex. Global	Conex. Global	Conex. Global	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
12.00						Mp3 Gira Lat.	Guía tu Cuerpo
12.30	Conex. Digital	Conex. Digital	Conex. Digital	Conex. Digital	Conex. Digital	Maestra Vida	Vidas
13.00	Voces Cambio	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Síntesis
13.30							Realidades
14.00	Vidas	Atomun	Guía tu Cuerpo	Zona Verde	Entre Fronteras	Síntesis	Mp3 Gira Lat.
14.30	TS Len. Señas	TS Len. Señas	TS Len. Señas	TS Len. Señas	TS Len. Señas	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
15.00	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	N. Mundo Esp.	N. Mundo Esp.
15.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
16.00	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Síntesis
16.30	Temas del Día	Temas del Día	Temas del Día	Temas del Día	Temas del Día	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
17.00	Cruce Palabras	USA de verdad	Cruce Palabras	Reportajes TS	Realidades	Maestra Vida	Vidas
17.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
18.00	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS
18.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	Reportajes TS	Prog. especial
19.00	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	Im. Económico	
19.30	Edición Central	Edición Central	Edición Central	Edición Central	Edición Central	TS Noticias	
20.00						Mestizo	
20.30	Cruce Palabras	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	Deportes TS	
21.00	USA de verdad	Causa Justa	Reportajes TS	Realidades	Cruce Palabras	Documentales	Voces Cambio
21.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
22.00	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	Mesa Red. Int.	NA Deportiva	NA Deportiva
22.30	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias	TS Noticias
23.00	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Dossier	Mp3 Gira Lat.	No son tuits...
23.30						Cruce Palabras	Realidades

Table A1. Programming of teleSUR scheduled for April 2014, classified under news and featured programs. Source: teleSUR (2014). *Programación*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from <http://www.telesurtv.net/programacion>



## Appendix B

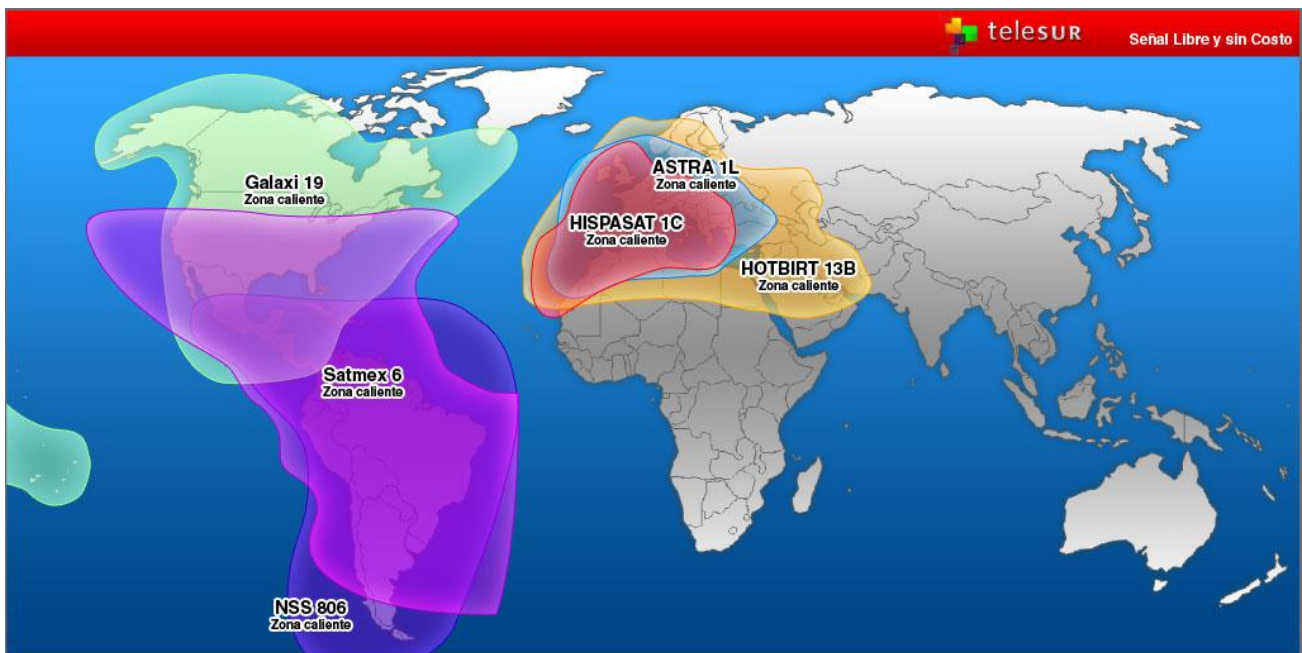


Figure B1. Satellite distribution and coverage of teleSUR. Source: teleSUR (2014). *El canal: Cobertura satelital*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from <http://www.telesurtv.net/el-canal/cobertura-satelital>



Figure B2. Cable and DTH distribution of teleSUR. Source: teleSUR (2014). *El canal: Distribución*. Retrieved April 10, 2014, from <http://www.telesurtv.net/el-canal/distribucion>