An action research process in the Ecuadorian Andean highlands. Radio Runacunapac and Radio Salinerito: when scarcity prevents the community[1]

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Abstract

This paper shows the results obtained after an action research process carried out over four years through two case studies in the Ecuadorian Andean highlands, Radio Runacunapac and Radio Salinerito. This tour was based on an initial exploration, planning and implementation of a training action and the evaluation of how these stations have changed throughout this period. We could then to verify the Organic Law of Communication (LOC) in 2013 initiated many possibilities recognizing radios as community media but these possibilities remained mainly on paper. Radio Runacunapac and Radio Salinerito got, indeed, recognition as community broadcasters but without programming changes. Two conclusions are derived: on the one hand, relationships between broadcaster and community are maintained over time but fail to foster the dialogue of the "common". On the other hand, roles and communication schemes typical of local private radios with musical and entertainment content are reproduced.
Keywords: community radios. participatory communication. social change. community media. radio programming.

Introduction

The origins of this research go back to 2014, when the Organic Law of Communication (LOC) gave a brave step ahead reserving the 34% of the radio-electrical spectrum for

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1   English version by Mabel Sampedro.

community radios. We did then a first prospection in Region 5 in Ecuador, to learn about private and public radio stations pursuing to become community radios. The first area of research can be observed in the map.

Figure 1 –

Region 5 in Ecuador (in blue color) covers an area of 33.916 km2, a 13% of the national territory (SENPLADES, 2015). It comprises 5 provinces (Guayas, Los Ríos, Santa Elena, Bolívar and Galápagos), placed in three natural regions (Costa, Sierra and Insular). According to the last census (INEC, 2010), it has a population of 2,286,782 inhabitants.

That was the time of a dream, the dream of those who considered community radios as a tool to give community a voice for its demands. Now, reality prevails: those stations, which had been legally recognized as community radios, are now limited to offer program models similar to private local media, due to economic limitations, rather than developing programs to and from their communities.

In 2012, Ecuador, together with Colombia, Bolivia and Peru (the Andean Community), proposed a strategy based on their identity as a regional value. In that moment, whilst in Ecuador the current law was taking shape, the Andean Community understood communication as a

form of integration and a space for dialogue. During the commemorative congress celebrating the Latin American Association for Radiophonic Education's 40th anniversary (ALER, for its initials in Spanish), this concept was described (ALER, 2012, p. 85).

Thirty years earlier, Freire (2012) understood that mass media could not offer a liberating communication since he considered them as elites' oppression vehicles. Freire (2012, p. 171) established a dichotomy between antidialogics and dialogics as "matrices of opposing theories of cultural action". This dualism can be applied to the essence of community media versus mass media. The dialogic relationship that should characterize community media is based on collaboration, union, organization and, ultimately, cultural synthesis. For this, radio is the ideal media to generate participation and collaboration processes inside a community. This happens because it is a low-cost technology easy to implement, both for broadcasting or receiving messages. It is appropriate for environments where populations are dispersed, in scattered towns, especially in the rural Andean Mountains or in the Galapagos islands.

In this paper, we intend to understand how community media is built in our country, analyzing their programming and contents as a reflection of their relationships with the community. The results obtained confirm the limitations of the media, but the novelty here is the research process itself, made from 2014 to 2018, bringing together Freire's (2012) scientific research and action. This pathway began with a research on the public and private radios which intended to become community radios with the LOC of 2013[2]. The scenario detected in 2014 was the basis for creating the Master´s Degree in Communication in Public and Community Media, which began in 2016 in the State University of Milagro (UNEMI, for its initials in Spanish) to train professionals for that kind of media. A third phase began four years later, in 2017, with a new research focusing on two historical stations: Radio Runacunapac and Radio Salinerito[3], which became considered as community radios. The vision we share in this paper comes from all this experience, together with the research project made on programming contents and production.

Theoretical framework

Community communication means processes. It is a two-way communication: the communication established by a community with itself and the dialogue it must keep with the others. It deals with the communication about people, their daily tasks, their culture, their jobs or their political and health issues. It has to do with their daily living.

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2   This work is developed between 2014 and early 2018 and is based in the regulatory framework provided by the Organic Law of Communication approved in 2013. It has been amended throughout 2018 under President Lenín Moreno. There are still pending amendments.

3   These radio stations are located in the rural context of Bolivar province, in the Andean Mountains. Radio Salinerito is located in Salinas canton and Radio Runacunapac in Simiatug. Radio Salinerito works on one of the solidarity economy projects led by the Salesian Family Foundation whilst Radio Runacunapac is located in a neighbor canton where 91% of the population is at poverty level, with unsatisfied basic needs (INEC, 2010).

The results alternate go from a reality of community gaps to the hope of obtaining resources to implement outcomes that facilitate and develop their implementation. To discover those gaps, first, we need to analyze the so-called "must-be" of community communication and consequently, community media. This must-be comes from a theoretical reflection as well as from the Ecuadorian legislation.

The Organic Law of Communication established in its article 85 the concept of community media based on three axes: ownership, administration and management, when they belong to "nonprofit associations or social organizations, communes, communities, villages and nationalities" [translated quotation]. According to the Law, these media must be nonprofit and with social profitability.

In that moment, three articles (12, 13 and 38) of the Law defined "who" should foster citizen participation. Article 12 established the principle of democratization of communication and information. This article ensures the State institutions create the material, juridical and political conditions needed to generate media and spaces for participation. Next article, 13th, defined the principle of participation, specifying "who" must ensure citizen participation in the communication processes: on one side, authorities and public employees; on the other side, the media themselves. Article 38 established the ways citizens may organize themselves in order to "stress the management of media and to monitor full compliance of communication rights by any media" [translated quotation].

Thus, the law centered in those who could be owners, administrators or managers of community media. That capacity was given to social groups or organizations. In other words, the law defined the community media according to "who" and not to "how", although the processes themselves give identity to community communication and therefore to community media. Participation mainly means process and building of citizenship as political subjects. "It involves control and decision-making possibilities. Also, it means that individuals and communities engage and implement their development proposals" (LARREA; LARREA; LEIVA, 2005, p. 23) [translated quotation].

Community-based does not only relates to population who share a specific physical or emotional space but, according to Marchioni (2012), it means that community plays the leading role of the process. Key authors in community communication agree when recognizing participation as the pillar of these communicative processes. Luis Ramiro Beltrán is probably the best representative. He identifies Latin America as "the most fertile, courageous, creative and brave region in the world, in terms of transformation in communication" (BRAUN, 2014, p. 80) [translated quotation]. Democratizing communication and maintaining the required participative approach "contribute to give people the power to decide" (GUMUCIO, 2001) [translated quotation]. Participatory communication reinforces social fabric and strengthens historically marginalized identities. On the other side, the Ecuadorian Forum of Communication (2013) states the aim of the community media is to foster "expression, incidence and active participation of nationalities, indigenous people, Afro-Ecuadorians, montubios and other popular sectors of the Plurinational and Intercultural State" [translated

quotation]. In fact, both their organization and their programming are defined with the community participation.

The participatory process is based on relationships, one of the basic fundamentals to create community. For Peruzzo (2002), a community-based lifestyle means detecting bonds, reciprocities and collective identities. The author identifies several qualities as inherent to communities, like active participation, compromise, sense of belonging or identity. Similarly, Paiva (2007) focuses on community more than a collective of subjects. It is about the relationships between those subjects.

Making a historical review on the development of community media in Latin America, it becomes apparent that these media have been designed as a lifeline to minimize social inequalities and to guarantee pluralism. During the first decade of the new century, this speech is accompanied by Correa policies on Well Being. They are based on the reconstruction of public spaces after the consequences of decades of neoliberalism: "massive privatizations and an increasing concentration of media" (ALONSO; FRUTOS GARCÍA; GALARZA, 2015, p. 10-11) [translated quotation]. After the approval of the LOC, the boom of community media was the answer to the previous hegemony of private media which belonged to Ecuador business and banking corporations. According to Simpson (1981), community media emerge as a response to two possible scenarios: a determined national structure of information and communication and the domination of political and cultural elites.

The history of community radios in Ecuador is scarce (GALÁN MONTESDEOCA, 2015) and has not reached the development of other Latin American countries due to the hegemony of private media in the country (CHECA-GODOY, 2012). The birth of community media has been intimately linked to Catholic Church since the 1960s, and to the Popular Radiophonic Workshops (in Spanish: Escuelas Radiofónicas Populares (ERPE, for its initials in Spanish)) leaded by Monsignor Leónidas Proaño. They had a double objective: literacy and evangelization (CERBINO; BELOTTI, 2016). In the 1970s ALER, the Latin American Association for Radiophonic Education is born and in the 1980s several radio stations like Radio Latacunga (Cotopaxi), Radio Cultural Católica (Esmeraldas) and Radio La Voz de Ingapirca (Cañar) become symbols of both evangelical and catholic churches. These radio stations played an important role during the indigenous claims of that period. In fact, there is an evolution from the initial educational purpose to a more activist character, showed by ERPE's support to the indigenous population's insurrections in the 1990s (ÁVALOS, 2017). In that decade, the Coordinator of Popular and Educative Radios of Ecuador (CORAPE, for its initials in Spanish) was born, playing a leader role since then among the country's community radios.

Despite the progress made in the 1960s, little research has been made on community media (CERBINO, 2018). Ecuador was historically considered as one of the countries with fewer studies about communication in Latin America. Nevertheless, it has become an experimentation lab for the last ten years (CHECA GODOY, 2012). After LOC's approval, there was an explosion of works and analysis in communication, being community

communication main research topics for postgraduate studies. Most of these research projects were centered in classic radio stations, with greater historical background, often linked to Church. They analyze the prosperity of those kinds of stations in connection with their link to community (CERBINO; BELOTTI, 2016, ÁVILA, 2017, DÁVILA, 2018…). However, in our research, we tried to highlight the weaknesses of these media regarding their contents and programming due to a lack of resources (TAMARIT; CEVALLOS; YÉPEZ, 2015).

Methodology

The methodology used in this work has been developed for four years and follows the parameters established by Freire (2012) and Lewin (1946) when they proposed research as a four-stage process: problem analysis, planning, action and assessment. They search a type of science which places intellectual sources at the service of human being. These four stages were used in our work in a timeline which began in 2014 and ended in 2018. Our common macro target has been the analysis of programming and contents of local radio stations in 2014, either public or private, that eventually became community radios. The specific objective was the development of research-action process focusing on the radio contents, framing them inside community participatory processes. This specific objective was likewise divided into the following aims: exploring the stations' initial shortcomings; planning of an intervention process; the intervention itself and the analysis of the evolution of the radios' programming in the last four years.

A quantitative and qualitative research was performed during the first stage. The quantitative part consisted of data gathering on the radios existing in Region 5 in Ecuador, both public and private. All provinces in the region and every single canton were covered. A mapping of existing local radio stations was performed. This search allowed us to register: 1) local media existing in the area; 2) its name or identification; 3) its public or private nature[4]; and 4) its programming.

At that time the processes for the stations to become community were at the beginning. The qualitative research was centered in these last radio stations: seven radios, five of them of private nature and two public. The two public radios were Radio Runacunapac and Radio Isabela. The five privates were Radio Salinerito, Radio La Paz, Radio La Voz de Galápagos, Radio Santa Cruz and Radio Surcos. These seven radio stations are located in the Bolivar province and the Galapagos Islands. In-depth interviews were carried out to media directors and those responsible for programming. 62 questions were made in six different sections: from identification and ownership to content development, budgetary issues and relationships with the community.

This first stage´s results were already published (TAMARIT; CEVALLOS; YÉPEZ, 2014). Thus, we could diagnose the main problems of these media, whose origin is the lack

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4   At that time, March 2014, LOC had been recently approved so the tender for community media had not taken place yet.

of resources. This leads to the lack of staff to develop contents and therefore, they offer a radio programming with little participation from the community.

This was the basis for the second stage of the process: planning of long-term actions to solve those weaknesses detected in the media which wanted to become community. In this context, the Research Group on Communication, Community and Social Change developed a master degree in a public university of the same region: The Universidad Estatal de Milagro. The aim of the master´s degree was to educate students in the community and mediation processes as well as search for resources to favor media development by and for communities. The Master´s Degree in Communication in Public and Community Media began in January of 2016. Its program emphasized on broadcasters' training and, especially, on training a professional profile prepared for mediation in communities. This can be checked in the project approved by the Council for the Evaluation, Accreditation and Quality Assurance of Higher Education (CEAACES, for its initials in Spanish, currently CACES) in 2015.

The third stage took place between June 2017 and February 2018. It developed the action with the communities, establishing relationships between Academy and those radio stations which had been recognized as community radios by the Administration. Several agreements were executed between radio stations, like Radio Runacunapac, at Simiatug and Radio Salinerito at Salinas de Guaranda, where relationships with the community were established in order to adapt programming to the citizens' needs on communication and information. We worked with the communities for five months and eventually, a second round of in-depth interviews was carried out. They were based on the same framework of 2014, so there was a new approach on the radios' situation, four years after their initial study and after having been recognized as community radios. These two stations, located in the Ecuadorian Andean highlands, in the province of Bolívar, have been analyzed as case studies for this paper.

The fourth and last stage of this article was the assessment of the outputs. It was centered in the analysis of the data gathered during this process, considering the evolution of the stations between 2014 and 2018 as well as the relationship established with their communities through their programming. This compromise also "involves researchers as part of the community in the knowledge and tool exchange with the communities, inside the communities" (MARTÍNEZ, 2012, p. 26) [translated quotation].

Results

The results obtained in this action-research process allow an analysis of the weaknesses of community media in their participatory processes to generate broadcast contents. Conclusions will be exposed sequenced according to the different stages of the action-research process: initial research in 2014; planning in 2016; action in 2017 and outcome assessment in 2018.

Detecting needs

The radiography obtained in 2014 revealed precarious media, which shared their limited benefits from a reduced local advertising market. At that moment, some private and public radio stations in Region 5 expected to become community for two reasons: the programming contents they wanted to do and to reduce the rental costs of their frequencies. Also, they expected to include institutional advertising, as the LOC already set. The weakness of these media was demonstrated in their little capacity for producing contents of their own[5].

Broadcasting time slots did not cover the whole day and the programming was mainly musical, with some news bulletins, mostly in the early morning. At best, broadcasting lasted 16 hours, only if the technical conditions allowed it. The informational strips were led by network disconnections with CORAPE and ALER.

The non-stop music contents covered most of the broadcasting contents. In addition to music contents, self-developed programs, like news, debates or entertainment programs were scarce and involved great effort.

> When we talk about own production, we mean 60%, including news and music programming. The other 40% is distributed as follows: 30% of CORAPE, which at the same time obtains contents from a network of community radios in Holland, from radio Nederland and 10% from ALER (Manuel Yanchaliquín, director of Radio Runacunapac, interviewed in 2014).

In 2014, the radio stations expected to become community radios. This dream was focused in the relationships with the community via radio programming. With the support of Italian volunteers, Marcelo Allauca, manager of Radio Salinerito, designed then a varied programming based on contents for different population sectors of the region. Thanks to the presence of international volunteering, they began developing "diverse programing: educational programs, children programs, gender programs (conducted by our colleagues at TEXSAL[6], motivation programs, 5-6-minute micro-programs, nutrition programs or environmental programs" (interview with Marcelo Allauca, manager of Radio Salinerito, 2014) [translated quotation]. However, this project did not last, as a consequence of the shortness of voluntary collaborations.

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5   We understand own production as those contents developed by any person working or collaborating with the media. According to the concept used by the community media mangers, we also consider as own contents the organization, selection and broadcasting of non-stop music. Current software allows programming music in advanced.

6   TexSal is an entrepreneurship project centered in the international commercialization of handcraft textile products made in Salinas de Guaranda.

Training for the transformative action

The second phase involved the planning and implementation of a master´s degree specialized in public and community media. The aim was to provide communicators with expertise to intervene in communities, to generate spaces to foster the democratization of the word and to give a voice to populations with less access to mass media. The fourth-level program focused on intervention and mediation processes in the communities. This was a novelty inside the fourth academic level offered until then in Ecuador. It began in January 2016 with almost forty students and a clear objective. According to the program approved in 2015 by the National Secretary of Higher Education, Science, Technology and Innovation, they sought:

> the necessary coordination between communication, journalism and social mediation, pursued by the Social Change; this coordination is encouraged by the recent state policy in different frameworks: territorial, production renewal, and specially the search of gender equality and the best opportunities of the citizens and diversity inside communities.

The research stage put into evidence the absence of communication professionals in community radios. None of the stations in Region 5 which intended to become community had media professionals, except for those volunteer graduate students. In many cases, these radio stations moved forward with the efforts of volunteers who got some technical training by CORAPE. There was not a professional profile in the whole country that combined both specialized training in communication and community mediation.

According to the data provided then by the Council for the Regulation and Development of Information and Communication (CORDICOM, for its initials in Spanish), only 29% of the 5,619 workers on communication in the country had a university degree or were studying one. The 61% did not have a professional degree. However, 97% of those devoted to communication would like to have a professional degree. Namely, 361 people wished to obtain training and a certification as program coordinators of community media and 566 as producers and directors of contents of community media.

Back to the communities

In 2017, direct action begins in the communities. The first professionals of the master´s degree began working with different populations, like the communities of Salinas de Guaranda and Simiatug, where Radio Salinerito and Radio Runacunapac are located. During five months in these communities of the Andean highlands, their interaction began with a first observation of the relationships between the media and the community and the contacts with associations and groups. Afterwards, they established their communication needs.

At that moment, Radio Salinerito and Radio Runacunapac had already been recognized as community media, so they had to develop a specific programming for the purpose. Nevertheless, they continued with earlier routines as if they were local private media. In other words, the community programming was just worthless scraps of paper.

> From my point of view, programming is not what a community radio should do. In fact, private media normally do this programming in their villages. I work for private media so I understand how they work. In community media, programming should be developed by the community. At Radio Runacunapac, the radio director and his colleagues do the programming. They go out and look for interviews but the interviews look like those made in the private media (Karina Perreros, collaborator at Radio Runacunapac; student from the Master´s Degree in Communication in Public and Community Media; interviewed in 2017).

> The lack of relationship with the community is obvious, particularly for the absence of transport, since the population is highly dispersed in this region. In the radio there are generic contents but they do not work with the community and this leads to the lack of identity among Salinas inhabitants (María Teresa Flores and Maryuri García, collaborators at Radio Salinerito and students from the Communication Master Degree).

Measuring the travelled way

The assessment of this four-year process was made at the beginning of 2018. The results obtained in this stage allow us to reach the conclusions shown at the end of this paper. For this, in-depth interviews were again used, both with directors and those responsible for the radio programming, together with the review of the programming itself.

We must clarify that the assessment is not just made on the intervention stage but mainly on the process started in 2014 and on the situation highlighted in 2018. By now, we have not included the evaluation of the intervention in the community through the training courses of the master´s degree since it is a long-term process which makes the intervention difficult to be assessed.

The most evident change is the increase of the media broadcasting time slots, in direct relation with their economic capacity. Both Radio Salinerito and Radio Runacunapac broadcasting time slots have increased from 16 hours in 2014 to finally a full 24-hour day. Thus, great effort has been made to offer the audience a constant presence. This is one of the characteristics and differentiating features of the radio as media.

Broadcasting 24 hours makes them equal to competitors and makes them a constant company for people in the region. This reinforces their identity against other private radios and, at the same time, it makes population feel there is a community radio of their own, generating closeness with their listeners during the whole day. Due to its inner features, the radio provides proximity and a sensation of connection with the community which is important in a rural environment like Salinas and Simiatug. In the heart of the Andean highlands, these villages have an isolated population due to the territory characteristics to the economic reasons that pressures them to migrate.

This temporal closeness is also identified to a spatial proximity. Today, this closeness is shown in social media[7], with short texts listeners send to the different radio stations in the country. Their intention is to ask for music, greet their relatives, and express their demands or homesickness, as we can see in the following examples, published in Radio Runacunapac website:

> Greetings to my beloved mother and sisters in Punta Urco… Hello from Latacunga (Jose Chimborazo).
>
> A special greeting to the nice audience of.... Hello from Quito, Ecuador to the whole Tixilema family in Papaloma community. Blessings. Please, a song by Ángel Guaraca, "dear mother" (madricita qrd, in Spanish) (Luis Tixilema).
>
> Hi Mr. President of FECAB, can you tell something about what's been done about the indigenous justice? (Ángel Ayme).

In Radio Runacunapac and Radio Salinerito, news programs are concentrated in the first three hours of the day, from five in the morning, when farmers leave home to work until half past eight. This means 12.5% of the total broadcasting period, with no significant changes through the day. In this morning section, local information is still combined to news provided by CORAPE and ALER, mainly national news from the first and international from the second. The rest of the time, programs are mainly non-stop music, with some occasional presenter to remind the hour or introduce the songs. Likewise, this broad music programming is sometimes arbitrarily stopped to offer an interview or to live broadcast some administrative or political event.

Although community media are nonprofit and do not aim economic profit, they suffer from the same weaknesses of private media: lack of resources. Nowadays, both private local media and community media compete for the same advertising piece of cake. Although community media are nonprofit, they have to be sustainable to guarantee their survival. The programming strategy is conditioned by the same factors: scarce resources, directly related

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7   Earlier, the listeners' closeness was shown through their own voices in telephone calls. With the current technological development, the listener' voice disappears and the presenter becomes the mediator of personal messages sent by the listeners.

to lack of staff. Their solutions are the same: information of poor journalistic elaboration and preloaded music, since it is the most economic resource[8].

The same difficulties prevail in this stage in terms of programming and relationship with the community. Broadcasting hours increase until the whole day is covered, but they fail to develop a real community programming, in response to the community interests. Contents are similar to those of 2014, before being recognized as community radios.

In fact, local information has not increased. The three hours of morning news mainly come from national information provided by CORAPE and international information provided by ALER. This has consequences, like the delocalization of the information, that is, the main information is not about Salinas, Simiatug or Bolívar, which appear after national and international news. Both organizations are closely related to the Catholic Church. In its ethical code, CORAPE, according to its website[9], names "God and acknowledges the diverse ways of religiosity and spirituality to carry out their job as communicators" [translated quotation]. On its part, ALER derives from the Catholic Church but now classifies itself as "of human and Cristian inspiration"[10] [translated quotation].

The inclusion of evangelizing contents also reflects the fact that news production is mainly controlled by church. For instance, Radio Runacunapac broadcasts on Sundays a program from Radio Salinerito where a reflection and analysis on God's message is made. This program is carried out with the contribution of catechists and collaborators from the indigenous diocesan pastoral center.

Beyond news, these media lack so many resources that they are not able to generate their own contents (educational, for children, social, about job, gender etc.) to respond to their communities' interests and needs. In the late-night programs, the situation is even worse since pre-loaded music is the only content and, as for Radio Runacunapac, they even include advertising from parapsychologists and naturists.

On the other side, the lack of resources and the travelling problems make it difficult to have inside the community press sources not related to institutions. Travelling around the territory is difficult due to the orography of the Andean highlands and to the transportation problems. Usually, the information is obtained from the digital national media. At best, authorities from Bolívar or close cantons may be interviewed.

The very limited advertising is still institutional, like campaigns from the national government, the prefecture or the villages. This advertising is paid late and badly, due to institutional bureaucratic obstacles.

Moreover, the possibilities of a community radio are hardly understood. They can go beyond the co-owner's exclusive interest, becoming a communication tool for all communes in the land. Radio Simiatug is hardly conceived beyond their owners, that it, Runacunapac

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8   Quantitative results of this research showed that, from a communicative point of view, population from Region 5 in Ecuador is greatly isolated while they suffer from a scarce and vulnerable communication structure that fosters an unfair access to media (TAMARIT; CEVALLOS; YÉPEZ, 2015, 755).

9   Available at: http://www.corape.org.ec/satelital/contenido/item/codigo-deontologico (consulted on May, 30th 2019).

10   Available at https://www.aler.org/node/1 (consulted on May, 28th 2019).

Yachana Foundation. The same happens with Radio Salinerito, which is much focused in the Salesian Family Foundation. Furthermore, the intervention stage discovered groups unaware of the existence of a community radio, as it happens in Simiatug, from the artisan women association.

These shortcomings affect both media communication and communication inside the community, being one major deficiency as community radios. Radio workers and, at best, occasional volunteers, lack time and resources to create bonds with the different organizations and associations in their regions. Each entity has diverse interests and a community radio should be the link between the different looks and interests inside the same region.

Conclusions

Four years later, the analysis is not exactly pessimistic, but shows a gloomy image that weakens the hope of these radios to undertake further actions in this Andean area. The following conclusions are being drawn from the reduced changes observed in these four years and the scarce political and public support of the Government.

The community radios examined still suffer from important shortcomings when fostering the "common" dialogue and they replicate the same standards of the private media. Although community media do not want economic profit like the private media, they do need enough economic resources to survive. Thus, the consequence is the same: lack of personnel and a poor programming.

Those radios which have been recognized as community media have increased their broadcasting and they currently offer 24-hour broadcasting. This could mean that resources have increased, but they have not. Programming is poor, more related to entertainment than to community news and participation.

Such programming is based on a musical model, combined with news. Those contents different from music or news are limited and usually at late-night hours and weekends, like parapsychological, natural medicine or religious programs.

The lack of human and material resources makes radios need volunteers, which brings instability at designing and developing a permanent, consistent quality programming, based on the participation of each single community member. We can see this in Radio Salinerito when the 2014 programming, made with Italian volunteers, had to stop when they came back home.

Community media have been influenced by the same journalistic routines of the private media. That is, repeating the same music and news programs based on community radios like CORAPE and ALER, whose news are not local, but national and international.

The presence of local voices, of close information about the own community, is constrained by the difficulty of developing a programming on their own. The participation of organizations is very limited in the media development or management. Sometimes, there is evidence of associations or segments of the population ignoring the existence of a community radio.

This reality has consequences. The participatory feeling which we believe characterizes community media is diluted. Local development of communication slows down. This kind of communication deals with the closest, with the interests of the citizens in the region. Four years after the approval of LOC in 2013, community media show difficulties to give the community a voice to talk to itself and to the others.

At this point, we introduce a final concern. The last community radios licensed in September 2017 are mainly religious entities and associations. Further analysis should be made on the risks involved for the ideological pluralism of the community radios.

Ecuador should not just license and pretend it has community media. The research-action process made for this paper begins with the speech given in 2014, encouraging the creation of community media. Three years later, visiting the same communities, it leaves us with an initial miserable feeling. It reminds the insecurity and difficulties described by Karina Herrera when analyzing the mining radios in Bolivia. There are many contextual differences due to the Bolivian radios' long experience and pioneering nature but they still share common threats that compromise their survival (HERRERA, 2006).

The loneliness of the radio studios we visited contrasts with the potential community media have to become the home of every single citizen. Their development, their professionality and the exigence required can only be affordable with properly paid professionals to provide strong positioning, relevance and quality in their regions. The licensed associations must be aware of the importance of the radios for the good living of their communities, must fight to obtain the necessary resources and claim the material conditions needed to effectively fulfill their right to communicate.

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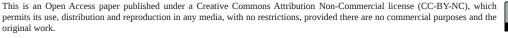

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