Audiovisual media in the countryside of Brazil and the production of local information

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Abstract
The purpose of this article is to verify whether there is or there is not local news content being produced by radiobroadcasters and by radio and TV re-broadcasters in the 32 municipalities with very low development indicators (Very Low IDHM), all of them in the North and in the Northeast regions. The scope of the study was determined by the lack of information either on media practices or local characteristics, which entailed the use of local media and local journalism concepts to advance the field analysis. The article considers territorial arrangements and media arrangements in observing the production of radio and RTV re-broadcasters. Legal and policies documents and empirical observation suggest that there is a direction (natural or intentional) in establishing a system of reproduction of information from other media in larger cities. The concepts used are territories, local media, and "news desert".
Keywords: local content. radiobroadcast stations. radio and tv re-broadcasters. "news deserts".

The Object and the Objective

The purpose of this article is to verify the existence or absence of media services and local news content on radio stations and TV re-broadcasters in 32 Brazilian

municipalities registering Very Low Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI). These municipalities (located in the North and Northeast regions) have among the worst social indicators in Brazil. We consider this development index group (MHDI indicators are classified as very low, low, medium, high, very high) to be an important geopolitical territory and one that needs analyzing. This analysis includes observing the local media organization and the production of local news content in the 32 municipalities located throughout nine states (Chart 1).

Chart 1 – Municipalities registering Very Low MHDI, by state

State	Municipality	State	Municipality
Acre	Jordão	**Pará**	Anajás Afuá Bagre Cachoeira do Piriá Chaves Ipixuna do Pará Melgaço Portel
Alagoas	Inhapi Olivença	**Pernambuco**	Manari
Amazonas	Atalaia do Norte Itamarati Ipixuna Maraã Pauini Santa Isabel do Rio Negro Santo Antônio do Içá	**Piauí**	Assunção do Piauí Betânia do Piauí Caxingó Cocal Cocal dos Alves São Francisco de Assis do Piauí
Bahia	Itapicuru	**Roraima**	Amajari Uiramutã
Maranhão	Fernando Falcão Jenipapo dos Vieiras Marajá do Sena Satubinha		

Source: UNDP. Atlas of Human Development in Brazil, 2010.

This article is part of a broader project, one which studies the existing media and telecommunications infrastructure in Brazil, starting with small municipalities. It focuses primarily on those municipalities registering a Very Low Municipal Human Development Index (less than 0.5, on a scale where 1 represents the highest degree) according to indicators of the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil. The UNDP Brazil (United Nations Development

Program), in conjunction with the João Pinheiro Foundation (Minas Gerais) and the Applied Economic Research Institute (IPEA), has been producing the Atlas since 1997. "It brings the Municipal Human Development Index (MHDI) and a further 200 indicators of demography, education, income, work, housing and vulnerability to Brazilian municipalities" (ATLAS BRASIL, 2010a).

The development indicators in the MHDI have, over time and concurrently, been reflected in the local and regional media. The predominance of audiovisual media (radio and television broadcasters, and radio and TV re-broadcasters added in 2005 by the Television Rebroadcasting Service Regulation and the Television Repetition Service, both subsidiaries to the Sound and Image Broadcasting Service (BRASIL, 2005) was the result of state communication policies, in particular, the rules for granting channels in the broadcasting sector.

The democratization of communication, which defends the fundamental principles of the Right to Communication (access to information, viability of content production, guarantee of diffusion and distribution) in the country, has been under debate since 1991 when the National Front for the Democratization of Communication (FNDC) was created. It is organized into classes in the 1988 Constitution in order to accompany the promulgation of communication laws in the Legislative branch (FNDC, 2019), to suggest amendments, and to collaborate for legal advancement.

Thirty years later, the media industry remains predominantly commercial and highly concentrated, with production centralized in the Southeast and South regions which receive 25.3% of advertising investments, most of which goes toward open television (54.1%) (CENP, 2020). There are four organizations and their networks (Globo, Band, SBT and Record) which reach just over 70% of households in the country. The degree of concentration in daily newspapers reduces the plurality of sources: more than 50% of all readers come from four groups in the states of Rio de Janeiro, São Paulo and Rio Grande do Sul: Grupo Globo, Grupo Folha, Grupo Estado and Grupo RBS (MOM BRASIL, 2018). The concentration index is also high among news portals, with four groups in the majority (Globo/G1, Folha/UOL, Record/R7, and Grupo Ongoing/iG) garnering 58% of the online audience (MEIOS NO BRASIL, 2018). This is on top of the progressive increase in participation from religious groups that have their own media[1]. They control some of the largest radio and TV networks in Brazil, as shown in the Media Ownership Monitor (MOM) survey[2].

The current environment of the culture of commercial media and the absence of a permanent state policy for public media does not favor independent media funded by varied

1   There are at least six religious groups that operate on a regional/national scale in Brazil: Grupo Record, Rede Gospel de Televisão, Rede Novo Tempo - Radio and TV, Rede Católica de Rádio (RCR), Rede Vida TV, and Rede Evangelizar de Comunicação.
2   Coordinated by the NGO Reporters Without Borders, the project mapped the media in 14 countries up until 2018. In Brazil, there were 50 media outlets and networks for radio, TV, print and online media.

sources if those sources do not come from public, economic or religious funds[3]. Consider, for example, the volume of investment in advertising in commercial media, which totaled R$8.9 billion between January 2020 and September 2020 (CENP, 2020), while the budget of the main (and only) public communications company was an estimated R$652 million reais in 2020 (BRASIL, 2021). Outside of advertising, economic, political and religious interests have the ability to set agendas for media groups and the potential to influence public opinion (MOM BRASIL, 2018).

The culture of commercial media also has an influence on what information is made available in public databases, generally being of a national or regional variety. There is local news information, but it can be quite rough depending on how it is collected, on the parameters, and on how it is analyzed. In the Open Data Portal of the National Telecommunications Agency (ANATEL, 2020), the "access numbers" of authorized companies, concessionaires, and service providers are separated into annual files, arranged on a monthly basis, and organized in tables and in time series identified by various inputs - companies, groups, technologies, municipalities, etc.

It is almost a paradox: the freedom to use data requires a tremendous amount of effort to overcome, organize and refine information which, by the way, can be found in paid reports by audit and market analysis companies (DELOITTE, 2020, KPMG, 2020) which gather updated data from a range of sectors. PwC is one of the few auditing firms to make survey results available by segments, such as the Global Entertainment Survey, which features macro trends and surveys of the consumption of books, media, data, games, virtual reality, etc. (PWC BRASIL, 2021).

The entire set shows the logic of the media groups in the country; commercial models that have established themselves in capital cities with branches or offices in smaller places or which have fewer resources for advertising investments. Any displacement that might occur in these groups is more administrative and less productive, and generally occurs in medium-sized cities or regional capitals, depending on the scope of content in the regions and locations. For example, the Region of Influence of Cities 2018 report, when referring to the dissemination of information, shows that "the analysis of open television networks at the very least allows to identify part of the centrality of cities in relation to telecommunications and information flows emitted and received in urban centers" (IBGE, 2020). Radio is a recognized local medium of communication that falls under the diverse and cyclical influence of governments, politicians, businessmen and, as of the 1980s, religious people.

In general, we do not know the demographics and audience profiles of small cities, and we know little about the existing structure for media production in these places as they are generally remote or difficult to access. This analysis is based on 32 municipalities

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3   There are at least six religious groups operating on a regional/national level in Brazil: Record, Rede Gospel de Televisão, Rede Novo Tempo (Rádio and TV), Rede Católica de Rádio (RCR), Rede Vida TV, and Rede Evangelizar de Comunicação.

registering Very Low MHDI, and observes examples from radio stations, and local radio and TV re-broadcasters at this scalar-social level.

Territory, Local Media, "News Deserts"

The approach of the existing media in the 32 municipalities registering Very Low Human Development Index (ATLAS BRASIL, 2010b) requires identifying concepts that support the arguments of the data analysis shown in the locations.

It is our intent here to verify the territorial arrangements of media and information in the audiovisual sphere, in radio stations, and in radio and television re-broadcasters. The methodology includes (in addition to MHDI indicators for selecting municipalities) consulting legal texts such as regional production in Art. 221 of the Constitution (BRASIL, 2019)[4] and the 2020 update of the Radio Broadcasting Services Regulation (BRASIL, 2020)[5]. These are added to the empirical observation of the content distributed by radio stations in the 32 municipalities. We shall examine whether there is local production and/or any direction (natural or intentional) in the 32 municipalities that may influence the circulation of information in other cities. The concepts of territory, local media, and "news deserts" make up the theoretical basis of our article.

The reference for territory comes from the field of geography. It is a multi-layered measure of place, as Santos (2007, p. 14) describes:

> Territory is not just the set of natural systems and systems of overlapping things; the territory has to be understood as the *used territory*, not the territory itself. The territory used is the ground plus the identity. Identity is the feeling of belonging to what belongs to us. The territory is the foundation of the work; the place of residence, material and spiritual exchanges and the exercise of life.

It also understands "complex geography", as proposed by Haesbaert (2009), describing a networked world in which "the multiplicity of scale generates multiple territories".

> The use of the term network emerges from this constant interaction between multiple scales and territories, and advances more and more, which contributes to understanding these articulations between different territories as well as

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4   Constitution of the Federative Republic of Brazil, Art, 221- The production and programming of radio and television stations will comply with the following principles: I – a preference for educational, artistic, cultural and informational purposes; II - promote national and regional culture and encourage independent production to disseminate said culture; III – have regional cultural, artistic and journalistic production, according to percentages established under the law.

5   Decree 10.405 of June 25, 2020, which amends "the Radio Broadcasting Services Regulation, approved by Decree no. 52.795 of October 31, 1963; Regulation of the Television Rebroadcasting Service and the Television Repetition Service, approved by Decree No. 5,371 of February 17, 2005, Decree No. 5,820 of June 29, 2006, Decree No. 8,139 of November 7, 2013, and the Regulation of the Radio Relay Service in the Legal Amazon, approved by Decree No. 9,942 of July 25, 2019, is to provide for the execution of broadcasting services and the licensing process for broadcasting stations.

their internal structures. (...) Identifying networks with a planetary dimension which, according to some authors, serve as an embryo for the formation of a 'world-territory' is as important as identifying networks of a local and regional character that often have the potential to propose alternative territorial organizations (HAESBAERT, 2009, p. 121-123).

The article also uses the evaluation of Beltrão Sposito (2006), who considers the territory as the space of differences between the time of nature and between social and natural events as "on the geographic scale, the result between different territorial cuts is not evaluated, but the way time affects different territories":

> (...) we know that the global levels of determination over national, regional, and local ones are increasing, and that is why it is increasingly important to know how these multiple determinations affect each geographical and historical context, regardless of the scale that we have taken as a starting point (area and period of study) (BELTRÃO SPOSITO, 2006, p. 153).

When analyzing local media and journalism we used proximity (CAMPONEZ, 2012), the local environment (PERUZZO, 2003, 2005), and "localism" as references (DORNELLES, 2010, 2012).

Proximity journalism has features of the profession that connect the ideas of geographic space and themes of interest to a community. The media gives voice and space to local actors, Camponez (2012) considers this proximity as a central news value of journalism, anchored not only in the geographical territory, but connected in the concepts of territory, place, communication and community:

> (...) regional journalism based on the concept of a communicational pact carried out in the context of local communities - that is, communities that recognize themselves based on values and interests built locally and recreated locally, based on a territorially situated experience - and where criteria such as the geographical space for implementing the editorial project intervene; the place of apprehension, collection and production of the events reported; the privileged space for the dissemination of information; the type of content shared and information made available; lastly, the definition of audiences (CAMPONEZ, 2012, p. 37).

The author's idea of proximity in local journalism is a "recreation" of identity and territory, which includes the profession and its audiences.

As Peruzzo (2005, p. 75) views it, the concept of proximity "can be explored from different perspectives", and even in local and regional media it refers to "the ties originated

by the familiarity and the singularity of a certain region, which have a lot to do with the issue of the territorial locus".

> The local issue will be better understood if looked at dialectically: when elements of proximity exist that interrelate globally and nationally; with the convergence and also the refusal of geographical demarcations; with the convergence between identities and differences that reaffirms or undermines specifics, yet contributes towards generating new identities; in the configuration of local and global poles which are both convergent and opposites of a relationship (PERUZZO, 2003, p. 69).

Peruzzo (2003, p. 69) uses "local" to designate spaces in which "there are links of proximity and familiarity, which occur through relationships (economic, political, neighborhood etc.) and ties of the most diverse identities" that are not demarcated by geographical characteristics but by "symbolic content".

Issues such as geographic space, the place where events are produced and covered, circulation space, local content, available information, the interest of the local public, and the economy of the regions are all central to Dornelles' (2010, 2012) studies on local journalism. Based on her experience researching printed material from the interior of Rio Grande do Sul, Dornelles (2012, p. 22) argued that "the specific bibliography in 'Interior Journalism' (...) is very small and often erroneous as it still does not credit the newspapers in the interior with the importance that they actually have on their communities". She goes on to say that the absence of studies makes it "easier to find criticisms of interior journalism than proposals to circumvent problems that affect the quality of the news".

The same "localism" that, for a long time, did not work in favor of the press in the interior benefited from online journalism, which increased interest in local information.

> What we have observed so far is the increasing use of the internet by the general population as a tool for disseminating information and, as a result, the news. This situation favored localism, as it increased the demand for quality local information. Competition for audiences on the part of the press is leading newspapers in large cities to expand their dissemination of local facts, which up until that time was of minor importance to the agendas of major newsrooms. This led to improved news coverage of neighborhoods, although it is still lacking since the criteria of news ability (used before the advent of the Internet) such as rarity, polemics, heinous crimes, and economy of the elites continue to prevail. Popular journalism was also strengthened and attracted readers from classes C and D, according to the economic division of the Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics (IBGE) (DORNELLES, 2010, p. 238).

The aggregating function of geography is perceived by Dornelles (2010) in the space of the local media, including in the newspapers from the small towns which are restricted to certain regions and whose circulation is "irremediably tied to issues such as geographical space". This means that geography plays more than a "determining role" in defining local information,

> (...) It can be understood more by the geographical space than by the characteristics of its content. Journalism in the interior, in addition to its geographic issue, can be recognized by other characteristics which are particular to the interior. Thus, local communication concerns the majority of people and members integrated in a certain local system, occurring constantly. "Local" is understood to mean information relating to an urban neighborhood or a small community or town. The local newspaper itself must also reflect the same geographical delimitation in the way information is organized in each edition, and can even use special pages when covering different situations. It must consist of news that is relatively restricted to one geographic area (DORNELLES, 2010, p. 238).

Local media was also central to the development of the concept of "news deserts" by Penelope (Penny) Abernathy[6] (2016) in her research on newspapers printed in small towns, developed at the Center for the Innovation and Sustainability of Local Media, at the University of North Carolina (USA). In the United States,

> (...) community newspapers provide up to 85% of the "news that feed democracy" at state and local levels. This means that the fate of newspapers and communities is inherently linked. If one fails, the other suffers. Therefore, the owner of a local newspaper is important because the decisions made by said owner affect the health and vitality of the community (ABERNATHY, 2016, p. 6).

Abernathy conducted research between 2015-2016 on media conglomerates and their influence on the disappearance of small newspapers in the interior. In her analysis of local media in several states she identified two fluctuating movements: the rise of the new "media barons" and their private investment funds, and the expansion of what she referred to as "news deserts".

> (...) A new media baron has emerged in the United States over the last decade. *Private equity* funds, *hedge funds,* and other newly created forms of investment

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6   Former *Wall Street Journal* and *New York Times* executive, currently serves as the Knight Chair in Journalism and Digital Media Economics at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

have appeared on the scene to buy - and effectively manage - newspapers across the country. These new owners differ greatly from the newspaper publishers who preceded them. Most of them have no experience in journalism nor the sense of civic duty traditionally adopted by editors and publisher owners. Newspapers represent only a fraction of the vast business portfolios of these companies (ABERNATHY, 2016, p. 7).

This is a concept that is linked to very specific contexts (business, temporal and geographical) of the United States media. The occurrence of "news deserts" in Brazil has been examined by the Atlas da Notícia (News Atlas). The Atlas is edited by Projor (the Institute for the Development of Journalism) and the data it obtains is provided for by Volt Data Lab in the 2017, 2018, 2019 and 2021 editions[7]. The Atlas is based on the Growing News Deserts project from *Columbia Journalism Review*[8] and aims to map media outlets that produce mostly local news in Brazil.

The 2020 data from Atlas shows there are 3,487 municipalities in Brazil (62%) characterized as "news deserts", representing 27.5 million people, without any access to at least one local medium. These people are also not on the regional press' agenda as it is usually established in state capitals. Then there are what is referred to as "almost deserts", places with one or two communication media outlets at risk of becoming "news deserts". These places account for 19% of the municipalities included in the Atlas survey (PROJOR, 2020). Radio stations (35,2%), digital media (25,5%), TV stations (9,7 %), and print media (29,4%), are prevalent in this environment. The 2020 version of the News Atlas does not contain any information on the displacement and dissemination of "news deserts" in Brazil; however, data released in December 2019 pointed to the largest proportions of these "deserts" belonging to the North (72%) and Northeast (73.5%) regions of the country.

When comparing "news deserts" in Brazil and the USA, we noticed two differences and one similarity. The differences concern the media (printed newspapers which are more accessible in the USA, while in Brazil it is radio and TV stations that predominate) and the media environment (community newspapers in the USA and radio and TV stations, mainly commercial, in Brazil). The similarity has to do with the geography of the deserts: they are usually in small towns in both countries. The imbalance in the distribution of conventional radio and TV channels in Brazil, distinguished by political interests, has stimulated the rapid expansion of community radio stations since 2000. In 2018, more than 4,500 low-power broadcasters were in operation (PORTAL BRASILEIRO DE DADOS ABERTOS, 2019).

In Brazil, there is an obvious correlation between a contradictory reality, marked by areas of media concentration and an abundance of information and areas of silence (deserts?) resulting from a lack of audiovisual and telecommunications infrastructure in smaller municipalities which are more remote from urban centers. This article aims to verify if there

7   Volt Data Lab. Available at: https://www.voltdata.info/. Accessed on: Jan. 20, 2020.
8   Available at: https://www.cjr.org/local_news/american-news-deserts-donuts-local.php. Accessed on: Jan. 28, 2021.

is a local media that provides access to information and news content in the 32 locations registering Very Low MHDI.

Infrastructure Issues in Local Production

This article seeks to establish a parallel between the close relationship between production and consumption of information: do "news deserts" occur in the absence of infrastructure? The analysis of media production in the municipalities registering Very Low MHDI set the guidelines for a diagnosis of numbers, reach capabilities, and organizational characteristics of the media in these locations. The information was collected from public databases such as Anatel, the Ministry of Science, Technology, Innovations and Communications, the Atlas of Human Development in Brazil, Brazilian Open Data Portal, Internet Management Committee, and IBGE, ending with an internet survey of the existing communication media outlets in the municipalities.

The Brazilian MHDI (PNUD, 2010) considers three dimensions of the Global HDI (longevity, education and income) in the municipalities with Very Low development (less than 0.5 on the indicator scale). The study of locations allows observing communicational arrangements in parts of the country accompanied by local socioeconomic levels. Thus, the following units of analysis were selected: a) audiovisual infrastructure - radio channels, with the exception of community broadcasters[9], pay TV, open TV, and digital and analog TV re-broadcasters; b) telecommunications - fixed and mobile telephony, fixed and mobile broadband and internet providers; c) communication policies for broadband in the municipalities.

The 32 municipalities with the worst average human development are located in the north (18) and northeast (14) regions. These 32 locations correspond to 0.57% of the 5,570 Brazilian municipalities, and their 670 thousand inhabitants represent 0.32% of the country's population. The average income per capita is around R$ 158. In other regions of the country there are no municipalities in the Very Low MHDI range. The Gini index[10], which measures the level of income concentration, shows that 45% of the population in these municipalities is extremely poor (DATASUS, 2010).

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9   The Community Broadcasting Service was created under Law 9.612 of 1998. Its objective is to facilitate installation in low-power (25 Watts) radio frequency modulated (FM) municipalities whose coverage is restricted to a radius of one kilometer from the broadcast antenna. Only non-profit community associations and foundations based in the area where the service is provided may operate the service. By law, broadcasters in this category must have a pluralist program, be open to participation from residents of the region they serve, and are not allowed to engage in political and/or religious proselytism. The sustainability and maintenance of community broadcasters depends on the mobilization and articulation capacity of the associations that operate the concession. This situation leads community members to a dynamic of irregular permanence in the media ecosystem and low presence on the internet, which makes it difficult to access information about its performance. When analyzing the presence of community broadcasters in the 32 municipalities with very low MHDI, we found that 12 of them had concessions for community channels in Anatel's database of interactive services. None of these have websites, three have streaming available in aggregators, and there are indications that half of them are not operational. Among those that are available for listening, one broadcasts religious programming (Rádio Afuá FM 87.9, in Pará), another broadcasts country music (87.9 FM Santo Antônio do Içá, in Amazonas) and a third broadcasts gospel music (Rádio Serra 87.9 FM, in Piauí).
10   The Gini index ranges from 0 to 1, with 0 representing total equality, where everyone has the same income, and 1 means severe income inequality; that is, very few people have all the income (IPEA, 2004).

Local observation indicates that the audiovisual and telecommunications sector in the 32 municipalities with Very Low MHDI is lacking infrastructure, and has mostly been neglected in the more remote regions. The number of installed radio stations is reduced: FM bandwidth is present in 18% of the municipalities and AM bandwidth in 6%; there are no television channels generating their own content (Table 1). Having a shortage of local media, the municipalities are served by analogue and digital TV broadcasters that reproduce programming from regional broadcasters affiliated with national networks. This supports the communication policy established in the 1970s of production being concentrated in a few media conglomerates. The circulation and consumption of content within these production conditions is regional or national, and local media outlets are unable to provide information about the communities in which they operate.

Table 1 – TV and radio broadcasters in Municipalities with Very Low MHDI

Services	Broadcasters	Municipalities	%
RTV	45	22	69%
RTVD (digital)	23	16	50%
FM Radio	6	6	18%
AM Radio	2	2	6%
Shortwave Radio	0	0	00
TV	0	0	00

Source: Table prepared by the authors based on data from the Anatel Mosaic System.

Of the 32 municipalities analyzed for this paper, nine have low information and communication flows: they do not have radio broadcasts, TV, or analogue or digital RTV rebroadcasts. These nine municipalities are located in the states of Maranhão (Fernando Falcão and Satubinha), Pará (Cachoeira do Piriá), Alagoas (Inhapi), and Piauí (São Francisco de Assis do Piau, Caxingó, Betânia do Piau, Cocal dos Alves and Assunção do Piauí). In total, they represent 95,309 inhabitants (PNUD, 2010) in precarious conditions of access to local resources. The municipalities with the largest number of media services are Santo Antônio do Içá (AM), Itapicuru (BA) and Portel (PA), each with six media. Table 2 shows the distribution of broadcasters in the Very Low MHDI locations.

Table 2 – Distribution of Radio and TV Broadcasters in Municipalities with Very Low MHDI

Municipality	FM	AM	RTV	RTVD	TOTAL
Santo Antônio do Içá (AM)	1	1	3	1	6
Itapicuru (BA)	1	1	3	1	6
Portel (PA)	1	-	2	3	6

Municipality	FM	AM	RTV	RTVD	TOTAL
Afuá (PA)	-	-	3	2	5
Atalaia do Norte (AM)	1	-	2	2	5
Amajari (RR)	-	-	3	2	5
Ipixuna do Pará (PA)	1	-	3	-	4
Ipixuna (AM)	-	-	3	1	4
Santa Isabel do Rio Negro (AM)	-	-	3	1	4
Itamarati (AM)	-	-	3	1	4
Uiramutã (RR)	-	-	2	1	3
Cocal (PI)	-	-	2	1	3
Maraã (AM)	-	-	2	1	3
Pauini (AM)	-	-	2	1	3
Satubinha (MA)	1	-	1	-	2
Jordão (AC)	-	-	1	1	2
Anajás (PA)	-	-	1	1	2
Chaves (PA)	-	-	2	-	2
Melgaço (PA)	-	-	-	2	2
Bagre (PA)	1	-	1	-	2
Olivença (AL)	-	-	1	-	1
Manari (PE)	-	-	1	-	1
Marajá do Sena (MA)	-	-	1	-	1
Inhapi (AL)	-	-	-	-	0
Cachoeira do Piriá (PA)	-	-	-	-	0
Jenipapo dos Vieiras (MA)	-	-	-	-	0
Fernando Falcão (MA)	-	-	-	-	0
São Francisco de Assis do Piauí (PI)	-	-	-	-	0
Assunção do Piauí (PI)	-	-	-	-	0
Cocal dos Alves (PI)	-	-	-	-	0
Betânia do Piauí (PI)	-	-	-	-	0
Caxingó (PI)	-	-	-	-	0

Source: Prepared by authors based on data from the Anatel Mosaic System.

Pay TV is a counterpoint to open media. Some households in the municipalities analyzed for this article have access to the paid TV service, but they serve, on average, less than 4% of the population. There are a few differences between some of the locations: Fernando Falcão (MA) has only one pay TV subscriber; Santa Isabel do Rio Negro (AM), Afuá (PA) and Satubinha (MA) have an average of 13 subscribers per 100 households. Telecom companies such as Claro (Claro Brasil), Telefonica (Vivo TV), and Telemar (Oi TV)

win customers over by offering packages with access to broadband and mobile telephony. According to data from Anatel, the technology most used in these locations is DTH (*Direct to Home*), which requires an external satellite antenna, a receiver and a decoder for reception. This standard reduces investments in infrastructure by the provider as the signals are sent to the TV converter without any intermediaries. Table 3 shows the access density[11] of this service in the municipalities analyzed in this paper.

Table 3 – Access Density of Pay TV per 100 Households (2019)

Municipality	Density	Municipality	Density
Afuá (PA)	15	Cocal dos Alves (PI)	5.7
Santa Isabel do Rio Negro (AM)	13	Chaves (PA)	5.6
Satubinha (MA)	12	Assunção do Piauí (PI)	5.6
Ipixuna do Pará (PA)	9.6	Ipixuna (AM))	4.2
Atalaia do Norte (AM)	8.9	Olivença (AL)	4.4
Santo Antônio do Içá (AM)	8.4	Pauini (AM)	4.4
Anajás (PA)	8.6	Jenipapo dos Vieiras (MA)	3.7
Bagre (PA)	7.7	Inhapi (AL)	2.5
Itapicuru (BA)	7.5	Amajari (RR)	1.8
Maraã (AM	7.3	Manari (PE)	1.7
Cocal (PI)	7.1	Marajá do Sena (MA)	1.5
Itamarati (AM)	6.5	Jordão (AC)	0.94
Portel (PA)	6.3	São Francisco de Assis do Piauí (PI)	0.9
Caxingó (PI)	6.2	Uiramutã, (RR)	0.35
Melgaço (PA)	6.0	Betânia do Piauí (PI)	0.3
Cachoeira do Piriá (PA)	5.9	Fernando Falcão (MA)	0.14

Source: Prepared by authors based on Anatel Data Panels (ANATEL, 2020).

The Personal Mobile Service (PMS) for mobile telephony and broadband was found in all the municipalities analyzed in this article. The average was two media telecom services per municipality; however, there were 11 municipalities in which only one company offered the service. 2G and 3G access technologies are most prominent, with 4G access being less prevalent, indicating low internet connection quality.

Technologies used for internet access include radio, satellite, and fiber optics. Fixed broadband reaches less than 1% of the population in the 32 locations studied here (Table 4). Of the 3,665 access points, most have a connection speed between 512kbps and 2Mbps, 21 of

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11 Access density is a term used by Anatel to designate the number of subscribers to services such as pay TV, mobile telephony and broadband per 100 households. Available at the Anatel Data Portal at https://www.anatel.gov.br/paineis/.

the municipalities had internet connection services with up to 34Mbps. The low broadband speed enhances digital exclusion and increases development inequality between locations.

Table 4 – Access Density for Fixed Broadband per 100 Households (2019)

Municipality	Density	Municipality	Density
Melgaço (PA)	12.0	São Francisco de Assis do Piauí (PI)	1.1
Pauini (AM)	8.6	Inhapi (AL)	1.0
Anajás (PA)	6.9	Chaves (PA)	0.9
Jenipapo dos Vieiras (MA)	4.6	Bagre (PA)	0.9
Cachoeira do Piriá (PA)	4.5	Itamarati (AM)	0.7
Olivença (AL)	4.2	Satubinha (MA)	0.7
Assunção do Piauí (PI)	3.0	Cocal dos Alves (PI)	0.6
Cocal (PI)	2.7	Uiramutã (RR)	0.6
Afuá (PA)	2.6	Portel (PA)	0.5
Ipixuna (AM))	1.7	Fernando Falcão (MA)	0.4
Ipixuna do Pará (PA)	1.5	Atalaia do Norte (AM)	0.4
Itapicuru (BA)	1.3	Marajá do Sena (MA)	0.4
Amajari (RR)	1.1	Jordão (AC)	0.4
Manari (PE)	1.2	Santo Antônio do Içá (AM)	0.4
Betânia do Piauí (PI)	1.4	Santa Isabel do Rio Negro (AM)	0.3
Caxingó (PI)	1.1	Maraã (AM)	0.3

Source: Prepared by authors based on Anatel Data Panels (ANATEL, 2020).

Installation of the Telecentre Project in all the municipalities analyzed in this paper did not change the situation (percentage of the population served by fixed broadband at good speed)[12]. Each location received eight installation kits (server, router, computers, printer and furniture); there were problems with the installation in schools in ten of the 32 municipalities analyzed in this paper schools (PORTAL BRASILEIRO DE DADOS ABERTOS, 2019). The idea at the schools is for the access point to better serve students, but it reduces community access. In some cases, installation kits were delivered before the telecentre was installed or before the location had the technical conditions to operate it as the public internet access service requires local management, staff training and technical support.

The first layer of verified data, then, shows that there is a media and telecommunications service network in the municipalities analyzed in this paper, operating with a low information

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12 "The telecentre project started in 2007. It is a Digital Inclusion Point (DIP), non-profit with free access to the public, having computers connected to the internet which are available for different uses. The purpose of the telecentre is to promote the social and economic development of the communities, and to help reduce social exclusion and provide digital inclusion to citizens. Telecentres were installed through partnerships between ministries, city halls, and civil society entities" (PORTAL BRASILEIRO DE DADOS ABERTOS, 2019).

and communication flow. TV re-broadcasters in almost all of the municipalities indicate that the information consumed are produced in other places. The reduced local content was confirmed in the News Atlas survey (PROJOR, 2018) which identified four of the 32 municipalities analyzed in this article as "almost deserts" and 27 as "news deserts", with no media or local production and no coverage from regional press. One municipality was not included in the survey.

Especially for TV re-broadcasters and radio stations, the existing infrastructure allows the production of local information to balance the centralized information flow in larger urban centers, usually capital cities.

Local News from Broadcasters and Re-broadcasters

One way that small municipalities can access information is through rebroadcasted signals from a television station with free reception. A 2005 decree regulating the service states that the purpose of the rebroadcasting channels is to allow signals from generating stations to be received in places where those signals do not reach or where the technical conditions are inadequate. The re-broadcasters help form national and regional networks and prohibit the insertion of content or advertising. The only exception to this rule is in areas around border regions and those that make up the Legal Amazon[13]. The broadcasters in the Legal Amazon are authorized to broadcast up to 15% of local programming with advertising. Even so, the program must have educational, artistic, cultural and informational content that benefits "the general development of the community" (BRASIL, 2005). 28 of the 32 municipalities with Very Low MHDI are located in the Legal Amazon.

The RTV rebroadcasting system in the Legal Amazon was the subject of field research undertaken by journalist Elvira Lobato on three expeditions she made to the region in 2017 where she visited 30 municipalities in four states and interviewed 200 people. She noted that the broadcaster owners were mostly businessmen and politicians, although the number of channels under the control of religious groups has grown since then. In practice, the re-broadcasters operate as "mini stations" that produce local news. Once this content is aired, broadcasters and re-broadcasters transmitting national content lose audience (LOBATO, 2017, p. 44). Lobato (2016) goes on to state that local producers have high school education, have taken short training courses, and many earn only a little more than minimum wage from broadcasters and have to supplement their income by selling ads on the programs. The production of local news by RTVs in the Legal Amazon depends on the capacity of media workers to capture local advertising. The focus, then, is not on the local public interest.

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13 The area of the Amazon rainforest that encompasses nine Brazilian states. The region consists of 52 municipalities in Rondônia, 22 municipalities in Acre, 62 in Amazonas, 15 in Roraima, 144 in Pará, 16 in Amapá, 139 in Tocantins, 141 in Mato Grosso, and 181 municipalities in the State of Maranhão (IBGE, 2019).

The addition of the Radio Rebroadcasting Service (RTR) to the Legal Amazon by law in 2018[14] is an infrastructure base that helps make the production of local content feasible. According to MCTIC (2019) there are 131 FM radio stations with licenses to operate in the nine capitals of the Legal Amazon. Once operations begin, the rebroadcasting service will transmit the signal to other municipalities across FM bandwidths or other systems used by states, municipalities, entities and foundations. Exclusive grants are issued to those parties interested in transmitting the signal. These parties must participate in a public bidding process issued by the MCTIC. 75% of the rebroadcasted content will be station programming and only 15% will be local programming. The radio rebroadcasting channels are permitted to carry local advertising as long as the advertising time slots are all the same length and air during the advertising spaces of the generating station. The local program "should have educational, artistic, cultural and informational content for the benefit of the general development of the community" (BRASIL, 2018, 2020).

Radio re-broadcasters in the Legal Amazon help broadcasters in low-income municipalities because content production is almost free of charge. Even still, Anatel's Basic Channel Distribution Plan shows 37 designated channels that have been off air for years - three educational in FM bandwidth, 25 in commercial FM, and nine in commercial AM.

The radio stations installed in the municipalities show some production of local news content, but the unreliable internet access prevents from obtaining any details about the broadcasters' programming. We identified license grants for eight AM and FM radio stations in Anatel's Mosaic system for the municipalities. Three broadcasters have programming data on websites, on applications and for streaming. Four broadcasters do not have a website and one has a webcast with minimal updates and very little programming information (Table 5). After the listening to one week of programming of the Rádio Clube de Itapicuru (Bahia) and the Arizona Communication System (Pará) we ascertain that their programming reproduces contents from national media news portals and have little local coverage. Automated live programming system used to transmit mostly musical content is another reason for the lack of local information.

Table 5 – Radio broadcasting programs from three municipalities with Very Low MHDI

Broadcaster	Municipality	Group/Company	Programming
Rádio Clube de Itapicuru	Itapicuru (BA)	Rádio Clube de Itapicuru Ltda.	Music, regional information
Rádio Arucará FM	Portel (PA)	Arizona Communications System	Gospel music, religious content, and information from national news agencies

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14 BRASIL. Law 13.649, Apr. 11, 2018.

Broadcaster	Municipality	Group/Company	Programming
Rádio Nacional do Alto Solimões	Atalaia do Norte (AM)	EBC	The station interconnects the nine municipalities in the Alto Solimões region in the Amazonas, and serves as a source of information and communication for communities and municipalities in the area. The radio signal reaches the Triple Border region[15]. The programming consists of music, information, education, and contains news coverage in the municipality of Atalaia do Norte.

Source: Authors gathered this data while listening to programming on the broadcasters' websites (June-July 2019).

Some Conclusions

The radio and TV rebroadcasting models in the municipalities analyzed in this paper contain spaces for the insertion of local news. However, there is a predominance of centralized production in stations located in urban centers which are dependent on local advertising, and thus opens the door to agreements being made with local political and economic groups, ultimately hindering the plurality of information. Open radio and TV channels not always have a diverse range of cultural, regional and media content. Internet access via cell phone can generate information capacity in the municipalities, not necessarily local. Changes in legislation to radio and TV rebroadcasting models might help produce local and regional content, even if the poorest locations find it difficult to maintain local programming.

Established in 1962, and still in force, the Brazilian Telecommunications Code requires radio and open television broadcasters to dedicate 5% of their programming to journalism and a maximum of 25% of the total programming time to advertising, among other obligations. The code places an importance on education and culture in the broadcasters' programming, but this is not monitored: Anatel inspections are limited to the technical capacity of transmissions and the Ministry of Communications does not have any mechanisms to monitor the content that is being produced and distributed. An example of the insufficient fiscalization can be seen with the illegal leasing of portions of the broadcasters' programming grids for the exclusive use of advertising or religious content (INTERVOZES, 2012).

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15 The Triple Border is a region between Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay. It is the main frontier in South America in terms of population, movement of people and international relations. For Gimenez *et al.* (2018), it is an international region on two fronts: local and global.

Field observation of the audiovisual and telecommunications infrastructure in 32 municipalities with Very Low MHDI, in the interior of Brazil, reaffirms the lack of policies guided by public interest and not by the interests of regional and local economy and politics. Abernathy's (2016) concept of "news deserts" and Dornelles' (2010) idea of localism set valuable parameters for a general definition of what local news is. Cultural, economic, federal, and educational differences indicate that, in Brazil, a local news program which includes public and community participation in its production is still rare. Large groups have no interest in covering communities with low populations, even if local radio and regional television stations are means of great reach and proximity to the public.

The geographic expanse of the country, in some cases the difficulties with the transport of physical goods, and the lack of interest on the part of the state to establish a communication policy for a balanced distribution of the radio spectrum retained for decades the natural local characteristic of radio and TV broadcasters. Without the interdependent relationship between media and citizens, expansion of local media, such as radio, is based on deliberately random criteria without any link to journalism as a public interest. A 6.8% illiteracy rate (IBGE, 2019) and a 29% functional illiteracy rate (INAF, 2019) are still pronounced in Brazil. Not having open radio and TV with local programming restricts people's access to communication and information, which could help them make more informed decisions. The media infrastructure needs to be organized and the legal framework needs to be in order to overcome and circumvent the "news desertification" processes and give a voice to the small communities in Santos' "used territory" (2007, p. 19).

> (...) All markets, however small, are fundamental - this is also globalization. Thus, no matter how small a place, however insignificant it may seem in the competitive world, this place is essential because global companies depend on small contributions to maintain their power. This power is blind, because it does not look around. (…) But it chooses places here and there, today and tomorrow, according to the answers it imagines it might have, and they leave those places when they discover that they can no longer offer such answers.

In this analysis we realized that the use of the local territory, where strong identity marks converge, indicates that local communities can give new meaning to the practices of information reproduction and constitute a field of diverse and plural interpretation throughout various media.

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