

## Chapter 5

### **Television and Continuity: The political use of the mass media in Brazil**

This chapter provides evidence that Brazil's elite-centred political culture shapes political communication through the control of a quasi-monopoly of television network. I attempt to show that this quasi-monopoly increases passive consensus around 'popular governments without power' and 'powerful governments without legitimacy' (McDonough, 1981:228). An elite-dominated mass communication conciliates contrasting representations of democratic values, obstructing a democratic dissent around the meaning of 'democracy', because television creates an ambiguity around this concept. It creates a common ground unifying different political positions, impeding the constitution of radical political differences in Brazilian society. This is so, because rhetorical strategies of political communication give rise to a hierarchical relation between formal and substantive notions of democracy, downgrading them rather than promoting an emancipatory synthesis between them. As shown in chapter four, the main problem affecting differentiation of political positions among Brazilian voters heavily exposed to government-controlled television, is the lack of political sophistication. If we accept Gueddes & Zaller's (1989:321) exposure-acceptance model, the higher the regime's effort to mobilise opinion, the higher political awareness will be. Conversely, the lower educational levels the higher policy support will be given to political propaganda. In this sense, traditional mechanisms of conciliation depicted on television programmes promote the blurring of political opposition in Brazilian society. Democracy has become an empty concept. As mentioned in the previous chapter, democracy has been wrongly conceptualised in modern Brazil as popular reification of the democratic regime associated with populism and elitism.

As shown in chapter 1, television is a conciliatory mechanism of power that observes the infrastructural logic of *iterability* attaching change and innovation to continuity. The logic of iterability involves repetition and alteration that is required in processes of idealisation, or

projection of future scenarios. Communication based on iterability does not involve phenomena of meaning or signification and is not bound by a context. Rather, iterability gives rise to the term 'democracy' by means of a divergence of its parts. Like a law of undecidable contamination between *signifier* and *signified*, iterability renders the rigour and purity of democracy as something impossible. This is because iterability produces identity in repetition but which is independent of the multiplicity of factual events. This is why the logic of iterability alters and contaminates the code of whatever it identifies, providing the means for a certain identity to repeat itself by meaning something that is already something else. Conversely, iterability is also the condition of possibility for the meaning of positive values since it permits a break of the sign with every given context, engendering new contexts in an unlimited way. It allows elements articulated in the horizontal axis of language to be detached from the chain of equivalence in which they are inserted without losing their function of precise communication.

This is where an articulation of Derridá's structure of iterability with E. Laclau's theory of hegemony intersects the present analysis. It is important to note that the iteration of divergent concepts of democracy imply *both* the logic of identity and the logic of difference. Iterability involves the creation of equivalential relations between democracy and other terms but also involves the differentiation or disarticulation of moments that mean democracy. Iterability splits the term democracy while simultaneously constituting it, so that the remainders of the term democracy never fulfil a presence since it is marked by an articulatory break. In short, as a differential structure, iterability escapes the logic of the binary presence/absence upon which the idea of permanence is dependent, and so gives rise to the primacy of political articulation.

The infrastructural logic of iterability explains the preservation of traditional politics ingrained in the fabric of Brazilian society. In this chapter I explore the hypothesis that a quasi-monopoly of political communication in Brazil, instituted during the military regime, played a central part in a negotiated opening of democratic transition by performing a necessary

mediation between government and the people. This mediation fulfilled by television guaranteed the development of two opposing tendencies: the broadening of social demands, including the valorisation of political competitiveness,<sup>1</sup> whilst simultaneously constraining heterogeneous social and political movements. Television limited threats to the continuity of traditional oligarchies' domination in that it has assisted the control of social explosion.

Here I argue that an important aspect of Brazilian television has been the displacement of political struggle into a struggle of meaning, pleasure and fetishism. 'Resistance', in this case, rebel reaction against military repression, took the form of a fictional exploitation and concern with aesthetic perfectionism and sensualism<sup>2</sup> on the television screen, which was harmless and perfectly congruent with elite interests. TV Globo's cult of the body saturating soap operas never challenged existing structures of power. On the contrary it channelled popular 'resistance' to other areas favouring the prevalence of hierarchy and elitism.<sup>3</sup> As any modern visual means of communication, TV Globo promotes the cult of the body, however, its specificity is to challenge traditional values by exposing naked bodies in embarrassing vignettes at its eight o'clock soap operas when the Brazilian family gets together to watch television. In this sense TV Globo differentiates from other networks when it represses political opposition but at the same time totally liberates sensualism in a traditional society.

As mentioned in previous chapters, traditional politics supported by a conciliatory television is demobilising, essentially non-ideological and based on clientelism, regionalism and personalism (Hagopian, 1996:16). In this chapter I argue that change and innovations in the area of telecommunications have played a fundamental part in the survival of this traditional

<sup>1</sup> However, it is important to note that despite the valorisation of political competitiveness, television has contributed to the valorisation of the personal vote.

<sup>2</sup> Despite its relevance, TV Globo's cult of the body is not on focus in this chapter that concentrates on the matter of fictional exploitation.

<sup>3</sup> As Soares and Boshi (1995) already noted, the recent transition from dictatorship to democracy in some Latin American countries was based in an encompassing coalition including the subaltern classes and the bourgeoisie, isolating segments of the old regime favourable to authoritarianism. In this way, the transition did not menace the elite groups but rather has benefited them with a reduction of uncertainty in relation to economic processes. In Brazil the liberal hypothesis of democracy, as the result of a new economic order founded on the market, was not hegemonic. See Soares & Boshi, 'Democracia e Reforma Economica: A Visão das Elites Brasileiras' *DADOS - Revista de Ciências Sociais*, (Rio de Janeiro, IUPERJ, Vol.38, n.1, 1995) pp. 7-30.

system of political organisation that remains, in spite of economic and social modernisation, thoroughly authoritarian.

Television was first established in Brazil in September 1950.<sup>4</sup> The first significant impulse toward the modernisation of television that was converted into a relevant mechanism of indoctrination by the military occurred in the 1960s, following a period of intense political mobilisation during President João Goulart's government. From 1964 onward, the military state assumed the task of developing and expanding the telecommunications system. Their target nonetheless presented an originary tension. On one hand, television should conform to the theory of National Security and the 'cold war' doctrine, and particularly to the idea of a 'psychological war' against internal and external enemies. On the other, the necessity of television's development was based on the concept of national integration and rationalisation of the state. The existence of this inner tension is precisely why television guarantees a great deal of political continuity. Several initiatives originating from civil society challenged the authoritarian political order, including new forms of association in urban areas, new unionism in industrial areas and the creation of new political opposition parties. Nevertheless, and despite these, political communication remained a primary factor in maintaining political elites. Political practices from the pre-authoritarian era have survived several waves of democratisation - a survival in which television has played a major contributing role.

### **The Problem**

Like developed democracies, television, rather than newspapers, occupies a central place in Brazil's system of mass communication.<sup>5</sup> Only a minority of the Brazilian population, namely

<sup>4</sup> During General Eurico Gaspar Dutra's government. After England, the United States, France, Germany and Holland, Brazil was the sixth country in the world to inaugurate television channels.

See M. E. Bonavita Frederico, *História da Comunicação: rádio e TV no Brasil*, (Petropolis, Vozes, 1982).

<sup>5</sup> As I have stressed and demonstrated through empirical data in the Introduction, television also occupies a central place in Western Democracies where newspaper circulation is higher than in Brazil. As said before, the point I want to make here is that Brazilians who rely on the electronic media, not newspapers, to get political information, have a high adult illiteracy rate, which decreases their predisposition against authoritarianism. The association between non-sophisticated citizens, authoritarian governments and inexhaustible pro-government propaganda constitutes the effective particular that makes Brazilian television distinct from that in Western Europe.

AB occupational groups, consumes press information and specialised TV programs containing political analysis.<sup>6</sup> In contrast with the low percentage of newspaper readers<sup>7</sup> that in Brazil is strongly related to adult illiteracy, television coverage reaches the whole national territory and is watched by more than 90 percent of urban households and 70 percent of rural households. TV Globo's electronic signal reaches 99.8 percent of the 4,974 municipal districts<sup>8</sup> and so, in this sense, television extends far beyond the consumer market.<sup>9</sup> Television's income currently corresponds to 56.9 percent of all publicity and investments in advertising within the media in Brazil.<sup>10</sup> In 1963, before the decisive impulse by the military regime, television received only 32.9 percent of the publicity budget allocated to all modes of communication (Frederico, 1982:148).

The traditional politics that obstructs the establishment of full democracy in Brazil is sheltered by the electronic mass media that, over the last 30 years, has assumed a conservative-innovative role while performing its conciliatory role through which it absorbs and neutralises changes in this society. Television diffuses images of modernity and creates great expectations of political democratisation, zero-inflation, economic development, and full employment. However, given to the hegemony of a conservative political structure, most of these are

<sup>6</sup> According to the last National Home Sample Research (PNAD- Pesquisa Nacional por Amostra de Domicilio) made in 1988 by the IBGE (Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics), the level of illiteracy among voters in Brazil was 23.27%. Taking the total of voters, who correspond to 49% of the whole population (72,288,976 individuals), 71.05% listened to the radio, 68.04% watched television and 28.19% read newspapers. Source: A.C. Alkmim Reis, 'A Participação Eleitoral no Brasil', (Rio de Janeiro, IUPERJ, MA Thesis, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> The total sales of the four national newspapers - O Globo, Jornal do Brasil, O Estado de São Paulo and Folha de São Paulo - do not amount to even 15% of the population. Of the 28.19% consumers of newspapers in Brazil, 13.19% read only tabloids or regional newspapers.

<sup>8</sup> Source: 'Rede Globo, 30 Anos. Uma História Ilustrada', (São Paulo: Globo, 1996).

According to IBGE- Foundation Brazilian Institute of Geography and Statistics, in 1993 TV Globo Network retransmitted its programs from 85 broadcasting stations around the country. The second largest network, SBT-Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão owned 62 broadcasting stations, followed by RMT- Rede Manchete de Televisão- 41, RBT- Rede Bandeirantes de Televisão - 32 stations, TVE-Sistema de Radiodifusão Educativa -20 stations, CNT- Central Nacional de Televisão - 16 stations and, Record Network with 11 stations. Source: 'Brazil in Numbers' Vol.3, 1994, IBGE, p. 75.

<sup>9</sup> According to Mauro Salles' interview in the magazine *Senhor* (Rio de Janeiro, n.288, July 1985), p. 57, 30% of the television audience in 1985 lay outside the market economy or had no access to minimal purchasing power. Considering that the income concentration has been increasing since 1985, today this percentage is even larger. Source: Magalhães de Castro, Maria Eugênia (1993) 'Television and Elites in Post-Authoritarian Brazil', Ph.D. thesis, (Duke University, USA).

<sup>10</sup> Only 25.9% of investments in advertisements are channelled to newspapers, 8.5% to magazines, 4.3% to Radios, 3.7% to outdoors and 0.7% in streets' performances. Source: 'Rede Globo, 30 Anos: Uma História Ilustrada'.

unrealisable promises. Great expectations and unfulfilled promises cause political demobilisation and distrust in political institutions while also encouraging populist leadership. However, I am not blaming the messenger for the message and also not arguing that politicians make pledges and fail to fulfil them, what I am arguing is that television programmes in general, such as soap operas, shows, comedies and news can be highly mobilising and pro-democratic. Paradoxically, such mobilisation in a hybrid order like Brazil leads to conciliation and unification of opinions rather radicalisation. Thus, television programmes end up always performing a conservative and normative role.

In this chapter I explore television's mobilising and demobilising effects from the perspective of political communication which is an interdisciplinary field of study (Swanson & Nimmo, 1990: 23). From the institutional perspective political communication expresses, sustains and fulfils the interests and functional requirements of political institutions and political systems (Berelson, Lazarsfeld, McPhee, 1954; Campbell, Converse, Miller and Stokes, 1960; Cohen, 1963; Rae, 1967; Milnor, 1969; Tunstall, 1970; Blanchard, 1974; Greenstein & Polsby, 1975; Lipset & Schneider, 1983; Hess, 1984; Morgan, 1986; Tulis, 1987). From a cultural perspective, political communication represents and ratifies the political culture reflected in the character of those institutions, exerting some influence on political behaviour (Barker, 1949; Almond & Verba, 1963; Devine, 1972; Freeman, 1986; Kincaid, 1982; Wildavsky, 1987; Eckstein, 1988). I use these perspectives to organise my argument concerning the role of television in Brazilian politics. The argument is divided into two sections focusing on first, institutional and, second, cultural questions.

### *An Institutional Perspective*

The first section analyses the conservative/innovative role of political communication according to an institutional perspective. I look at how institutions facilitate or inhibit the articulation of party system and civil society; i.e. the attitudes of the political community in relation to communication that inhibits the impact of political partisanship, popular

expectations and political activism. This viewpoint encompasses television's licensing system, state control, electoral laws regulating the use of the mass media by political parties, the strengthening of the television system by the military state to combat communism and integrate the country, and finally the liberalisation of television by the military. I provide evidence of how, under the institutional framework of the licensing system, Brazilian television has been utilised by the elite, by the state and by network owners to develop a superficially competitive and pluralist political system while maintaining a sub-political patriarchal culture. I claim that the State's policies and institutional frameworks did not present significant changes in the post-authoritarian era, in spite of the new licensing system prescribed in the 1988 Constitution.<sup>11</sup>

The institutional perspective comprises five sub-sections. First, I deal with broad questions raised by Lamounier (1993) and Kinzo (1993) concerning institutional structure, governability and the relation of these questions to political communication. Second, I consider the federally controlled licensing system. Third, I look at the development of mass communication in Brazil conceived by the military as a matter of national integration, co-optation and a system of national security. Fourthly, I examine changes in television legislation and state intervention concerning the use of mass communication in electoral campaigns. Finally, I discuss experiences of political liberation in Brazilian television following a decade of military censorship.

I conclude that as the democratisation process evolved in Brazil, television networks previously engaged in opposition politics returned to old traditional alignments. This conservative backlash suggests that the involvement of television networks in the opening process was purely a manipulation of public opinion.

---

<sup>11</sup> According to article n.49 of the 1988 Brazilian Constitution, acts of concession and renewal of concessions of radio and television stations are the exclusive purview of the National Congress. According to article n.224, paragraph 5, concessions or permissions are to last ten years for radio stations and fifteen years for television broadcasts.

### *A Cultural Perspective*

The second section views Brazilian television from a cultural perspective. In this section I follow the tradition of 'critical theory' (Lanigan & Strobl, 1981; Fejes, 1984; Hall, 1982, 1989; Morley, 1980) which include neo-Marxist cultural studies, post-structuralist ideological criticism, and semiotic perspectives. I concentrate on mass television and the Globo Network phenomenon in four sub-sections. First, I discuss TV Globo's broadcasting monopoly and consider the weight of the TV Globo monopoly in terms of audience rates and the success of its fictional productions that contribute to social disintegration. Secondly, I analyse the history of fictional productions by TV Globo, explaining the importance of a mass television system that creates its own cultural products sustaining a national conservative ideology. Thirdly, I concentrate on the invasion of political issues in TV Globo's soap operas establishing the relation between soap operas and electoral processes of 1989 and 1994, in Brazil. Finally, I investigate how TV Globo performs a mediatory function between the state and society while filtering information concerning political institutions and social movements.

In the conclusion I discuss the assumption that the media tend to render intra-party politics superfluous in that extra party politics, i.e. political communication, has assumed a main role for political representation in Brazil. Certain strategies of political communication enable parties to address incongruent conceptions of politics that are meaningful for different social groups in a very uneven society. In this sense I argue that television performs an integrative role not only between state and society but also integrates a modern, urban, well informed Brazil with a backwards, underdeveloped, poor, illiterate Brazil.

## Section 1

### **The Institutional Perspective of Political Communication**

#### **General Approach: Institutional structure, governability and political communication.**

Civil society and political parties do not regulate Brazilian television as they do in Germany and Netherlands, especially until the mid-eighties when the German media system 'was characterised by a dual system of private press and public broadcasting' (Kaid & Holtz-Bacha, 1995:63). Until 1990, when the commercial RTL plus and SAT 1 were created, German political parties were distinguished to influence a balance of views by carefully supervising television. Today, the main public channels, ARD and ZDF, still have a reputation for safe programming. In Netherlands, the media also tend to represent the whole social and political spectrum.<sup>12</sup> If such a regulative base existed in Brazil, public stations such as the 'Rede Nacional de TVs Educativas' (Educational Network TVs) would receive more economical and political support, performing an important function of attenuating the blurring of social distinctions such as class, race, gender, religion and regional differences that is accomplished by private stations monopolised by elite groups. In other words, public broadcasting does not challenge a commercial television that hinders the emergence and expansion of new political identities throughout Brazilian society. As mentioned before, political communication's conservative function occurs through the consolidation or crystallisation of objective differences within society<sup>13</sup> and the construction of an illusion of harmony based on the

<sup>12</sup> See Dorling Kindersley (ed.), *World Reference Atlas*, London, 1998 and also Lee Kaid, L. & Holtz-Bacha, C., *Political Advertising in Western Democracies- Parties & Candidates on Television*, London, Sage Publications, pp.61-89 and 143-161.

<sup>13</sup> Examples of this sedimentation of differences are numerous in the mass media, but are particularly evident in the daily news and soap operas. Since the mid 90's TV Globos's news has contributed to the intensity of a social apartheid in Rio de Janeiro and other states when insistently screening scenes of the so-called '*arrastão*'. This was a human net composed of dozens of poor, black, suburban teenagers who banded together on upper class beaches to rob the well-to-do in their leisure time. Scenes of panic on Rio's beaches showed the rich fleeing from the poor criminals and led middle and upper class people to systematically abandon beaches on sight of any potential 'suspects'. Other examples of sedimentation of differences can be found in the soap operas transmitted in prime time with an audience of 60% to 70% of the population. The division poor/rich, black servant or black

positivity of the social order. Additionally, the media reactivates judgement about the moral and the abject (Waisbord, 1996).<sup>14</sup> In addition to its integrative and conciliatory effects, television conservatism disarticulates *the political*<sup>15</sup> by creating an ambiguity around political positions and concepts such as democracy. As said before, a conciliatory television in Brazil builds a common ground unifying different political tendencies. In doing so, television postpones the constitution of radical political differences in Brazilian society.

I agree with Lamounier's (1993:117) 'revisionist' analysis in which conservatism and governmental weakness in Brazil are related to the institutional structure of the political system. According to this view, the Brazilian model 'combines fragmentation and a multiplicity of counterweights appropriated to the so-called consociational democracies with the... expectation that the resulting blockades can be controlled or neutralised by the plebiscitarian nature of the presidency'.<sup>16</sup> There is evidence of party fragmentation and instability concerning the composition of National Congress since the inauguration of the New Republic (Kinzo, 1993: 141). The composition of the National Congress has been altered every year despite the fact

---

slave/white millionaire is present in most plots. The mass media also calls considerable attention to religious scandals and corruption involving (neo) Pentecostal sects as opposed to the dominant Catholic order.

<sup>14</sup> Examining the coverage of the *Collor* affair (the Brazilian Watergate), Waisbord notes that the Brazilian television and printed press tell political stories in melodramatic fashion, reinforcing a populist morality. The 'Collor's War' was a good example when the media spent months publicising internal conflicts in President Collor's family. Moreover, the use of soap opera narrative has extended to the coverage of students' manifestations claiming for President Collor's impeachment in September 1992. At that time students were called 'Anjos Rebeldes' (Rebel Angels), with clear reference to TV Globo soap opera 'Anos Rebeldes' (Rebel Years). See S. Waisbord, 'Contando historias de corrupcao: narrativa de telenovela e moralidade populista' in *Comunicação e Política* (Rio de Janeiro, v.III, n.2, n.n, May-August, 1996) pp. 94-110.

<sup>15</sup> In his deconstructive approach, which focuses on the politico-discursive production of society, Laclau ('Deconstruction, Pragmatism, Hegemony', (Essex, mimeo, 1995) esp. pp. 2-3) discusses two dimensions of the political: the political as the instituting moment of society and also the acts of political institution as incompleteness. According to his theory, the expansion of political relations in society may operate a double displacement. To expand the political 'at the expense of the social' produces social links leading to a 'decentring of society'. It means that 'what makes the political possible- the contingency of the acts of institution- is also what makes it impossible' because 'no instituting act is fully achievable.'

<sup>16</sup> B. Lamounier, 'Institutional Structure and Governability in the 1990s' in M.D.G. Kinzo, *Brazil: The Challenges of the 1990s*, (London, The Institute of Latin American Studies and British Academic Press, 1993), p. 117. In contemporary political science, consociational democracy designates an institutional structure adopted in stable democracies like Switzerland, Belgium and Holland which have consolidated a representative democracy on the macropolitical level by means of counterweights and rights to protect minorities against majority. Lamounier (1993:118) attempts to show that Brazilian political system has become, on one of its axes, 'excessively consociational and that there seem not to exist, within the democratic mechanism, adequate counterweights for dealing with the ensuing fragmentation and blockades; and therefore, the final result may well be a perverse and unstable polyarchy exhibiting a strong tendency towards ungovernability'.

that between 1985 and 1994 there was only three legislative elections.<sup>17</sup> During the ten years following Brazil's democratic transition, the party system underwent a process of high fragmentation culminating in at least fourteen relevant parties represented in the National Congress.<sup>18</sup> The largest parties like PMDB and PDS underwent a process of division, losing more than half of their seats in Congress. Moreover, some parties like the PRN and the PPR were created just before the general elections of 1989 and 1994, establishing the influence of pragmatism in the proliferation of new parties that crave free exposure on national television.

The 1989 election provides an excellent illustration of media influence on the weakening of the party system (Kinzo, 1993:144). Immediately before the election, 'representation in the legislative houses changed every day... the election was the best example of disconnection between presidentialism and the party system'. The PRN, a small party lacking parliamentary background, captured the republican presidency with the election of Collor de Mello. This highlights several of the effects of institutional conditions that determine political competition, hampering the development of party politics and making the emergence of strong parties a project of some considerable difficulty.

Lamounier (1993:136) has drawn attention to the facilitation of media access by law, in identifying the risks faced by a fragmented party system that might aggravate the instability of the presidential regime in Brazil. This is due to a fusion between government leaders and the head of state. To secure a viable parliamentary base, the president depends not only on the degree of fragmentation of the party system but also on his credibility with respect to public opinion. According to this view, free access to the electronic media, both during electoral campaigns and also at any time required by the presidency, contributes to a radicalisation of plebiscitarian presidentialism, which in a highly fragmented system is the great unifying force of the political order.

---

<sup>17</sup> From 1985-1991 data was taken from by M.D.G. Kinzo, *Brazil: The Challenges of the 1990s*, (London, The Institute of Latin American Studies and British Academic Press, 1993), p. 141.

Following Lamounier's (1993) perspective, it is important to emphasise that the fragmented Brazilian party system, was not hegemonic enough to develop a media system anchored in either the political parties themselves, or in the ethnic and religious identities of the nation such as in *de facto* consociational systems. The Dutch example, one of the most democratic media systems in Europe (Brants, 1985) is the antithesis to the Brazilian media that diminishes the role of political parties as institutions of proportional representation. Brazilian television privileges centralisation. It generates and emits the impression of coherence in the system by concentrating on symbolic aspects of politics such as personal image.

The point I want to stress here is that, according to this 'revisionist' perspective, the main deficiency of the Brazilian political system is its inability to produce stable governmental compositions and global decision-making in the post-authoritarian era. Conversely the main virtue of the highly centralised mass media is to produce hegemonic viewpoints among the public opinion in this society. Since the military regime transformed the Brazilian State into a powerful bureaucratic and economic actor, decision-making depends on 'material and/or symbolic accretions to the presidency',<sup>19</sup> from television exposure in particular. The paradoxical weakness of the Brazilian Presidential system is that it lacks the support of a consistent party system. As said before, the dearth of institutional sustenance endured by the executive has been counterbalanced by a mass media that assumed a crucial role in the political process.

In this sense, television networks find space to assure the reproduction of conservative forces in several ways. I shall highlight only four. First, they assure unity and national security by sustaining the president and by disseminating hegemonic views concerning political, economic and social issues. The broadcast networks guarantee access to publicly owned channels of communication by providing support for the president's actions and decisions. This

---

See Table 1, 'Changes in Party Representation in the National Congress (Senate+ Federal Chamber) 1985-1994' in the Appendix to Chapter 5. Table 1 illustrates the transitional character and the growing fragmentation of the Brazilian party system from 1985 to 1995.

<sup>18</sup> See Table 1 as above.

is accomplished by means of positive images in the daily news that increase popular evaluations of the government. The media thus supplement the executive power with legitimacy and stability to govern. This support is politically vital since the president generally lacks support from the National Congress composed by an electoral system that combines majority elections for president and proportional elections for Congress. The mixed electoral system encourages a multiparty system not able to produce consensus around governmental decisions.

Second, the free use of media every sixty days before elections by all parties represented in National Congress entails further fragmentation of the political party system. This intensive televised exposure is guaranteed by electoral legislation that attempts to democratise television exposure to all parties allowing them national Free Airtime during elections. Such allowance has led to disputes for proportional Free Airtime and has encouraged the creation of new parties that should receive daily at least one minute of national televised projection. Free Airtime, then, induces both splits within large parties that already enjoy an exaggerated proportion of airtime and also makes attractive projects of merging small parties in a bid to secure more exposure in the media.

Third, television monopolises the consumer market, imposing a certain lifestyle upon a population divided by tremendous cultural and social differences. This influences social disintegration and political disarticulation given that broadcasts' production is concentrated in Rio de Janeiro and São Paulo. In this way, television programmes and soap operas tend to reflect cultural aspects, values and attitudes that are common and acceptable in these cosmopolitan centres but unsuitable or unpalatable for most of the population living in small towns all over the country. The adoption of certain behaviours that are very popular in Rio de Janeiro's beaches, such as using tiny bikinis, may have already caused serious problems linked

---

<sup>19</sup> M.D.G. Kinzo, *Brazil: The Challenges of the 1990s*, (London, The Institute of Latin American Studies and British Academic Press, 1993), p. 118.

with prostitution and social disintegration in small communities in the conservative North and Northeast.<sup>20</sup>

Fourth and last, the elite-oriented character of the media tends to make intra-party politics superfluous. That is, television replaces parties in which it expands the political role of mass communication when this is inscribed in the infrastructural logic of *iterability* that composes the structure of undecidability. Based on this presupposition, there is no reality previous to discursive construction, there is nothing else than the manufacture of society by means of repetition through innovation promoted by the media. In this way iterability explains superfluous character of political parties challenged by conservatism and the consensual power of mass media that perform a hegemonic politico-discursive production of society. For these reasons, communication as iterability expands the political, which is no longer a subsystem under the laws of society but the power to create reality through its universalising *representation*.

#### **The Licensing System: State Control and the Concession of Television Channels in Brazil**

Mass communication has been highly implicated in State and government since the 1930s. The Brazilian communication system had often been instrumental to the dissemination of the state ideology that, in exchange, implemented major technological innovations in the electronic media. On one hand, the electronic media assists the survival of the conservative project whilst on the other, conservative groups tend to invest and develop a sophisticated mass media that is democratic in the sense that it shows exactly what the people want to see. In the following discussion I expose the growing implications between mass media, the state and the elite.

During Getulio Vargas' second government (1951-1954) the State definitively secured its power over the public concessions of radio and television channels through the Decree

---

<sup>20</sup> The film, 'Bye Bye Brazil', directed by Cacá Diegues, deals with the problem of the invasion of mass culture

n.29.783/51, when in the 1960s the licensing system became a special power of the President. However, a licensing system controlled by the Federal Government has regulated radio broadcasting in Brazil since the 1930s, when social communication underwent a period of important state controlled development during the *Estado Novo*. In these authoritarian times, Vargas' Department of Press and Propaganda (DIP) pressurised radio networks to align the language of their programmes to the ideological project of the State, networks that failed to obey were closed down.

During his second mandate, Getulio attempted to exert the same power that had existed during the authoritarian times, over radio networks. However, in 1953 radio stations and the press assumed a clear oppositional stance to Vargas's government. The structure of broadcasting enterprises, however, was not undermined. Indeed, it was precisely during this period that national television was established in Brazil. This occurred with the institution of the *TV Tupi Difusora* of São Paulo in September 1950, integrating the already powerful communication network, *Diários Associados*, owned by Assis Chateaubriand.

Throughout this first phase, from the 1950s to the 1960s, Brazilian television production was exclusively regional and, as there was no videotape, consisted of live broadcasts. It was also strongly dependent on the United States, which, at that time, already had a hundred television channels. The Brazilian television system was structured according to North-American patterns of media exploitation by private enterprises, through the concession of channels. Moreover, American firms like General Electric and RCA Victor provided all Brazil's television equipment, technical assistance and personnel training. All Brazilian television programmes endeavoured to follow North American patterns of creativity. American sponsors exercised considerable power over programme scheduling, creating series like *Cine Max Factor*, *Reporter Esso*, *Teatro Walita*, some of them produced by the McCann Erickson (Sodré, 1966:464).

---

that destroys traditional communities in Brazil, causing disintegration and poverty.

From 1960 onwards television moved to a new phase of 'national integration' with the expansion of existing networks and the installation of new technological apparatus that provided the possibility of concentrating production of all programmes transmitted in the country within a single centre: Rio de Janeiro- São Paulo. In 1962, the Brazilian Code of Telecommunications established that the concession of public channels of communication would be ten years for radio and fifteen for television.

In 1964, television networks figured strongly in the ideological preparation of public opinion for the civilian-military coup d'état. TV Tupi, for instance, became the scenario of military-civilian social-ideological action to bring about the mobilisation of Brazilian society against João Goulart's national popular government. Assis Chateaubriand, owner of the communication network Diarios Associados, which included TV Tupi, transformed his own São Paulo residence into a centre of opposition against President João Goulart (Dreifuss, 1981:233). The plan of action held by the elite(s) and the military was to stop popular claims that were proliferating in the society and at the same time undermine the bases of João Goulart's populism. To this end, television networks gave prominent access to important intellectuals, economists, politicians, artists and religious personalities to support the ideas intended to legitimise the 1964 coup. The Institute of Research and Social Studies (IPES) performed an important task in this ideological action (Dreifuss, 1981).

The opposition to President João Goulart revealed that even while dependent on the State, television enjoyed the independence and influence required to accomplish its conservative/innovative task. Television proved to be a fourth centre of power alongside the Executive, Senate and Federal Congress.

After the 1964 Revolution, Brazilian television experienced its greatest development from 1964 to 1979 with the founding of TV Globo. Globo was instrumental in advancing a capitalist regime controlled by the State. The military established very close relations with social communication. One of their main political strategies was the valorisation of the mass communications as a channel for the diffusion of state ideology and also using it as a solid

infrastructure for information services in order to guarantee national security. It is plausible to claim that, for public opinion, the legitimacy of the military regime was built almost entirely by television and radio propaganda.

Military control over the mass media was legitimised in 1967 with the creation of the Ministry of Communications. This concentrated in the hands of the State all power over the mass communication, which was previously accomplished by regulation agencies generally influenced by, if not dominated by, communication networks. The creation of a Ministry of Communications also created technical conditions to the modernisation and expansion of the telecommunications system enabling the establishment of TV networks in all national territory. At this time public concessions of radio and television channels were given exclusively to groups supporting the military government that developed several mechanisms of pressure on communication enterprises. The concentration of the mass media (newspapers, radio and television) by a very few reliable enterprises, like the Globo Network, also favoured the monopoly of communications.

The regulation of mass communication since the 1930s indicates the existence of mutual implications between the state and television in Brazil. During the military regime the State permitted the private initiative new television and radio network concessions but retained for itself the basic control of the means of communication. Regarding television, the frontiers between the power of State control and private initiative action were very subtle. As General Geisel declared in 1976, 'the government cannot give up this control without failing to accomplish its duty, otherwise it will put the nation's security at risk'.<sup>21</sup>

An analysis of the specific developments of political communication both in Brazil and in other Latin American democracies such as Mexico illustrates that this dependence undermines the political party system threatening the establishment of fully democratic

---

<sup>21</sup> E. Geisel, Speech - ABERT, 1/10/1976. In R. Ortiz, Cultura Brasileira e Identidade Nacional, (Rio de Janeiro, Brasiliense, 1985), p. 88.

regimes. Previous studies reveal that in the Mexican case, Televisa network<sup>22</sup> concentrates substantial power (Adler, 1993; Trejo, 1985; Gonzalez Molina, 1987, 1990; Arredondo Ramirez, 1991) acting in a comparable role to Brazil's TV Globo. Both monopolies of communication furnish weak governments with crucial support. This goes some way toward explaining why the electronic media become controversial actors in political change since their mass messages discredit politicians and political parties directly. This keeps political faith low instead of legitimating political parties in their task of mobilising and organising civil society.

### **The television system installed by the military: TV as national security priority**

Relations between State and television networks after 1964 were functional to the establishment of a conservative and demobilising order in Brazil. These relations were defined by:

- (1) State's power to grant public television channels to be temporarily explored by private enterprises, as was the case with TV Globo, TV Manchete and TV Silvio Santos, for example;
- (2) the indirect interference of governmental propaganda investments on television;
- (3) the transmission of official propaganda by television;
- (4) State censorship over television's programmes.

Television developed significantly in Brazil during the military regime (1964-84). To build the nation's modern identity, that regime attempted to institute a patrimonial-liberalism by means of a state-led liberalisation of the economy. The original intention was to de-politicise differences in society by introducing ideological elements of the *Política de Segurança Nacional* (National Security Politics). It was definitely the loyalty of private networks' to the authoritarian state, and the successive rewards received from the military government in

<sup>22</sup> For an account of Televisa Network and its implication in Mexican politics see Daniel C. Hallin, 'Dos Instituciones, un camino: A Televisão e o Estado na Eleição de 1994 no México' in *Comunicação e Política* (Rio

exchange, that favoured the development of mass communication in Brazil. Since 1964, an official propaganda of the military government was included among television networks programmes, mainly on TV Globo, the expansion of which was concomitant with the installation and evolution of the military regime.<sup>23</sup>

As mentioned in the previous section, during the General Costa e Silva Administration in 1967, the military provided support for an integrative television by creating the Ministry of Communications to advance a capitalist regime favoured by the State. As Santos (1992) has pointed out, 'in the absence of a strong market logic, able to produce social solidarity independently from governmental actions, the anti-disruptive reaction should necessarily come from another sphere: the administrative and military'.<sup>24</sup>

Military policy in the area of telecommunications aimed not only at the establishment of a systematic political propaganda to the extra-oligarchic public but also at supplementing the gaps left by a weak State, by promoting imaginary satisfaction and concrete social policies.<sup>25</sup> In order to systematise pro-governmental propaganda, General Costa e Silva created a Special Agency for Public Relations (*Assessoria Especial de Relações Públicas da Presidência da República- AERP*) in 1968. The AERP developed a broad campaign of political propaganda on

---

de Janeiro, Centro Brasileiro de Estudos Latino-Americanos, CEBELA, May-August, 1996, v.III, n.2), pp. 72-93.

<sup>23</sup> TV Globo was given a concession for the use of a public channel on the 30th December 1957, by means of the Decree n.42.946, signed by President Juscelino Kubitschek.

<sup>24</sup> W. G. dos Santos (1992) *Razões da Desordem*, (Rocco, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) p. 17-8. The author also calls attention to the radical difference between the Brazilian and the British cases as, after the Industrial Revolution, the internal market in Britain was integrated and nationalised, overcoming factions within the oligarchic elites. This occurred after successive Acts broadened the political. Finally, the modern Welfare State was established. In the Brazilian case, the absence of a nationally integrated market posed difficulties for the communion of interests into political parties defined in terms of their manifestos and their ability to articulate global projects. Meanwhile, Brazilian political disputes remained circumscribed to intra-elites' disputes around individual projects. The alternations of power, which do not show any significant reorientation in economic or administrative policies, indicate evidence of these dynamics. (WGS, 1992: p.19)

<sup>25</sup> It is true that Globo Network is aware of its social responsibility. According to its commemorative book 'Globo Thirty Years' '...after entertainment and information, which are also made with social concerns, the projects oriented to the community are the third major component among Globo's programs. The Globo's actions includes 'Child's Hope' (Criança Esperança) and 'Global Action' (Ação Global).' In 1984, Globo developed 'Northeastern people, Brazil in the search for solutions' (Nordestinos, o Brasil em busca de Soluções), an eleven month campaign searching for solutions to poverty in the most needy regions of Brazil. With the support of local universities, TV Globo promoted debates and sent the conclusions to the authorities and to several segments of the civil society. 'Rio against Crime' (Rio Contra o Crime) and 'Globo Service' (Globo Serviço) are other social initiatives developed by TV Globo. See 'Globo Trinta Anos', Editora Globo S.A., 1996, (Rio de Janeiro, Brazil) pp. 287-8.

television, following the precepts of the Superior College of War (*Escola Superior de Guerra – ESG*).

The AERP aimed to:

(a) Grasp interests and aspirations of groups, classes, religions, by listening to national claims, forecasting them and also monitoring the reflexes of the governmental action; (b) Produce campaigns to strengthen the national character; (c) Contribute toward building a feeling of national unity under the inspiration of economic development; (d) Guarantee an adequate flux of information to the Brazilian people in order to make them more participatory in the developmental process, stimulating interest in the progression of national questions.<sup>26</sup>

Moreover, during the military regime the mass media remained under control of the Law of National Security, Art.39. Censorship prohibited the transmission of negative messages against the regime, repressing the following situations:

(1) War or subversion of the politico-social order; (2) Collective disobedience to the law; (3) Animosity within the army, between the army and the social classes or civilian institutions; (4) Any call to violence between social classes; (5) Strike action by public services or essential activities; (6) Odioussness or racial discrimination. (Caparelli, 1980:163)

Despite State censorship some journalists and conscientious objectors tried to escape state control, precipitating the debate about issues strictly prohibited by the Law of National Security. This was so with Vladimir Herzog, director of the Department of Journalism of TV Cultura, owned by the State. The repressive wings of the military government subsequently assassinated Herzog. With his murder it became clear that such objection through state-owned media networks would not be tolerated. This exposed the existence of enormous conflicts and extreme cases of internal antagonism between television professionals- programme directors, writers, actors, producers, and owners.

<sup>26</sup> See S. M. Rummert 'Os Meios de Comunicação de Massa como Aparelhos de Hegemonia', MA. thesis, (Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Instituto de Estudos Avançados em Educação, 1986, Rio de Janeiro).

According to the Basic Manual of the Superior College of War, mass communication constituted 'an extremely powerful instrument to the fast and equalised diffusion of ideas, creation of emotional states, alteration of habits and attitudes. Well utilised by the elite, they might become an important factor for the refinement of political expression; used in a biased way, they can generate and increment nonconformity'.<sup>27</sup> With respect to national security and psychological operations, the military Manual maintained that:

When the public is not very educated, a simple 'slogan' is sufficient to attain spectacular effects. When it is directed to the elite, it requires a more careful planning. To each psychological manoeuvre it must correspond an idea-power (appealing idea), as an element able to influence and even persuade the public target in the sense of the accomplishment of the psychological mission. The idea-power must appeal to the intelligence or to sentiments (if possible to both at the same time) and it is translated by a specific theme.<sup>28</sup>

Following the above precepts, during the Costa e Silva (1967-1969) administration an official propaganda regulated by the AERP, and controlled by a strict censorship, invaded television channels throughout the country. This occurred as television owners were ready to please the military government (Caparelli, 1980: 157) and so they transmitted intensive campaigns like 'Brazil, love-it or leave-it'.

General Medici's administration (1970-1974) marked the beginning of a new phase of official television propaganda which transmitted several government development projects such as the '*Transamazônica*' Motorway, the Plan of Social Integration, the '*Proterra*', and the coastal hegemony over 200 miles (*Mar Territorial das 200 milhas*). A systematic pro-government campaign was organised in concert with the participation of multinational enterprises that promoted their products by invoking patriotic appeals to reinforce the national consciousness. The main issues highlighted by political propaganda included; union, solidarity, security, faith in Brazil's future, happiness and pride in being Brazilian, and popular themes like; carnival, samba, football, the family and positive images of General Medici.

<sup>27</sup> Brazil, Escola Superior de Guerra, *Manual Básico*, (Rio de Janeiro, Estado Maior das Forças Armadas, Departamento de Estudos, 1977-1978), chapter II, section I: Political Expression, p. 116.

The 'Amaral Neto Reporter', transmitted by TV Globo, remains one of the most significant programmes of this era. It formerly displayed the Government's colossal achievements such as the building of the *Transamazônica*, a motorway cutting across the Amazon rainforest<sup>29</sup> and also breath-taking aspects of the Brazilian landscape like the Iguazu waterfall, depicting Brazil's immense natural potency. A nationalist spirit was one of the main constructions of pro-military visions supported by television in the 1960s and 1970s, which became characterised by patriotic appeals.

In 1970, the whole country was able to watch in colour the national football team winning the World Cup in Mexico. The event was highly valuable to the military project. Official propaganda aimed to conceal its strong authoritarian guidelines. Television news was also employed to exacerbate popular anxiety concerning any resistance to the military regime, in effect, justifying State repression and terrorism. As left-wing activists were tortured in the Brazilian prisons, the main subject on television was 'the Brazilian miracle' and President Medici was systematically on the screen listening to football games from a tiny radio close to his ear crying out, 'ahead Brazil!' (*Prá Frente Brasil!*).

General Medici (1969-74) best expressed the absolute identification between mass communication television and dictatorship with the comment: 'every night I feel happy when I turn on the television to watch the news [referring to TV Globo's *Jornal Nacional*]. While the news reports strikes, agitation, terrorist assaults and conflicts all over the world, Brazil marches in peace towards development. It is as if I had a sedative after a days work' (Guimarães & Amaral, 1985: 7).<sup>30</sup>

During General Geisel's administration (1974-1979), social tensions began to emerge and (to) become visible. The myth of the 'economic miracle' was disintegrating and in order to

<sup>28</sup> Brazil, Escola Superior de Guerra, *Manual Básico*, (Rio de Janeiro, Estado Maior das Forças Armadas, Departamento de Estudos, 1977-1978), chapter III- National Security; sect. IV, 'Psychological Operations', p. 249.

<sup>29</sup> Today the *Transamazonica* motorway is no longer operational but at the time its main utility favoured landowner interests.

<sup>30</sup> C. Guimarães & R.A. Amaral Vieira, 'A Televisão Brasileira na Transição. Um Caso de Conversão Rápida a Nova Ordem', *Série Estudos*, (Rio de Janeiro, IUPERJ, 1985) p.7.

reanimate satisfaction with the military regime TV Globo initiated a new campaign of popular mobilisation that consisted in making the people believe that the resources to create favourable social and economic conditions were in their own hands. Examples of such campaigns were 'Drive without hatred', *Guie sem Ódio* (1974), asking people to humanise the traffic; 'Shake!'-*Mexa-se* (1975) by means of which the urban population was invited to react against tension and stress by practising physical exercises; 'Give up weapons', *Desarme-se* (1976) against urban violence, suggesting that the people strive to preserve and practice cordiality in social relations. TV Globo campaigns tried to present social effects as if they were the result of isolated causes. The main assumption was that television could control dissatisfaction with political, economic and social crises. TV Globo was left with the difficult task of building a positive atmosphere to redeem the military regime in its worst days.

In 1978, TV Globo promoted one of its most successful campaigns at the beginning of the Children's International Year (UNESCO). The station remained on air for 24 hours requesting donations for almost two million of Brazilian children living in serious state of malnutrition. TV Globo collected more than twenty million *cruzeiros*, a huge amount of clothes, furniture, food and toys sent from all over the country. With this phenomenal mobilisation, TV Globo proved its capacity to deal with questions like starvation and mortality in an isolated way and went some way toward showing that they could be solved through popular solidarity. Basic problems, like those facing the economic model adopted by the military, did not emerge at any moment during this successful campaign (Rummert, 1986:252).

During the 1970s figures concerning the ownership of television sets in Brazil showed a phenomenal increase from 4,584,000, in 1970, to 16,737,000, in 1979 (Avila, 1982:111). According to research by *Embrafilme*, at the end of the 1970s Brazil had the fifth largest television audience in the world, owning more television sets than all other Latin American countries put together (Pereira, 1983:48).<sup>31</sup>

---

<sup>31</sup> Source: *Revista Visão*, (São Paulo, 9/7/1979)

Until 1979 television networks directed their programmes toward entertainment to distract the audience from national themes, in a bid to retain confidence in the military. Only one hour a day was set aside for educational and journalist programmes. Reporters were obliged to speak without saying much and the main objective of television networks was to produce non-informative news. A good example of this occurred in 1978, when the president of TV Globo decided to transmit in prime time news a full story about a terrible flu attacking racing horses. It is important to note that the audience of thirty million could not afford to attend horse races (Moran, 1982:11). Facts like this caused rebellion among TV Globo's professionals so that in 1979, mass dismissals occurred after writing a letter to the population objecting to the editorial board of *Jornal Nacional*. In this case, TV Globo's direction forced the transmission of a text condemning a metal-workers' strike in São Paulo (Moran, 1982: 11).

As seen in this section, the development of a modern television controlled by the military state was a strategy of national security. Since the bureaucratic-authoritarian project was directed to an increase in the concentration of wealth that eventually precipitated an inevitable social crisis, the reproduction of the authoritarian order depended upon television's punctual mobilisation that was part of a more general demobilising political strategy. The high level of creativity and emotional appeals produced by the mass media managed to combine two opposing forces, conservatism and innovation, made possible by the strategy of keeping national issues totally isolated. That is to say, no discourse of equivalence between questions like economic model, poverty, starvation, mortality, social violence, censorship, military regime, and so on, was created. Even retaining subject matters as *differential moments*, eventually focusing on one of them, television was able to create great mobilisation because of the scope of its transmission.

**Electoral Legislation and conservatism: the Free Access of Political Parties to television.**

Here I show that the democratisation of television space by means of electoral legislation also had a conservative impact on Brazilian politics. The popular will, I argue, has not been favoured by the regulation of mass communication through successive electoral laws. Moreover, from 1945 to 1964 Brazil experienced a democratic period in spite of the non-existence of the *Horário Gratuito de Propaganda Eleitoral – HGPE* (Electoral Propaganda Free Air Time), allowing free access of political parties to radio and television.

The use of mass communication by government and political parties in Brazil can be related to a pattern of plebiscitarian presidentialism that does not favour the consolidation of democratic institutions. Plebiscitarian presidentialism has been observed since the revolution of 1930, particularly after 1935, 'when repression of the *Integralista* and communist movements created the conditions for the expansion of Getúlio Vargas personal power'<sup>32</sup> and the weakening of the party system.

Soon after the 1930 Revolution, a new politico-electoral legislation tried to pacify intra-elite conflicts by permitting the creation and proliferation of new political parties through instituting an electoral system based on the principle of proportionality. The first Electoral Code in Brazil that was issued on the 24th February 1932 (Forjaz, 1989: 158) favoured the accommodation micro-interests and the preservation of national unity since it enabled subgroups of the political elite to coexist in legislative chambers and party leadership. In the same way, the first law attempting to regulate electoral propaganda in the media, issued on the 24th July 1950 (Law n.1.164), accredited equal access to the media for all parties but this was not free, it had to be paid. The law restricted to force commercial networks to attribute uniform exposure in all time slots to every party. Article n.130 compelled private networks to apply a fixed price list to all parties purchasing broadcasting space. Moreover, article n.129 prohibited newspapers and radio networks from emitting any positive or negative opinion about citizens and political parties. Previously access to radio was restricted to rich campaigners, which clearly had an impact on party developments.

In August 1962, Law n.4.115 established the *HGPE* for all parties, still permitting paid electoral propaganda in the mass media until 1974. In July 1965 a new Electoral Code extended the *HGPE* beyond electoral years. From this time onward media networks were obliged to entitle a monthly space of one hour for the dissemination of parties' programmes. This exigency was scrapped one year later, in May 1966 by law n.4.961, article n.50.

During the so-called 'democratic era' of 1945-64, the Brazilian multiparty system underwent several reforms and new regulations specifically concerned with electoral campaigns in mass communication that concurred with an increase in political fragmentation. Since this time, a new Electoral Law has been created to regulate almost every election. The main intention of all changes in electoral legislation has been the democratisation of the use of electronic media by political parties, permitting free access to radio and television during electoral disputes. However, this model has increased over-representation in Congress relating it to the wide viewing public, i.e. the proportion of power that smaller states hold in Congress parties has been automatically translated into *HGPE* on television.

The Free Airtime allowed to all parties in August 1962 by law n. 4.115 has not necessarily proven helpful in channelling social demands according to a principle of proportionality. Television exaggerates the already distorted nature of political representation in the National Congress. Moreover, the *HGPE* assists the transformation of mass parties into 'catch-all', or professional-electoral, parties sporting very loose links with their traditional social bases. By using television, political parties develop effective means of catching votes rather than relying on grass-roots support from their original constituency. It is also patent that paid propaganda as opposed to the free variety is not democratic either since it blocks the access of small parties to the most popular means of political information while these would be unable to buy one minute in prime time television sixty days before elections.

Apart from establishing conditions of equality between wealthy parties supporting government and not so wealthy opposition parties, a more positive aspect of the *HGPE* is that it

---

<sup>32</sup> See B. Lamounier 'Institutional Structure and Governability in the 1990s' in M. D'Alva Kinzo,

compensates the power of mass media monopoly to promote their strategies of rhetorical interaction. Biased campaigns made by television networks lead their favourite candidates to dominate political disputes in the volume of rhetorical appeals on a specific theme, *before* the start of the official campaign. This is what W. Riker (1996:10) calls the 'Dominance Principle',<sup>33</sup> which leads opposition parties to abandon appeals on that theme as it is already dominated by candidates supported by the establishment. Dominance regarding a particular issue, is possible since, months before the official electoral competition, private networks highlight their preferred candidates' platform and image during the news and other regular programmes like soap operas, constructing what Lima (1994:9-10; 1995:95-106) calls a 'scenario of political representation' (CP-R). In this sense, electoral laws guarantee equal exposure within the *HGPE* despite the preference of economic groups controlling the media but this occurs too late, after television networks have already built their own candidates' images and a favourable scenario for their approval by public opinion.

The proliferation of new electoral laws after 1964 indicated that changes in mass media legislation aimed to not only democratise but to repress the growth of the opposition parties in National Congress. During the military dictatorship political debate was eliminated from mass media until General Geisel assumed office, initiating a process of *abertura politica* - or 'political opening' - in 1974. President Geisel delivered some liberalising measures enabling parties to recover political debate on television. During the 1974 elections, these liberal measures encumbered the progress of Arena, the situation party, while playing a very helpful role for MDB, the opposition party. On the basis of Geisel's liberalising measures, the MDB elected 16 of 22 senators capturing 60 percent of popular vote. Following the same pattern, the MDB secured 44 percent of the seats in the Federal Congress and attained majoritarian representation in six states.

---

<sup>33</sup> According to Riker, when one party successfully wins the argument on an issue, the other side ceases to discuss it, while the winner continues to exploit it (the Dominance Principle). When both sides fail to persuade - to win the argument on an issue - both cease to discuss it and search for some other, more profitable issue (the

Since rotation of power was not among the main projects behind electoral legislation, the *HGPE* was prohibited in August 1974 by Law n.6.091, created by Federal Deputy Etelvino Lins (Arena-PE). From then on, electoral propaganda should be paid and restricted to the publication of candidates' curriculum vitae in newspapers and magazines. In July 1976, the military regime approved Law n. 6.339, known as *Lei Falcão*, which was maintained until 1982. This law was destined to challenge the oppositions' growth, maintaining a conservative majority in the National Congress. It limited party propaganda on radio and television to a strict publication of candidates' curriculum vitae, name of the party, registration number, time and location of next rallies, and a photograph and a voice in off-peak advertising time. Candidates looked forbidding in propaganda photographs and *Lei Falcão* proved to be helpful to Arena's deputies. In the 1978 elections many Arena candidates recovered seats in the Congress (M. Figueiredo, 1995: 124). In 1982 there was a small relaxation of *Lei Falcão* with the re-establishment of paid propaganda on radio and television and also the re-introduction of party debates.

The civilian regime installed in 1985 extended the suffrage to illiterates. At the same time, National Congress passed several bills expanding politicians rights to *HGPE* on television. The number of political parties in 1985 was approximately thirty, all of which were granted one hour of free broadcast per year. Moreover, candidates enjoyed free access to prime time television for the last sixty consecutive days before an election. These unpaid party broadcasts were allocated an hour in the morning and another from 8:00 to 9:00 p.m., seven days a week. The new legislation permitted live television debates among front runners and allowed parties to purchase extra advertising time over and above the gratuitous two hours. This re-democratisation of party propaganda in the electronic media was endorsed by the 1988 Constitution, article n. 17. This gave back to political parties the right of free access to radio and television without restrictions concerning format and content of electoral broadcasts. The

---

Dispersion Principle). See W.H. Riker, *The Strategy of Rhetoric*, (New Haven, Yale University Press, 1996) p.10.

1988 Constitution also voted for important changes in television's autonomy from State to become law in the following years. According to the new constitutional instructions Senate and Federal Commission should participate in the decision of granting and renewing television licenses.

Notwithstanding the plethora of new opportunities given to politicians by the 1988 Constitution to publicise their platforms, studies in this area made by O. Olsen – Director of a major poll institute, the IBOPE (Brazilian Institute of Public Opinion Statistics) – conclude that political communication in Brazil is a model of inefficiency:

Considering the number of opportunities the Brazilian electoral system gives to politicians to expound their ideas to the general public, political communication in Brazil is undoubtedly a model of inefficiency, although our electoral marketing is among the most sophisticated in the world. Despite the enormous amount of information to which voters are submitted, the vast majority is unable to outline one basic proposal put forward by any political party.<sup>34</sup>

In 1989, the new electoral law in fact produced unexpected results in the first presidential elections in the post authoritarian era. The lessons learned from the Collor de Mello campaign led to the creation of Law n.8.713 that was intended to regulate the 1994 general elections for the Presidency, Congress and Senate. The main objective of this legislation was basically to protect the voter against fraud and deception such as those imposed by the 1989 PRN electoral broadcasts. It also aimed at preventing the manipulation of public opinion by communication networks favouring particular candidates. It seems that few, if any, of these objectives were accomplished. TV Globo abetted Fernando Henrique Cardoso's subsequent dominance through the volume of rhetorical appeals on the combat against inflation that was broadcast nation-wide.

The 1994 electoral law prohibited the exhibition of previously recorded 'external' scenes; only images broadcast from the television studio were permitted. It also proscribed the participation of anyone apart from the candidate and his candidate for the vice-presidency.

---

<sup>34</sup>O. Olsen, 'Pesquisas e Fontes de Informação Política no Brasil', paper presented at the International Seminar on Political Communication and Electoral Marketing, São Paulo, Sept. 1990, quoted by Magalhães de Castro,

These restrictions caused not merely a total loss of the main characteristics of television language but also neutralised the important resource parties had to prove their work and also their popularity among the electorate.

In my view this law directly affected the Workers' Party. Before the endorsement of the Law n.8.713, PT's campaign was already broadcast and being commented on by the press. The PT's so-called '*Caravana da Esperança*' (Rally of Hope) was to be a main television attraction in the 1994 electoral propaganda. Hours and hours of videotape were scheduled to show the PT's leader travelling with a Workers Party delegation, just as Column Prestes did more than 50 years before. Lula had toured most of the national territory speaking with voters from all regions and backgrounds in order to discover their main wishes and these were included in the PT's party platform. Because of the new electoral law, the televised broadcast of the Workers' Party campaign presented only some pictures of the enormous event. PT's campaigns on television resulted in disaster when compared to its main opponent, the PSDB, led by Cardoso who defended an economic plan massively commended in Globo Network news and soap operas.

According to debates upon the dispositions of the 1994 Electoral Law (Albuquerque, 1995), new prohibitions were not democratic at all. They have reduced the informative potential of political parties unable to use the same weapons television networks employed in their news and fictional programmes appeasing some candidates and denigrating others before and during the *HGPE*. Because of technical limitations imposed by law, political parties could not rectify official versions of facts proving their contrary versions with the help of images and interviews. Moreover, political support given to some parties by the intellectuals and a community of artists was also banished from the media.

In 1994, Law 8.713, which imposed severe penalties against communication networks showing favouritism to specific candidate, was not consummated. The PSDB and TV Globo

---

'Television and Elites in Post-Authoritarian Brazil', PhD dissertation, (Graduate School of Duke University, 1993).

did not suffer any penalty even after a confession made off-the-record by a State Minister (but captured by cameras and microphones) saying that TV Globo was indeed favouring Cardoso's campaign. This Minister declared that he did not have the 'scruples' to appear on TV Globo's programmes defending the *Plano Real* and lying about low inflation rates. TV Globo escaped without penalty and Cardoso was elected.

For all the above reasons, in 1996 a new law was created (Electoral Law n.9.100 of October 1996) to re-establish all that was forbidden by the previous law. External images, electronic vignettes, interviews on the streets, participation of artists and intellectuals were welcome again in the *HGPE*. Moreover, the Law n.9.100 allowed parties to use local radio and television stations to establish closer contact with voters. It seems that legislation did not touch the most crucial problem confronted by political communication in Brazil: television monopoly. During all these years, television fulfilled its role of large-scale manipulation detracting from popular political participation. Following Schmitter's (1977) observations, one could argue that monopolist television de-politicises the masses destroying public life, since it leads to political inaction and disinformation.

As seen in this section, legislation concerning the mass media underwent considerable changes, not only to democratise the space of television, but also to repress political debate in the media. In either case, changes in electoral legislation proved that easy access of political parties to means of communication did not contribute to party consolidation and the strengthening of democracy in Brazil. The extensive use of mass media for party propaganda, lobbies and government self-promotion seems to have contributed to instability, lack of cohesion and absence of linkage between parties and society. Political communication has strengthened the belief in the unifying power of charismatic politicians. Thus, free access to the media did not act as an incentive to consolidate the representative sub-system that comprises the electoral process, party structure, the internal organisation of Congress and the federative organisation.

### **The elite and television in the democratic transition**

Despite the weakening of the political system in Brazil, television might have a great political relevance for elite groups in transitional periods, when opposition to the state of affairs leads public opinion to create relations of equivalence between a number of issues in national life. In these moments the media provide information and common ground for actors, playing the role of the intermediary between the elite and society. On one hand, television networks cannot challenge the general will and lose their audience, but on the other, they also have to support the hegemonic elite groups to guarantee their public concession. This section concerns the political use of television in Brazil that has been based on fantastic campaigns of mobilisation of public opinion followed by tremendous frustration, discredit in political institutions and conservative worldviews.

From 1977 to 1988, the military conducted their withdrawal from centre-stage by means of a negotiated transition. During this 'transition from above', there was much more at work in the Brazilian scenario than the Globo network monopoly. Television networks like Tupy, Bandeirantes, Manchete, TV Record, TV Cultura, TVE, TV Gazeta, SBT and TV Globo reacted to the liberalisation project in several ways, contributing to the reconstitution of the military regime's political basis and legitimacy for a smooth political change toward democracy.

In fact the liberalisation process led to the military's progressive loss of power and a constant manipulation of the rules of the game to assure government majority in Congress. Clearly, political use of communication, with the proliferation of debate and dialogue was a necessary factor, since reliance on economic performance was no longer feasible. The 'economic miracle' was over and social crisis was uncontrollable.

During the democratic transition (1974-1985), almost all television networks reserved space for political debate in their regular programmes. As indicated before, this process was directly related to a governmental incentive towards public debate in order to re-capture some legitimacy, overcoming internal disputes that were threatening the military as an institution.

'canned politics' in biased, conservative daily evening news - were perceived as influential by the elite. Under the format of improvised conversations or debates recorded live, these programmes were viewed by a qualified audience attracting the most prominent individuals in opinion-formation and government officials.

The important point is that during the transitional process in Brazilian politics the democratisation process seemed unpredictable. No one could understand the consequences of that moment. Perceptions of the elite, the military and also of television entrepreneurs were undergoing significant changes. It was precisely during this time, when there were no parameters to guide the outcome of the transition, that the media discovered the space to shift their alliances, backing the liberal opposition against the military hard-liners. Television conquered a relative autonomy from the military government becoming not only the common ground informing both the elite and the broader society. It also became a focus of experimentation and absolutely unexpected programmes in which the political vanguard could express and challenge the authoritarian status quo in very subtle ways.

During the political transition, the media was able to democratise information by covering the decision-making process, exposing behind the scenes of the government and the crisis of management endured by the military government to public opinion. In this way, military-planned liberalisation phases negotiated with the elite became more accountable as they were mirrored in public opinion. In this sense, television programmes created the setting for a gradual eleven year 'transition from above' with an 'alternation of advances and retreats' (W. Smith, 1986:185).

At the beginning, political forum ratings were low when compared with mass television, at around 8 to 10 percent with peaks of audience reaching 20-25 percent. These elite oriented programmes constituted a horizontal communication, alien to television business. However, these rates decreased and political debate had a brief life in Brazilian television. It is undeniable that within a short time the media brought about some innovations, particularly after television censorship was officially abolished in early 1979.

These threats were due to a disproportionate increase of the autonomous and massive intelligence-repressive apparatus of SNI (National Service of Information), founded by General Golbery. The parallel power of the SNI menaced the unity of Armed Forces. President Geisel (1974-79) then decided to retain the information community power to stabilise the regime by allowing an unexpected liberalisation of the press. This liberation was solely a strategic move to reconstitute the regime by deterring hard-liners in the security community.

During this period, newspapers and weekly magazines were the first to be liberated from hard censorship through a gradual and uneven application of measures. Self-censorship, however, was preserved. Liberalisation also achieved expanded television coverage of domestic politics, capturing new audiences in the more educated upper classes. Prestigious press professionals, intellectuals, moviemakers, music-composers, and press columnists prepared to fight for democracy occupied a special place in televised debates. At the same time the powerful elite also began to utilise political marketing techniques on television as a crucial political strategy. Visible changes were apparent in the relationship between television and politics in Brazil at this time, but these proved to be temporary and superficial. In any case, the crisis of legitimacy of the incumbent elite enabled a growing ability of the opposition to articulate itself. This included the press and television producers and also the urban working class, middle class professionals, the Catholic Church and grassroots social movements.

Magalhães de Castro (1993) identified two simultaneous processes in this new political order when television was incorporated into the political communication circuit and power arena. Firstly, television was adjusted to cater for competitive politics and secondly, the political elite used television as a fresh political resource, as a means of bypassing party structures in those functions related to intra-party elite politics.<sup>35</sup> Castro's study analyses the decrease in censorship at the end of the 1970s when television networks introduced late night political talk shows. This genre of programmes - classified as 'forum politics' as opposed to

---

<sup>35</sup> Magalhães de Castro, 'Television and Elites in Post-Authoritarian Brazil', (Graduate School of Duke University, PhD Dissertation, 1993).

From 1979 to 1980, a vanguard journalistic television became evident with the inauguration of political forum programmes. Castro (1993:30) has called this period the 'societal' phase as 'it was led by independent producers, it featured more opinion leaders than politicians and explored politics in its loosest sense. The feeling created was of society recovering the speech, the naming, and interpretation of the country's reality'.<sup>36</sup> Given the market and journalistic interest in the politicisation of television, domestic politics was gradually reintroduced in late night shows in a continued repressive atmosphere in which the fear of government retaliation was perceptible. Producers like F. Barbosa Lima, who idealised the programme *Abertura* (Opening), an allusion to President Geisel's democratisation project, believed that by exercising freedom of expression the new series created opposition to the military regime by pressing for democracy. *Abertura* was, however, committed to assisting the soft-liners' project of gradual democratisation and did not exclude the regime. With the participation of opinion leaders, for example, personalities from cultural circles and celebrities from the jet set, intelligentsia, politics and business, *Abertura* bridged government and society with the sponsorship of CEF- the Federal Savings Bank. This provided a space where government figures and opinion leaders appeared side by side as participants in the democratisation effort. Simultaneously, it also supplied a new space for the opposition and a useful instrument to legitimate and give credibility to the military democratisation project.

After *Abertura*, several other programmes in this genre emerged like *Canal Livre* (Free Channel) in which the Declaration of Human Rights was read at the end of each programme. *Canal Livre* followed a biographical line exploring the humanity of the people. At a time of growing political polarisation (1980-86), instead of setting out ideological debates, *Canal Livre* invested in political moderation by humanising the guests, among them government authorities, focusing on their personal views. Overall, *Canal Livre* was able to channel feelings in a society that was recapturing its sovereignty.

---

<sup>36</sup> In Magalhães de Castro, *Television and Elites in Post-Authoritarian Brazil*, (Graduate School of Duke University, PhD Dissertation, 1993), p. 30.

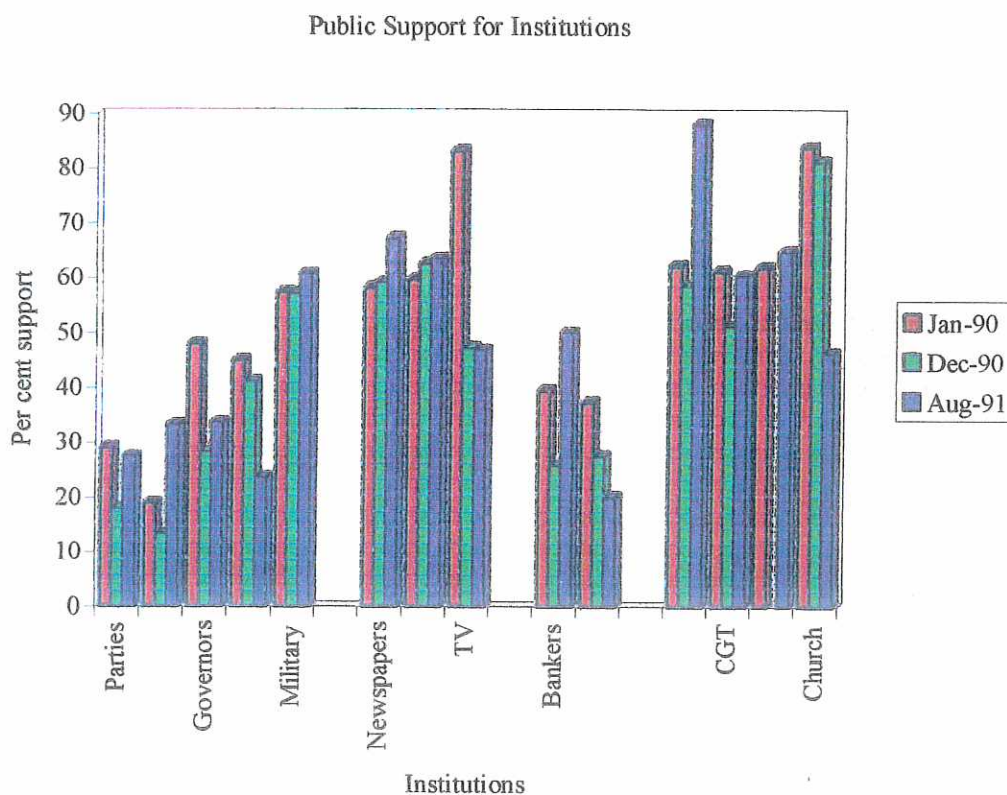
From 1981 to 1984 television networks embarked upon the business of producing forum politics programmes, taking the market from independent producers. This second phase of 'institutional' politicisation of media networks was marked by a proliferation of programmes like *Critica & Autocrítica*, *Globo Revista*, *Diálogo Nacional*, *Ferreira Neto*, *Sem Censura*, *Diálogo*, *Bom Dia Brasil*, *Debate em Manchete*, *Jogo de Carta* and *Persona*. There was also a massive ingress of the business community, economists, politicians, jurists, and journalists to these programmes, which ultimately suffered decisive changes in their profile. Over this period networks like Globo, Manchete and TVS created their own programmes. In general, these forum programmes presented a deeper involvement in politics, the participation of weighty power holders and a general support to Tancredo Neves' *Aliança Democrática* in the negotiation with hard-liners of a direct election for the Presidency.

Different from the first years of democratic 'opening' (1985-1988), televised political programmes caused anticipation and frustration of all hopes in the democratic process. The electronic media was no longer the forum for avant-garde ideas, instigating debates or political evaluation. It developed into a means for instilling participation, campaigning for votes and manoeuvring public opinion. It was only around December 1990 that the Brazilian people lost their faith in television as an institution<sup>37</sup> (Chart 1). This probably occurred after the public realised that, as opposed to radio and newspapers, optimism and promises disseminated by television, concerning imminent democratisation, freedom, respect of human rights and establishment of social rights, were unrealistic. Clear disparities between promises on the media and the appalling reality became increasingly salient. Many also lost faith in the Church, confidence in political parties remained low and the CUT – *Central Única dos Trabalhadores* (Unique Workers' Central) – closely related with the Workers' party, won popular credence.

---

<sup>37</sup> See Table 2 'Faith in Institutions- Brazil, 1990/1991' in the Appendix to Chapter 5.

## Chart 1

**Faith in Political Institutions – Brazil, 1990-91**

Source: IBOPE

Popular support for television dramatically decreased by almost half at the end of December 1990 after a series of intensive campaigns that created many unfulfilled expectations in society. From 1985 to 1990 the electronic media promised democracy and social justice but these were never accomplished. Brizola (PDT), ex-governor of Rio de Janeiro and 'public enemy' of TV Globo, called these intensive campaigns 'electronic shocks' in the population.

The first electronic shock was delivered by the *Diretas Já* campaign (Direct Elections for the President Now) in 1984, an event in which most television networks had a high involvement. During a couple of months television news showed thousands of people participating in pro-democratic rallies. Hit parades included songs praising the democratisation

process and the *Diretas Já* campaign convinced 80 percent of the population of the need for demanding a rapid return to democracy and immediate election for the Presidency as the only solution for political impasse and economic crisis.

Among the military, the massive involvement of civil society in the democratisation of the regime proved that the end of censorship allowed by the military did not have the expected results. Rather than bringing support and therefore unity to the military, the politicisation of society split liberal positions supported by television networks and hard-liners of SNI. At first the hard-liners were hegemonic since they were able to secure an indirect election to substitute General Figueiredo (1979-1985) in the executive. TV Globo remained with the hard-liners. Over Figueiredo's administration a long process of 'conciliation from above' between moderate sectors of the opposition preceded the 1985 indirect election when Aureliano Chaves and José Sarney, leaders from party government, left the PDS to form a new party, the PFL (Liberal Front Party). This party was able to negotiate with MDB, the opposition party led by Tancredo Neves, a member of the Minas Gerais elite, who became the candidate of the opposition. The PMDB-PFL candidates for the 'Aliança Democrática' coalition, Neves and Sarney, were finally accepted by the military mostly given the tremendous involvement of the mass media in their support, which at the time expressed genuine democratic forces at work in Brazilian society.



*Diretas Já* Campaign - 1984. TV Globo images

Thousands of people manifest their support to Dante de Oliveira's project that was rejected in the National Congress.

Despite the democratic apotheosis and scenes of the people supporting the *Aliança Democrática*, a conservative majority in Congress rejected *Diretas Já*. Following this setback, popular indignation was such that even TV Globo, which did not initially support the democratic campaign, had to change its position. TV Globo was compelled to follow public opinion and the other television networks. At this crucial moment, Globo differentiated itself from dictatorship (Guimarães & Amaral, 1985:10): 'Globo was born with dictatorship, had grown with dictatorship but was not going to die with it'.<sup>38</sup> Strategic alterations in TV Globo's editorial line following its adherence to popular claims provided television with high public support.

Most television networks supported Tancredo Neves, the elite's candidate of 'opposition', demonising the candidate, Paulo Maluf, supported by the hard-liners. The ardent campaign in the media supporting *Aliança Democrática* and its candidate Tancredo Neves, probably aided his success in the 1985 indirect election for the Presidency. At this point public opinion suffered another electronic shock when the first civilian President after 21 years of dictatorship fell extremely ill a day after his appointment to the executive. Neves election was followed by a two-month coverage of his sudden illness, surgery, health recovery, agony and death.



In 1985, the Electoral College elects President Tancredo Neves after 21 years of the military regime

<sup>38</sup> C. Guimarães & R.A. Amaral Vieira, 'A Televisão Brasileira na Transição: Um Caso de Conversão Rápida a Nova Ordem', *Série Estudos* n.44, (Rio de Janeiro, IUPERJ, 1985), p. 10.



In 1985, Tancredo Neves' long agony filmed by TV Globo's cameras at the Hospital das Clinicas, São Paulo



In 1985, Vice-President Jose Sarney assumes office

For two months, television viewers followed a 24-hour coverage of medical reports, hospital scenes, crowds of people praying for Tancredo's recovery, interviews with the family and musical shows with special arrangements for the vanishing president. Tancredo died and Vice-President Sarney, ex-supporter of military regime assumed office reiterating a conservative trend in Brazilian history.

Following the shock of Tancredo Neves death, a third electronic shock accompanied the 1985 municipal elections that dominated prime time television with political propaganda and debates from September to November. This was followed by another intensive campaign for the Cruzado Plan, a zero-inflation shock in the economy launched by President Sarney. A military loyalist, Sarney introduced a new relationship with the media. His agenda was completely adapted to media coverage causing disillusion among public opinion and

weakening party institutions. The worst step was taken when the president recorded a television address invoking all the people to check the application of his anti-inflation plan, monitor prices and communicate abuses. The following day the people took to the streets to complain on behalf of Sarney, closing down commercial establishments that failed to follow the price freeze. Heroic scenes were presented in prime time television news. The people believed that *Plano Cruzado* would solve economic and social problems. All hopes were nonetheless frustrated and the plan abandoned in 1986, after accomplishing its objective of increasing government popularity.

During Sarney's government, the political elite invaded television screens far more than in the military regime. In 1988 the new Congress passed a law creating two daily time-slots in all radio and television stations for the Legislative Assembly's self-produced news. TV owners like TV Globo's Roberto Marinho rejected the abusive use of mass media, supporting Collor de Mello's presidential campaign against political institutions (De Lima, 1993: 98, 103,105). Globo provided favourable and extensive coverage of Collor during the 1989 campaign, proclaiming him as the front-runner several months before the first-round elections. Collor de Mello's anti-politics crusade throughout the 1989 presidential elections delivered another electronic shock of political moralisation, supported by TV Globo, that was never accomplished. In his intensive propaganda, Collor convinced the people that he would remove all corrupt politicians and 'maharajas' from Brazilian politics. Yet after his election, Collor proved to be the most conservative and corrupt of all 'maharajas'. As seen before with TV Globo in Chart 1, television lost public support over the first and second years of Collor's government (1990-1).

To recover its credibility, TV Globo formed the backdrop of another intensive campaign for Collor's impeachment in 1992. Globo gave wide exposure to students' rallies, co-opting the new rebel generation with faces painted in yellow and green, the colours of the Brazilian flag, the so-called *carapintadas*. TV Globo was successful in the co-option of public opinion and dismissal of Collor de Mello who was replaced by a member of the Minas Gerais

politics, President Itamar Franco. Once again, public opinion mobilised by TV Globo's campaign in the name of democracy could not celebrate the demise of traditional politics and the introduction of democracy since the power of political communication was again used to serve the interests of a traditional elite. The interests of the elite were directly pursued in that while Globo greatly strengthened the campaign for impeaching Collor, this was not due to a motive concerning the promotion of democracy but being in tune with a hegemonic consumer market. Now, Itamar Franco may not have been the ideal candidate to represent the interests of Brazil's traditional elite. But the important point to be made here is that his presidency would be less damaging to them than Mello's, which had become more of a personal<sup>39</sup> than an elitist project.



Impeachment Campaign, 1992. TV Globo Images

<sup>39</sup> It is debatable whether Collor was deposed by TV Globo or by a broad movement of public opinion but it is true that the latter could not succeed without the former. According to ex-deputy Ulisses Guimarães' interview in *Imprensa Magazine* (Year VI, September 1992, n. 61, pp.10-15), 'Rede Globo coverage of PC Farias' scandal was decisive for the impeachment campaign against president Collor because it mobilised public opinion in the streets'. According to the same source, Roberto Marinho became upset with Collor's political behaviour, because he used to act without prior consultation.

During the 1994 presidential campaign, television networks again launched a massive crusade to convince the people that Minister Cardoso's Real Plan would solve economic and social problems in the country. Bombarded by all kinds of programmes reporting the successes of the Real Plan, the people believed that the economic shock was a perfect solution for the Brazilian crisis and voted Cardoso for President. At the end of Cardoso's government, social inequality remains the same. This is the way in which television mobilises public opinion for the support of its own political projects, eventually causing social frustration and popular scepticism of politics and politicians.

As seen throughout this section, as the democratisation process evolved, networks decreased their engagement in opposition politics, returned to old alignments and also built new ones with the emergent elite. Programmes like *Abertura* and *Canal Livre* showed genuine tension between government authorities and society, remaining in the memory of television producers as transcending the television's routine agenda or belonging to another tempo. With the re-establishment of 'democracy', traditional politicians had already been bolstered by communicational strategies that reinforced the structural bases of traditional politics and kept alive the operation of patronage machines. Forum politics programmes therefore, began to decline since they were no longer crucial to the affirmation of politicians that, at the time, controlled state houses, federal and state cabinets. As traditional politics survived the regime change, forum politics programmes lost their function and ratings have fallen to below one percent of the viewing public. In 1987-1988 programme, guests were no longer opinion leaders but consisted mostly of members of the power elite such as congressmen, Cabinet members, business people, top technocrats from public and private sectors, head executives of multinationals and top military officers. They were searching for visibility and prestige among peers rather than addressing the public. Nevertheless, it is important to stress that from 1979 to 1988, forum politics programmes performed an important pressure, expanding freedom of speech and creating the very kind of political polarisation that conventional television aimed to

discourage. After only one year of experience, TV Globo and TVS, the most popular commercial networks, removed forum politics programmes from their plans since they were concerned with the size of their audiences rather than fighting for democracy.

Overall, the interruption of an opposition politics and the involvement of the television network in traditional politics again illustrates the work of iterability, which enables the repetition, and innovation, of a conservative order. Abuse of the media leads to a repudiation of politics that corresponds to what social scientists called 'political apathy' at the beginning of the Republican times. In the next section I look at how the politics of mass television contributes to the construction of an 'always new' conservative order in Brazil.

## Section 2

### **The Cultural Perspective of Political Communication**

Here, I explore the conservative efficacy of Brazilian television from a cultural perspective considering aspects of the political culture constructed by communication, paying special attention to narrative structures of television soap operas. I follow the tradition of 'critical theory' focusing on how the Globo Network contributes to the construction of scenarios of political representation. In order to detail the ways this television network homogenises a population divided by tremendous cultural and social difference, I analyse some of its self-produced cultural products that sustain a national conservative ideology in the following subsections:

First, I shall comment on Globo's monopoly and ideological paradigms, tracing a short history of its progressive enlargement. Second, I discuss the emergence of typically Brazilian soap operas, through which TV Globo presented the viewers with an opportunity to participate in the national cultural process and social reality, highly influenced by a populist, coronelistic and clientelistic universe.

Third, I discuss the recent invasion of political issues in TV Globo's soap operas that have promoted a certain denigration of political institutions by means of hegemonic interpretations in the fictional world. I use the concept of 'scenario of political representation', *Cenário de representação política* (CR-P) (Lima, 1994) that defines the forms through which the media relate the political and electoral processes. In this section I also show how TV Globo performs a mediating function between the state and society whilst filtering information concerning political institutions and social movements by calling attention to subjective and moral aspects of events.

### **General approach: TV Globo's Broadcasting Monopoly<sup>40</sup>**

In spite of the establishment of four national commercial networks and one state-owned network by the military, to date the Globo network has retained a *de facto* monopoly over the audience. Since the 1970's Globo's monopoly<sup>41</sup> of mass communication is the main representative of Brazil's hybrid model in which modernity coexists with pre-modernity. Competition with TV Globo is hopeless since it is both vertically and horizontally dominant in the field. Globo controls both its productions and its own advertising agencies, radio stations, a national newspaper, a publishing house, plus businesses such as records and video companies. Globo captures an average 63 percent of the national audience during peak times.

---

<sup>40</sup> I would like to thank Maria Alice Fontes, Director of Globo Network Documentation Centre, who provided all the necessary information for this chapter. I also acknowledge Hans Donner, Globo's designer, author of TV Globo computer graphics aesthetic project, for his interview; Gilda Espezol Antoniazzi from the Central Globo of Communication, Suzana França from the Division of Videographics and Therezinha Santa Rita from Globo's Documentation Centre Library.

<sup>41</sup> Globo's monopoly has been object of study by scholars in the field of political science and communication (Prado, 1973; Sodré, 1977; Milanese, 1978; Carvalho, 1981; Kehl, 1981; Kotscho, 1986; Lemos, 1984; Ribeiro & Botelho, 1981; Lins da Silva, 1982; Mattos, 1982; Dassin, 1982; Miranda & Pereira, 1983; Potsch, 1983; Souza, 1984; Távola, 1984; Vieira & Guimarães, 1985; Melo, 1985; Ramos, 1986; Távola, 1986; Sarti, 1986; Herz, 1987; Vink, 1988; Sthraubaar, 1989; Albuquerque, 1996; Jorge, 1995; Dias, 1995; Porto, 1994).

TV Globo currently expresses the national paradigms, which appear to be aesthetic modernity, traditional values and sexual liberation, which were conceived by TV Globo 'to instil in the population a sense of participation in the modernisation process.'<sup>42</sup>

The question emerging from Globo's hegemonic role concerns how television confers subjectivity, since the construction and re-construction of the subjects identity is a never-ending process. First, what the subject sees as a stable world is actually nothing more than the effect of a constant renewal of the discursive activities through Globo's particular point of view that matches viewers' perspective. The people identify with TV productions which encourages them to watch soap operas and to say 'Yes, that's me', 'That's how I feel', 'That's what I see'.

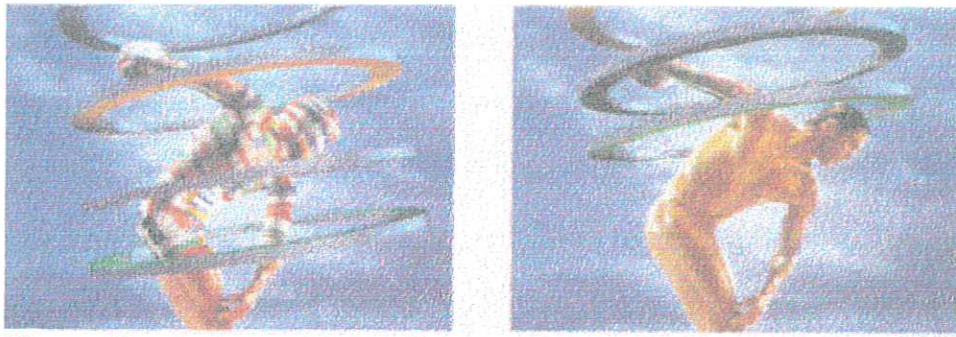
All soap operas, vignettes, openings and logos that encourage the people to watch TV Globo, are inserted into a broader aesthetic project conceived by Hans Donner, a German-Austrian designer, who joined the network in 1975 to direct the Video-graphics Division. Today, approximately five percent of Globo's images are composed by computer graphic art, which is futuristic and centred on artistic human nakedness. A sphere wrapping a television screen from which appears another sphere represents Donner's logotype for TV Globo. It appears to be an eye within an eye suggesting the question: Who watches whom? Globo's philosophy, eyes in the future to invent history, reveals the basis of its hegemonic trajectory.



TV Globo's symbol, Hans Donner



<sup>42</sup>As declared by the Minister of Communication, Cel. Quandt de Oliveira, quoted by Mattos, Sergio A. Soares (1982) 'The Impact of the 1964 Revolution in the Brazilian Television'. MA. Dissertation, (University of Texas, San Antonio, V: Klingensmith Independent Publisher).



Vignette Olympic Games, 1992. TV Globo. By Hans Donner

TV Globo's fictional production has set the standard of mass television in the country promoting general addiction to TV Globo's images and imaginary satisfaction. This system, shaped by a politics of dictatorship, has enabled the control of society's demands, guaranteeing the continuity of traditional politics. With its technically sophisticated programmes, this communications network represents the modern 'half' of a Brazil not shared by the poor populations in its other archaic 'half'. The latter lack aspects of vital services, which are taken for granted in a modern society, such as Welfare State provisions. This composite is viewed as one of the origins of a paradoxical political behaviour in the country where the majority of the poor population have rejected democratic projects favouring neo-liberal political representatives.<sup>43</sup>

In 1998, TV Globo still maintained its leadership in the television market, producing twelve top ranked in January 1998<sup>44</sup> with audiences between 28 and 37 million. If we consider the publicity market, Globo network received 45 percent of the entire budget allocated to propaganda in the mass media.<sup>45</sup> It maintained a stable position in the publicity market, followed by the SBT – Sistema Brasileiro de Televisão,<sup>46</sup> which received only half of that amount.

<sup>43</sup> I provide evidences and explain the problem latter in this chapter but the first evidences for this statement are electoral results for the 1989 and 1994 presidential contests, which favoured neo-liberal projects.

<sup>44</sup> See Table 3, 'Top Ranked Brazilian Television Broadcasts, January/1998' in the Appendix to Chapter 5

<sup>45</sup> See Table 4, 'Television Publicity Market in Brazil, 1991-1996' in the Appendix to Chapter 5.

<sup>46</sup> Silvio Santos, a showman and candidate in the 1989 presidential elections for a short time, is the SBT Network owner.

Idealised by Roberto Marinho, president of the Globo Organisations in 1957, the Globo network is a public concession first solicited for exploring a channel in Rio de Janeiro during Kubitschek's government. Progressive enlargement continued during Goulart's government in 1962, when permission was granted to explore a channel in Brasilia. Finally, the Globo national network was inaugurated on 26 April 1965.<sup>47</sup> Thirty one years after its foundation, Globo produces 78 percent of its own discourse transmitted by 86 of its own broadcasting stations surpassing US\$ 1.1 billion revenue in 1994.

Now one of the largest television producers in the world, Globo directly employs about half of its eight thousand functionaries. The Globo network holds several significant underlying principles that its employees have been required to follow over the last thirty years:

To develop a television language; search for the most advanced technology in the world-wide market; maintain permanent researches and analyses of audience behaviour; introduce differentiated systems of communications in publicity and overall to keep an open eye on the future.<sup>48</sup>

Marinho's preface to TV Globo's thirty-year commemorative book asserts that one of the virtues of his network is 'to always dare'. One should not overestimate the importance of an oligarchic controlled network and the fact that Marinho owns TV Globo. However, since the 1930s, all Brazilian presidents have been interlocutors of Marinho, the most influential professional in the Brazilian press.<sup>49</sup> Internal party politics has become superfluous even during the most critical moments in the history of Brazilian crises. Leader of a power elite, Marinho's voice has always been heard before and after each election which has helped to define the socio-political present and future of the nation.

The Globo phenomenon is a combination of political umbrella and competent entrepreneurial management. As shown in the previous sections, in 1985, Globo boosted

<sup>47</sup> To build his network, Marinho received \$4 million given by the Time Life group in exchange for their minority participation in the business. The Brazilian legislation had already impeded society with foreign capital in communication enterprises.

<sup>48</sup> See 'Rede Globo, 30 Anos. Uma História Ilustrada', (Rio de Janeiro, TV Globo, 1995), p. 6.

<sup>49</sup> The political relevance of the mass media as an important modernising factor in political development has been recognised since the 1960's by Almond and Powell, Lerner, Deutsch. More recently, in 'Media Agenda-Setting

Tancredo Neves presidential candidacy and, in exchange, Marinho nominated the Minister of Communication (A.C.Magalhães). During the 1989 presidential election, TV Globo was blamed for manipulating the Worker's Party leader's speech, Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva (PT-Partido dos Trabalhadores), in favour of the representative of Northern traditional elites, Fernando Collor de Mello (PRN- Partido da Renovação Nacional). Marinho indicated clearly who had the power to decide a presidential election in Brazil and who could also exert a veto against any rebel president. This power was discovered by the whole country during the memorable Collor de Mello impeachment in 1992, which was not the result of a public revolt against corruption in the government but an outcome of Marinho's disapproval and veto.<sup>50</sup>

It seems that nobody is enabled to govern Brazil if opposed by Marinho.<sup>51</sup> The result of President Collor's disrespect toward this hierarchy was his immediate elimination from politics. During the parliamentary debates on Collor's impeachment, Marinho surprised everyone with the detonation of bombastic revelations in TV Globo's news about a series of Collor's corrupt actions including Collor's relations with his private secretary, P.C. Farias.

Today, nobody has the power to reproach Marinho's private fortune. His son, Roberto Irineu Marinho believes that it is impossible to grow further in the national market and for that reason Globo has already formulated a strategy to insert its programmes into international competition in the USA and Europe. To tackle the challenges of the new digital technologies and the progressively more international character of multi-channel television, Roberto Irineu believes that several cable and satellite channels already guarantee TV Globo's wide coverage within Brazil.

---

in a Presidential Election', it has been blamed by MacCombs, Weaver, Graber and Eyal for causing the decline of party identification in some European democracies.

<sup>50</sup> TV Globo filters information, influencing not only the higher personalities of the Republic, but also all the anonymous viewers. It also enjoys active participation in government decisions. Marinho was not heard during the Collor de Mello government and therefore did not interfere in ministerial replacements. Contrary to the 'coronelistic' dynamics established in the country, Collor de Mello informed Marinho about changes in his government through the press. In previous governments, such as Sarney's, the future Minister of Treasury Department, Mailson da Nobrega was confirmed as substitute for the previous Minister, Bresser Pereira, only after being interviewed by Marinho in TV Globo's headquarters in Brasilia.

<sup>51</sup>For further information see 'The President without Mandate' an interview by Barbosa Lima Sobrinho, in Magazine *Imprensa*, (Rio de Janeiro, Year VI. September, Number 61), pp.10-15.

In the international market Globo is dependent on the high level of technical and artistic quality of its soap operas, especially those recently produced in its new scenario industry and studios complex, which is completely digitised and HDTV- high definition television. After establishing a channel in the Portuguese market with significant success and trying to establish its TV Montecarlo in the Italian market despite a fierce battle, the Globo network intends to compete in the USA with the Mexican Televisa.

### **Globo and the real *fantasy***<sup>52</sup>

In 1977, TV Globo's fictional programmes began to reach across 128 countries,<sup>53</sup> long before the inauguration of its High Definition Television regime. For the internal market, over the last thirty years Globo network has produced 180 soap operas with more than 25 thousand chapters, transforming this kind of production into a genuine Brazilian product. It soon became obvious that soap operas could attract large audiences as they have been contagious since 1966 with 'I buy this Woman' (*Eu compro essa Mulher*) and later 'The Sheik of Agadir' (*O Sheik de Agadir*).<sup>54</sup>

<sup>52</sup> The concept of 'phantasy' or 'fantasy' is according to the Lacanian theory the visual quality of desire, the scenario that protects against the lack of the Other. This concept was taken from Freud's early distinction between reality and an illusory product of imagination that later has changed to the acceptance that reality is not an unproblematic given but a discursive construction. Lacan placed the veracity of memory into question for it has a discursive, imaginative component that works together with unconscious desire to produce a symptom. This is why Lacan took fantasy in its role of creating scenarios but considered it to be a fixed and immobile quality, to protect the subject from a traumatic experience.

<sup>53</sup> Soap operas such as 'O Bem Amado' (The Beloved) were bought by Uruguay and Portugal, 'Gabriela' was a success in Portugal, 'Brilhante' (Brilliant) captured an audience in Belgium and Spain, 'Malu Mulher' (Malu the Woman) was watched in Cuba, Greece, Holland and Sweden where it achieved record audiences. 'Escrava Isaura' (Isaura the Slave) was a must in Angola, Italy, China, Switzerland and France. 'Dancing' Days', 'Marron-Glacé', 'A Sucessora' (The Successor), 'Pai Herói' (Father Hero), 'Água Viva' (Live Water), 'Ciranda de Pedra' (Stone's Ciranda) and 'O Casarão' (The Mansion) were bought by the Italian Rete Quatro, 'Baila Comigo' (Dance with me) has strongly motivated the French public of TF1. Globo is now entering the international game through a partnership regime whereby strategic alliances will enable the creation of an international language for its soap operas.

<sup>54</sup> 'O Sheik de Agadir' was a history passed in the North of Africa in which the actress Ioná Magalhães was a young French woman, Janette Legrand, being disputed by two men- Sheik Omar Ben Nazir (Henrique Martins) and a French Army official.



The Sheik of Agadir. TV Globo, 1996.

In the 1970s, the appearance of videotape and the use of external shots opened a new era influencing soap operas through new cinematic techniques such as repetition, editing and the selection of scenes. Brazilian authors realised the necessity of discovering a new dramatic content, different from Cuban or Mexican big dramas. Soap operas, they believed, should become 'part of the Brazilian reality'<sup>55</sup> which meant returning to soap operas 'the capacity to affect and to intrigue'.<sup>56</sup>

The first typically Brazilian soap opera was 'Bride's Veil' (*Véu de Noiva*) recorded in the suburban areas of Rio de Janeiro. It portrayed characters and situations that deeply moved the national audience who completely identified with the series. Next, 'Red Summer' (*Verão Vermelho*), written in 1969 by Dias Gomes, transported the audience to the streets of Salvador

<sup>55</sup> Source: TV Globo Network, *A Rede Globo aos 20 anos: uma história de sucesso*, (Rio de Janeiro, Globo, 1985).

<sup>56</sup> Source: TV Globo Network, *A Rede Globo aos 20 anos*, (1985). In this respect, TV Globo's official documents assume that it was not really the discoverer of soap-operas but it was from its studios that an impulse for renovation enabled the start of 'a very specific personality, typically Brazilian in its language, thematic and production schemes'.

in Bahia. Globo believed that this gave the viewers an opportunity to know typically Brazilian characters and therefore to participate in the national cultural process and its social reality. In this way, television soap opera deflected from radio soap-opera content, transforming itself in a kind of fiction with its own language, highly influenced by a populist, coronelistic, clientelistic universe.

According to a TV Globo screenwriter, Aguinaldo Silva, an interesting side of soap opera is 'to reveal something which is very Brazilian, to adapt the myths to our aspirations. In Brazil all myths have to be 'well-behaved' and sweetened, almost sanctified as with Pelé, Fitipaldi and Roque Santeiro. The soap opera *'Asa Branca'* for example transformed its main character - Roque Santeiro, 'into a saint leading some to think that in Brazil the reality will never manage to be stronger than mystification'.<sup>57</sup> In 1985, the soap opera *'Roque Santeiro'* attained audience levels much higher than the news, as Brazil was glued to the screen.<sup>58</sup>

### **Soap Operas and the hegemonic interpretation of political issues**

In this sub-section I discuss the means by which soap operas' hegemonic interpretations of the Brazilian politics might interfere with the consolidation of conservative political behaviour in this country. I present evidence of how political institutions, politicians, government and the state have been frequently ridiculed in fictional programmes, interfering in the democratic electoral process.<sup>59</sup>

According to analyses in this area of political science, television is transforming politics (Porto, 1994). Several terms have been created to give an account of the importance of the media for political analysis in the 1990s, e.g. 'video-politics', 'video-power' (Sartori, 1992,

<sup>57</sup> Source: Rede Globo Informative Bulletin. 'Roque Santeiro' (June, 1985, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil).

<sup>58</sup> From the gallery of 'Roque Santeiro' the most admired characters were the colonel or 'coronel' Sinhozinho Malta, a political chief in the region who dominated everyone and the 'Widow Porcina' who led a very extravagant and pagan life. In this period, Brazilian women began to imitate Porcina's character concerning the use of kitsch jewellery, similar clothes, hairstyles, gestures, and capricious authoritarian behaviour.

1993); 'videocracia' (Bobbio), 'constructed candidates' (Skidmore, 1993). Since 1989, Brazilian scholars observed the invasion of political issues on TV Globo's programmes, especially in soap operas. These seem to exert a strong impact on the construction of political conceptions (Porto, 1994; Rubin, 1989; Lima, 1990; Weber, 1990; Porto, 1993) since millions of Brazilians daily watch the 8:00 o'clock soap opera.<sup>60</sup>

The relation between soap operas and electoral processes is such that in 1993 the Electoral Law n.8713, article 79 manifested clear concern with the invasion of political issues on TV programmes, establishing that:

During the period of Free Electoral Propaganda, TV and Radio Broadcast Networks cannot transmit any film, soap opera, mini-series or other kind of programme with mentions or criticism that is harmful to any candidate or political party, even if in a subjective way.<sup>61</sup>

Brazilian researchers have been analysing representations of the world of politics from the theoretical point of view developed by Stuart Hall (1988), namely the concept of 'scenarios of representation' from which Venicio A. de Lima (1994) created the concept '*cenario de representação politica*' (CR-P) (scenario of political representation).<sup>62</sup> This concept defines the forms through which the media relate with the political and electoral processes. One of the main hypotheses emerging from CR-P is that in national majoritarian elections a candidate will not win a dispute if he/she does not adjust to the ongoing 'scenario of political representation'. Thus, candidates attempting to adapt to CR-P tend to succeed in electoral disputes. I am not claiming that the CR-P constituted straight ideological manipulation by TV Globo, but I am

---

<sup>59</sup> All claims made concerning this influence have been researched from literature, adequately quoted and corroborated by my own endeavours which have led me to believe that my conclusions on this matter are correct and well founded. Having worked in the broadcasting industry I know such examples do take place.

<sup>60</sup> According to Ibope (Relatório AIP- Audiencia Individual por Programa), from June 1993 to October 1994, the eleven most popular programmes in the Brazilian television were produced by TV Globo. Nine of these were soap operas and two news programmes.

<sup>61</sup> See M. Porto, 'Telenovelas e Política: o CR-P da eleição de 1994', in *Comunicação & Política* (Rio de Janeiro, Cebela, n.s., v.1, n.3, April-July, 1995), p. 56.

<sup>62</sup> According to V. Lima, 'Televisão e poder: a hipótese do cenário de representação política: CR-P', *Comunicação e Política*, (Rio de Janeiro, Cebela, n.s., v.1, n.1, August-November, 1994) pp. 5-22.

'The CR-P is a specific space of political representation in contemporary "representative democracies", constituted and constitutive of hegemonic articulation, constructed over long term processes by and in the media, especially on and by television'.

arguing that the CR-P constituted fictional scenarios permeating television's discourse and political culture, thus contaminating political party broadcasts.

Here, based on CR-P assumptions, I reconstitute the account given by specialists about the scenarios of political representation influencing the 1989 and 1994 presidential elections in Brazil. It might seem overtly simplistic to quote soap opera plots to give an account of the atmosphere in which the 1989 and 1994 electoral disputes evolved, but this was the most apt example I found to give an account of the main discursive constructions used by television.

### **The 1988-1989 Scenario of Political Representation**

From July 1988 to October 1989, TV Globo constructed the political scenario of the first free democratic presidential elections since the military coup by transmitting three gripping soap operas: 'Everything is Allowed' - *Vale Tudo*, 'The Nation's Saviour' *Salvador da Pátria* and 'Which King am I?' - *Que Rei Sou Eu?* These performed the function of disqualifying any problematic issue not linked with TV Globo's political and economic interests, especially those related with politics and popular participation in the re-democratisation process (Weber, 1990). These soap operas concerned ethics, decadence of moral values and the relation of these with politics.

'Everything is Allowed' (*Vale Tudo*), written by Gilberto Braga and transmitted from May 1988 to January 1989, played with a well known law in Brazil - '*lei de Gerson*'<sup>63</sup> whose principle is to take advantage of everything. The main question brought about by 'Vale Tudo' was the following: 'Is it worthwhile to be honest in the Brazil of nowadays?'<sup>64</sup> A number of political analysts have observed the similarities between the central idea explored in *Vale Tudo*

<sup>63</sup> Gerson's Law refers to an ex-football player, Gerson, who acted in cigarette propaganda stressing the importance of taking advantage of everything.

<sup>64</sup> Source: Globo Network, *Programs Bulletin* (Rio de Janeiro, n.801, May 1988). The protagonist, Maria de Fatima, is convinced that honesty has no value. Without hesitating, she sells the only property her family owns, a little house in Foz do Iguaçu, and moves to Rio de Janeiro to become a top model. In her view everything is valid: lies about her family's finances, dissimulation, small robberies and a marriage with a millionaire to ascend in society. Her mother thinks exactly the opposite. For her it is only work, which provides dignity to human being. A great clash of ideas and emotions springs from this relation between honest mother and dishonest daughter, forming the central plot in 'Vale Tudo'.

and the moralising manifesto defended by the neo-populist candidate, Collor de Mello during the 1989 presidential campaign (Rubim, 1989; Lima, 1989; Weber, 1990). At the end of his governorship in the state of Alagoas, the candidate dismissed several public employees arguing that they were consuming the people's money, additionally accusing several government members of corruption. Collor vowed to rid the country from all mandarins, the so-called 'maharajas', if elected.<sup>65</sup>

*Vale Tudo* entreated the audience to compare themselves with the dominant ruling class whom, through illegal transactions make fortunes to enjoy themselves abroad. *Vale Tudo* attempts to show that the power held by a dishonest dominant class allows it to steal, kill and run away from the country while the common people pay for everything. Several scenes display the impunity of power and capital in a country charged by the 'stupidity and laziness of the people', in the protagonist Odette Roitman's terms. There are nonetheless a few exceptions of poor people that because of their good heart manage to earn some honest money with small businesses.



*Vale Tudo* (Everything is allowed), TV Globo, 1988  
The two protagonists: Maria de Fatima and Odette Roitman

'Nation's Saviour' - *Salvador da Patria*, written by Lauro Cesar Muniz and presented by TV Globo from January to August 1989, was an ingenuous counterpoint to the cosmopolitan and sophisticated characters of *Vale Tudo*. *Salvador da Patria*, set in the rural area of Brazil,

<sup>65</sup> The success of Collor's campaign was enormous. The public identified with the moral character of Maria de Fatima's mother and for almost six months accompanied the Maria de Fatima's illicit actions without punishment

was a parabola about leadership, revealing behind the scenes of power and dominant class intrigue around politics, drug trafficking and elections.<sup>66</sup> One of the central aspects stressed by this soap opera was that any candidate could be constructed from scratch (Weber, 1990:76), as Collor was.



*O Salvador da Pátria* (The Nation's Saviour), TV Globo- 1989.  
The protagonist, an ingenuous rural worker called Sassa Mutema

Not insignificantly, presidential candidates during the 1989 electoral campaign mentioned 'The Nation's Saviour', the actor who played Sassa Mutema was the conductor of the PSDB's (Brazilian Social Democratic Party) party broadcast during the campaign. This combination of politics and fiction certainly helped to improve Mario Covas' (PSDB) popularity but the plot of economic development was not as striking as the scandals involving corruption and moralisation.

From February to September 1989, TV Globo presented a third soap opera focusing on political corruption. The political satire, 'Which King Am I?', (*Que Rei Sou Eu?*), written by Gabus Mendes, situated in 1786, within an imaginary country near Europe that was an explicit

---

which came at the very end of the 'Vale Tudo' narrative.

<sup>66</sup> According to its author, Lauro Cesar Muniz, the 'Nation's Savior' plot can be summarised as the story of a rural worker called Sassa Mutema. He is from Minas Gerais and subsists on the orange crop enjoying an absolute integration with nature. He is ignorant but wise. Mutema becomes the epicentre of an electoral confusion in Ouro Verde by accepting the candidacy, becoming the nation's saviour'.

metaphor of Brazil. A small Kingdom called the 'Realm of Avilan' confronts serious financial problems, since all wish to take advantage of everyone at any cost. The court's pomp contrasts with the extreme poverty of its people. Humour is the only solution where a few possess substantial and the majority has nothing - except hunger. All the injustices occurring in Brazil were transposed to the fictional narrative of *Que Rei Sou Eu?*,<sup>67</sup> captivating viewers' agreement. Such as in *Salvador da Pátria*, there are elections in the 'Realm of Avilan' and unexpectedly the winner is a servant called 'Bode Zé' (sic, Joseph of the Goat), while Bidet, the elite's candidate, receives only one vote.<sup>68</sup>



*Que Rei Sou Eu?* (Which King am I?), TV Globo- 1989

In his 1989 presidential campaign, Collor de Mello often hailed the voter-television consumer by comparing the Brazilian government with that of the 'Realm of Avilan'. These are some examples of successful denigration of politics, politicians and government by soap operas. The identification between real candidates and fictional characters was a really

<sup>67</sup> King Petrus II is fatally ill and the chaos is complete because there is no successor to the throne. Nobles and poor alike wait anxiously for the king's death. This could be a solution for Avilan because it cannot become worse than it already is.

<sup>68</sup> It is interesting to note how the fictional world of the 'Reign of Avilan' was transposed to real life in the 1989 presidential campaign when many voters annulled their votes by writing 'Bode Ze' instead of voting for one of the official candidates.

In his 1989 presidential campaign, Collor de Mello often hailed the voter-television consumer by comparing the Brazilian government with that of the 'Realm of Avilan'. These are some examples of successful denigration of politics, politicians and government by soap operas. The identification between real candidates and fictional characters was a really important factor in the 1989 elections. However, no one could prove that these fictional representations were in any way unfairly constructed to guarantee the continuity of certain conceptions held by a traditional elite.

### **The 1993-1994 Scenario of Political Representation**

Due to the impossibility of regulating fictional manipulations, one year before the 1994 presidential election, TV Globo again expressed through, its eight o'clock soap operas, its hegemonic interpretation of political questions. These representations of the political world were constituted by the soap operas *Renascer* (Reborn), *Fera Ferida* (The Hurt Beast) and *Pátria Minha* (My Country). Porto (1995) highlighted several constitutive elements of the 1994 elections in these soap operas that contributed to a conservative tendency in this election:

- (a) Disqualification of politics and politicians;
- (b) Disqualification of the State and Government;
- (c) Disqualification of left-wing ideals and leadership;
- (d) Valorisation of intellectually qualified candidates;
- (e) Emphasis on the social crisis;
- (f) Atmosphere of confidence and optimism;
- (g) Support to small business.<sup>69</sup>

The soap opera 'Reborn' (*Renascer*), written by Benedito Ruy Barbosa and transmitted from June to December 1993, developed its plot around the central figure and family of *coronel* José Inocêncio. He is a landowner in the Bahia Backlands, a region of cocoa plantations. In this

<sup>69</sup> See M. Porto, 'Telenovelas e Política: o CR-P da eleição de 1994' in *Comunicação & Política* (Rio de Janeiro, Cebela, n.s., v.1, n.3, April-July, 1995), p. 72.



Renascer, (Reborn) - TV Globo, 1993. The protagonist: *coronel* Jose Inocencio and his young wife.

In several scenes, characters recite that all politicians are corrupt, use political activity for their own profit and that this applies to the whole class. Politics is even compared to prostitution. *Renascer* also downgrades the government and the State, which are denounced as inefficient institutions. Tributary laws and taxation that are criticised in several dialogues involve characters support for withholding income tax payment since the government cannot properly administrate these resources that ultimately end up in corrupt politicians' pockets.

Whilst being fiction, *Renascer* characters openly discussed the state of affairs in Brazilian politics and the social crisis of the 1990s, with clear reference to the jailing of PC Farias', President Collor's impeachment and the Parliamentary Commission of Inquiry (CPI) on budget issues.

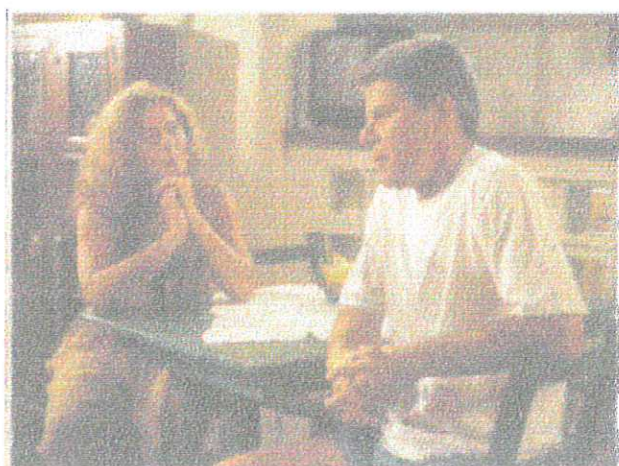
From November 1993 to July 1994, TV Globo transmitted the soap opera *Fera Ferida* (The Hurt Beast), written by Aguinaldo Silva. This production also included several episodes constructing negative conceptions of the political world. In *Fera Ferida*, state and government are again presented as spaces of incompetence and corruption; the people of the imaginary Tubiacanga take them as useless institutions. In several dialogues characters formulate

---

extremely negative generalisations about the municipal executive and against the country's government. Several fictional characters display similarities with the real presidential candidates in the 1994 elections (Porto, 1995:69).

A last example of soap operas dealing with political issues was 'My Country' (*Pátria Minha*), written by Gilberto Braga and transmitted from July to October 1994. This soap opera was part of TV Globo's construction of an atmosphere of optimism and confidence in Brazil's future reinforcing its support to Fernando Henrique Cardoso's economic plan. *Pátria Minha* established the hegemony of optimism, confronting the pessimism stimulated in previously mentioned fictions.

*Pátria Minha* tells the story of a Brazilian couple, Pedro and Ester that live in the United States and face a dilemma. Pedro wants to go back to Brazil since he believes that the country has a promising future. Ester opposes this idea, arguing that the country will not overcome crisis and will never change. The couple finally return to Brazil and their experiences prove to Ester that there are no reasons to be pessimistic about Brazil. The country has changed and Ester finally joins the general atmosphere of optimism (Porto, 1995:71).



*Pátria Minha*, 'My Country'- TV Globo 1994. Ester and Pedro discuss about Brazil's regeneration

As described above, the representational scenarios created by TV Globo's soap operas created hegemonic scenarios within which the 1989 and 1994 presidential elections evolved. Candidates that best adapted to these scenarios were more persuasive to voters. In 1989, Globo's fictional representations pictured politics and politicians as corrupt and morally decadent. These ideas benefited the outsider candidate, Collor de Mello, who based his campaign on the fight against politicians and maharajas. In 1994, Fernando Henrique Cardoso best adapted to soap-operas representations when trying to convince the voter that the Real Plan would lead Brazil to first world patterns. The construction of optimism and hope in TV Globo's *Pátria Minha* helped the voter to believe that Cardoso could concretise Brazil prosperous future.

### Soap Opera and Land Reform

A later example of the filtering role, performed by TV Globo in 1996, had as its target the new social forces constituted by the Landless Workers Movement (MST - *Movimento dos Sem Terra*). This radical pro-agrarian reform movement inspired TV Globo's 'The King of the Cattle' - (*O Rei do Gado*). This soap opera focused on the highly concentrated 8,500,000m<sup>2</sup> of land under dispute in Brazil. However, the conflict was eventually overcome insofar as a landless woman and landowner fall in love.<sup>70</sup>

<sup>70</sup> It is important to note here that public opinion in Brazil has been very supportive of agrarian reform as revealed by opinion polls carried out from 1962 to 1995. It remains necessary to ascertain if there were changes after this soap-opera. In 1962, during the elections for state governors, the majority of respondents were willing to support candidates defending land redistribution. Agrarian reform supporters amounted to 65% in Sao Paulo, 65% in Rio Grande do Sul, 60% in Guanabara and 58% in Pernambuco. Those against agrarian reform comprised around 19% and 30%. In 1963, another research illuminated that the majority of respondents in urban centres were favourable to agrarian reform: 76% in Porto Alegre, 71% in Recife, 66% in Guanabara, 65% in Salvador, 53% in Belo Horizonte. In 1972 again the majority of respondents favoured agrarian reform. Among syndicate supporters, 75.8% found land redistribution favourable and of the whole population, 68.8% were in favour. In 1987, research on the support for agrarian reform in the new constitution revealed that 83% of the population was in favour. In 1995, another research carried on in Campinas informed that 85.5% believed that agrarian reform would improve life in the urban centers. Source: *Opinio Publica*. April 1996. Vol. iv, n.1. Publication CESOP- Centro de Estudos de Opinio Publica, UNICAMP- University of Campinas, Brazil

Founded in 1983,<sup>71</sup> the Landless Workers Movement (portrayed in TV Globo's soap opera) is independent from political parties in the real world, has strong roots in the Liberation Theology and in agricultural movements. It is also related to the Zapatista movement in Mexico and other radical left wing organisations. It always gives preference to extra-institutional actions such as land invasion and occupation. Even enjoying less support from the Church since 1996, the Landless Movement in Brazil is a successful organisation, which, in the eleven years of its existence, had already installed 139,000 families in 7.2 hectares. The MST today owns more than 55 co-operatives in 12 states where, with the help of the Federal Government, they invested (300 million dollars) US\$ 300 million since 1994 to 1997. The organisation has displayed revolutionary ambitions, prioritises illegal methods of contestation and it does not respect private property.

In 1996, at a time of national concern with the extermination in Corumbiara and Eldorado of Carajás, with 32 landless massacred, TV Globo's 'The King of the Cattle' portrayed the landless, the most mobilising force in contemporary Brazil, as a group of professional agitators. In some scenes, the main landless leader- Regino repeats his central slogan: 'land yes, but not war'. He complains about the excess of radicalism in the MST, manifests his disagreement with the landless campaigns on the roads, and criticises the MST red flag because it reminds him of war and blood.

---

<sup>71</sup> The MST was founded by Bishop Jose Gomes - head of the Diocese of Chapecó (Santa Catarina), and by Joao Pedro Stedile - ex-functionary of the Agriculture Secretary.

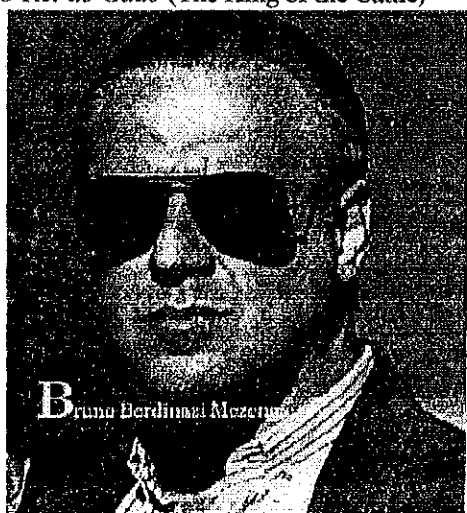


Luana, the landless.  
*O Rei do Gado* (The King of The Cattle) – TV Globo, 1996



*O Rei do Gado* (The King of the Cattle) - TV Globo, 1996  
 Regino, the landless leader

*O Rei do Gado* (The King of the Cattle)



The Landowner, Bruno Berdinazi Mezenga.

Considering the high audience rates, TV Globo was successful in moulding the MST's image as an irresponsible group of agitators. According to Globo's bulletin, 'The King of the Cattle' provided a way of tackling relevant issues while telling a good story, a modern version of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* involving two immigrant families - the Mezenga and the Berdinazi. As with the Bard's tale, love and hate move these families, fighting for a piece of land. The story is a saga beginning in the 1940s and unfolds until the present day when a landless group invades the land of Bruno Mezenga. The landless are, however, mistaken because Mezenga's farm is rather productive and all his cattle were transferred somewhere else to be submitted for a health exam.

At the core of the story, the fixation of meaning occurs not in the debate concerning agrarian reform in Brazil but rather on the romance between Luana, a pretty, landless activist, and the handsome Bruno Mezenga, the so-called 'King of the Cattle'. All the drama emerges when they discovered that in reality Luana, the landless woman, is the lost niece of Geremias Berdinazi, Mezenga's mortal enemy who completely lost her memory in a road accident.

According to the soap opera's author, Benedito Ruy Barbosa, one cannot blame landless or landowners, 'there are mistakes in both sides, neither landowners nor landless people are right'. It is this approach to social problems that pervades 'The King of the Cattle' narrative.

This problem will not have a solution while government do look at it face to face and search a *technical solution, which is neither ideological nor political*. On the other hand, there is also no point in giving land to everyone not providing the necessary resources as they could settle down. Work in the land is very hard. The agrarian reform is not a solution for all unemployed. I still want to unveil this polemic with private property occupation. There are people selling a bad land by ten times its price as the government can use it to settle people who will not be able to work in there. Later on they will sell the land and invade a new one. And all this generates conflicts, wasting public money.<sup>72</sup>

## Conclusion

In this chapter I have discussed the hypothesis that a quasi-monopoly of political communication in Brazil, instituted during the military regime, played a central part in a negotiated opening or democratic transition by performing a necessary mediation between government and the people. It seems that this mediation accomplished by television has underpinned the development of two opposing tendencies in Brazil, the broadening of social demands, including the accentuation of political competitiveness, whilst simultaneously constraining heterogeneous social and political movements. I have attempted to explain that the non-egalitarian, hierarchical character of Brazilian society remains intact given certain strategies of political communication that have been explained in theoretical terms by the logic of *iterability*.

I have shown from both institutional and cultural perspectives how television weakens political institutions, denigrates political activities while conceiving and representing the social body as a harmonious whole in which individuals appear fixed and attached to differential positions.

In the first section, I analysed the conservative/innovative role of political communication according to an institutional perspective by looking at how institutions facilitate or inhibit the articulation of party system and civil society. This viewpoint encompassed television's licensing system, state control, electoral legislation regulating party use of the mass media, the strengthening of the television system by the military state to combat communism and integrate the country, and finally the liberalisation of television by the military. I explored evidence that elite, state and network owners, to develop a superficially competitive and pluralist political system while maintaining a patriarchal or sub-political culture, have used Brazilian television under the institutional framework of the licensing system. I maintained that the State's policies and institutional frameworks did not present

---

<sup>72</sup> See Programs Bulletin by TV Globo (Boletim de Programação) issued 15/06/1996. Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. (Emphasis added).

significant changes in the post-authoritarian era, in spite of the 1988 Constitution, that prescribed a new licensing system, the strengthening of controls over civil society and a decrease in state control over the media system.

Between the main points composing the institutional perspective I dealt with broad questions raised by Lamounier and Kinzo concerning governability, the party system and the relation of these questions to political communication. In this respect I concluded that television networks assure the reproduction of conservative forces in several ways. I stressed that television assures unity and national security by sustaining the president, and by imposing hegemonic views about political, economic and social issues. I have also stressed that the free use of the media, sixty days before elections by all parties represented in National Congress, entails a further fragmentation of the political party system. Moreover, television monopolises the consumer market, imposing a certain, particularistic lifestyle upon a population divided by huge cultural and social differences. A further conclusion concerned that the media oriented character of Brazilian politics tends to render intra party politics superfluous, in that television replaces party platforms in disseminating information and different political perspectives to the populace. These aspects provided some evidence showing how the infrastructural logic of *iterability* organises mass communication in Brazil.

Following an institutional perspective, I also reviewed the licensing system and the inter-dependent relation between state, television and government. The main inference here is that the regulation of mass communication since the 1930s maintains a relation of mutual implications between the state and television in Brazil, with the aim of circumscribing power rotation within traditional elite. According to the development of mass communication since the 1964 coup, I concluded that the relations between State and television networks are functional to the establishment of a conservative and demobilising order in Brazil. This has been possible by keeping national issues totally isolated by means of a *one nation* discourse, i.e. not creating a discourse of *equivalence* between questions. However, even keeping subject

matters as differential moments, focusing on one of them at each time, television has been able to create great mobilisation.

I have argued that the democratisation of television space, by means of electoral legislation, has an inevitable conservative impact on Brazilian politics, and that the popular command had not been favoured by the regulation of the mass communication through successive electoral laws. Moreover, I related the extreme use of mass communication by government and political parties in Brazil to a pattern of plebiscitarian presidentialism that does not favour the consolidation of democratic institutions. I have found that the strong intervention policy with respect to the use of the mass media during electoral campaigns did not liberate political communication from its conservative function. I have also concluded that the use of television by the elite during the democratic transition was based on huge campaigns of mobilisation of public opinion but this was followed by a tremendous backlash of frustration and a diminishing faith in political institutions that supported conservative worldviews.

To examine the conservative role of Brazilian television from a cultural perspective, I considered aspects of the political culture constructed by political communication, paying particular attention to the narrative structures of television soap operas. Concentrating on mass television and the Globo Network phenomenon from different points of view I claimed that TV Globo's imaginary world is relevant to the iterability of traditional paradigms whilst it constructs and re-constructs social identities in a perpetual process that is nevertheless based on an essential truth about the order. Television consumers perceive a stable world on the screen that is actually nothing more than the effect of a constant renewal of the discursive activities from Globo's particular point of view that mirrors the more general desire for order. I have shown how political institutions, politicians, government and the state have been frequently downgraded in fictional programmes which, on other occasions, have also created very positive images of governmental projects, interfering in the democratic electoral process.

The main conclusion in this chapter is that the present model of a centralised mass media in Brazil tends to make intra party politics superfluous in Brazil, since it has daily access

to the largest constituency of all. Parties cannot compete with the media in terms of the representation of society's interests. Hence party programmes appear secondary and dependent in relation to discursive constructions elaborated by the main television networks. Television is unbeatable in terms of the fixation of certain images of society. In transmitting an impression of stability via its programmes, soap opera characters always act in the same way at the same time, independent of current national and domestic crises. Television also confers the place of social groups in society by renewing small ideals and proposing innovation that does not challenge the basic power structure.

The question emerging from this conclusion is how does television fix differential positions in society so that politics can be no more than a repetition of hierarchical relations? I will discuss this intriguing problem in the next chapter.