

# CORPORATE PRESSURES ON MEDIA: the case of a Chilean sports outlet

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**ABSTRACT** - The purpose of the paper is to analyze how corporate interests shape the Chilean media system as well as journalistic performance. The implications for democracy are discussed. This article uses a case study approach to show how corporate interests operate concretely on media to strengthen private interests instead of public ones. The article suggests that Chilean journalism is shaped mostly on a neoliberal frame, playing a collaborative role in order not to disturb the business environment because it creates employment and national economic growth. Secondly, the paper explores the case, which is analyzed within a development journalism approach following a broader public discourse about the development requirements for Chile. Indeed, journalism, corporations, and the economic sphere are strongly related despite the tensions and stresses of recent years in the Chilean media system.

**Keywords:** Corporate censorship. Chile media system. Market-driven journalism.

## PRESSÕES CORPORATIVAS SOBRE A MÍDIA: o caso de um canal esportivo chileno

**RESUMO** - O objetivo deste artigo é analisar como os interesses das empresas moldam o sistema de mídia no Chile e a prática do jornalismo. As implicações para a democracia também são consideradas. Este artigo emprega um estudo de caso para mostrar como os interesses das empresas operam especificamente sobre formas de fortalecer os interesses privados em vez de públicos. O artigo sugere que o jornalismo chileno é formado principalmente por um quadro neoliberal, desempenhando um papel colaborativo para não prejudicar o ambiente de negócios, pois gera empregos e crescimento econômico para o país. Em segundo lugar, o artigo explora o caso, analisando-o no contexto do jornalismo desenvolvimentista, na sequência de um discurso público mais amplo sobre as necessidades de desenvolvimento para o Chile. Na verdade, as empresas jornalísticas e a esfera econômica chilena estão intimamente relacionadas, apesar das tensões dos últimos anos no sistema midiático chileno.

**Palavras-chave:** Censura corporativa. Sistema de mídia chilena. Jornalismo baseado no mercado.

## PRESIONES EMPRESARIALES A LOS MEDIOS: El caso de un medio deportivo chileno

**RESUMEN** - El propósito de este artículo es analizar cómo los intereses corporativos modelan el sistema de medios en Chile y el ejercicio periodístico. Las implicancias para la democracia también son consideradas en consideración. Este artículo usa un caso de estudio para mostrar cómo los intereses empresariales operan concretamente en los medios para fortalecer los intereses privados en vez de los públicos. El artículo sugiere que el periodismo chileno está constreñido principalmente por un marco neoliberal, jugando un rol colaborativo para no entorpecer el medioambiente empresarial debido a que éste genera empleos y crecimiento económico para el país. En segundo lugar, el texto explora el caso, analizando en el marco de la perspectiva del periodismo del desarrollo, siguiendo un discurso público más amplio sobre los requerimientos de desarrollo para Chile. De hecho, las corporaciones periodísticas y la esfera económica chilenas están fuertemente relacionadas a pesar de las tensiones de los años recientes en el sistema de medios chileno.

**Palabras clave:** Censura corporativa. Sistema de medios chileno. Periodismo basado en el mercado.

During the last two decades, Chile had regularly been ranked highly by international organizations devoted to freedom of expression, like *Reporters without Borders* and *Freedom House*. However, this apparent good performance could be explained better by the types of problems that both organizations are focused on and the methodologies used, rather than the actual free speech conditions in this country (SAPIEZYNSKA, LAGOS, CABALIN, 2013). Both *Reporters without Borders* (RWB) and *Freedom House* highlight the most aggressive violations of freedom of expression as threats against media or journalists or as restrictions or governmental manipulations. In other words, both RWB and *Freedom House* assume freedom of expression as a potential conflict between media and the state. However, several authors and international organizations<sup>1</sup> have pointed out the industrial constraint on exercising freedom of expression and the collective and fair participation of different voices in the public sphere are fundamental issues to take into account in the freedom of expression debate. Actually, this frame has driven the design of communication public policies in several countries (LORETI, 2005; R. W. MCCHESENEY, SCOTT, 2004; SANTA CRUZ, 1996; MACBRIDE, 1980). However, the liberal tradition of understanding free speech has been stronger than the attempts to diversify the debate about it and remains hegemonic concerning legal, public, and

international debate on this topic. Indeed, the suspicion against the State is the core of this liberal approach.

Nevertheless, in a neoliberal society with private corporations with enormous power over the media and content industries, the inquiry about the role of private actors is key within the “freedom from” and the “freedom for” tension. In fact, the private power over the media landscape has become a concern among scholars and journalists in the Chilean media system, starting with Portales’ seminal study in the early ‘80s (MÖNCKEBERG, 2009; DERMOTA, 2002; SUNKEL, GEOFFROY, 2001; PORTALES, 1981). Portales did the most complete empirical study about the economic and industrial aspects of the Chilean press before, during, and after the military coup from a political economy of communication approach. He collected and analyzed data about the press, radio, television, and advertising industries until 1980. He analyzed the industrialization process of the Chilean media system and its progressive concentration among only a few owners. Most of the research in that field in Chile should take into account Portales’ work.

This concern is still valid in the 21<sup>st</sup> century due to the increasing corporate takeover of Chilean media properties and the potential interest conflicts between media holdings and their shareholders, which both jumped onto the public agenda. In fact, as larger Chilean and international corporations with interests in mining, banking, insurance, retail, and even the political arena took control of television channels, radio stations, and newspapers during the 2000s, questions have emerged as to how their media outlets will cover the business beat or how critical they would be towards their owners’ businesses. The highest profile case affected the former president Sebastián Piñera, who was one of the richest Chilean businessmen when he won the election in 2010. In fact, he still is<sup>2</sup>. By the time he became president, he was the main shareholder of Chilevisión (CHV), a national TV channel. The press and his political opponents pushed him to sell the station<sup>3</sup>.

The Piñera example is not the only one in which the role of journalism and corporate interest are stressed. Indeed, during 2013-2014 there were several situations that strained the relationship between journalism and private interests, both due to the commercialization and corporate pressures. We will outline some of them:

In June 2014, one of the main national broadcasting companies<sup>4</sup> apologized in prime time for a story<sup>5</sup> aired one year before. By that time, the TV channel had exposed the wrong labeling of the food of one of the biggest retailers and food producers in Chile –Cencosud-, owned by one of the richest men in the country and Latin America, Horst Paulman<sup>6</sup>. The TV channel “regretted” any “discomfort” caused by the story and recognized that it could have allowed better *communication conditions to facilitate*<sup>7</sup> a fuller opportunity for the company to tell its side of the story<sup>8</sup>, even when the original TV show included interviews with retailer’s spokesman. These public excuses stopped the criminal and civil cases in court against the media outlet (RIUMALLÓ, 2014).

During the same month, an energy company -which is part of one of the most important Chilean business holdings- complained formally against Chilevisión (CHV)<sup>9</sup> to the Consejo Nacional de Televisión, CNTV (National Broadcasting Council), due to a special report<sup>10</sup> about a controversial hydroelectric project near Santiago de Chile. The energy company accused CHV of being biased, non-objective and unprofessional, which impacted negatively on pluralism<sup>11</sup>.

Later, in August 2014, the private companies which manage the retirement funds of Chilean people<sup>12</sup> filed a complaint against CHV due to a story which criticized the social security system privatized in the early ‘80s<sup>13</sup>. The TV channel withdrew the story from its website. One of the editors said that the story negatively impacted the advertising paid by the social security companies<sup>14</sup>.

During the same month, the Chilean Supreme Court condemned the director of a Chilean economic newspaper, *Estrategia*, because he used his outlet to manipulate the share prices of a company of which he was a minor shareholder.

These cases highlight the interests of the main Chilean industries (energy, retail, pensions) which are also the largest advertisers, their intentions to shape how they are publicly portrayed, and the diversity of the media outlets where they display their strategies. As we will explain later in the methods section, this paper centers on a case which takes place within the *Canal del Fútbol* (CDF), a TV cable station focusing on soccer. Editors were fired and other journalists resigned as a consequence of corporate pressures imposed by top executives upset by a story aired at the end of July 2014<sup>15</sup>.

The impact of market-driven journalism and the commercialization of media can be observed in these kinds of corporate pressures on media content as well as on staff cuts in order to increase profits. During the first semester of 2014, journalistic staffs

were merged and outlets fired employees<sup>16</sup>, and a media holding fired a journalist and a leader of his company's labor union after a formal complaint was filed against the company in a court specializing in labor issues (SILVA, 2014)<sup>17</sup>. "As we believe, this is an attempt to scare workers", said Juan Guerra, the fired journalist (GUERRA, 2014)<sup>18</sup>. In the last three years, several labor unions of media outlets issued strikes to call for better labor conditions<sup>19</sup>. Questions about quality, professionalization, and shields against censorship were raised due to the influences of both commercialization and corporate interests in the Chilean media system.

The attempt of this paper is to explore and deeply analyze the corporate interests that shape the Chilean media system and journalistic performance, and how that in turn impacts a new democracy. To accomplish this purpose, this article intends to go beyond an anecdotal account of isolated cases of corporate pressures on media outlets by carefully describing and analyzing a particular case and relating it to the media system and the economic sphere.

This case allows us to: 1) understand the types of ties between commercialized journalism, corporate media, and the broad corporate landscape within a neoliberal society; and 2) describe the corporate practices in controlling what information can circulate or not, without coercion. Secondly, we also explore the collaborative role of journalism in Chile as a kind of development journalism. By analyzing the corporate pressures in the Chilean media system we can clarify the kind of landscape in which journalists are working.

This paper is divided in three sections. The first is the literature review and the theoretical framework; the second explains the methods and describes the case study; and the last part offers a discussion, explores conclusions, and points out the limitations of the study and presents questions for further research.

## **1 LITERATURE REVIEW**

There are three main topics that form our literature review: first, democracy and the public sphere in their relation to journalism; second, the Chilean media system, and finally, the status of freedom of expression and journalism, and the forces that have shaped them in recent Chilean history.

## 1.1 DEMOCRACY AND JOURNALISM

This article is framed within the normative theories of the press and its role in democratic societies from the description of a particular case in a specific national media system following an inductive approach. The literature, which links democracy, media systems and journalism, recognizes two ways to understand the links between them: “First, those *prescribing* the normative tasks for the media in society, and second those *describing* the factual role of the media in society” (CHRISTIANS et al., 2009, p. 69). Following Christians et al., a normative theory of the press can “sensitize media policymakers and professionals to acknowledge their own unstated premises -by exposing discrepancies between philosophical rationales and actual operations” (CHRISTIANS et al., 2009). This article addresses the normative tradition.

Despite the critics of Habermas’ concept of the public sphere (BENSON, 2009), it still orients the discussion about media, journalism and democracy. Indeed, the public sphere is a deliberative model and “necessarily a socially organized field, with characteristic lines of division, relationships of force, and other constitutive features” (CALHOUN cited by BENSON, 2009, p. 180). In fact, the contribution of the “public sphere” concept allows us to understand the public and democratic life as the place and space where deliberation takes place and participation is possible, and from which emerges a consensus through open and pluralistic argumentation and debate (HABERMAS, 1974). Hence, the concept of the public sphere is key for our purpose because it stresses the ideal of media or journalistic autonomy in a commercialized media system.

Within four philosophical traditions of Western thought highlighted by Christians et al. (corporatist, libertarian, social responsibility and citizen participation), they suggest that the media could play four roles (monitorial, facilitative, radical and/or collaborative) depending on the model of democracy within which it operates (administrative, pluralist, civic or direct) (CHRISTIANS et al., 2009). Our analysis will focus on a sort of collaborative role of media within a new or transitional democracy -the Chilean one-, in a way that strengthens the neoliberal model and the business environment more than the deliberative public sphere. Specifically, the case study shows how this collaborative role of the press is performed through a kind of development journalism.

Following Harvey, “[n]eoliberalism is a theory of political economy practices proposing that human well-being can best be advanced by the maximization of entrepreneurial freedoms within an institutional framework characterized by private property rights, individual liberty, unencumbered markets, and free trade. The role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to such practices” (HARVEY, 2007, p. 22). In fact, Harvey points out that Chile was the first great neoliberal experiment<sup>20</sup>.

The journalism performed in a neoliberal society can be explained following a reframing of development journalism. This kind of journalism was conceived during the ‘60s as an alternative agenda to non-Western societies or undeveloped countries and as a way to engage journalists and media in progressive social change. The frame was born within a postcolonial moment and against the ideology of modernization. Following Chalkley, development journalism “means news attitudes on the part of governments, the press, radio and TV, the international institutions..., and the many sources of news and analysis from the private sector –banks, companies in all economic fields, private research organizations, the lot” (CHALKLEY, 1980, p. 215). In Xiaoge words, “it was designed to serve the ordinary people, not the elite” (XIAOGE, 2009, p. 357).

However, we propose a shift to understand development journalism in a case of corporate pressures on Chilean media: the goal of this development journalism is not the entire welfare of the country as a whole, but the development of the economic sphere and its business actors within a neoliberal and free-market oriented society.

In fact, one of the components of development journalism described by Xiaoge (2009, p. 358) is what Richstad defines as “working constructively with the government in nation building”, which assumes that journalism must focus on “news of economic and social development” (RICHSTAD, 2000, p. 279). We see two risks in the idea of journalism working “constructively” with the government: first, the government could control or manipulate the media –directly or subtly- in the name of national goals, political stability, and economic growth; and second, national development normally implies a strong collaboration with private corporations. Hence, journalism could be constrained by both the government and corporations.

These two risks underlying development journalism imply an inherent contradiction: instead of contributing to a national and independent agenda, media is engaged with economic growth and

goals of power, as was the case in some African countries (XIAOGE, 2009; SHAH, 1996). In the Latin American case, this type of journalism was shaped by the dependence theory developed during the '60s and '70s. This theoretical approach criticized the theories of modernization because it "assumed that the course taken by political, social, and economic systems of Western Europe and the United States foretells the future for the underdeveloped countries" (CARDOSO; FALETTA, 1979, p. 11). However, Cardoso and Faletto distinguished between peripheral and central societies instead of developed, underdeveloped and developing countries. The peripheral and dependent societies produce raw material while central countries produce industrial goods. The distinction is not only about the stage of the production system, "but also of function of production and distribution... This requires a definite structure of relations of domination to assure an international trade based on merchandise produced at unequal levels of technology and cost of labor force" (CARDOSO; FALETTA, 1979, p. 17). Within this frame, the underdeveloped or developing countries could not be developed, because is not about a lineal process, but an interrelated and globally one.

## 1.2 "DEMOCRACIES"

In analyzing the media system and the status of journalism in a democratic country within the Latin American context the four models of democracy framed by Christians et al. (2009) are not appropriate. The administrative, the pluralist, the civic, and the direct models do not accurately describe the models of democracy shaped after authoritarian regimes that ruled most Latin American countries during the '70s and '80s, including Chile.

Generally, there are several definitions of "transition to democracy" depending on what period will be considered as transitional (GODOY, 1999). While some authors focus on the formal aspects of the changeover from one regime to another, others stress the structural transformations which can differentiate between one regime and another (GODOY, 1999; GARRETÓN, 1994). In the Chilean case, there is no agreement among scholars and politicians on which is the beginning and the end of the transition to democracy. For some, the process started in the mid '80s, while the dictatorship was ruling and the opposition chose to fight within the regime's rules



(GARRETÓN, 1994; OTANO, 1994). Consequently, the end of the transition remains debatable: Some affirm that happened when the first democratic president took office on March 11, 1990, after the dictatorship (ALTMAN; TORO; PIÑEIRO, 2008), while others argue that the legacy of dictatorship remains untouched, so it is impossible to affirm that the transition is completely over. Additionally, former presidents Patricio Aylwin (1990-1993) and Ricardo Lagos (2000-2005) claimed to have completed the transition: Aylwin, after presenting the *Report of the National Commission of Truth and Reconciliation*, in 1991; and Lagos, after signing important constitutional amendments in 2005. “In Chile, ‘democracy’ is a term to which a multitude of meanings have been attached as it has been strategically used by a range of actors to different ends” (PALEY, 2001, p. 117). Hence, we prefer the term post-dictatorship instead of transition to democracy.

### 1.3 CHILEAN MEDIA SYSTEM

In the Chilean transition to democracy “the old regime was not fully dismantled. There is no *tabula rasa* for reform. Powerful interests from the authoritarian period, as well as elements of political culture, some institutions and rules of interaction, have persisted into the new democratic era” (GOODWIN; NACHT, 1995). This is also true in the Chilean media sphere and remains true nowadays (MÖNCKEBERG, 2009).

The Chilean military dictatorship (1973-1990) forever shifted both the society as a whole and the media landscape (MCCHESENEY, 1999, p. 111 and ff.). After the Coup d’État in September 1973, many journalists were persecuted and exiled; left-wing media were closed and never re-opened. Hence, the dictatorship consolidated the privileged spot of a few media outlets which still holds true because none of the democratic governments since 1990 reformed the status quo (MÖNCKEBERG, 2009; BRESNAHAN, 2003; DERMOTA, 2002). These deep transformations of the media environment occurred within a broad political, economic and social shift in Chilean society. Since the mid ‘70s, the regime drove drastic reforms, which were consolidated during the ‘80s characterized by deregulation and privatization of most spheres. These movements shaped media and journalism performance as well. This situation is quite paradoxical: the free market was defended, but freedom of expression was not.

Particularly, the Chilean broadcasting system is rooted in a non-profit system, which has been handled by the national State through a public TV channel and the national universities since its creation in the late '50s. In fact, there was no commercialized television until the early '90s when the private ownership of broadcasting was allowed by legal reform. TV cable came on the scene in the mid '90s and grew rapidly. In 1994, there were 279,234 TV cable subscribers. By 2011, there were more than 1 million<sup>21</sup>.

Chile is characterized by its deregulation and privatization of its media landscape, especially broadcasting, and there are few rules against the concentration of ownership. The democratic government's "embrace of the neoliberal conception of media democratization has facilitated national and transnational corporate control of the principal means of public expression and consolidated a consumerist, entertainment model incompatible with the democratic need for a diverse and vigorous public sphere" (BRESNAHAN, 2003, p. 39). This is what McChesney has called "the rich media/poor democracy paradox" (MCCHESENEY, 1999, p. 3).

The prior research on Chile addresses problems about freedom of expression, especially but not only in the first years after the military dictatorship (SAPIEZYNSKA et al., 2013; KROHNE, 2005; SUNKEL; GEOFFROY, 2001; HRW, 1998; TIRONI; SUNKEL, 1993) as well as the status of journalism (HANITZSCH; MELLADO, 2011; GRONEMEYER, 2002) and the forces that shape it (OTANO; SUNKEL, 2003; DERMOTA, 2002; SUNKEL; GEOFFROY, 2001).

## 2 METHODS

This article is based on a "critical case" study following the typology of Flyvbjerg (FLYVBJERG, 2011), which allows logical deductions and generalizations. This is useful because Chile is regularly well ranked on international measurements of freedom of expression precisely because industrial and economic constraints remain out of the focus of international measures of freedom of expression. Describing and analyzing actual cases of corporate pressures on media outlets and journalistic practices make it possible to challenge and reframe the measurement of freedom of expression.

This case study focuses on a story about the stadium's construction of one of the main soccer teams in Chile that was aired

on *Canal del Fútbol* (CDF), a TV cable network. The owner is the National Soccer Association and a private company owned by Jorge Claro, a former soccer leader, and his family. The company, which runs the University of Chile team (*Azul Azul*), made a formal complaint against CDF's executives due to the story. Consequently, CDF fired two editors and four journalists resigned. The story was erased off the website and it was not shown again. There are verified media accounts of the pressures placed on CDF<sup>22</sup>, and the CDF's labor union also reported corporate pressures upon CDF's executives and showed solidarity with affected editors and journalists publicly. The case also includes the version of three of the former CDF's journalists<sup>23</sup>.

## 2.1 WHY THIS CASE

Sports journalism is perceived as a secondary beat, both within a professional environment and journalism studies. Both are focused on autonomy, professionalization, or political relevance. Most of the research in this field is centered on politics and business beats. However, sports journalism should to be highlighted due to the worldwide commodification and privatization of sports, which has transformed it in a scenario where business and corporate interests are actually deployed.

Sports privatization has caused deep transformations in several of its spheres: from social and sport clubs to private corporations; from club members to hooligans (*barras bravas*); and from sports journalism within a social responsibility approach to sports journalism which helps the commodification of sports media within the entertainment business (SANTA CRUZ, 2011). In fact, soccer is one of the most profitable businesses worldwide and income comes mainly from broadcasting contracts. In fact, according Forbes, the FIFA's World Cup generated around \$4 billion<sup>24</sup>.

Indeed, it is necessary to enlarge the focus to other beats such as sports, especially if people's interest in politics and public affairs is decreasing (MCCHESENEY, 1999). This imperative becomes more obvious if we think about the hybridization of genres (*infotainment*, for example). Hence, mass and popular cultures are becoming new spaces where citizenship and policy is played out.

Actually, in a mass culture era, there are many examples of the political and economic role played by sports events: The 1936 Berlin Olympics (SCHAAP, 2008); the 1978 Soccer World Cup played

in Argentina during the military dictatorship<sup>25</sup>, and the 1995 Rugby World Cup played in South Africa are three great examples of how sports are shaped within a broader political and economic context (CARLIN, 2009). In Latin America, soccer is not just a sport - in fact, it is a cultural practice, an economic industry, an entertainment sphere, and a place where the political arena is deployed. Its commercialization and privatization in the last 30 years has impacted the world in several ways beyond the scope of this article<sup>26</sup>.

### **3 THE CASE STUDY: CANAL DEL FÚTBOL (CDF) - THE OUTLET**

The *Canal del Fútbol*, CDF (or “Broadcasting Soccer”) is a TV cable channel which was created by the National Association of Professional Soccer (Asociación Nacional de Fútbol Profesional, ANFP) in 2003, in partnership with a private businessman, Jorge Claro. CDF has the exclusive broadcasting contract for the entire national soccer competitions. Consequently, the broadcasting revenue from CDF is the major source of income for the ANFP and its teams. Today, CDF has more than 120 workers and 600,000 subscribers who must pay extra on their TV cable bills if they want to have access to CDF, and its estimated value is US\$600 million<sup>27</sup>.

#### **3.1 THE OWNERS**

There are three main actors behind the CDF property: The ANFP, its 32 associated soccer clubs and sports companies, and GTV, Jorge Claro’s TV cable company.

Soccer used to be a social activity within social and sports clubs, usually rooted in local communities. During the ‘90s, professional soccer became a very profitable business and the clubs started to receive a lot of money due to broadcasting contracts. After several administrative and legal problems that some clubs faced in the ‘90s, including fraud and bankruptcy, a legal reform forced the clubs to transform into sports companies or become part of one. The sports companies are compelled by the law to higher accountability and transparency standards following trade regulations, similar to banks or insurance companies. This bill opened the door for traditional businessmen to come into the soccer business.

One of the companies created under this law was *Azul Azul* (Blue Blue). Its main shareholders are investment companies, stockbrokers and banks. The current president of the company is Carlos Heller, the main shareholder of MEGA, one of the private broadcasters in the country. His predecessor, José Yurazseck, is a member of the most conservative right-wing party and owner of several companies. *Azul Azul* is the company which has managed the Universidad de Chile Soccer Club since 2007 and will do so for the next thirty years. The club was founded by the Universidad de Chile, the national university, in 1927. *Azul Azul* pays a franchise for the brand, the institutional signs, and so on. Because of that, the higher education institution has a spot on the board of directors of the company.

Finally, Jorge Claro is a Chilean businessman who in 2002 created with his wife and his four sons GTV Company, principally to participate as a shareholder of CDF<sup>28</sup>.

### 3.2 THE STORY WHICH TRIGGERED THE CONFLICT

On July 31, 2014<sup>29</sup>, *Canal del Fútbol* aired a story about the problems faced by the project of the Universidad de Chile soccer team's stadium. This club is one of the oldest and most popular in Chile, and has won many national championships. However, it does not own its own field. The story of this stadium is a long one<sup>30</sup>: for at least the last 25 years, it has been an unfulfilled promise for former and current managers of the club. The last announcement was in April 2014, when the president of *Azul Azul* affirmed that the Universidad de Chile will have its own field by 2017 and the construction would be starting soon.

The CDF's story about the unfinished stadium included excerpts of past TV news stories on the same topic, on the record interviews of the sports company and in the club, as well governmental sources at a local level due to the official requirements behind the construction. The TV report showed that *Azul Azul* had not yet submitted its stadium project to the authorities, which must authorize the construction. Even one of the executives of *Azul Azul* responsible for this paperwork confirmed the delay<sup>31</sup>.

The story had been approved by the CDF editorial team<sup>32</sup> one week before. Roberto Gálvez, who investigated the story, never

thought of or perceived of any problem during the production of the story. “I worked on it professionally, carefully, in order not to get anyone angry... Nobody told us that there was something wrong going on” (GÁLVEZ, 2014). The former CDF’s executive producer, Patricio Torres, says that they were confident about the story “because it included the *Azul Azul* statement” (TORRES, 2014).

A few minutes after the story was aired, the general manager of *Azul Azul*, Cristián Aubert, called Martín Awad, the executive director of CDF, to criticize what he considered a “biased” story. Awad immediately told Patricio Torres about the *Azul Azul* complaint. In fact, an off the record source cited by the investigative website *Ciperchile.cl* confirmed that the story showed the stadium’s project as something vague, without chances to succeed, triggering uncertainty in their fans (and in their shareholders). Several phone calls followed from the top to the bottom, and from *Azul Azul* to CDF. The next day, *Azul Azul*’s president, Carlos Heller, and Sergio Weinstein, *Azul Azul*’s executive of the stadium project, sent an official letter to CDF’s executives confirming their “profound indignation” and blaming CDF’s journalists of stimulating conflict within *Azul Azul*, the club, the fans, and the rest of the soccer industry. The letter included the following statement: “We require that CDF take *tough and exemplary*<sup>33</sup> measures... Filters and/or reports must exist to prevent this type of serious situation”<sup>34</sup>. Patricio Torres and the rest of the journalistic team had no idea about the letter: the team’s members read it in the media. Several meetings between Awad and the editorial team followed after the story.

Heller himself acknowledged that they actually had complained about CDF’s story. “I believe in freedom of expression, but people have the right to formulate his or her discontent... We weren’t arrogant, *we just showed our anger*<sup>35</sup>”, affirmed Heller<sup>36</sup>, who did not expect that his complaint would cause the firing of CDF’s editors. “I didn’t think about consequences. I thought that this would be simpler”.

The story was not aired again on CDF and was not linked to the TV cable website and official social networks. The story has disappeared<sup>37</sup>. On August 5<sup>th</sup>, the outlet fired two editors and three journalists resigned in solidarity with their editorial bosses. According to Patricio Torres, Awad told him: “The CDF’s foundations were shaken by the story: Due to that, we should restructure CDF’s news and you are not included” (TORRES, 2014).

### 3.3 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In general, this article contributes and enriches the research focused on freedom of expression in Chile, the Chilean media system and its relation to democracy after the military dictatorship, and it illustrates the kind of corporate pressures which are shaping Chilean journalism.

Particularly, the case analyzed allows us 1) to describe the corporate practices to control what information can or cannot circulate, and 2) to understand the types of ties between commercialized journalism, corporate media, and the broad corporate landscape within a neoliberal society.

Concerning the first topic, the story aired by CDF triggered an immediate and tough response from shareholders. In five days, the outlet fired editors and journalists resigned due to the story. The players were the top executives from both corporations (*Azul Azul* and CDF), and they displayed direct strategies to stop what they considered “biased” journalism: several phone calls, the official letter, the meetings, the communication strategy through the media to “explain” the corporate reaction, and the discourse of the decision making process within CDF (the editors were fired due to “a restructuration”, not because of the story). Finally, it was a top to bottom flow with no chance of counterbalance. Although the reporters, the CDF’s labor union, and the national professional association of journalists publicly denounced the situation, neither the corporation nor CDF changed its mind or decisions. The letter from *Azul Azul* to CDF is illustrative: “We require that CDF take *tough* and *exemplary*<sup>38</sup> measures... Filters and/or reports must exist to prevent this type of serious situation”. Indeed, “external” corporations have direct influences on the media outlet and worked to stop the circulation of the information, to correct the misbehavior, and to suggest paths to follow<sup>39</sup>.

We say “external” corporation to refer to *Azul Azul* sports company because it is not actually an outside player. In fact, the company is one of the shareholders of CDF through its membership in ANFP. The players (ANFP, *Azul Azul*, CDF) share the same institutional visions and missions. So, it is necessary to discuss if the journalism is a shared goal among CDF and its journalists. While Gálvez described his job as “professional”, the CDF’s vision and mission are shaped by institutional goals, like “to be the *communication organization* of

Chile's soccer" and "*to promote soccer* and its passion among Chilean people, by providing content of excellence, and *by fomenting*<sup>40</sup> the sustainable development of national soccer"<sup>41</sup>. There is no way to see the autonomy of journalism in the CDF's statement.

This case shows how the corporation remains "a legally designated 'person' designed to valorize self-interest and invalidate moral concern" (BAKAN, 2004, p. 28). In Friedman's words, "a corporation is the property of its stockholders... There is one social responsibility for corporate executives... They must make as much money as possible for their shareholders. This is a moral imperative. Executives who choose social and environmental goals over profits –who try to act morally- are, in fact, immoral". The corporations exist to maximize returns for their shareholders and social corporate responsibility is just a long-term self-interest (interviewed by BAKAN, 2004, p. 34 and ff.).

Secondly, this paper explores the collaborative role of journalism in Chile as a kind of development journalism. Originally, the collaborative role of media was rooted in deliberative democracies and attempted "to support and strengthen participation in civil society outside the state and the market" (CHRISTIANS et al., 2009, p. 158). However, this case study shows how a commercialized media system, within a neoliberal democracy, could be engaged with economic growth more than with a vibrant public sphere, and encourage a facilitative role of media to strengthen the economic system and its players more than democracy itself.

The main incomes of soccer clubs and sports companies come from broadcasting contracts, specifically through CDF, a TV cable network created to broadcast soccer in Chile, with more than 600,000 subscribers who must pay extra on their TV cable bills if they want to have access to CDF<sup>42</sup>. Therefore, soccer competition should maintain a high level to be attractive for investors, advertisers, and broadcasting. So, if we relate this fact to the CDF's vision/mission about promoting soccer, CDF appears as a communication branch of the industry (ANFP/clubs and companies, and the TV channel itself), focused on developing this industry and its spectacle. New studies should deeply examine and compare the collaborative role of Chilean media outlets and their shareholders (with interests in banking, retail, or mining). For instance, further research should consider the stock's behavior in the marketplace, the value of the companies, and the value of the brands, and relate it to the circulation of critical information –as the case here studied.



In fact, if we connect the CDF case with the situations explained in the background section of this paper<sup>43</sup>, we can affirm that Chilean journalism is shaped by corporate interests, which require from journalism a collaborative role to strengthen the economic sphere and a national goal to not damage economic stability. Further research should explore and compare which similarities and differences can be found among these cases and CDF's, and if the Chilean media system is deploying a sort of development journalism engaged with national goals of economic growth and political stability beyond this study.

Paley uses the concept of “marketing of democracy” in a study of social movements in post-dictatorship Chile, which is appropriate to the role of a sort of development journalism playing a collaborative role in a new democracy: “In the current globalized economy, policy decisions are strongly oriented toward transnational market considerations that foster an export model of development, rely on attracting foreign investment, and saturate societies with imported goods. Sustaining this model requires *political stability*, which is advanced through the moderation of social movement activity and enhanced by the widespread stimulation of consumerist behavior... I refer to a kind of political marketing (which) create images that sell the idea of democracy to both citizen-consumers and foreign investors” (PALEY, 2001, p. 117).

Following the discussion about journalism and democracy, this article addresses the normative tradition of the press. As the case showed, CDF's does not acknowledge a public sphere to discuss and democratically understand such important cultural spheres, such as soccer. Instead, it promotes corporate interests of the soccer industry. Following Bresnahan, in Chile the “adoption of the market model of the media influenced a series of policy choices that have contributed significantly to the debilitated public sphere” (BRESNAHAN, 2003, p. 44). It will be necessary to take a broad perspective to test this point of view in different kinds of outlets (by channel –broadcast, online, print-, property, audiences, and geographical location). But following this case study and the examples provided early in this paper, we can expect similar trends.

And finally, as McChesney and Harvey pointed out about neoliberalism and Chile, this case study showed how media is co-opted by corporate interests, in this particular example, private sports companies. As Harvey said, the role of the state is to create and preserve an institutional framework appropriate to free markets

and trade; we would add “the role of the state and the media system” in its collaborative role. In a neoliberal society it is mandatory to take into account both state and private players to analyze the different social spheres -in this particular case, freedom of expression- since the Chilean media system is a market-driven one.

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### Notes

- 1 Like the Special Rapporteurship for Freedom of Expression of the Organization of American States (OAS) and the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression of the United Nations (UN).
- 2 “The world’s billionaires” 2014, by Forbes. Available at <http://www.forbes.com/profile/sebastian-pinera/> [consulted in December 12, 2014].
- 3 “Chile’s new president faces pressure to sell TV channel”, *Journalism in the Americas*, April 14, 2010. Available at <http://knightcenter.utexas.edu/archive/blog/?q=en/node/6939> [consulted on December 12, 2014].
- 4 The release was published in national print media too.
- 5 “Alimentos saludables. ¿Gato por liebre?, story aired by Channel 13 on July 9, 2013. Available on <http://www.13.cl/programa/contacto-t23/capitulos/alimentos-saludables-gato-por-liebre>
- 6 “The world’s billionaires” 2014, by Forbes. Available at <http://www.forbes.com/profile/horst-paulmann/> [consulted on December 12, 2014].

- 7 The author's highlight.
- 8 "Acuerdo Cencosud - Canal 13 por el oliva Jumbo: 'Aceitadas' suspicacias", *Lanacion.cl*, July 1, 2014, available on <http://www.lanacion.cl/noticias/economia/empresas/acuerdo-cencosud-canal-13-por-el-oliva-jumbo-aceitadas-suspicias/2014-07-01/140632.html> [consulted on December 7, 2014]; "Jumbo gana la pelea a Canal 13 por capítulo de 'Contacto' sobre aceites", *Emol.com* July 1, 2014, available on <http://www.emol.com/noticias/magazine/2014/07/01/667809/canal-13-y-cencosud.html> [consulted on December 7, 2014].
- 9 CHV is owned by Time Warner.
- 10 "Aguas turbulentas en el Cajón del Maipo", available on <http://www.codexverde.cl/tribuna/2461-aguas-turbulentas-revive-el-reportaje-de-en-la-mira-sobre-alto-maipo.html> [consulted on December 7, 2013].
- 11 Pluralism is not defined in the complaint. Indeed, it is just a reference to the legal obligations of CNTV about ensuring "the proper operations of broadcasting companies", which includes a guarantee of pluralism. Act of the ordinary session of the National Broadcasting Council (Consejo Nacional de Televisión), September 1, 2014. Available on [http://www.cntv.cl/prontus\\_cntv/site/artic/20140911/asocfile/20140911171737/septiembre\\_01\\_2014\\_actaaprobada\\_copia.pdf](http://www.cntv.cl/prontus_cntv/site/artic/20140911/asocfile/20140911171737/septiembre_01_2014_actaaprobada_copia.pdf) [consulted on December 7, 2014]. The CNTV have few studies which mention "pluralism" without describing it only as an assumption.
- 12 The Chilean social security system was privatized in 1981. Since then, "it is compulsory for all wage and salary workers and involves the mandatory payment of a percentage of gross earnings as contributions into a private pension fund selected by the individual from pension fund administrators ("AFP")". (For an overview of the Chilean system of pensions, see OCDE, 2011, p. 9 and ss.) (For a critical overview of the system's pension based on individual funds, see Orszag & Stiglitz, 1999). Actually, the Chilean government is studying reforming the pension system and has appointed a commission whose duty is to review and propose changes. See <http://www.comision-pensiones.cl/>
- 13 "AFP. Una previsión sin futuro", *En la mira*, Chilevisión, July 23, 2014. Available on <http://vimeo.com/101930055> [consulted on October 16, 2014].

- 14 The source required to be off the record. Personal email, dated on October 15, 2014.
- 15 “Días de furia en el CDF: Así se gestó la salida de los periodistas que enfadaron a Carlos Heller”, *Ciperchile.cl*, August 14, 2014, available on <http://ciperchile.cl/2014/08/14/dias-de-furia-en-el-cdf-asi-se-gesto-la-salida-de-los-periodistas-que-enfadaron-a-carlos-heller/> [consulted on November 25, 2014].
- 16 “Canal 13 decide sacar del aire la edición de TV cable de Teletrece”, *Emol.com*, October 22, 2014. Available on Fuente: Emol.com - <http://www.emol.com/noticias/magazine/2014/10/22/686318/canal-13-saca-del-aire-la-edicion-de-tv-cable-de-teletrece.html> [consulted on November 25, 2014].
- 17 “Paulsen renuncia a ADN en apoyo a dirigente sindical despedido”, in *The Clinic*, November 10, 2014, available on <http://www.theclinic.cl/2014/11/10/paulsen-renuncia-adn-en-apoyo-dirigente-sindical/> [consulted on November 25, 2014]. SILVA, 2014.
- 18 In February 2015, a labor court determined that the company should reincorporate Juan Guerra to his job. According the court, the journalist had been unjustified fired. See “Juan Guerra, el sindicalista que le dobló la mano a Iberoamericana Radio Chile”, *El Desconcierto*, February 20, 2015. Available at <http://eldesconcierto.cl/juan-guerra-el-sindicalista-que-le-doblo-la-mano-iberoamericana-radio-chile/> [retrieved on May 1, 2015].
- 19 “Huelga en *El Mercurio de Valparaíso* y precarización del periodismo”, *Ciperchile.cl*, May 31, 2013, available on <http://ciperchile.cl/2013/05/31/huelga-en-el-mercurio-de-valparaiso-y-precarizacion-del-periodismo/> [consulted on December 7, 2014].
- 20 For more about Chile, neoliberalism, and media system, see also McChesney, 1999, p. 110 and ff.
- 21 Statistics from the *Subsecretaría de Telecomunicaciones (Subtel)*, which is part of the Ministry of Transportation and Telecommunications.
- 22 “Los días de furia en el CDF”, *Ciperchile.cl*, August 14, 2014. Available on <http://ciperchile.cl/2014/08/14/dias-de-furia-en-el-cdf-asi-se-gesto-la-salida-de-los-periodistas-que-enfadaron-a-carlos-heller/> [consulted in December 4, 2014]
- 23 Claudio Lara, email dated on October 10, 2014; Roberto Gálvez,

email dated on October 13, 2014; Patricio Torres, email date on October 14, 2014.

- 24 “World Cup Brazil Will Generate \$4 Billion for FIFA, 66% More Than 2010 Tournament”, *Forbes*, June 5, 2014. Available at <http://www.forbes.com/sites/mikeozanian/2014/06/05/the-billion-dollar-business-of-the-world-cup/> [retrieved on May 27, 2015]. The value of the most popular teams around the world is another clue to understand how profitable is the soccer’s businesses. See “Soccer Team Values. Business on the pitch”, *Forbes*, available at <http://www.forbes.com/soccer-valuations/list/> [retrieved on May 27, 2015].
- 25 “Argentina’s bittersweet win”, *Los Angeles Times*, June 28, 2008, available on <http://articles.latimes.com/2008/jun/28/world/fg-mundial28> [consulted on December 9, 2014]; “Kidnappers made Cruyff miss World Cup”, *The Guardian*, April 16, 2008, available on <http://www.theguardian.com/football/2008/apr/16/newsstory.sport15> [consulted on December 9, 2014].
- 26 One of the cases which illustrate this is Argentina’s “Fútbol para todos”: In 2009, the Argentinian government purchased the broadcasting rights of the entire professional soccer business in the country to be aired publicly instead of only TV cable as a national and cultural goal. In the case of Brazil, and as part of its commodification, after the Soccer World Cup 2014, soccer became available just for elites due to the high cost of the tickets. See “Mundial de 2014, la elitización del fútbol en Brasil”, IPSNoticias, January 31, 2012, available at <http://www.ipsnoticias.net/2012/01/mundial-de-2014-la-elitizacion-del-futbol-en-brasil/> [retrieved on May 27, 2015]. “Brasileños se cuelan en estadios del Mundial a medida que el fútbol se encarece”, *La Tercera*, June 12, 2014. Available at <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/negocios/tiempo-libre/2014/06/744-582078-9-brasilenos-se-cuelan-en-estadios-del-mundial-a-medida-que-el-futbol-se-encarece.shtml> [retrieved on May 27, 2015].
- 27 “Claro persigue el pasado”, *La Tercera*, June 2, 2013. Available at <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/deportes/2013/06/656-526274-9-claro-persigue-el-pasado.shtml> [consulted on December 10, 2014].
- 28 “CDF popular: La revolucionaria apuesta de Jorge Claro”, *Ciperchile.cl*, November 21, 2012, Available at <http://ciperchile.cl/2012/11/21/cdf-popular-la-revolucionaria-apuesta-de-jorge-claro/> [consulted in December 10, 2014].
- 29 The story production took a week, since July 26.

- 30 In fact, the story of CDF about the stadium was just an update on the topic: it is possible to find online hundreds of media articles, in different Chilean outlets, which refer to the eternal promise about a Universidad de Chile's field. The last information about this topic was published when we were editing this paper: "Azul Azul deja atrás laguna Carén y oficializa intención de construir estadio en La Pintana", *La Tercera*, December 10, 2014. Available at <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/deportes/2014/12/656-608159-9-azul-azul-deja-atras-laguna-caren-y-oficializa-intencion-de-construir-estadio-en.shtml> [consulted on December 12, 2014]; and "Azul Azul viaja a Inglaterra a visitar estadios y sigue trabajando en refuerzos", *La Tercera*, December 10, 2014, Available at <http://www.latercera.com/noticia/deportes/2014/12/656-608290-9-azul-azul-viaja-a-inglesa-a-visitar-estadios-y-sigue-trabajando-en-refuerzos.shtml> [consulted on December 12, 2014].
- 31 "Días de furia en el CDF: Así se gestó la salida de los periodistas que enfadaron a Carlos Heller", *Ciperchile.cl*, August 8, 2014. Available at <http://ciperchile.cl/2014/08/14/dias-de-furia-en-el-cdf-asi-se-gesto-la-salida-de-los-periodistas-que-enfadaron-a-carlos-heller/> [consulted in December 4, 2014].
- 32 Patricio Torres, executive producer; José Manuel García, Pablo Sepúlveda y Claudio Lara, vice editors of CDF news (LARA, 2014).
- 33 Our italics.
- 34 In Spanish: "Requerimos que el CDF tome medidas duras y ejemplarizadoras, que incorpore filtros y/o reportes necesarios que deben existir para evitar que este tipo de graves situaciones se vuelvan a repetir". Cited in "Días de furia en el CDF: Así se gestó la salida de los periodistas que enfadaron a Carlos Heller", *Ciperchile.cl*, August 8, 2014. Available at <http://ciperchile.cl/2014/08/14/dias-de-furia-en-el-cdf-asi-se-gesto-la-salida-de-los-periodistas-que-enfadaron-a-carlos-heller/> [consulted in December 4, 2014].
- 35 Our italics.
- 36 Translated by the author. Audio record and Heller's statement Available at "Heller y reclamo por reportaje de CDF: 'No hubo soberbia, sólo manifestamos nuestra molestia'", AND Radio, August 5, 2014. Available at <http://www.adnradio.cl/noticias/deportes/heller-y-reclamo-por-reportaje-de-cdf-no-hubo-soberbia-solo-manifestamos-nuestra-molestia/20140805/nota/2354679.aspx> [consulted in December

10, 2014]. It wasn't the only communication strategy displayed by *Azul Azul* and Heller.

37 According to Patricio Torres, CDF's former executive producer, the production manager, Mario Insulza, decided the story wouldn't be aired again and wouldn't be linked to CDF's website. Patricio Torres, email, December 12, 2014.

38 Our italics.

39 See footnote #33.

40 Our italics.

41 CDF's Vision and Mission. Available at <http://corporativo.cdf.cl/nuestro-canal/> [consulted on December 12, 2014].

42 See footnote #26.

43 See pp. 3-4.

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