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DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-65-2010-897-244-254-EN - ISSN 1138 - 5820 - RLCS # 65 - 2010

Economic, Political and Communicative power in the neoliberal societies

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Abstract: The article analyses the relations between the economic, political and communicative powers in the socioeconomic model of neoliberal capitalism. Firstly, it examines the transformations in the economic power, to analyse later the various mechanisms linking this changing economic power to the media performance. Among these mechanisms, the article analyses the control of ownership and other external financial sources; the origin of commercial income; and business management techniques, while simultaneously investigating the relations between these variables and the transformations in the economic sphere. Following the political economy tradition, the article addresses the implications that the concentration of economic, political and communicative power have on democracy and freedom, taking into account the evolution of the socioeconomic and political system in the last decades.

Keywords: Power and media; political economy; globalisation; concentration; commodification; media management.

Summary: 1. Introduction. 2. Theoretical basis, hypothesis, and methodology. 3. The economic power in the neoliberal globalization. 4. The Media: mechanisms of economic and political power. 5. Results: Freedom and concentration of the economic, political and communicative powers. 6. References.

Translated: **Cruz Alberto Martínez Arcos**

1. Introduction

"Discourse plays a role within a strategic system in which power is involved and by which it works"...."Power is something that operates through discourse, as the discourse itself is an element in a strategic device of power relations" (Foucault, 1999: 59).

The transformation in the global socioeconomic system after the crisis of the 1970s involved changes in power relations between economic, political and social agents. In this context, the media, the main producers of public discourse in our societies, were also subject to major changes, which modified their modes of operation and their position in the whole social system. This article presents the different mechanisms (ownership, financing, organization, etc.) through which the changing economic power affects the media and thus conditions the production of public discourse. It proposes that, in the new capitalist model, the media act as devices that allow the exercising of power to some actors and not others; which permits establishing power relationships in favour of some players but not others.

Once more, I will make use of Foucault to define the aim of this article: "to establish and describe the relationships that these events, which we might call discursive events, maintain with other events that pertain to the economic system, the political field or the institutions" (Foucault 1999: 61-62). This study is, therefore, positioned in the tradition of the political economy of communication, whose conceptual framework is presented in the first section, together with the hypothesis and methodologies that underpin the article. The second section is devoted to situating some of the economic events of recent times that have changed the power relations in our socioeconomic system. The article then discusses what happened in those "discursive events" which are the media, and which are the mechanisms that are linked to economic power.

2. Theoretical basis, hypothesis and methodology

The article is situated in the critical tradition of research on mass communication, and developed from the perspective of the political economy of communication, as it is concerned with the interrelations between media systems, and the processes and power relations in the economic and political spheres, in the prevailing social system. The notion of power in which this work is based includes the contributions of Foucault (1999) and Gramsci, in whose conceptual framework the media have a key role in the construction of hegemonies and the constant negotiation of power relations, but not for this can be considered as counter-power or a power control mechanism, as suggested by the liberal theories. Rather, the media constitute a space of conflict, a political-economic arena, where, in fact, the most powerful actors may therefore have a greater influence, as it has been discussed by Curran (2005), among others scholars.

The work presented is based on several qualitative and empirical research studies on the structure of the

communication system in Spain and Europe, on the one hand, and the management of television companies, on the other. These research projects have been based on methodologies for analyzing the industrial structure of the Spanish audiovisual media, European comparative analysis, economic-financial analysis of companies, and methodologies of qualitative analysis of business management and organization through in-depth interviews.

The main hypothesis to be defended is the existence and strengthening of the structural mechanisms that make the media a discourse tool or device increasingly interwoven with the interests of the economic agents with more power in the new neoliberal socio-economic system, reinforcing the growing political role of these agents, which undermines the foundations of democracy. For the analysis of this relationship, the article firstly presents the changes in power relations provoked by the economic model that emerged from the crisis of the seventies, and which again enters in crisis by the end of the noughties. Afterwards the article discusses the different mechanisms that tie these socio-economic changes to the operation of the media to finally address the implications for the freedom of concentration of economic-political-communicative power.

3. The economic power in the neoliberal globalization

Since the 1970s our socioeconomic system has experienced a process of profound changes. The crisis of industrial overproduction in the US, the end of the convertibility of the dollar and the monetary system established at Bretton Woods, and the oil crisis in the seventies coincided in the 1970s causing a crisis that would lead to a revision in the system of capitalist accumulation both nationally and globally.

The growth and consumption model led by the US after World War II entered a stage of adjustment to find a new growth model that, from the 1990s, has received several names: the Information Society or Knowledge Society in which the role of information and knowledge are emphasized as engines of economic and political development, resulting in an investigation similar to the administrative tradition; neoliberal globalization, cognitive capitalism, or Empire, for which the emphasis is placed in the new relations of economic power established in this new model, thus ranking in the critical line of inquiry (Almirón, 2007)

Some of the structural changes that characterize this new growth model (sum of events in the economic sphere) are, with more or less intensity depending on the country:

- The liberalization of activities previously subject to politic regulation, from the financial activities and the currency markets to the public services and goods considered to be of general or public interest: health, education, energy, transport, radio-electric space, and the broadcasting services and telecommunications, the land, security and defence (Albert, 1992; Foucault, 1999, Stiglitz, 2003; Strange, 2001).

- The tertiarization of the economy: faced with the crisis of industrial overproduction, companies find in the service sector a space for the expansion, either by the growth of private services or privatized public services.

- The deepening of economic globalization: there is an increase in the volume of international trade in goods and services and the internationalization of investment, employment, and financial flows, leading to a new system of global competition, which determines the feasibility of nations and migratory movements, and where the dominance of the US and the EU is tempered by the economic emergence of other areas, especially in Asia.

- The business concentration, either through ownership control or multiple agreements and alliances between large corporations of international dimensions (OECD, 2002); and financialization of the economy or, in other words, the dominance of the financial economy over the real economy, in a system based on debt and the liberalization of financial flows (Palazuelos, 1998; Chesnais and Pilon, 2000; Aglieta and Morati, 2002).

- The exponential increase in the consumption of energy and other natural resources in developed and emerging countries, which concentrate a large part of the global energy use, and which generates environmental, violence and energy-dependence conflicts.

- The importance of military spending, especially of the US (and previously of the USSR, which was pointed out as one of the causes of its economic collapse): The US accounts for 42% of overall spending worldwide, which in 2008 was \$ 1.46 billion US dollars; 44 of the top 100 arms companies in the world are in the US, with 61% of the turnover of the industry (SIPRI, 2009). In addition, we must place this military spending within security systems progressively privatized (subcontracted), and with growing links with other economic activities (Fernández Durán, 2003; Channaa, Hillier et al., 2004; Uessler, 2007).

- The growth of the criminal economy, the financial havens and mafias: European judges have pointed out this has a closer relationship not only with the legal economy, but also permeates the domestic and foreign policy of many (Sterling, 1996, Maillard, 2002; Cámara and Morabito, 2005; Gayraud, 2007).

- The increase in the weight of information and information technologies in the economic activity, both as direct activity as well as ingredient or fourth production factor for the rest of the economic activities.

- The coexistence of high rates of growth and development in many sectors, internationally and within each country, which are outside or on the margins of these improvements in living standards (Maravall, 1999; Kaplinsky, 2008).

These socioeconomic changes have been designated with different names. Globalization emphasizes the extension of

the economic power relations characteristic of capitalism, territorially but also towards a wider range of activities: "It is global because the production, consumption and circulation, as well as all their components (capital, labour, raw materials, management, information, technology, markets) are organized on a global scale, either directly or through a network of links between economic agents" Castells (1997: 93).

The term cognitive capitalism is also used (Moulier, Corsani, Lassarato et al., 2004), in comparison to the terms of information or knowledge society, to highlight the extension of capitalist institutions (profit motive, private property, market, employer) in comparison to the field of knowledge, and how this reinforces the established economic power. Another concept used to define this new situation is that of Empire (Hardt and Negri, 2000), to highlight the various mechanisms of power –economic, military, political– that will shape a new order of global dominance and largely deterritorialized, where "the capitalist project is able to gather the political and economic power" (Hardt and Negri, 2002: 25).

Other authors (Albert, 1992; Foucault, 1999) also highlight how, from the 1980s, especially after the collapse of socialist regimes, an opposition between the Anglo-Saxon capitalist model and the social market economy model of Central Europe was evident, with a growing hegemony of the former since the 1980s, with the rise to power of Reagan in the US and Margaret Thatcher in the UK. Indeed, the Anglo-Saxon model is characterized by the spread of capitalist institutions and their rationality to not exclusively or primarily economic areas, as opposed to Rhinean Capitalism, which contemplates a greater involvement of political institutions in the regulation of the economy and, in general, in the government of the population.

We are therefore facing an economic transformation that expands the sphere of economics at the expense of politics or, rather, that expands the capacity to influence of the economic powers in the sphere of politics or in the field of "Governance", causing what Strange calls "a shift in the balance of power from the nations to the markets" (Strange, 2001: 54). More specifically, it is a shift in the balance of power in favour of the actors who have more power in these markets: the large multinational corporations (of energy, telecommunications, distribution, chemical, automobile), many of them linked to what has been called the military-industrial complex; the financial capital; the mafias; and the international economic authorities, through which the great potencies and large lobbies exercise their influence (Strange, 2001; Lawton, Rosenau & Verdun, 2000). The media are also part of these markets that are gaining ground in politics, and have multiple links with leading players in the transformation described.

4. The Media: mechanisms of economic and political power

The media appear to be a political and economic actor with multiple connections to power and its transformation. This section focuses primarily on business and economic mechanisms that link the media with the changes described above, in order to point out some of the lines through which the economic power leads the construction of social discourse.

The media have been consolidated as an economic activity, with an increasing direct relevance and, in fact, have been identified as one of the engines of the economic growth as they drive the development and dissemination of information and communication technologies (ICT), which is key in the new growth model –as envisaged in the Bangemann Report (EC, 1994) and the project of the information superhighway (Gore, 1994). The privatization of public radio and television services in Europe and the expansion of commercial communications and Internet information services are part of a process that treats the media industry as a space for capitalist expansion, which strengthens economic and business arguments in the management of the media, against considerations of public service and general interest and its importance for the exercise of fundamental rights like the right to information and the freedom of expression (de Mateo, 2009).

Thus, the media maintain its dual nature (economic interests and ideological interests), but regulation, ownership, the definition of the information products and services and, in general, decision-making within the media now increasingly depends on the business and markets logics characteristic of the capitalist system. The interests of the actors in positions of power in such markets and business structures have, therefore, a privileged position to assert their interests in the discourse of the media.

This section will pose a relationship between the operation of the media and the economic power that goes through different mechanisms: the control of media ownership; the control of other forms of external funding (mainly in the form of debt or public funds, in reverse) and internal funding (through the sale of advertising revenue by sale of goods or services to recipients); and trends in the business management and organization. To these mechanisms is added the influence that private companies have over public communications policies, to achieve a regulatory environment favourable to their interests (Lessig, 2004; McChesney, 2004).

4.1. Who runs the media? Ownership and financing

The social capital provided by the owners is one of the sources of finance of the company, but corporate control is also exercised through other external and internal sources of finance. Thus, the analysis of the various actors who lead the financing of the media reports on who has control of business decisions and who gets the benefit of the activity. The analysis also reports who and how mobilizes the resources for the production of certain goods or services, or for the opening of new markets, at a time that there is a significant reorganization of information and communication systems.

Although the analyses focused on media ownership have been criticized because shareholders cannot be accounted responsible for content control (Schulz, Kaserer and Trappel, 2008), shareholders are indeed responsible for the strategic operation of the company through investment and spending decisions, which influence the type of medium

possible, without ruling out direct interventions in the content, especially at particular times that affect their interests. Therefore, it is interesting to analyze the ownership of the media and the relationships that can be established with the economic power.

Media ownership is characterized by the dominance of large companies that are expanding in terms of geographical markets, the range of products offered (horizontal expansion), the production process (vertical expansion), and in different media (multimedia expansion), resulting in a media system characterized by concentration and internationalization, as it happens in the rest of the economy. In the audiovisual system, nine groups (AOL Time Warner, Viacom, Sony, Walt Disney, Vivendi, News Corporation, Bertelsmann, General Electric/NBC and Liberty Media) dominate the US market and to a large extent the European market too (McChesney, 1999, Nordicom, 2009).

Also in the printed media, newspapers and magazines, there are only few groups of international dimension, with a prominent position and in many cases, linked to audiovisual activities: News Corporation, Bertelsmann, Springer, Fininvest, Lagardere, Reed Elsevier, Pearson, Prisa, Wolter Kluwer, Bonnier, G+J (de Bens, 2007), are some of the leading companies in the publishing activities, which include books, magazines and specialized information services with high added value. Also in the field of advertising there is a situation of business concentration at national and global levels, in seven groups (WPP, Publicis, Omnicom, Interpublic, Aegis, Havas, Dentsu) that concentrate much of the global advertising market, especially TV advertising (Bergés and Sabater, 2007).

Besides the concentration of ownership with the formation of holdings, we must also keep in mind that most of the major groups have alliances with the rest, whether long-term agreements to act in some markets, like with the creation of joint ventures or cross equity shares, which increase the level of concentration among the big media conglomerates.

But in addition to the concentration of media in fewer companies (except for Internet), it must be highlighted the increasing interrelatedness of the communications industry with other companies in activities such as finance, energy, telecommunications, construction, information technology, military industry and, in some cases, mafias (as pointed out by Geffroy, Fabre and Schiray Fabre, 2002). In other words, there is an increasing interrelation between the media and the main agents of the neoliberal globalization.

In fact, the growth model has been based, among other factors, in a conglomerate growth, where the communications industry has established itself as a field for the expansion of companies focused on other activities. In France, Générale des Eaux, a company of water, transport, energy and construction (sectors subject to liberalization) launched the first pay TV in Europe, Canal +, and continued expanding its investment into the Vivendi group. In 2000 the media business was segregated from other activities, and grouped under the holding company Veolia, and a few years later Vivendi Universal will be acquired by the subsidiary of General Electric, NBC. Already in 2010, Vivendi abandoned the shareholders of NBC Universal (which will be acquired by Comcast), focusing its business on Canal + and telecommunications activities. Another French media group, Lagardère, emerged from the fusion of the aerospace and arms manufacturing company, Matra, and the main European magazine publisher, Hachette.

In Italy, Fininvest, Berlusconi's company, started in the construction business to later accumulate investments in audiovisual and publishing (Società Europea di Edizione, Mondadori, Mediaset, Medusa film), but also in other activities like sports (Milan), banking and insurance (Mediolanum), and distribution (between 1988 and 1998 Fininvest is the main shareholder of the Italian distribution chain Standa). In Greece, the main shipping companies, oil companies and refineries in the country launched private television channels and are also behind a number of daily headlines. In the Nordic countries, Telenor and Nokia are investing in the digital content market. In Russia, the oligarchs, who emerged from the privatization of the socialist economy, are those who control the ownership of television and major newspapers.

In Spain, privatized companies are also involved in the ownership of media. This is the case of Telefonica with interests in free TV, and pay radio and TV (Antena 3 TV and Onda Cero Radio, between 1997 and 2003, Vía Digital, between 1996 and 2003, Digital Plus between 2003 and 2008 and again in 2009). Also, the successor of Tabacalera, Altadis, appears as a shareholder of digital terrestrial television, with Net TV, or the also privatized Endesa, an electrical company which was a shareholder of Auna Cable between 1998 and 2005. The housing sector (construction, real estate, mortgage) has also invested in media in Spain, and also contributed to the business of classified advertising in local markets. Some shares in media ownership include Rayet in Antena 3 TV, or the investments in local free newspapers.

As it often occurs among media groups, the links between media and the centres of political and economic power also go through agreements or partnerships like the one Google has with the NASA Ames Research Centre for research on technologies to manage large volumes of information, among other issues, or the agreement with Sun Microsystems, for the joint distribution of their technologies.

Banks, investment funds and venture capital funds are another of the protagonists in the structure of the media, either through shareholding (often through the stock market), or funding through credit and loans.

Almirón (2006) analyzes in depth the relationship between the PRISA Group and Bank Santander, putting on the table the linkages between the financial and media groups, which underlines the convergence of interests between the two sectors: the media system meets the communication needs of the financial system (in its territorial expansion, attraction of new customers, dealing with crises, and provision of information on court cases involving banks) and, conversely, the financial system meets the financial needs of the media (for its operations of expansion to new geographic or product markets, and for the corporate concentration).

BBVA's links with the group *Correo*, and the participation of the two big Spanish banks, and other financial institutions in the social capital of the private and cable TV stations in Spain, are situation studied by Almirón. Similarly, at the international level, the links between the media system and the financial system through ownership and financial intermediation are increasingly important.

In Europe is particularly noteworthy the participation of investment funds in cable television and free newspapers. With the differences that may exist between the strategies of various entities, we can say that the participation of financial capital in the media reinforces the concentration and allows the large groups to situate themselves in emerging markets with competitive advantages over competitors with less financial capacity. For example, large groups have been able to penetrate the Internet and take advantage of new possibilities for audiovisual transmission via cable, thanks to the financial support provided by banks and other financial institutions, enabling them to withstand heavy losses and eliminate competitors.

The transition, by internal growth or by acquisition, of the former family business centred on a single medium, to the consolidation of large holding companies and conglomerates, the media are bound to the nucleus of a changing economy. Thus, rather than a possible counter-power or an instrument of control, they become a part of an ever greater concentration of economic and political power centres of the new growth model. The media are therefore left available to the players most benefitted by the socioeconomic changes previously described, and thus they have gained valuable tools for promoting their activities and interests

4.2. Commercial activity

The third source of funding, in addition to external capital contributed by partners or others, is the own company through its commercial activity. Regarding the revenue of the media, Kops (2007) discusses, for television, the relationship between the channels' revenue model and the kind of discourse they offer, distinguishing three basic models and up to ten intermediate models: the media funded by commercial resources (private/commercial sector); the media financed mainly by the state (public and institutional sector) and the media financed mainly by voluntary contributions (private sector, non-commercial or public/non-institutional).

Kops shows how the type of content offered, the audience, the journalistic and artistic style, are all closely related to the structure of income, as it determines the incentives for producers: the benefits and salary of workers, the power of the State, the motivations of civil society, respectively (Kops, 2006: 73). It must be said that although the income coming from the state are significant in the radio and television of most European countries, they are increasingly subject to more limitations in the European legislation (Parent, 2007), while the third sector with no-profit motive occupies a marginal position and in some countries, like Spain, they have not yet achieved full legal recognition, occupying a marginal space in the radio-electric spectrum (EU's Commission on Culture and Education, 2008).

But in addition to the differences depending on whether the income come from the market, the State or voluntary contributions, there are differences in the discourses of media companies that have commercial financing, depending on what is sold and according to the source of income. In this sense, it is worth noting two trends in recent years. On the one hand, in the audiovisual system the weight of the spectators as a source of income has increased with the development of payment platforms, premium channels, video on demand and the new forms of digital distribution of payment (by subscription catalogues, per unit, per time). In contrast, the weight of the advertisers has increased in the press, with the strong growth of free newspapers of wide circulation initially driven by large groups of northern Europe (such as Metro International and Schibsted, which have international investment funds among its shareholders), and then also driven by the national press groups themselves.

This re-balancing between the weight of advertisers and audiences in the production of media has created a differentiation in the supply of content, with information and other content of high added value (scientific, financial, legal, and commercial information) aimed to groups with more purchasing power through the different media available; most trivial information in the media funded by advertising, for the people who cannot afford a high cultural spending; and, in the middle, more affordable pay media offers (certain magazines, payment platforms, online payment services) with more variety and informative or cultural interest, but with little added value (Robbins and Webster, 1987). We can identify here another link between a discursive event (the differentiation of offers according to the income and educational level), and events in the economic field, as those discussed above like the increasing inequality.

As for the advertisers as a funding sources is not necessary to dwell on the usefulness of advertising to the interests of economic power, which is subject dealt with, among others, by Baran (1969), Jhally (1987) and Sinclair (1987): it contributes to the consumption growth, is the motor of capitalism; allows business expansion; transmits consumerist values; ignores conflict. I will just highlight that in the field of advertising there is also an increasing concentration, both in relation to the advertising industry, as well as to the investment by advertisers. Large companies, protagonists of the neoliberal globalization are among the major advertisers and their interests have found more space for advertisement than for informative communication.

For example, in Spain the privatization of public services appeared more in the language of advertising than in the news language: the sharp increase of advertising investment in television en 1998 and 1999, with annual growth rates exceeding 14%, can be attributed largely to strong increases in ad spending of companies and activities recently privatized and liberalized. Telefónica's advertising investment in 1998 was 79 million Euros, almost double the previous year, and rose to 240 million Euros in 2000. Auna, which emerged from the privatization of Retevisión, was the second advertiser in Spain in 1999, only a year after its privatization was complete, with an investment of about 120 million Euros (Infoadex investment data).

It is also worth mentioning the advertising campaigns based on the values of freedom and environmentalism by oil companies with a presence in Iraq and favoured by the evolution of oil prices and associated circumstances. Car ads, especially 4X4, which take technology based on the US military industry to the consumer market, but appeal to environmental values in their ads, are also a paradigmatic case of the reflection that conflicts of our times have in the televised discourse through advertising, one of the most watched discourses.

We can see, then, how the major economic powers, benefited from the change of growth model, have had and have a significant capacity to affect the functioning of the media, whether through ownership shares, agreements or partnerships, or other contributions to the financing and commercial revenues of one of the media companies increasingly more concentrated.

4.3. How do the media work?: the logics of corporate management

The growing commercialization of the media assumes that their management is increasingly oriented to the purposes of profit, against the objectives of public service or informative and democratic utility of the media. We can highlight tendencies in corporate governance, derivatives of this desire for profit, which help the economic power may operate through the discourse of the media. These three trends are: demand-oriented management, the demands for cost reduction, and intra-industry competition.

The demand-oriented management involves that the discourse of the media is increasingly defined by market research indicating what content can attract more audience, which based on their profile are more attractive to advertisers. Faced with professional, creative, and public service standards, business management will be guided by the demands of the public and, especially, of advertisers and advertising agencies, which are customers with greater negotiation capacity (as opposed to the audience/readers, who are dispersed customers with little negotiation power).

Thus, the interests of big advertisers of large media agencies or buying groups, are taken into consideration in the public segmentation strategies, in the definition of programme schedules, websites, or magazines and newspapers, in content distribution and the very creation of such content. Therefore, the media keep track of the audience, their demographic characteristics, their behaviour patterns, their demands and preferences to design products that appeal the amount and type of audience that advertisers want. This commodification of media content translates into information increasingly spectacularized, giving rise to new hybrid formats that use the resources of entertainment to attract more audience, as discussed by Ortells (2009) for the Spanish case.

With the progressive participation of advertisers and advertising agencies in the production of content, new hybrid formats are also developed, using techniques such as product placement, publicity or what has been called infotaining and advertainment, which are genres that hybridize advertising with information and entertainment, and which are seen by the media themselves as a way to fill up a growing range of channels that instead of generating costs generate revenues.

The demand-oriented management can also be considered as a mechanism of power in the manner proposed by Foucault in relation to modern systems of social control: "At the end of the 18th century society introduced a mode of power that was not based on exclusion –this terms continues to be used- but in the inclusion in a system in which each person should be located, monitored, watched day and night, in which each one had to be chained to his own identity" (Foucault, 1999: 61).

In a sense, the demand-oriented management would be one of the mechanisms that links us to an identity defined by market research, with audience control and analysis instruments that, somehow, track and monitor audiences to then design contents and discourses to retain viewers, or readers or users, as clients of the media and receivers of advertising messages, that keep them included in the system of consumption.

A second notable aspect in profit-oriented management is the pressure to reduce costs. In the context of mature markets, where margins of revenue growth are reduced, companies are more pressured to reduce costs as the only way to improve the company's profitability and value. In this informative production and, in general, in content production, this leads to production models with less staff and less equipment (which are the fixed costs of the major media companies), which is reflected in less effort in innovation and quality. In the case of information, reducing costs means greater reliance on institutionalized information sources such as news agencies (also few), and communication offices of companies and institutions.

This results in a shift in the ability of creation and selection of news, with less power for some media characterized by the outsourcing and insecurity of the journalistic work, compared with the communication departments of large companies and institutions with more resources than the media to make news. The pressure to reduce costs in the media also brings greater attention to issues that require less research work and contrast of sources, and interpretation and documentation work, such as sports events or images of impact.

In the case of other non-informative content, outsourcing strategies to cut costs favour the integration of media in large business groups that have larger and more diversified stocks (in products and prices) and which can obtain more favourable purchasing conditions (as reflected in the importance of commercial debt on their balance sheets, especially in audiovisual companies). In this intra-industry market of contents, US productions continued to occupy a hegemonic position (EAO, 2008), especially in the realm of fiction. About 50% of fiction on European television stations is of US origin, with some audience success at the international level, especially with series related to themes of security, defence and health, which are protagonist issues in the neoliberal globalization model that gets a greater presence

through the prism of fiction rather than information.

Finally, the strategies for business growth, the demand-oriented management, the changes in the regulation, and the technological innovations have led to a scenario of greater intra-industry competition, of more competition between the different media. This means more competition between the different types of content (informative, cultural, fictional, entertainment, educative), with competitive advantages for those contents that have better rates of profitability, either because they have lower costs, or because they have more commercial value.

In this competition, entertainment, and what can be called entertainment information, clearly wins the game over information, especially over information that requires more productive resources and has less ability to generate revenue, such as information with added value for mass audiences or with less resources. The result is a growing socioeconomic differentiation in access to relevant information and culture.

5. Results: Freedom and concentration of economic-political-communicative power

The analysis of media ownership, financing, revenue and management shows how, in fact, there are various mechanisms through which the economic power, which is also political power, intervenes in the production of the media discourse. These mechanisms have been reinforced in the new model of neoliberal globalization, resulting in a greater concentration of economic, political and communicative power.

The implications of the economic changes described in the first section can be pointed out with two quotes from two characters of the liberal tradition: Friedrich Hayek, one of the fathers of post-war liberalism and Dwight Eisenhower, the Republican president of the US between 1953-1961. Hayek argued that economic planning by the government (communists and socialists) led inevitably to totalitarianism and servitude; but at the same time admitted the need for public intervention in the organization of the tools of the system (such as the financial system), and in activities related to public goods and services. He also warned against corporate planning because, as all planning, it involved a totalitarian danger.

"A situation that cannot satisfy the planners nor the liberals: a kind of union or "corporate" organization of the industry, in which competition has been suppressed more or less, but the planning has been left to independent monopolies which are the various industries" (Hayek, 1995: 71)

The current situation, with business concentration and internationalization, which exceeds national policies; and the liberalization of financial markets, which places the regulation of the monetary system on private hands, reflects the evils which Hayek warned against; it coincides with the situations that, according to the Austrian author, inevitably lead to servitude, as the socialist planning did. These "independent monopolies" also have mechanisms like those discussed in this article to intervene in the social construction of reality through the media discourse, thereby aggravating the threat to freedom posed by the corporate planning of the economy.

If to this autonomous economic power, which builds up power to decide over our lives, we add the growth of the military industry and the privatization of services like defence and security, we find a path fertilized for the servitude, a danger warned against by Eisenhower in 1961: "In the councils of government, we must guard against the acquisition of unwarranted influence, whether sought or unsought, by the military-industrial complex. The potential for the disastrous rise of misplaced power exists and will persist. We must never let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes. We should take nothing for granted. Only an alert and knowledgeable citizenry can compel the proper meshing of the huge industrial and military machinery of defence with our peaceful methods and goals, so that security and liberty may prosper together." Dwight D. Eisenhower. Farewell Address (17 January, 1961).

Eisenhower trusted the social control to avoid the negative consequences that the growth that defined it as military-industrial complex could have on the degree of liberty, the democratic processes, and the peaceful objectives and methods in politics. The "war on terror" (or the terror of war), unleashed after the September 11 attacks in New York and other conflicts involving the US and US-made weapons, shows that the optimism of the US President regarding the "alert and knowledgeable citizenry", that would be able to ensure a balance between public interests and private interests of the military industry, was not justified. In addition to the considerations that could be made regarding the optimism to think that an informed and conscious citizenry can (just for being that) stop the certain interests, the position and the logic of the media in the fabric of economic and political power surely has something to do with the fact that we cannot even say that the public has every chance to be alert and to have a knowledge of things that will allow effective intervention in the democratic and peaceful life of nations.

As shown in this article, the ownership and financing relations of the media with an economic power that has a growing political influence, as well as the own logics of business management in a liberalized communications industry, undermine the ability of the media to commit themselves to guarantee the right to information, essential to democratic politics. While this relationship between the economic and political power and the media can be considered a constant in the history of the media (see for instance Winsek and Pike, 2008), it must be highlighted that in the socio-political evolution of the so-called neoliberal globalization coincide a transition of the political power from the state to large conglomerates, the mafia, and military and security industries, with concentration, liberalization and commercialization of the media, which brings them under the growing influence of these same centres of economic and political power. Thus, they have a set of public communication tools that allow them to develop their interests by directly intervening in decisions about the content and, above all, by indirectly intervening through business management decisions that enhance a certain type of discourse where certain conflicts do not appear, or appear under the discourse of fiction or advertising, while increasing inequalities in access to the most relevant information.

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* This article is the result of several research projects: research funded by the Ministry of Education and Science. R&D Projects "The challenges of public television. Finance, public service and free market" (SEJ 2004-06130); the research funded by the Catalonia Broadcasting Council of "The production of television news programmes", directed by Rosario de Mateo; and the research work developed at the Euromedia Research Group.

HOW TO CITE THIS ARTICLE IN BIBLIOGRAPHIES / REFERENCES:

Bergés Saura, L. (2010): "Economic, Political and Communicative power in the neoliberal societies", at *Revista Latina de Comunicación Social*, 65, pages 244 to 254. La Laguna (Tenerife, Canary Islands): La Laguna University, retrieved on ____th of ____ of 2____, from http://www.revistalatinacs.org/10/art2/897_UAB/19_LauraEN.html
DOI: 10.4185/RLCS-65-2010-897-244-254-EN

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