

The Audio-visual Technology Hub Programme and TV Diversity in Argentina

LUIS A. ALBORNOZ & AZAHARA CAÑEDO¹

I – Introduction

The UNESCO Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions (CDCE) argues that cultural diversity is one of the main engines of sustainable development. Based on the assumption that all cultural expressions deserve the same dignity and respect, this international agreement urges countries to create a favourable environment for individuals and social groups in their respective territories to be able to create, produce,

¹ Luis A. Albornoz is founding partner and former president (2007–2013) of the scientific association the Latin Union of Political Economy of Information, Communication and Culture (ULEPICC). Researcher of the National Scientific and Technical Research Council (CONICET, Argentina) at the Research Institute Gino Germani at the University of Buenos Aires (IIGG, UBA). Director of the research group Audio-visual Diversity and member of Madrid Carlos III University “TECMERIN – Television-Film: Memory, Representation and Industry” Research Group. Editor-in-chief and/or co-author of *Periodismo digital. Los grandes diarios en la Red* (2007), *La televisión digital terrestre. Experiencias nacionales y diversidad en Europa, América y Asia* (2012) and *Power, Media, Culture. A Critical View from the Political Economy of Communication* (2015). Azahara Cañedo is PhD student in the Department of Journalism and Audio-visual Communication at Carlos III University of Madrid. Member of the research group Audio-visual Diversity and of the research group “TECMERIN – Television-Film: Memory, Representation and Industry”.

disseminate and distribute cultural expressions of their own, as well as have access to a range of cultural expressions originating from their own territories and the rest of the countries in the world.

One decade after the approval of the Convention there are numerous initiatives in place to support its goals in the field of culture and communication (UNESCO 2012 and 2013; Alborno & García Leiva 2017; Gallego 2017). A case in point is the Audio-visual Technology Hub Programme (*Programa Polos Audiovisuales Tecnológicos*, PPAT) implemented in Argentina² between 2011 and 2015, with the aim to revert the historically high geographic concentration of TV content production in the city of Buenos Aires. One of the consequences of such concentration is that the diversity of cultural practices originating in different regions of the country are seldom seen on the screen. Thus, sixty percent of the hours of free-to-air TV programming in the provinces during 2011 were live or deferred retransmissions of contents generated by metropolitan stations (AFSCA 2012).

In response to this situation, and in a context of changing audio-visual public policies and terrestrial digital television deployment (Alborno & García Leiva 2012; Krakowiak et al. 2012; Mastrini et al. 2012; Becerra et al. 2012), the former administration of Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who served two terms (2007-2011 and 2011-2015), supported the PPAT in order to activate TV production in the various provinces and regions of Argentina. To accomplish that goal, the national territory was divided into nine audio-visual technology hubs, where national public universities acted as centres that gathered a range of regional stakeholders.

² Argentina, with an area of 2,780,400 km², is the world's eighth largest country. Its territory is organised in 23 provinces, with a total of 40,117,096 inhabitants.

The purpose of the present case-study is to analyse this effort to decentralize TV production, embodied in the PPAT. The research techniques that support this study include documentary review, search and analysis of indicators, and in-depth interviews with key players: PPAT managers, audio-visual producers and researchers. This chapter provides an overview of the context of PPAT implementation and the program's goals, organizational structure, focus areas and funding. It then goes on to describe the phases of the Content Production focus area between 2011 and 2015, and discusses the diversity of sources and TV genres / subgenres, considering the 18 TV seasons that were aired between 2013 and 2014. The following sections address the dissemination of the Programme and the limited commercialization of the 18 projects produced. The case-study closes with a brief set of conclusions about this initiative.

II – The Audio-visual Technology Hub Programme

The Audio-visual Technology Hub Programme, hereinafter referred for its Spanish acronym as PPAT, has as its direct precedent the enactment of the Audio-visual Communication Services Act No. 26,552 (*Ley de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual*, LSCA) in 2009. This law distributes the radio-electric spectrum allocated to broadcasting services in equal portions among State operators, private for-profit operators and private not-for-profit operators; introduces major limits to concentration of ownership of broadcasting media; and creates a regulatory entity that is less dependent on the Government. Additionally, it establishes content quotas for national and local production, in order to develop and bring to light diverse audio-visual contents.

In 2011, the PPAT was introduced as one of the proposals developed by the Government to meet the objectives of the new law, with the goal to “encourage federalization of audio-visual content production by implementing a network of Audio-visual Technology Hubs, in which national universities could, through articulation and administration activities, collaborate with other governmental and civil-society sectors in the field of audio-visual production” (Consejo Asesor SATVD-T 2010: 4). Additionally, this initiative was also intended to create contents reflecting the cultural diversity in the country, develop a federal and sustainable audio-visual sector, and encourage research and development for digital TV. In this manner, the PPAT was conceived as a tool to reach the national and local production quotas for free-to-air TV signals established by the Audio-visual Communication Services Act: a minimum of sixty percent of national production contents, and between thirty and ten percent of local independent production depending on the demographics of the regions where the TV stations are located.

Eva Piwowarski, PPAT coordinator, described the horizon for the project: “Federal public policies are required (...) to open opportunities for genuine expressions from all over the country and to empower civil society for the legitimate appropriation of their own discourse, to promote local skills and drive the development of a new domestic TV market leading to the effective de-concentration of the business, thus guaranteeing the formulation of a new communication model for Argentina” (Piwowarski 2011).

The structure of the PPAT comprised the creation of nine regional Hubs in different parts of the country – called Digital Audio-visual Technology Research and Improvement Hubs or Audio-visual Technology Hubs – and four focus areas: Research and Development, Training, Equipment, and Content Production. The Advisory Council for the Argentine System of Terrestrial Digital Television

(SATVD-T),³ an instrumentality of the Federal Ministry for Planning, Public Investment and Services (MINPLAN),⁴ was assigned the coordination and management of the various Hubs through two areas: Implementation and Follow-up, and Project Assessment and Viability. Furthermore, the SATVD-T Advisory Council hosts the Administrative HQ of the PPAT, in charge of coordinating activities and projects in each region. Its roles included articulation of efforts with national universities, project selection and follow-up.

The regional production systems were made up of one or two Main Sites, depending on the area covered, and led by public universities. The universities, in turn, through the National Inter-University Council (*Consejo Interuniversitario Nacional*, CIN), were commissioned to manage and run the project in each region. Additionally, each Main Site included several Audio-visual Technology Nodes involving different local stakeholders – institutions, private companies, social collectives, individuals, non-profit civil society organizations and labour unions – in order to produce TV contents. Each Main Site promoted networking among the Nodes under its responsibility, short-listed the projects that they submitted, and provided technical, research and training support to the Nodes.

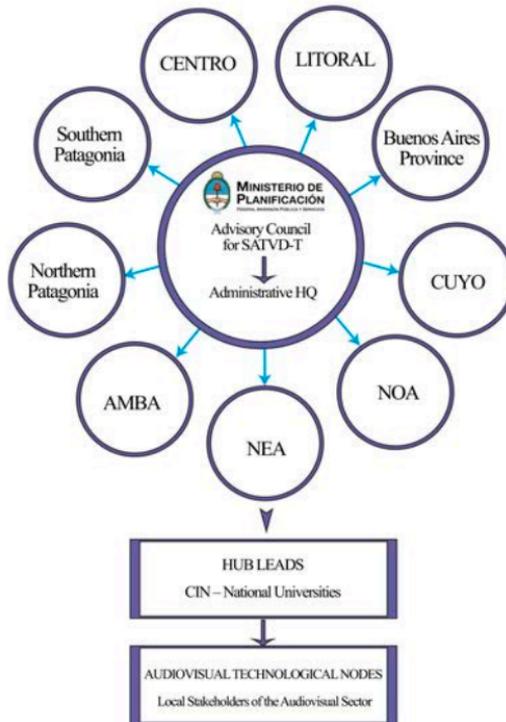
The geographic configuration of the Nodes was conceived in such a way that any large urban conglomerate in the country had a Node in its geographic proximity. The role of Nodes was to provide free technical support for the local audio-visual sector, conduct research and training activities, and articulate and coordinate PPAT policies.

³ The Advisory Council, with representatives from different Ministries, works on the implementation of SATVD-T. Its objectives include the promotion of social inclusion, cultural diversity and the national language through access to technology.

⁴ One of the fifteen ministries existing in Argentina when PPAT was introduced. In December 2015, the new Mauricio Macri Administration adopted Decree 13/2015 changing the ministry structure and proposing the merger of MINPLAN into the newly created Ministry for Energy and Mining.

The Nodes were also in charge of preparing a map of local actors, encourage innovation in new format and content production, and promote the organization of audio-visual projects capable of becoming independent economic units.

Figure 1. PPAT organizational structure



Source: Own research.

On 2 March 2011, the first Node was established at National University of Mar del Plata, belonging to the Buenos Aires Province Hub. Less than five years later (December 2015) there were 45 nodes in operation throughout the Argentine territory. Table 1 shows the geographical division of the country in Hubs with their main sites, territories, populations and nodes.

Table 1. Audio-visual Technology Hubs: territorial structure and organization

Hub	Territory	Population	Main Site(s)	Nodes
Centro (Centre)	Provinces: Córdoba, San Luis and La Pampa	4.060.037	National University of Villa María	-Córdoba -San Luis -Villa María -Río Cuarto -La Pampa
Littoral	Provinces: Entre Ríos and Santa Fe	4.430.531	National University of Entre Ríos	-Litoral -Rosario -Costa del Uruguay -Paraná -Concepción del Uruguay

Cuyo	Provinces: San Juan, Mendoza and La Rioja	2.753.626	National Uni- versity of Cuyo	-San Juan - Mendoza Sur - Mendoza Centro -Oeste Riojano
AMBA – Área Metro- politana de Buenos Aires (Met- ropolitan area of Buenos Aires)	City of Buenos Aires and Greater Buenos Aires*	12.806.866	National Uni- versity of Tres de Febrero / National Uni- versity of Arts	-Rodolfo Walsh -La Matanza - Conurbano Sudeste - Moreno -Lanús -La Pla- ta - General Sarmiento - Avellaneda -North San Martín
NEA – Noreste Argentino (Northeast Argentina)	Provinces: Misiones, Formosa, Chaco and Corrientes	3.679.609	National Uni- versity of Misiones	-Misiones -Chaco - Formosa - Corrientes
NOA – Noroeste Argentino (Northwest Argentina)	Provinces: Jujuy, Salta, Tucumán, Santiago del Estero and Catamarca	4.577.770	National Uni- versity of Jujuy / National Uni- versity of Tucumán	-Tucumán -Jujuy - Catamarca - Santiago del Estero

Patagonia Norte (Northern Patagonia)	Provinces: Neuquén and Río Negro	1.187.911	Université nationale de Comahue / Université nationale de Río Negro	-Atlántico -Ríos & Bardas -Andino - Norpatagónico
Patagonia Sur (Southern Patagonia)	Provinces: Chubut, Santa Cruz and Land of Fire, Antarctica and South Atlantic Islands	910.277	National University of Patagonie Australe / National University of Patagonie San Juan Bosco	-Tewsen -Valle - Cordillera - Aonikenk -Tierra del Fuego
Buenos Aires Province	Cities in the province of Buenos Aires not included in the Greater Buenos Aires *	2.818.218	National University of centre Buenos Aires	-Luján -Bahía Blanca - Trenque Lauquen -Tandil -Mar del Plata

Notes: * Greater Buenos Aires comprises 24 municipalities in the outskirts of Buenos Aires city.

Source: Own research based on PPAT internal documents and website, and National Statistics and Census Institute of Argentina 2010.

As with any initiative, the budget allocation was a vital aspect for PPAT. In 2011, the Government granted an initial allocation of \$ 4.9 million: one half was allocated to the purchase of equipment and the other half was invested in Research and Development, Training and Content Production. The next year, the same budget allocation was maintained. However, in 2013, a few months after its introduction, the PPAT underwent a total cut of budgetary resources for reasons that remained unclear, without any official

explanation.⁵ This unexpected shortage of resources seriously affected the initiative, which was in its early stages, hindering the implementation of TV productions. Subsequently, in 2014 and 2015, the initiative recovered part of its budget allotment, receiving a little over \$1 million each year. This considerable reduction in resources already cast doubts on the viability of an initiative, which, with the advent of the neoliberal administration of Mauricio Macri on 10 December 2015, has a low likelihood of continuity.⁶

As mentioned, the PPAT included four focus areas. The first one, Research and Development, was intended to prepare a theoretical and fact-based framework to strengthen the development of digital TV in Argentina, encouraging dialog among public universities and leading to a tailored approach in each of them based on their respective territorial realities. Each Main Site disclosed the human and technical resources available and proposed research lines

5 According to Piwowski, this budget cut was due to “political and not-so-political priorities (...) The Ministry [MINPLAN] did not contribute funding directly but through an agreement with universities that went through the CIN. And the CIN started to manage too many things. (...) As the financial level rose, the system deteriorated. The CIN had to negotiate many things, not only the Hubs [Programme]. I’ll give you money for the Cultural Equality [National Plan] but not for the Hubs [Programme] because now there is a shortage. What did the CIN do? It had never managed so much money. There was a deterioration not of the people but of the weak institutionalality that created very poor political practices. The University should have defended a programme that was vital.” (Piwowski 2015). As a result of the budget cut, the Headquarters did not always deliver on the execution deadlines set, or the economic amounts committed, which hindered the development of some audio-visual products, causing a slowdown in their production schedules.

6 In its first months in office, the Macri Administration has given clear signals of wanting to repeal the core tenets of the Audio-visual Communication Services Act. This has triggered a reaction from various social and academic groups. In this regard, please see the statement “*Ante la Política de Comunicación delineada por los DNUS 13/15 y 267/15 de M. Macri*” (“About the Communication Policy outlined by Decrees 13/15 and 267/15 by M. Macri”) (Becerra et al. 2016).

to follow. Subsequently, the Headquarters and the Advisory Council selected some research projects and proposed others to be implemented across several public universities.⁷

The second focus area had to do with the training of Node members. Based on a database of professionals prepared by the Headquarters – extendable with the addition of local trainers, at the suggestion of the Nodes – and relying on the cooperation of labour unions and renowned professionals, training workshops were delivered, with topics selected based on the needs of each Node. Between October and December 2011, 87 classroom courses were held at the nine Hubs. Based on the results, the 2012 Training Plan developed 150 self-managed courses; 75 clinics focusing on new projects from ongoing lines of production for Node members, and 55 tutorships for direction, production, screenplay and acting during the production of projects, through the assignment of a specific tutor to each. During the 2013-2014 period, only 91 training activities were held. Such a considerable decrease in activity was triggered by two factors: on the one hand, the reduction of the PPAT budget, and on the other, the progressive professionalization facilitated by the training activities conducted in the previous years. It is worth noting that training was one of the key points of the PPAT proposition, because lack of training was detected as one of the main barriers to TV programme production in several regions.

⁷ The following studies were conducted: “*Relevamiento de recursos de la producción audiovisual argentina 2012. Encuesta nacional y diagnóstico por regiones*” (Arias 2013), “*Regulación del derecho de propiedad intelectual para producciones audiovisuales en Argentina*” (Loreti et al. 2013), “*Sustentabilidad y nuevos mercados*” (Borello 2013), “*Consumos y audiencias televisivas. Informe comparativo de estudios locales. Nodos Córdoba, Ríos y Bardas, y Jujuy*” (Córdoba & Morales 2013) and “*Desarrollo de la TV digital argentina*” (Bulla & Hernández 2013). An additional study was “*Conocer para contar*” (Programa de Estudios sobre Comunicación y Ciudadanía 2013), a methodological guide to conduct quantitative studies on TV audiences, from the Communication and Citizenship Study Programme of the National University of Córdoba.

In the area of Equipment, it is worth noting that when the PPAT was introduced, Public Centres for Audio-visual Production were created at each Main Site. Through concession agreements, these centres were awarded to the universities in order to democratize access to the equipment required to produce contents. As such, each Node was authorised to request from the respective Main Site the necessary equipment. These requests were evaluated by the Advisory Council and the Headquarters, and answered based on budget availability. The equipment was delivered to the Nodes on loan, on the condition that the members of local communities were allowed free access to it, ensuring it was used for non-profit purposes.

Finally, the Content Production focus area may be viewed as the most important one in the Programme, as it meant the effective implementation of article 153 of the Audio-visual Communication Services Act, which commissioned the government to implement, among other measures, policies to promote and defend the national audio-visual industry. These measures would be based on “the promotion of activities with a federal orientation, considering and stimulating local production in the provinces and regions of the country.”

III – Digital television production: diversity of sources and contents

Content Production focus area was organized during the last five years through successive phases, with a total investment of \$4.5 million of public funds for making audio-visual products.

The execution of the Pilot Plan for Testing and Demonstrating Installed Capacity, started in March 2011, was the first phase of the Content Production focus area. After four months and an investment of \$ 1.3 million, 90 hours of

digital TV content were developed (10 hours per Hub). Additionally, the Testing Pilot Plan – involving more than one hundred professionals, 47 universities and the creation of 31 new programme cycles – served to conduct a diagnosis of the production capacity of each Hub before the PPAT intervention.

The second phase, called TV Factory (*Fábrica de TV*), can be claimed as the essence of the Content Production focus area and was broken down, in turn, in three cycles. The first one, in 2012, created 55 pilot programmes in Journalistic, Fiction and Entertainment formats. These programmes entailed a cost of \$ 718,062: \$ 11,013 for each Journalistic and/or Entertainment pilot, and \$ 17,621 for each Fiction pilot. Subsequently, between 2013 and 2014, based on those 55 pilots, 18 seasons were made, with 12, 10 and 8 episodes that were 26 minutes long. For their making, each Fiction production received \$ 97,489 per season, while each Journalistic and Entertainment production received \$ 62,038. This meant a total investment of \$ 1.2 million. Finally, in 2015, the third cycle of the Content Production focus area selected other 25 projects that are currently in the making stage. Each project was allocated \$ 43,317 for the making of seasons comprised of four 26-minute long episodes.

In parallel with the TV Factory, other productions were made: the “Tell me a Story” cycle for Acua Mayor,⁸ including 30 micro spaces of five-minute duration each; 18 promotional spots for Access to Knowledge Nodes, which are part of the *Argentina Conectada* National Telecommunications Plan; and 76 micro-reports to be inserted in 26-minute units in the PPAT audio-visual magazine *Ahí Va*.⁹

⁸ Launched in 2013, Acua Mayor is a state-run TV station for senior citizens that is part of the Digital Free-to-Air TV Platform supported by MINPLAN.

⁹ Magazine produced by PPAT members. “Approximately 300 producers, reporters, editors, cameramen and technical assistants took part in the project, from 39 audio-visual nodes from all over the country. They produced 78 (*sic*) reports with topics they described themselves. This is how a one-of-

Table 2. PPAT: Investments in production, 2011-2015

Production Phase		Completed Products	Investment
Pilot Plan for Testing and Demonstrating Installed Capacity (2011)		31 cycles of News programs (90 hours of TV)	\$ 1,313,869
TV Factory	Pilot Phase (2012)	55 pilot programs for TV Formats: fiction, entertainment and journalistic (26 minutes each)	\$ 718,062
	New Formats (2013-2014)	18 productions for TV Formats: fiction, entertainment and journalistic (15 productions of 12 episodes of 26 minutes each, 1 production of 10 episodes of 26 minutes each, and 2 productions of 8 episodes of 26 minutes each)	\$ 1,223,043

a-kind production routine was set up, changing 60 years of Argentine history, being made from all corners of the country" (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=PRBTfQAdwDA>).

	New Formats (2015)	25 productions for TV Formats: fiction, entertain- ment and jour- nalistic (4 episodes of 26 minutes each)	\$ 1,082,921
	Cycle "Tell me a Story" for Acua Mayor	30 micro fiction productions for TV (5 minutes each)	\$ 66,079
	Promotional spots for Access to Knowledge Nodes – <i>Argentina Connected</i> National Telecommunications Plan	18 TV spots (9 informa- tional spots of 45 seconds and 9 testimonial spots of 1 minute)	\$ 36,264
	<i>Ahí va</i> (PPAT audio-visual maga- zine)	76 micro-reports (150 seconds each) assem- blies in unit emissions (26 minute)	\$ 23,515
Total			\$ 4,463,753

Source: Own research based on instructions and internal production reports, PPAT.

Considering the 18 TV seasons designed in the framework of the first phase of the New Formats of TV Factory cycle during the 2013-2014 period, it is possible to analyse the diversity of sources, in terms of variety and balance, in the context of the Argentine TV market. To that end, the components of variety and balance mentioned by Andrew Stirling (1988 and 2007) in his examination of the concept

of diversity have been considered, comprising the combination of three components: variety, balance and disparity. Variety relates to the number of different categories defined in a given set, balance considers the different extents to which these categories are represented, and disparity has to do with the degree of similarity among the different categories. The larger the number of categories, and the more balanced and more dissimilar they are from each other, the more diverse the system. The findings presented below are the result of a quantitative analysis based on the computation of participating Hubs and Nodes, and the calculation of the content percentage developed by each of them. As shown in table 3, all Hubs had a presence in this stage, reflecting a variety of geographic sources.

Table 3. TV Factory-New Formats: Productions, 2013-2014

Hub	Node	Locality	Title of the Production	Gender *	Subgenre **
Centre	Villa María	Villa María	Vale la pena conocernos	Journalistic	Interviews
	San Luis	San Luis	Jóvenes vocaciones	Entertainment	Educational
Litoral	Litoral	Santa Fe	Habitación 13	Fiction	Multi-genre
Cuyo	Mendoza Centro	Mendoza	Invencciones	Entertainment	Cultural
			Los buscadores	Entertainment	Cultural

AMBA	La Matanza	La Matanza	Ver de otra manera	Entertainment	Environmental
	La Plata	La Plata	El mejor plan del mundo	Entertainment	Cultural
NEA	Corrientes	Corrientes	En tus zapatos	Entertainment	Social
			En el patio	Entertainment	Cultural
	Misiones	Oberá	Casi el mismo techo	Fiction	Comedy
		Misiones	Revolución estéreo	Entertainment	Musical
NOA	Jujuy	Jujuy	Waikuna Wasi	Entertainment	Gastronomy
	Santiago del Estero	Santiago del Estero	Ideas en trama	Entertainment	Environmental
Northern Patagonia	Andino	Bariloche	La inutilidad del conocimiento	Entertainment	Cultural
Southern Patagonia	Tewsen	Caleta Olivia	Mini periodistas	Entertainment	Children
	Aonikenk	Comodoro Rivadavia	Sonido Sur	Entertainment	Musical
Buenos Aires Province	Mar del Plata	Mar del Plata	Dos estrellas	Fiction	Comedy
	Tandil	Tandil	Telepípedos	Entertainment	Children

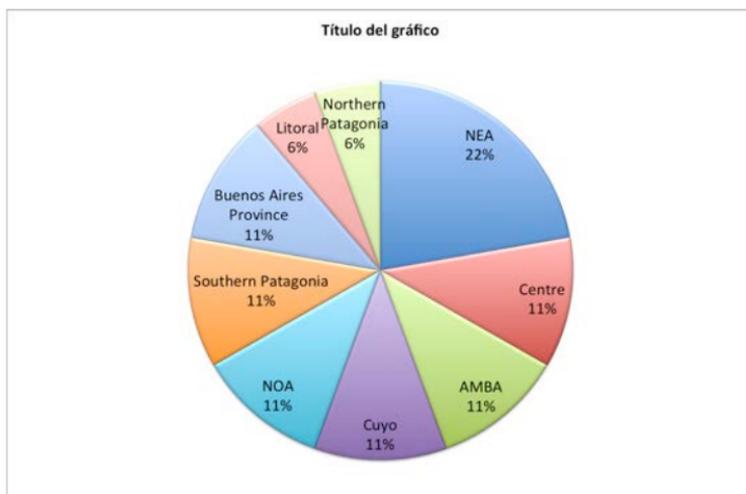
Notes: *Classification determined by PPAT in its call for pilot programmes.

****Authors' classification based on the documentation submitted by each production maker.**

Source: Own research based on instructions and internal reports, PPAT.

As shown in Chart 1, the Hub with the largest share in the 18 productions made during the first phase of the TV Factory New Format cycle was the NEA Hub: with four titles, it has 22.2 percent of productions. At the opposite end are the Litoral Hub and the Northern Patagonia Hub, which, with one production per Hub, have a share of 5.6 percent respectively. The rest of the regions have two productions each.

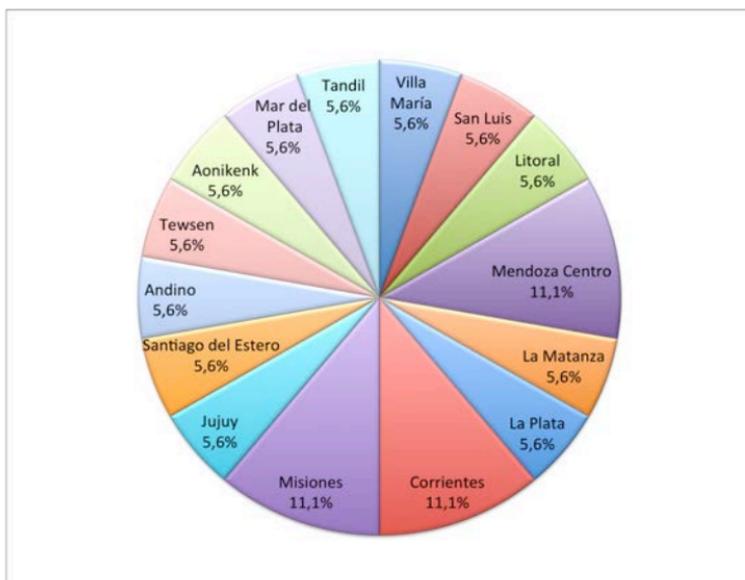
Chart 1. TV Factory – New Formats: Geographic origin of productions per Hub, 2013-2014



Source: Own research based on instructions and internal reports, PPAT.

Furthermore, an analysis of production per Node illustrated in Chart 2 shows the involvement of 15 Nodes with 18 productions in total; this reveals a major diversity in terms of variety of sources. On the other hand, it also shows a marked balance regarding the number of productions made. The exceptions were the Nodes of Mendoza Central, Misiones and Corrientes, with two productions each.

Chart 2. TV Factory - New Formats: Geographical origin of productions per Node, 2013-2014

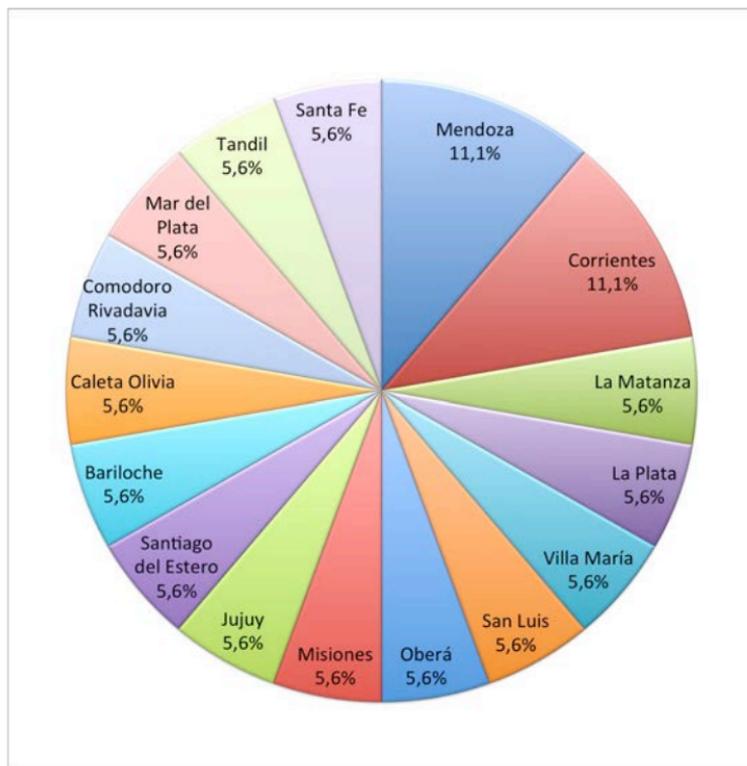


Source: Own research based on instructions and internal reports, PPAT.

An analysis of data based on the locations where the TV seasons were made shows that variety increases compared to the previous chart. Chart 3 reveals the presence of 16 locations in the 18 productions made, which entails a high

diversity in terms of variety as well as balance. With the exception of Mendoza and Corrientes cities, with two productions each, the rest have one production per location.

Chart 3. TV Factory - New Formats: Geographical origin of productions per location, 2013-2014



Source: Own research based on instructions and internal reports, PPAT.

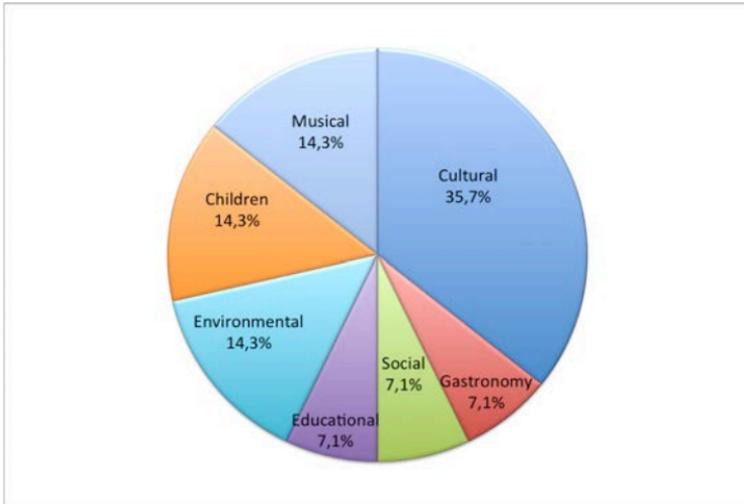
Regarding the topics addressed by the first 18 seasons made in the framework of the TV Factory-New Formats cycle, it should be noted that they are all infused, in essence,

with the cultural identity of the regions where they were made, in view of the importance given to local content relevance. Now, considering the distribution of productions according to the large three TV genres used by PPAT, it is clear that there is a prevalence of Entertainment programmes: they represent 78 percent of titles produced, versus 17 percent Fiction and 5 percent Journalistic, evidencing a lack of production diversity in terms of balance.

With regard to the classification in TV subgenres, the only Journalistic programme made falls under the Interviews subgenre, and as to the three Fictions, two of them are comedies and the third one – *Habitación 13*¹⁰ – can be coded as multi-genre, as each episode has a different genre. In the field of Entertainment, the subgenre breakdown shows a diverse spectrum. As seen in Chart 5, in terms of variety there is a range of seven subgenres: cultural, musical, children, educational, environmental, social and gastronomy. In terms of balance, there is prevalence of the cultural subgenre, with 35.7 percent of the total productions. The musical, children and environmental subgenres each have a share of 14.3 percent, and the educational, social and gastronomy subgenres have a share of 7.1 percent.

¹⁰ In this regard, see El Litoral (2015).

Chart 4. TV Factory – New Formats: Productions per entertainment subgenre, 2013-2014



Source: Own research based on instructions and internal reports, PPAT.

IV – Production dissemination and marketing

From its first steps, the PPAT tried to reach citizens based on a presence, though sporadically fed, on different platforms and social networks: Facebook since 2010, and Twitter and YouTube since 2011. Additionally, managers sought to disseminate this initiative through the audio-visual magazine *Ahí va*, and the creation of micro TV programmes for the Acua Mayor station.

The PPAT – designed more to focus on training and content production than on their dissemination and promotion – was a governmental initiative which, through the involvement of several universities represented by the CIN, sought to become rooted at local level. This initiative,

oriented to TV production in digital format, necessarily had to be supplemented by the emergence of new TV stations as a result of the application of the Audio-visual Communication Services Act. The stations managed by non-profit organizations would be the natural channels of dissemination of the TV production from the Nodes scattered throughout the country. However, the partial implementation of the Audio-visual Communication Services Act by the Fernández de Kirchner Administration (Becerra 2015), followed by its suspension by the Macri Administration, has been a major obstacle for productions reaching Argentine viewers.

In practice, the PPAT established a difference between the resulting TV productions and their formats. On the one hand, the intellectual and industrial property rights of productions belong to the State, and should be included in the catalogue of the Digital Audio-visual Content Database (BACUA – *Banco de Contenidos Audiovisuales Digitales*)¹¹ in order to attract potential channels/stations. On the other hand, the rights over the production formats are the property of their creators, who are entitled to market them in and outside the country. Furthermore, the Main Sites were entitled to market their productions abroad during the 24 months following their delivery to BACUA. The problem is that public universities do not have the power to sign purchase-and-sale agreements abroad—in practical terms, this prevented the commercialization of TV productions.

Regarding the productions resulting from the first phase of the cycle TV Factory-New Formats, while the Nodes were empowered to take steps for the broadcasting of their programmes, they had to comply with a require-

¹¹ Established in 2010, BACUA is a free-access audio-visual repository fed by producers and cultural organizations at the disposal of Argentine digital free-to-air TV stations.

ment: the projects presented had to be supported by an agreement with a free-to-air screen for the broadcasting of the prospective programme.

If we consider the 18 seasons resulting from the 2013-2014 New Format cycle, it is noted that so far they have had very limited circulation. As shown in Table 4, one year after the end of this phase, only 11 productions (61 percent of the total) were actually premiered on TV, and only two did so on two different screens (though it is expected that another four productions will follow on that path). As regards the screens that will receive the premieres already released or to be released soon, about 62.5 percent of them are managed by the private sector; which means that little more than one-third of the PPAT investment will be allocated to cover the grids of public operators.

Table 4. TV Factory – New Formats: Production screening windows, 2013-2014

Title	Number of episodes	TV Screen				Face-book Profile
		Channel	Property	Range: Territory / Population (approx.)	Premiere	
Vale la pena conocerlos	12	Canal 20 Compartir	Private	Villa María 99,820	Non-scheduled	Yes
Jóvenes vocaciones	12	MerloTV	Private	San Luis 250,947	10/10/2015	No
Habitación 13	12	Canal 13 Santa Fe	Private	Santa Fe Province 1,800,000	25/09/2015	Yes

Inven- ciones	12	Canal 9 Televida	Private	Gran Mendoza 937,154	23/11/ 2014	Yes
		Señal U	Public	Gran Mendoza 937,154	28/05/ 2015	
Los bus- cadores	12	Canal 9 Televida	Private	Gran Mendoza 937,154	15/08/ 2015	Yes
Ver de otra man- era	12	TV Uni- versidad La Plata	Public	La Plata 643,133	Non- scheduled	No
El mejor plan del mundo	12	TV Uni- versidad La Plata	Public	La Plata 643,133	12/06/ 2015	No
En tus zapatos	12	Telemóvil 5 de Cor- rientes	Private	More than 400 cities (provinces: Corri- entes, Chaco, Misiones, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Cata- marca, Salta, Jujuy, Chubut, Río Negro and San- ta Cruz)	02/08/ 2015	Yes

En el patio	12	Telemóvil 5 de Corrientes	Private	More than 400 cities (provinces: Corrientes, Chaco, Misiones, Entre Ríos, Santa Fe, Catamarca, Salta, Jujuy, Chubut, Río Negro and Santa Cruz)	16/10/2014 (03/09/2015: 2nd Season)	Yes
Casi el mismo techo	12	Canal 12 Posadas	Private	Province of Misiones 1,097,829	17/04/2015	No
Revolución estéreo	10	Wanda Cablevision SRL	Private	Wanda, province of Misiones 15,529	ND	Yes
Waikuna Wasi	12	Canal 4 Jujuy	Private	Province of Jujuy 672,260	Non-scheduled	No

Ideas en trama	12	Canal 7	Private	Province of Santiago del Estero, Valle de Catamarca and southern province of Tucumán 800,000	19/10/2014	Yes
La inutilidad del conocimiento	8	360 TV	Private	National	28/11/2015	Yes
		Canal 3 AVC	Private	Bariloche 112,887	17/12/2015	
Mini periodistas	12	Canal 7 Rawson	Public	Province of Chubut 509,108	Non-scheduled	No
		Canal 9 Santa Cruz	Public	Province of Santa Cruz 273,964	April 2016	
Sonido sur	12	Canal 7 Rawson	Public	Province of Chubut 509,108	Non-scheduled	No
		Canal 9 Santa Cruz	Public	Province of Santa Cruz 273,964	April 2016	
Dos estrellas	12	Canal 33 Mar del Plata	Private	Mar del Plata 618,989	ND	No
		Canal Caprica	Private	Mar del Plata 618,989	ND	

Telepep- dos	8	Canal 13 Ai tv coop.	Private	Necochea 84,784	ND	No
		LU 91 TV Canal 12 Trenque Lauquen	Public	Judicial district of Trenque Lauquen 43,021	ND	

Sources: Own research, based on personal interviews, PPAT production reports; PPAT official Facebook page; National Statistics and Census Institute of Argentina; TV station websites; official Facebook pages of programmes.

It should be noted that half of programmes, 9 out of 18, have their own profiles on the Facebook social network. In terms of dissemination through digital platforms, only the fiction programme *Habitación 13* is available on the online video-on-demand platform in the Free-to-Air Digital Content section (*Contenidos Digitales Abiertos*, CDA). As regards the presence of productions in BACUA, even though there is proof that the producers delivered their productions to the audio-visual database, and in spite of the PPAT commitment to this platform as a showcase for such contents, the fact is that productions are not currently available.

Conclusions

In closing this first approach to the PPAT, we share some conclusions in the hope that they will be useful to stimulate a reflection on this case and encourage the study of measures designed to protect and promote the necessary diversity of audio-visual expressions:

1. The five years of PPAT implementation in Argentina are framed in a context of political, legislative and technological changes involving the audio-visual sector, and an

administration whose discourse championed the diversity and pluralism of the communication media system. In this regard, the governmental initiative, whose aim was to drive the TV production of different geographical regions in the country, is in line with the objectives of the CDCE.

2. PPAT is an attempt to respond to a serious problem faced by the Argentine audio-visual industry: the strong concentration of audio-visual production, including TV, in Buenos Aires City. This historical concentration of production, added to the power of TV stations in the large metropolis, results in a serious distortion of the offerings on the screen, with underrepresentation of regional and local idiosyncrasies in a large and diverse country. The larger country that lies beyond the city of Buenos Aires usually appears on the small screens “in the form of news of catastrophic or violent events or as a tourist or exotic landscape, to the amazed eyes of the capital city audience” (Piwowarski 2011).

3. The PPAT as an initiative also has a strong dependence on the Government that set it in motion and faces the challenges of internal conflicts that trouble it (the budget cut of 2013 is an example). On the other hand, the close relationship between the administration in power and communication policies has remained invariable throughout Argentine history (Mastrini 2009). With the change of administrations, the chances of continuity for this initiative are very low.

4. The PPAT organizational structure shows a large degree of centralization of decision-making in the entities around MINPLAN. Contrary to what may be expected from a federal initiative intended to empower a diversity of citizens throughout the country with a TV production endowed with recognizably local traits, the first five years of operation do not reveal strong connections among the various Hubs. On the other hand, the fact that public

universities have taken the lead in an initiative designed to create and strengthen regional productive systems is a positive milestone of the project.

5. Training of workers in the TV sector and provision of the equipment to produce programmes in different locations of the country are remarkable achievements of PPAT. It is yet to be determined how the different stakeholders involved in this initiative will articulate a response that can provide continuity for PPAT objectives in the adverse political context that they face today. As an example, we may wonder about the use that will be given to audio-visual production centres hosted in the universities that acted as main sites for the Hubs.

6. The audio-visual productions resulting from PPAT show a commitment to reflect the cultural identity of the regions and locations where they were made. For their part, the 18 TV programme seasons analysed in this document speak of an actual geographical diversity of sources in terms of variety and balance. Of note, there is a clear prevalence of the Entertainment genre, though with a variety of subgenres.

7. In spite of its explicit objectives and the high investments made, unfortunately the PPAT has not succeeded in achieving the level of institutionalization that would have enabled it to put an end to the lack of visibility of regional and local TV production. This is demonstrated by the so far scarce number of productions that have been released in free-to-air screens and their unavailability at the BACUA database.

8. Managing any programme aiming to boost local TV production must start by looking at two key issues: the commercial exploitation of contents through various audio-visual windows – traditional as well as new – and their promotion at different levels – regional, national and international. This implies carefully defining those responsible for commercialising the programs produced and their

modus operandi, and establishing a strategy involving content dissemination through online platforms. Two aspects that were not well defined when the PPAT was developed.

Acknowledgments

This document was produced as part of the execution of the research project Diversity of the Audio-visual Industry in the Digital Era (ref. CSO2014-5234-R), within the State Programme for R&D+i focusing on the Challenges of Society (*Programa Estatal de I+D+i Orientada a los Retos de la Sociedad*) organized by the Ministry of Economy and Competitiveness of Spain (*Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad de Spain*). Azahara Cañedo thanks the “Programa Becas Iberoamérica para Jóvenes profesores e investigadores 2015” from *Santander Universidades*, which enabled her to take up a research stay at National University of Quilmes (UNQ, Argentina).

References

- AFSCA (2012) *Informe anual sobre contenidos de la televisión abierta argentina – Período 2011*, Buenos Aires: AFSCA (Autoridad Federal de Servicios de Comunicación Audiovisual).
- Albornoz, L.A. & García Leiva, M.T. (eds.) (2012) *La televisión digital terrestre. Experiencias nacionales y diversidad en Europa, América y Asia*, Buenos Aires: La Crujía.
- Albornoz, L.A. & M.T. García Leiva (eds.) (2017) *Diversidad e industria audiovisual: el desafío cultural del siglo XXI*, México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica (in press).
- Argentina (2009) *Audiovisual Communication Services Act No. 26,552*, Buenos Aires, 10 October.

- Arias, F. (ed.) (2013) *Relevamiento de recursos de la producción audiovisual argentina 2012. Encuesta nacional y diagnóstico por regiones*, Buenos Aires: Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T.
- Becerra, M., Marino, S. & Mastrini, G. (2012) *Mapping Digital Media: Argentina*, London: OSF.
- Becerra, M. (2015) *Recalculando: seis años de la ley audiovisual, Quipu – Políticas y tecnologías de la comunicación*, Buenos Aires, 9 October.
- Becerra et al. (2016) *Ante la Política de Comunicación delineada por los DNUS 13/15 y 267/15 de M. Macri*. <<http://observacom.org/sitio/wp-content/uploads/2016/02/documento-conjunto-sobre-dnus-macri-feb20161.pdf>> (accessed 06 October 2016).
- Borello, J.A. (ed.) (2013) *Sustentabilidad y nuevos mercados*, Buenos Aires: Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T.
- Bulla, G. & Hernández, P. (eds.) (2013) *Desarrollo de la TV digital argentina*, Buenos Aires: Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T.
- Córdoba, M.L. & Morales, S. (coords.) (2013) *Consumos y audiencias televisivas. Informe comparativo de estudios locales. Nodos Córdoba, Ríos y Bardas, y Jujuy*, Buenos Aires: Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T.
- Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T (2010) *Reglamento operativo de los polos de investigación y perfeccionamiento de tecnologías audiovisuales digitales*, Buenos Aires: Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T, Ministerio de Planificación Federal, Inversión Pública y Servicios.
- El Litoral (2015) *Las 13 historias de 'La habitación 13'*. <http://www.ellitoral.com/index.php/id_um/119903-las-13-historias-de-la-habitacion-13> (accessed 06 October 2016).
- Gallego, J.I. (2017) *Acciones para la diversidad en la industria audiovisual: estudios de caso*, in L.A. Albornoz & M.T. García Leiva (eds.) *Diversidad e industria audiovisual: el desafío cultural del siglo XXI*, México D.F.: Fondo de Cultura Económica (Forthcoming).

- Krakowiak, F., Mastrini, G. & Becerra, M. (2012) *Argentina: razones geopolíticas y perspectivas económicas*, in L.A. Albornoz & M.T. García Leiva (eds.) *La televisión digital terrestre. Experiencias nacionales y diversidad en Europa, América y Asia*, Buenos Aires: La Crujía.
- Loreti, D., Peñafort, G., Lozano, L., Guida, M. C., Fraiman, W. & Aurtenechea, E. (2013) *Regulación del derecho de propiedad intelectual para producciones audiovisuales en Argentina*, Buenos Aires: Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T.
- Mastrini, G. (ed.) (2009) *Mucho ruido, pocas leyes. Economía y política de la comunicación en la Argentina*, Buenos Aires: La Crujía (2nd expanded edition).
- Mastrini, G., Becerra, M., Bizberge, A. & Krakowiak, F. (2012) *El Estado como protagonista del desarrollo de la TDT en Argentina*, Cuadernos de la Información, 31.
- Piwowarski, E. (2011) *La televisión de todos*, Página 12, Buenos Aires, 31 August.
- Piwowarski, E. (2015), Personal interview conducted by the authors, Buenos Aires, 9 December.
- Programa de Estudios sobre Comunicación y Ciudadanía (Centro de Estudios Avanzados – Universidad Nacional de Córdoba) (2013) ‘Conocer para contar’, Buenos Aires: Consejo Asesor del SATVD-T.
- Stirling, A. (1988) *On the Economics and Analysis of Diversity*, SPRU Electronic Working Paper, 28, Brighton: University of Sussex.
- Stirling, A. (2007) ‘A general framework for analysing diversity in science, technology and society’, *Journal of the Royal Society Interface*, 15(4): 707-719.
- UNESCO (2005) *Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions*, Paris: UNESCO.
- UNESCO (2012) *Strategic and action-oriented analytical summary of the quadrennial periodic reports*, working document of the 6th ordinary session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the Convention on the pro-

tection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions (CE/12/6.IGC/4), Paris: UNESCO, 10 – 14 December.

UNESCO (2013) *Quadrennial periodic reporting: new reports and analytical summary*, working document of the 7th Ordinary Session of the Intergovernmental Committee of the Convention on the protection and promotion of the diversity of cultural expressions (CE/13/7.IGC/5 Rev.), Paris: UNESCO, 10 – 13 December.