

**International Development Aid Beyond Money: The Push and Pull of Media Democracy Promotion in Three Mercosur Countries**

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**Apoyo internacional al desarrollo más allá del dinero: El tira y afloja de la promoción de desarrollo mediático en tres países del Mercosur**

**Apoio internacional para o desenvolvimento mais além do dinheiro: O tira e afrouxa da promoção da democracia na mídia de tres países do Mercosul**

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**Abstract:** Media democracy promotion is a hidden form of international development aid (IDA). However, the dynamics underlying democracy promotion and their adaptation in local contexts is hardly considered when evaluating or theorizing international media development aid (IMDA). Multi-lateral organizations (MLOs) are important carriers of democratic ideals and different interpretations. In this paper, I unravel the dynamics between multi-lateral organizations and local actors during the media reform debates in three MERCOSUR countries; Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay.

**Keywords:**

media democracy promotion; political motivation; multi-lateral organizations; mercosur.

**Resumen:** La promoción de democracia mediática es una forma desconocida de apoyo al desarrollo. En efecto, las dinámicas que acompañan la promoción democrática y su adaptación en contextos locales se consideran pocas veces si evaluamos o teorizamos el apoyo internacional al desarrollo mediático. Las organizaciones multilaterales son importantes para la transferencia de ideales democráticos y su reconceptualización. En este trabajo, analizo las dinámicas entre las organizaciones multilaterales y los actores locales durante los debates sobre reformas de los sistemas mediáticos en Argentina, Brasil y Uruguay.

**Palabras clave:**

Promoción de democracia mediática; motivación política; organizaciones internacionales; Mercosur

**Resumo:** A promoção da democracia midiática é uma forma desconhecida de apoio ao desenvolvimento. No entanto, as dinâmicas que acompanham a promoção democrática e sua adaptação em contextos locais raramente são consideradas se avaliarmos ou teorizarmos o apoio internacional para o desenvolvimento midiático. Organizações multilaterais são importantes para a transferência de ideais democráticos e sua reconceitualização. Neste artigo, analiso a dinâmica entre as organizações multilaterais e os atores locais durante os debates sobre as reformas dos sistemas midiáticos na Argentina, no Brasil e no Uruguai.

**Palavras-chave:**

promoção democracia mediática; motivação política; organizações multilaterais; mercosul

**1. Introduction**

Visible forms of international media development aid (IMDA) consist of resources and training. However, there are also hidden forms of IMDA that are difficult to measure and trace. An example for implicit ways of influence are the media democratization discourses lead by multi-lateral organizations (MLOs). This hidden aspect of IMDA is often left aside when assessing impact of international aid programs. This paper sheds light onto the discursive dimensions of international aid used by MLOs. I show how the discourses of media democracy lead by MLOs reflect in the process of promoting media democracy in the three Mercosur countries; Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. This process is characterized through a dynamic that transcends the donor and recipient relation and develops into a push and pull between local actors and internationally promoted agendas. The push and pull characterizing IMDA in the Mercosur region show that local actors engage with IMDA and in particular with the media democratization discourse according to their own political agenda.

I examine the interactions between local actors and MLOs and their dynamics based on international (n=43) and local (n=19) documents as well as on interviews conducted with local actors (n=104) and representatives of multi-lateral organizations (n=18) between 2013 and 2014 (Ganter, 2016). The results deepen the conceptualization of IMDA as dynamic. I examine international media democracy promotion and its reflections in the debates around reforming the media landscapes in the three Mercosur founding members; Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. The quest for democratizing media systems in the region offered new opportunities for actors like the European Union (EU), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the Organization of American States (OAS), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), or the World Trade Organization (WTO) to engage into framing the attempts to restructure the media systems on national level and to re-vitalize their long-established links with the Mercosur countries.

## **2. IDA and democratization of media systems**

Scholarly works on international development aid (IDA) assess different opportunities, models of success, establishes measurements for evaluating impact and frequently discuss the purposes of practical measures as well as of theoretical models (Grugel & Hammett, 2016). The question of what constitutes development is at the center of the field, a question that offers room for critical approaches (Myers, Dietz, Frère & 2014). Overall, IDA is associated with developing society into a better version of reality, and desirable change is frequently linked to the notion of democratization. Kumar (2009) for example, frames media assistance in the broader picture of democracy assistance, emphasizing the aim of democratic change. However, democracy is a term as questionable as development as both terms are applied mainly in line with normative understandings from the West (Bishop, 2016). When it comes to democratic media systems, their importance to successfully promoting democracy in society puts the democratization of media landscapes on the agenda of IMDA (Brownlee, 2017; Myers, Dietz & Frère, 2014). The role of the media in democracies is widely discussed in the scholarly literature (Curran, 2001) and an often-made argument is that the media industry can have a stake in the safeguarding and improving of democracy, as media have the capacity to confront the audience with values

underpinning political and social life, thereby shaping the (democratic) identity of the audience (Curran, 2001). Media reform is frequently seen as necessary tool to adhere better to the democratic ideal and the idea of safeguarding democracy through media policy measures is closely attached to the aim of safeguarding public interest, as an overarching aim in society (Becerra & Mastrini, 2009; Becerra, 2015; Curran, 2001). However, democracy and development are terms that both tend to be measured through scaled evaluations. Freedom House Index for example, assesses legal, economic and political environments to determine how freely media can operate. The more recently designed UNESCO Media Development Indicators are applied by a row of local teams and the consequent assessment should result in recommendations aimed at policy makers and media development actors (UNESCO, 2008).

The internationalization of the media democracy scales leads frequently to standardized reactions to improve low performances along the established scales. Those standardized reactions are often manifested in the setting of new regulatory frameworks or in the design of new policy programs (Bennett, 1991). Accordingly, regulation and control are bound to cross-nationally agreed-upon principles that are fostered through international interactions (Braman, 2009). Scholars argue that media policies influenced by international standards are potentially disadvantageous to democratic development and can lead to limited democracy. Internationalization of audio-visual media policies was argued to result in a decrease of national power to shape media experience within a given country (Price, 2002; Raboy, 1990). Exacerbated normativism raise if local realities are not considered when actors strive for achieving what is considered an ideal setting.

Work focusing on the gap between donor and recipient relations in IDA tends to focus on the development, raise and consequences of exacerbated normativism. Whilst perspectives focusing on the gaps in power relations are immanent to IDA studies, the possibility of a more balanced dynamic between international and local actors needs to be considered, as well. The question of motivations that stipulate an engagement and eventually an adaptation to dominant discourses is central in this latter perspective. Scholars have mentioned the implicit political nature of international media development in the past, (Myers, Dietz & Frère, 2014) including local actors' potential political motivations compliments this notion importantly. In this conceptualization I develop on the idea that

following a border-crossing interaction, political motivation is key in the inclination towards media democracy promotion discourses. I theorize that governmental interest in media reforms relates positively to engagement with MLOs' agenda of media democracy promotion. In these cases, international embeddedness is used to create a discourse of legitimacy that is established to decrease internal critique and opposition.

### **3. MLOs and media democracy promotion in the Mercosur**

Media assistance projects are often not showing far reaching or immediate results but are rather part of a slowly progressing process (Brownlee, 2017). The spectrum of ideas surrounding media democracy reaches from promoting cultural diversity, pluralism and freedom of expression to approaches focusing on inclusion and access, unlimited circulation of contents, technological and economic development. Since the new technological invention of satellite television and the advancing globalization of media markets, MLOs started to formulate their ideas about democratic media landscapes. The new circumstances of the media sector posed similar challenges to the industry and governments all over the world; the creation of first international alliances and forums that would help to discuss and establish similar standards in the sector was therefore a logical consequence. The documents stemming from these discussions reveal the main lines of international debates and the increasing institutionalization of the issue as pursued by MLOs and international negotiation rounds (Sarikakis & Ganter, 2014).

MLOs carry a legacy of promoting media democracy in the Mercosur region. Latin America was the first region in which media policies were placed on a multi-lateral agenda (Ó Siochrú, 2004). Conceptualizations regarding media policies evolved in Latin America in a vein of discussions around the New World Information and Communication Order (NWICO). In a time when most Latin American countries were governed by dictatorships, intergovernmental meetings marked the starting point for defining ways of governing communication. The main driver of the early media policy developments was UNESCO, which in 1976 hosted the first 'Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies in Latin America and the Caribbean' in San José. This event took place with the assistance of all the member states of Mercosur. The aim was to support national sovereignty in the long term through coherent national policy initiatives (Ganter, 2010; Fox, 1998). Future

directives in media policies and the related objectives and interests driving them are manifested in the report of the 'Meeting of Experts on Communication Policies in Latin America' in Bogotá (UNESCO, 1974), as well as in the final document of the San José conference (UNESCO, 1976). The Meeting of Experts in Bogotá had a preparatory character for San José. The Bogotá conference was directed by representatives from governments and by researchers, journalists and representatives from nongovernmental organizations and international bodies. UNESCO was the organizing body and was responsible for the final report. At the core of the meeting was the suggestion that a democratic, independent and pluralistic media landscape be established in the region through national policy reforms. However, the calls encountered strong opposing economic and political interests, as international and regional media corporations that dominated in the region began a campaign against the recommendations of the San José conference. These entities feared any attempt to reform the status quo as a possible limitation on their economic interests (Fox, 1998) and argued that the documents suggested nationalization of media policies that would endanger freedom of expression, given that many of the countries were governed by dictatorships (Quirós & Segovia, 1996).

As Roncagliolo (1995) explains, the outcomes in terms of intergovernmental mechanisms were unsuccessful for many years. However, with media policies gaining significance at a national level between 2000 and 2015 in South American countries (Segura & Waisbord, 2016), the outcomes of the first Intergovernmental Conference on Communication Policies showed their importance later on. New technologies brought different actors on the agenda. The ITU partly filled in the vacuum created by the temporary withdrawal of UNESCO. In the Maitland report the ITU promoted the inclusion of developing countries in organizations, equitable allocation of resources and the establishment of communications infrastructures through the founding of the International Program for Development Communication (IPDC). The notion of media development took root during the late 1980s and 1990s and was also used by the OECD and World Bank (WB). The WTO ratified a Trade Facilitation Agreement for the cultural industries in 2014. However, from within the Mercosur, only Brazil participated in the agreement (WTO, 2014). The role of the OAS is less concrete, as it works in the area of media through themes, such as technology and science, culture, access to information and human rights.

Cultural diversity has a special mandate in the OAS, established through several declarations between 2001 until 2009, promoting diversity through regulation of the media to circumvent violation of international human rights standards (OAS, 2007). The promotion of freedom of expression is another important theme promoted by the OAS. The Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression is responsible for carrying out the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of thought and expression. The fundamental documents on which the mandate is based are Article 13 of the American Declaration of Human Rights and the Declaration on Principles of Freedom of Expression. These declarations are signed by the Mercosur member states and are to be considered in the national activities.

Despite its efforts to establish international entry points for promoting the idea of progressive liberalization through FTAs, the role of the North American alliances as a catalyst for audio-visual policies in the core Mercosur countries can be considered minor in comparison with the role that UNESCO and the EU have played over the years in the region (Dominguez & Montero, 2009). In its Communication on a European Agenda for Culture in a Globalizing World, the European Commission established cultural diversity as a core principle that is economically, politically and socially relevant (EC, 2007, Art. 3). The CoE and the EC globally promoted an understanding of cultural diversity that guarantees access to diverse cultural sources and integrates the citizens as an active part of the production and distribution of contents. Two instruments developed for that purpose are Culture Europe Aid (CEA) and the Development Co-operation Instrument (DCI) that feed the regional Audiovisual Mercosur Program (AMP) as direct contact point between the EU and the Mercosur on regional level (Crusafón, 2009; Ganter, 2010; Sarikakis & Ganter, 2014).

#### **4. Push and pull of multi-lateral organizations and local actors**

##### **a. Media reform discourses and incorporation of media democracy principles**

The period between the early 2000s and 2014 was particularly important for media reform discourses in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay. The initiatives to change governing structures and regulations concerning the media markets occurred over a period of almost fifteen years and all form part of the broader media democracy discourses lead in each

country in that period of time (Image 1). Debates concerning media reforms across the three countries shared some distinct communalities: First, the experience of long ruling media laws enacted during dictatorships, second the slow nature of the process towards enacting new regulations. A third common aspect is the challenge of placing local content in the national and regional markets, against the competition of foreign contents. The absence of visible audio-visual policy initiatives until beginning of the 2000s (Mastrini, 2005) led to increased calls for structural change of the media landscape's informal coalitions of citizens' initiatives to rise in all three countries and share the demand for the 'democratization of communication' (Segura 2012; Segura & Waisbord, 2016). The establishment of audio-visual laws, directives and programs (Image 1) was part of the wider discourse that was shaped by a set of practices and articulations in each country (Ganter, 2016; Martens, Reina & Vivares, 2016). Comparing all the three countries, it is visible that reforming media and communication policies was accompanied by similar slogans (Table 2). The overall theme was the establishment of a more plural media landscape.

**Table 2** Slogans for democratization on national levels

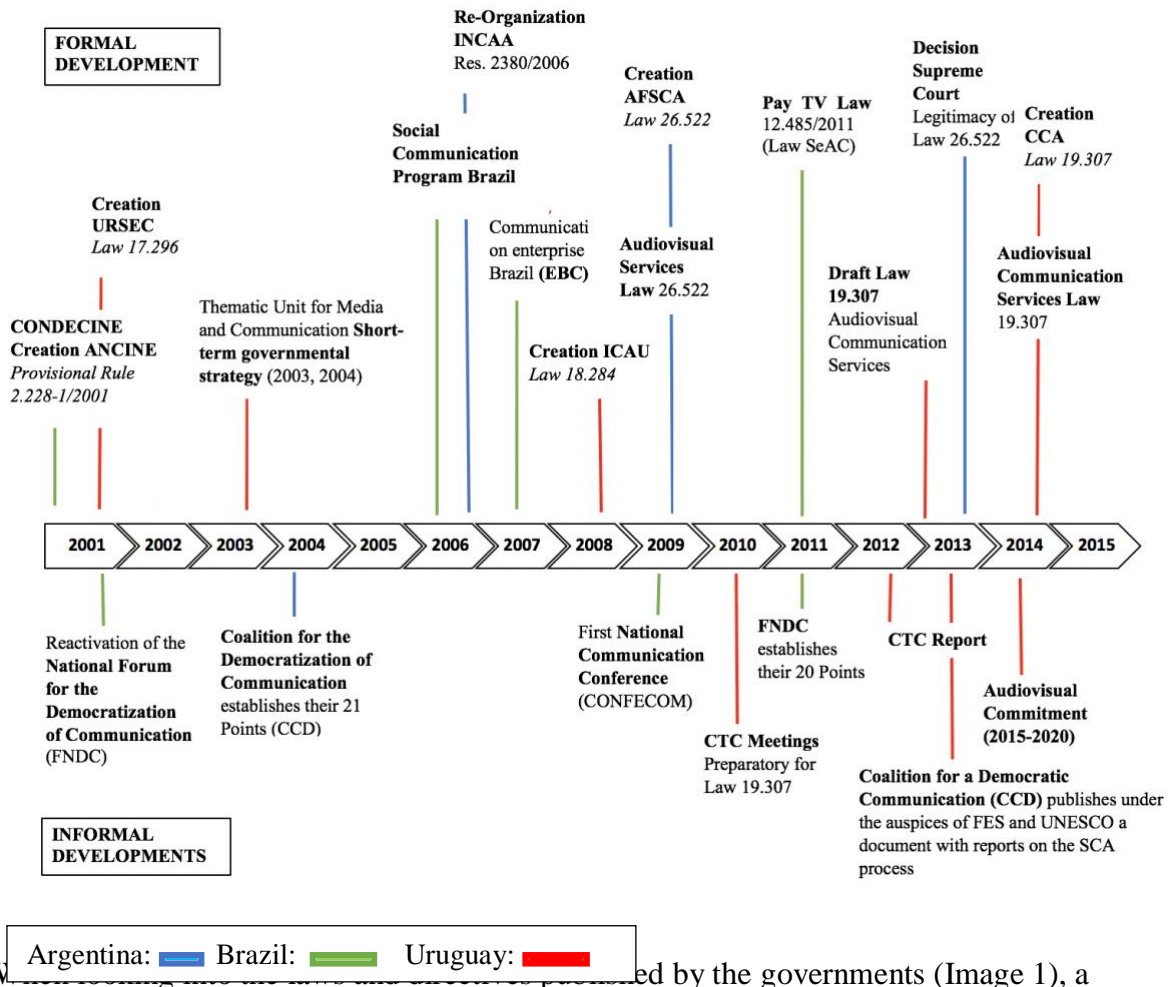
Argentina: "More Voices, more Pluralism, more Work"
Brazil: "Diversity, Pluralism, Liberty and Democracy"
Uruguay: "Pluralism and Diversity"

Sources: Leaflet of the CCD; Website of Infocom, 2013; Website of the FNDC, 2013

Where media policy reforms reached the parliament with governmental support, governmental actors embraced the same buzzwords established by civil society organizations and used them to underline the urgency of media reforms in the country (Image 2). The main expressions like diversity, pluralism and democracy are initially used pushing for the audio-visual media laws promoted in the timeframe studied in the three countries. However, similar buzzword and storylines surrounding them can be found in cinematographic policies or the digitalization of television.

**Image 1.** Timeline of media reform initiatives in Argentina, Brazil and Uruguay (2000-2014)



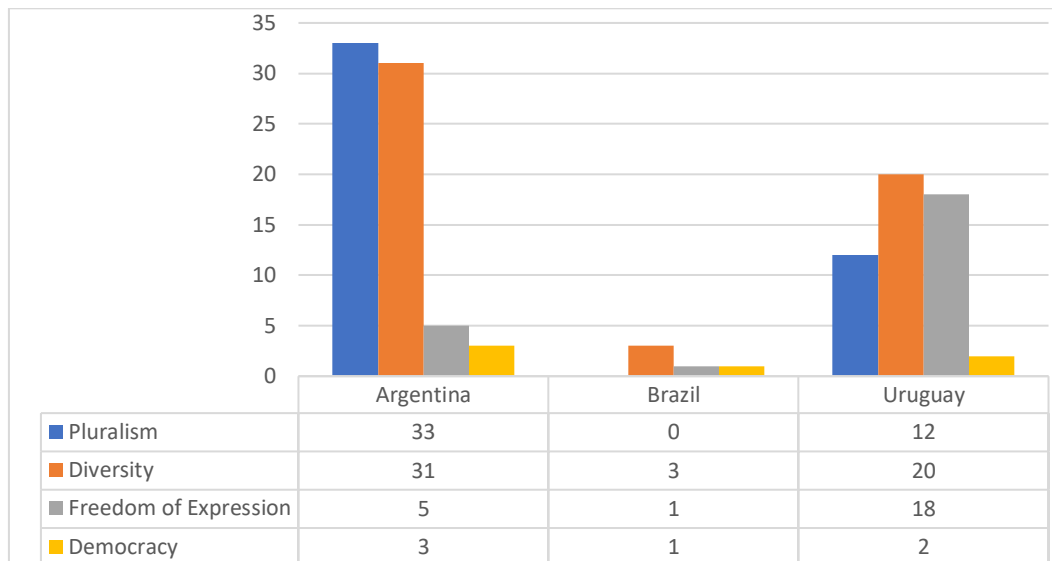


led by the governments (Image 1), a frequency analysis of the documents reveals the gap in employing the discourses on governmental level. There is a difference using these terms on governmental level (Image 2)<sup>1</sup> between those countries where the governments took up on the urge for media reform and discussed reforms on different levels in breadth and depth (Argentina and Uruguay) and the country in which the government reacted reserved to attempts of media reforms (Brazil). In the Brazilian documents, terms like pluralism, diversity, democracy and freedom of expression are almost not used. Argentinean and Uruguayan documents, on contrary, are full of references in the documents. The process of democratizing communications is put forward by the articulation of principles that are used as buzzwords

<sup>1</sup> The analysis was run in atlas.ti across the documents. The terms used were pluralis\*, diversidad\*, democra\*, libertad\* + expres\*.

to underline how new laws would feed the consolidation of democracy. These principles are liberty, pluralism, diversity and the right to work. The integration of those principles in the documents formulated in the parliamentary processes pulls the MLOs media democracy promotion into the national contexts where actors in power were striving for successful media reform processes.

**Image 2.** Frequency of references made to pluralism, diversity, freedom of expression and democracy in audio-visual norms across countries (in absolute numbers).



Source: Legal texts concerning media reform processes as seen in Image (1) (n=19)

### b. Political motivation and engagement with MLOs

During the interviews conducted, local actors in Argentina and Uruguay emphasized repeatedly the importance of MLOs to the local media reform processes. In Brazil, however, international actors visible in Argentina and Uruguay, were not showcased in the debate on governmental levels, neither during the debate regarding the law SeAC, nor during the debate regarding a new media law as suggested by social organizations.

When the government in Argentina entered the debate of a new law for audio-visual communications services, the discourse of democratization was adapted. As the former General Subsecretary at the Presidency of the Nation described, “the fight is about democratization of the word more generally, about improving democracy” (Interview 04.10.2013, Argentina, author’s own translation). When looking at the parliamentary texts in Argentina (Image 2), diversity and pluralism are the two most prominently articulated

principles, whilst freedom of expression seems to play a less prominent role. However, the final text of law 26.5222 established the relevance of the international framework for the implementation of the law by emphasizing on freedom of expression: “The objectives of the law are aligned with international texts of human rights, particularly those that are closely related to the freedom of expression” (Presidencia de la Nación, 2009, articles 2° y 3° p.8; author’s own translation).

The situation a new law within the framework of democracy promotion also manifested in the close involvement of UNO Special Rapporteur of Freedom of Expression. Frank la Rue assessed the law several times before and after the Argentinean Congress had passed the text and the Higher Supreme Court in Argentina was called to evaluate whether some articles of the law violated the constitution. In 2009, la Rue was a guest of the Argentinean government and participated in this context in a press conference the 14th of July and several mediatory talks between the sectors. In this encounter, La Rue supported the law and its process publicly:

*For me it is a great pleasure and honor (...) to come to Argentina that is presenting what I believe is the law project most advanced regarding the freedom of expression that we have in Latin America and it is certainly an example for the world. (Frank la Rue, 14.07.2009, press conference, author’s own translation).*

The importance of the international players for the shaping and supporting the democratization of the media landscape in Argentina was particularly high as political pressure to drop the project was on the rise

*We called the rapporteur for freedom of expression of the United Nations, Frank La Rue, during the process in which the law was questioned. This means that we also had the opportunity to change our ideas and to present our proposal to La Rue (Interview 01.10.2013, former official AFSCA and member of the CCD, author’s own translation)<sup>2</sup>.*

Three years later, in the process of achieving constitutionality of the law, the importance of la Rue was visible again. The Argentinean daily newspaper *Página 12* titled quoting him stating that "Argentina is a model". This headline subsumes what many Argentinean

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<sup>2</sup> The interviews for this research were conducted in the understanding that names of interviewees will not be revealed to the public. The quotes that show names are from public statements given in press releases, interviews with the press or press conferences.

interviewees stated. The fact that the Argentinean process was evaluated and presented as example for establishing in a democratic way a law set up to democratize a highly concentrated media landscape was frequently presented as proof of the necessity to pursue the reforms and put the new law into practice. Through the establishment of new laws in the audio-visual sector and a strong discourse about the democratic nature of both process and contents, local actors in Argentina shaped a process in which democratization was referred to mainly through the buzzwords pluralism and diversity that put structural issues of concentration in the spotlight. However, when recognizing publicly the role of MLOS' work in promoting democracy, freedom of expression was the principle mostly referred to.

The establishing of an audio-visual law as expression of democratization is also very prominent in the process of establishing a new law in Uruguay. Here the establishment of a law for audio-visual communication services was represented as guarantee for plurality and diversity (Image 2). The Uruguayan government particularly emphasized these two principles in the draft of law SCA. Like in Argentina, the Uruguayan government reached actively out for international players. Persons like Frank la Rue, Guilherme Canela (UNESCO), Catalina Botero who was by the time special rapporteur for freedom of expression (OAS) and local representatives from the German Foundation FES discussed the framework of a new law and played an important role early in the process (Interview, 17.10.2013, former official Dinatel). These actors were invited to participate in the discussion of the TCC that established the main contents of the LSCA in Uruguay (Interview, 24.07.2013, Uruguay, member of the TCC). The Commission of Industry that discussed the draft of the law also invited these actors to the according hearing, together with national actors from within society (Interview 22.07.2013, Uruguay, Director of SIP).

*We invited someone from UNESCO and also from the Spanish government to present their ideas about audio-visual regulations. But this was on a very informal bases to listen to other perspectives from outside Uruguay in the process of the TCC. It was very important for us to include these perspectives in our discussion or hear different perspectives and to see how we can write our law* (Interview, 24.07.2013, member of the TCC, author's own translation).

Later in the process these actors engaged more visibly by participating at press conferences, panel discussions and seminars (Interviews 25.07.2013, representative

UNESCO; 16.10.2013, representative FES, 17.07.2013, Uruguay, former director of Dinatel). Particularly la Rue was an important figure, similarly, to his role in Argentina. Before the law was enacted, the Uruguayan government invited the UNO rapporteur for freedom of expression, stating that

*There is no authority in the world of a better position to express the opinions of the United Nations, of the international community regarding the standards of good practice and the best elements in this topic. (...) We are going to analyze the law with him, there is a public seminar to which we have invited him to evaluate the law and to give us recommendations (...)* (Press Release, Diego Cánepa, Subsecretary of the Presidency, 02.09.2013).

Shortly after the visit one of the main advocates of the new law sent out an email via subscription list in which he titled; *Frank La Rue: Uruguayan law democratizes audio-visual media and facilitates the liberty of expression, there is no censorship.* (Email Gustavo Gomez, 03.09.2013). The Email quotes the UNO representative stating: “It is a law that democratizes audio-visual media and, consequently facilitates freedom of expression. I came to congratulate President Mujica and the Uruguayan government for having taken this initiative and for having presented it to the Parliament”. (Email Gustavo Gomez, 03.09.2013).

Like in Argentina, local actors actively pull international actors into the process, to emphasize the importance and the democratic nature of the media reforms envisioned. Diego Cánepa stated in a press release, the integration of international actors into the process was an important way for underlying this transparency:

*Because of this reason, I think it is very important that Frank la Rue is visiting us, because it shows the compromise of the government to be very transparent in this and very open and we are also open to criticisms, to the audience and the control of any international organism in this topic* (Press Release, Diego Cánepa, Subsecretary of the Presidency, 02.09.2013).

Like in Argentina, the integration and comparative character of the law importantly served as justification and bases for gaining legitimacy and support in the country to confront oppositions against the law.

*They looked at all the literature and all the laws that refer to these topics. Therefore, when one says that this law violates human rights it is like a crazy thing to say. They had to look elsewhere and be very in line with the announcements made in the last 30 to 40 years regarding human rights in the context of freedom of expression. All of this is absorbed in the law, there was special cautiousness to make it that way, because we are talking precisely about democratization of communications (Interview 22.07.2013, representative APU, author's own translation).*

Whilst the actors in Uruguay and Argentina were showcasing the involvement of UNESCO, OAS and in parts FES, the European Union, regionally involved through the AMP, is on national levels far less visible. However, those involved in writing the drafts of both Law 18.284 and Law 26.5222 (Interviews, Uruguay, 17.07.2013, 17.10.2013, Argentina, 08.08.2013) confirmed that they studied the European Union's frameworks closely. In both cases, early drafts of the legislative texts show references to European directives such the European Television without Frontier Directive.

In Brazil, the idea of media democratization is heavily promoted by members of the FNDC (Cabral, 2011; Segura & Waisbord, 2016), but on governmental levels so far success in establishing a longer termed discussion was rather slim:

*So, we have this project to establish a law, we want it to be a more general law of communications, we tried... but the truth is, that we met with this person, a very important person from inside the Ministry of Communications and we spoke to him... and he said that the problem was not that they were not interested in communication, but that they were not interested in the democratization of communication. That this was not a priority in a year in which elections would take place. So, it is very, very difficult (Interview, 24.09.2013, representative of FNDC, author's own translation).*

The absence of governmental programs shows an important difference from Brazil and its neighbors.

*Look, I am from the PT [by the time party of the governmental position], right, but I also think that even though Lula has done many good things for the country, communication is just a topic he preferred not to touch. But I think it is very important that we improve in this area, we need to work on the democratization of communication in Brazil, this is something necessary for the consolidation of the Brazilian democracy. There is no democracy if there*

*is no diversity of communication. I think, we as government should take a bigger stance in this, be more decisive in amplify this position of democratization. This is what happened in Argentina with the media law or what they are working on in Uruguay.* (Interview, 25.09.2013, National Deputy PT, author's own translation)

When asked for the role, external actors, such as UNESCO or international foundations are playing, Brazilian stakeholders were very reluctant in showcasing the forms of entanglement. Indeed, interviews with other actors like representatives of UNESCO, the EU and political foundations in Brazil confirmed that the exchange in the context of media policy reforms was less vibrant. One international representative said:

*We offer these seminars for Brazilian journalists on freedom of expression, and of course we follow the discussions regarding legislative changes in the sector, but we are not engaging. This is also not our role. I have heard that in other countries this has been interpreted differently, but we really should not be engaging into these kind of national matters* (Interview, 25.09.2013, representative UNESCO, author's own translation).

This lack of engagement on both sides proofs when looking at law SeAC established in 2012. Like the national deputy interviewed emphasized, this law was thought of as a partial step towards changing the media landscape in Brazil. The analysis of the three cases shows that articulations of the need to 'democratize communication' found on national agendas are shaped by a dynamic international development. However, how far local actors actively integrate the different principles both formally and informally into their deliberations and written documentations, depends on the own political motivation in promoting media democracy nationally.

## **5. Conclusion**

To sum up, the democratization of media as an international field of enquiry has been shaped by a push and pull between MLOs and local actors. Local actors interested in reforming national media systems incline into internationally shaped discourses when beneficial to their own political agenda. Local power holders in the three Mercosur member countries actively used MLOs during internal power struggles as legitimizing tool, when political motivation was high (Table 3).

**Table 3** Political motivation, democracy promotion and engagement with MLOs

Level	Country	Democracy promotion	MLOs
strong political motivation	Argentina	strong inclusion of principles and reference to MLOs	OAS EU UNESCO
weak political motivation	Brazil	very little inclusion of principles and reference to MLOs	WTO ITU
strong political motivation	Uruguay	strong inclusion of principles and reference to MLOs	OAS EU UNESCO FES

The cases here studied suggest that local actors engage actively into power dynamics and are able to steer interactions as agents in the IDA environment. I show that the involvement of multi-lateral actors is particularly strong in cases in which governments have political interest to make the influence of those actors more visible and this shows that implicit political nature is characterized by a dialectic push-and pull dynamic when it comes to promoting media democracy. The results deepen the conceptualization of IMDA as dynamic beyond the typical understanding of a donor-recipient relationship.

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