



**A SIGN OF THE TIMES: TELEVISION AND
ELECTORAL POLITICS IN ARGENTINA, 1983-1989**

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines the use of television as a political campaign tool in the 1983-1989 elections in Argentina. Campaigns were conducted against the background of a national television system that was subject to both commercial and political pressures. Initially, politicians' lack of experience in exploiting the medium led to a scramble for air time right before the election. Within a few years, television became the dominant form of political communication. Political candidates soon developed more sophisticated approaches to television campaigning, but failed to reach a deeper understanding of how television could facilitate the interaction between political parties and citizens in a democracy.

RESUMEN

El presente trabajo analiza el uso de la televisión como instrumento de campaña política en las elecciones de 1983-1989 en la Argentina. Las campañas se llevaron a cabo con el trasfondo de un sistema nacional de televisión sujeto tanto a presiones comerciales como políticas. Inicialmente, la falta de experiencia de los políticos en el uso de este medio de comunicación condujo a una rebatiña por el tiempo en el aire justo antes de la elección. Después de unos pocos años, la televisión se convirtió en la forma dominante de comunicación política. Los candidatos políticos pronto desarrollaron enfoques más sofisticados de campaña televisiva, aunque fracasaron en el logro de un entendimiento más profundo de como la televisión puede facilitar la interacción entre los partidos políticos y los ciudadanos en una democracia.

Research on television and election campaigning has been concerned primarily with two dominant models of broadcasting. On the one hand, the extraordinary amount of studies on the U.S. case have dealt with a commercially driven, privately owned television system and its impact on electoral politics (Altheide 1979; Jamieson 1992; Luke 1987; Mendelsohn et al. 1970; Ranney 1983). On the other hand, research on Western European countries has elucidated a remarkably different broadcasting structure: television was originally based on a public-service model, assigning an important role to both Parliament and political parties (Blumler 1983, 1991; Mazzoleni 1987; Schoenbach 1987; Seaton and Pimlott 1987; Siune 1986; Smith 1979; Williams 1975). Despite recent cracks observed in the public broadcasting systems in several European democracies as a result of an ongoing wave of privatization, the use of television for campaigning on both sides of the Atlantic still reveals important contrasts as television presents structural differences and political parties relate differently to television.

Though focusing on diverging broadcasting systems, the bulk of the analysis is devoted to tracing the evolution of television in stable democratic regimes. Since its eruption into politics in the 1950s, television has gradually but firmly reshaped the forms through which politicians and parties go public (Agranoff 1972; Blumler et al. 1978; Farrell et al. 1987; Ranney 1983; Smith 1979). The stability of both the U.S. and the post-war European democracies has been the constant background against which television redefined election campaigns. The development of television campaigning during the last decades would be unthinkable without considering the permanence of the political regime; the continuous holding of elections has allowed political parties, politicians, and campaign intelligentsia to progressively alter, reconsider, and master the use of television for electioneering.

Television campaigning in post-authoritarian Argentina diverges substantially from these cases. The Argentine television system was neither completely privately owned nor exclusively run by commercial criteria; however, it was not entirely state-owned or managed following strictly political criteria either. Television was a rare breed: neither a fully commercially-driven enterprise nor a public-broadcasting service.

In 1983 Argentine election campaigns returned to television after a seven-year absence. After being censored and banned from television screens, political parties and politicians needed to reestablish forms of communication but knew little about television. Their last experience dated back to the turbulent and frantic 1973 election campaign when television was still black and white.¹ The old class of politicians, whose political upbringing was rooted in times when

¹ Argentine television was converted to color before the 1978 World Cup, thanks to the military government's laborious dedication to hosting the championship and to broadcasting propaganda worldwide.

television scarcely affected political dynamics, remained unfamiliar with the medium, for later they were excluded from access to the screens. The new generation of young politicians had matured outside television, so they had absolutely no previous contacts with the medium and little idea about its political potential. Campaign strategists were also trained in an old style of electioneering that underestimated, or even dismissed, the importance of television.

Thus, to understand the evolution of televised campaigning in 1983-1989 Argentina, these two aspects need to be considered: the unique structure of its broadcasting system, and the fact that candidates, young and old alike, had little experience with television. Little can be understood without consideration of the structure of Argentine television during 1983-1989. The goal is not to offer an exhaustive analysis of broadcasting policy during the 1983-1989 period but to present a general framework of the state of Argentine television for a better comprehension of how television was used for canvassing.

THE DISPUTE FOR THE SCREENS

By the 1980s, television had spread widely. There were forty-four stations in Argentina, ninety-four percent of the households in the city of Buenos Aires and greater Buenos Aires and eighty-four percent of the homes in the rest of the country owned television sets (Morgan and Shanahan 1991). Though the state played an important role in the early beginnings of television during the first Peronist administration in 1951, Argentine television developed in the late 1950s under initiatives from private investors plus economic and technological investments by the three major U.S. networks (Muraro 1974). Yet the state had a major role in the management of television stations during the 1980s. Although fifty-nine percent of stations remained privately owned, the role of the state was substantial because the Buenos Aires channels that produced and distributed most of the national programming were state-owned.² Transferred to the state by the Peronist government in 1974 on the grounds that the licenses granted to private owners had expired, the four Buenos Aires-based television stations remained state-owned throughout the military government.

Those stations as well as other state broadcasting media were not privatized during the authoritarian regime, despite announcements to the contrary by government officials. Two factors account for this. First, constant disputes among the three branches of the armed forces obstructed the development of a unified media policy; and second, the regime's conception that keeping television in its hands guaranteed full control over the formation of public opinion.

² Of a total of forty-four television stations, fifteen were state-owned (whether by the central government or local states), twenty-six were privately owned, one was state intervened, and two were run by universities (Todo es Historia 1988).

Though the Law of Broadcasting authorizing the privatization of state-owned television and radio stations and excluding media corporations from participating in the bidding was enacted in 1980, the process of privatization proceeded at a very slow pace. Only after the 1982 Malvinas/Falklands war, and urged on by its unexpected finale, did the government accelerate the process of privatization with the hope of retaining some control over television stations by favoring political allies in the bidding. However, when the newly democratic government was inaugurated in December 1983, only Buenos Aires Channel 9 had been transferred to private owners.³ As a result, the Alfonsín administration inherited, besides dozens of small provincial radio transmitters, an attractive yet problematic legacy from the authoritarian regime: three gigantic, highly indebted, state-owned television stations in the city of Buenos Aires.⁴

Television was a thorny issue for the Radical government. Though the 1983 Radical party platform set out precise goals, by the end of the five-and-half year term, little of the original plan had been accomplished and the general structure of Argentine television remained basically untouched. During the first years the government did produce quick and major transformations regarding the abolition of censorship and the partial renovation of television programming. However, other major planned reforms were not carried out. The 1983 platform considered a profound reevaluation of the television structure, mainly through the creation of a bicameral commission for radio and television “to supervise the right for true information, the respect for ideological pluralism, free access of people and institutions to the mass media, and the defense of the democratic and republican form of government” (Union Cívica Radical 1983); the restructuring of the COMFER (the Federal Commission of Radio and Broadcasting) by integrating it with Congress and other “community representatives”; and the repeal of the 1980 Law of Broadcasting. The Radical party envisioned three different forms for television and radio ownership. First, a state-owned sector including a small network of one national television station and one national radio station with branches throughout the country; second, privately owned broadcasting media (partially inspired by the U.S. case); and third, a mixed model, public but not governmental, conceding participation to universities, political parties, and trade unions which, according to the director of the National News Agency (TELAM) during the Alfonsín administration, “was vaguely inspired by the model of PBS and the BBC” (Monteverde 1990).

However, the scenario at the end of the Alfonsín administration was quite different from what the Radical party had planned in 1983. The 1980 Law of Broadcasting still remained in force

³ Libertad S.A., a media group headed by Alejandro Romay, who owned the station before it was taken over by the state in 1974, was favored by the bidding.

⁴ How television stations’ debts mounted is difficult to trace precisely. A merry-go-round management, seldom obliged to publicly present a balance sheet, and major investments done in the modernization of station’s equipment for color transmission, are usually seen as the main factors accounting for skyrocketing debts.

(although the process of privatization started by the military government was stopped by the 1151/84 decree); only in April 1988 did the Radical bloc in Congress present its first proposal for broadcasting;⁵ and television stations were still government-owned, highly-indebted enterprises, run by a mix of commercially driven and political criteria, fragmented among different party factions, and managed by numerous alternating government-appointed directors.

Radical officials concluded that the government had little success in the area of mass-media policy. In their analysis, the major problem was the lack of a law which could reorder the chaotic state of Argentine broadcasting. The management of state-owned media was largely fragmented among numerous government branches which had oversight powers over different television and radio stations. There was the COMFER, which directly depended on the executive and controlled legislation on media issues; the SIP (Secretary of Public Information), which, until its dissolution in 1987, also depended on the executive and was basically in charge of announcing government actions and opinions; and the Council for the Consolidation of Democracy, which was in charge of elaborating telecommunication policies. According to the 1987-1989 Vice-secretary of Communication, “the overlapping [of roles] impeded having a new Law of Broadcasting” (Porto 1990).⁶ The dispersion of functions was interpreted to mean that the government was reluctant to centralize activities on media policy; observers argued that in trying to differentiate itself from the “Apold model,” a synonym for an authoritarian control of the mass media, the government consciously resisted the idea of leaving decisions to one all-powerful official.⁷

Explanations for why the administration could not achieve its 1983 mass-media plan are divergent among former officials. Some argue that the permanent disputes and inability to reach a consensus between a pro-private media and a more pro-state faction within the Radical party made the unification of media policies impossible (Gregorich 1990). In contrast, others claim that there was not a clear communication policy, “nor even the policy of no policy” (Monteverde 1990). The 1985-1987 Secretary of Public Information recalls:

When the government was inaugurated it was not very clear what to do with the media. It hadn't been a central topic during the campaign and there was only the general feeling that they were used by the military to manipulate public opinion and now they had to be opened to every political group (Radonjic 1990).

⁵ Several proposals to reform the 1980 Law of Broadcasting were formulated and presented by different political parties in Congress, but, for different reasons, none of them was ever approved.

⁶ Curiously, within this highly intricate and dispersed management of television stations, the Ministry of Economics controlled the La Plata-based Channel 2.

⁷ During the second Peronist administration (1952-1955), Raúl Apold was the head of the *Subsecretaría de Informaciones*, the media office that controlled the large string of state-owned newspapers, magazines, and radio stations.

Still others express the view, "it was difficult to privatize in a fair way in both political and entrepreneurial terms" (Sábato 1990). Some feel that the media issue was neglected and avoided, prolonging a tradition of the Radicals' feeling ill at ease with the media, the oft-called "Illia syndrome" (López 1990).⁸ Finally, other former senior officials, more attuned to criticisms made by political opponents, hold that the Radical administration, like former governments, could not resist the temptation of keeping and using the media while in power and attempting to privatize them (favoring potential allies), when leaving power.⁹

All these reasons seem to have a grain of truth. Even during the early years under the continuation of the "democratic spring" and with popular support, when the Alfonsín administration carried out its plans of removing mechanisms of censorship and guaranteeing political pluralism (Gibaja 1990), the government was slow in carrying out a firm media policy. The impetus for having a unified direction for television policy was evidently stronger at the beginning, but few advances were made in transforming the overall structure of television. Why? It seems that a major revision of the structure of the mass media, though mentioned in various electoral platforms and certainly a concern of some government officials, was not a main preoccupation for the government (and I might say for the other parties) and little was known about "what to do with the media."

The inability (and/or perhaps the reluctance) to reach an agreement with other parliamentary forces certainly eliminated one main requisite for introducing profound modifications in broadcasting. To introduce some of the major reforms outlined in the 1983 Radical electoral platform without political support from other parties or through negotiation with other parliamentary forces was implausible. Whether the government could not get support because it purposely did not want to reach an agreement with other parties (especially with Peronism) about the future of the mass media or because it could not find a common ground with its opponents due to the latter's permanent, fierce resistance to any legislation which "sounded Radical" (as former government officials claim), is still matter of open debate. But undeniably the lack of political agreement prevented any major transformation of the media structure within a design which

⁸ "Illia syndrome" is a catchword alluding to the attitude of 1963-1966 Radical president Arturo Illia regarding mass-media policy. Illia was overthrown by a military coup which took place in June 1966 during continuous attacks by the major media against his Administration trumpeting the need for and the proximity of a military government. Illia, who considered that to keep the media independent, the government should not intervene in mass-media issues, proposed a "hands-off" position despite the evident and constant criticisms voiced by the major newspapers and political magazines.

⁹ Television analyst Pablo Sirvén observes that when the Radical bloc presented its first proposal for a new Law of Broadcasting in 1988, "the Radical government attempted to continue with a long-lasting tradition of lame-duck administrations: to pass broadcasting legislation in the very last minute, to avoid leaving state-owned media in the hands of its political adversaries" (1988: 48).

granted an important role to Congress, other political institutions, and intermediate associations in managing television and radio stations.

In addition, political timing was not on the government's side. When the Radical party enjoyed a majority in the House of Representatives from 1983-1987, the issue of restructuring the media was not a priority in the government's agenda; questions such as human-rights violations during the military government or solving the recurrent economic crisis clearly relegated to the back burner any attempts to review media policy. Later, when Radicals elaborated a common proposal for a Law of Broadcasting and presented it in Congress in April 1988, the Radical party no longer a majority, the government was discredited, and, for many, it was moribund. The increasing loss of political legitimacy (especially after the conclusive 1987 electoral defeat), plus the visible factionalization of the party, definitely eliminated the possibility of reaching a consensus among different sectors whether within or outside the party. Once the television stations were distributed according to internal party struggles and the government lost its initial strength and momentum, it was politically difficult to define a common policy.

Thus, the government, though it did not champion full state intervention in television but only a mild role, was left to its own resources to confront the intense push for privatization from different groups. Entrepreneurial and media companies (especially the major newspapers) constantly pressured both to eliminate the controversial article 45 of the 1980 Law of Broadcasting (that prohibited print firms from owning broadcasting media) and to privatize television stations. Their demands for privatization were clearly expressed during the 1983 election campaign. A *La Nación* editorial (1983a) stated that after nine years of state-owned television the result was very poor; television was unsuccessful whether as an economic enterprise or as a "cultural vehicle." Along similar lines, whether in conferences or op-ed articles, newspapers and other media organizations urged privatization in order to develop an independent media and exhorted the elimination of article 45 by arguing that it was unconstitutional (*Clarín* 1983a, 1983b; *La Nación* 1983b). By the end of the Radical government and during the 1989 election campaign, amid the staunch lobbying efforts of private firms, presidential candidates from the three major political parties agreed on the need for privatization and the participation of print companies in the bidding (*La Nación* 1989).¹⁰

As the early attempts for establishing a somewhat unified policy failed, the state of television became highly chaotic. Radical officials observe that once Channel 9 was privatized

¹⁰ The Buenos Aires television stations were privatized and transferred to the new owners by the Menem administration in December 1989. Though the 1980 Law of Broadcasting still remained, the controversial article 45 was bypassed and print groups could participate. Channel 13 was granted to ARTEAR-Clarín, a conglomerate formed mainly by *Clarín* together with other smaller print and broadcasting media groups, while Channel 11 was given to TELEFE S.A., an association of numerous companies including among others the publishing company *Atlántida* and *Televisoras Provinciales* (a conglomerate of provincial media groups).

(after the military sold the station to a private group, the judiciary in charge of reviewing the decision confirmed the bidding during the Alfonsín administration) and initiatives to develop a model of television that included both public and private ownership remained weak, competition became the central criteria for running television stations and any chance of developing a coherent policy vanished. Similar to what happened during the military government, though the major stations remained state-owned, the Alfonsín administration was no longer in full command as the control of television stations was distributed among party factions. Channel 13 was under the *Junta Coordinadora Nacional* (a faction closely allied to President Alfonsín), Channel 11 was controlled by the party office of the Buenos Aires state, and Channel 7 (*Argentina Televisora Color*) remained under the domain of the executive. Party factions influenced the workings of stations mainly through controlling the appointment of stations' directors. Appointees were often designated more on the basis of their political contacts than on their expertise in the field. Given continual political and economic pressures, the tenure of station managers (as well as that of other high-ranking executives) was subjected to internal struggles within the Radical party. The former Vice-secretary of Communication admits that "internal [party] struggles were permanently reflected in media policy" (Muiño 1990).

Managers were expected to be successful in two areas. First, once economic efficiency was implicitly adopted as a yardstick for gauging what a "good station" was, managers were pressured to be competent administrators by trying to increase ratings in order to get larger advertising revenues and to maintain (or hopefully decrease) the stations' debts. Second, they had to be politically "fair," to run stations in a democratic way guaranteeing "freedom." What "fair" and "freedom" meant was vaguely defined and, alternatively, it alluded to opening studios to political adversaries and to offering equal television time to all party factions and officials. Both commercial and political aspects caused constant debates.

Though state-owned, stations were managed following typical criteria of commercial television, resulting in what President Alfonsín's former spokesperson defines as "an absurdity, a hodgepodge" (López 1990). Ratings were a central obsession of station directors; individual producers "rented" time slots from each station (the so-called "co-productions"), thus having full control over their shows both in terms of programming and advertising;¹¹ and commercial advertising saturated television screens, though the Law of Broadcasting limited the amount of

¹¹ Silvia Schulein (1986) defined these "co-productions" as "a prostitution of the concept of production which, instead of incorporating new talents into these stations, has been the way through which private interests are again the owners of the television programming structure. By admitting coproductions in state-owned television, they are allowing ideological control, usually with a very conservative bias, from the private coproducers."

advertising to twelve minutes per hour.¹² What a “successful television station” meant was highly controversial and unclear among Radical officials. Opinions ranged between those who conceived television as another public institution (thus, as they argued, it was impossible to expect stations to be profitable), and others who understood television as any other commercial enterprise and claimed that stations had to be lucrative.¹³ As tensions between these conceptions lasted throughout the whole Radical administration, television’s role remained ambiguously defined and was a matter of continual controversy. Also, what “fair” or “democratic” management (and thus coverage) meant was also ill-defined and usually was left to the station managers’ criteria. Station directors as well as other officials (especially those in control of television news) were permanently subjected to demands and pressured from both party colleagues and political opponents to “get camera” (Dominiani 1991). Accusations of partiality were frequent, and politicians often clocked television time to “prove” bias on the screen.

As a result, and despite some important advances in terms of freedom of expression and a clear attitude towards the defense of the democratic system, television presented a lamentable state by the end of the Alfonsín administration. Though reduced during the early phase of the government, stations’ debts had astronomically increased afterwards, adding to the colossal state deficit.¹⁴ Though they supposedly belonged to the same owner, stations relentlessly competed with each other. In July 1987, an article in the magazine *El Porteño* (1987a) stated: “The state-owned stations compete offering similar shows or stealing stars from each other to get a higher rating and capture more advertising.” Though Radical officials continuously described the situation of the three state-owned television stations as an eternal source of conflict and insisted on finding a fast and complete solution to the problem, by the end of the Alfonsín administration the channels still exhibited the structure they had in 1983 and the electoral platform had been completely abandoned.

Within an extremely chaotic television structure, controlled by competing party factions and guided by a melange of commercial and political considerations, politicians slowly adopted campaign strategies for television. Amid continual conflicts over television management and accusations over manipulation and negligence in broadcasting or covering specific campaigns,

¹² According to Pedro Sánchez, who was in charge of COMFER and was strongly criticized by many Radical officials given his pro-privatization position, “such violations [of the limit in the amount of advertising] occur[red] more often in state-owned than in the private stations” (*El Porteño* 1987c).

¹³ Emilio Gibaja, the first Secretary of Public Information until May 1985, represented the first position and under his tenure the Administration attempted to coordinate a common policy and fulfill its electoral promise. In an interview (*El Porteño* 1987b), he stated: “It cannot be expected from television, a vital medium for the democratic system, to be profitable. Otherwise television news has to be done not for the sake of democracy but to make money.”

¹⁴ By the end of the administration the state television deficit was \$70,000,000 (Morgan and Shanahan 1991).

candidates increasingly started to participate in a wide range of shows and to tailor their campaigns to television standards. It is against the backdrop of permanent controversies over the management of television stations that the accelerating importance of television qua medium for campaigning has to be understood.

TURNING ON THE TV SET, TURNING ON CAMPAIGN POLITICS

In times when television structure and management were chaotic, political parties and candidates persistently scrambled to get television airtime, rarely questioning the predominant state of television. Making inroads in the prevailing system rather than reconsidering the overall architecture of television was the usual solution to the need to go public. It was seldom considered that the urgent necessity to reach voters, and the parties' accelerating weakness in constructing stable mechanisms for political communication, demanded a profound reevaluation of the role of television in democratic Argentina. Instead, it was generally assumed that filling television programming with candidates solved the persistent problems of widening and strengthening forms of communication.

Campaigning did not equal television, since campaigns clearly went beyond television: there was more campaigning than what met the television eye. But on the brink of election day, watching television often equaled watching campaigning. Though it neither absolutely nor permanently dictated the tempo of the campaign, television's rhythm and codes governed stumping activities. Audience complaints that television was flooded during election times with politics that interrupted regular programming were certainly well-grounded. During campaign months, almost every television show became a tribune for candidates to address the audience.

Why were television screens overflowing with electoral politics at this time? Why was a significant proportion of the total television advertising aired in the last weeks of the campaigns? To answer these questions, various factors have to be addressed. First, with few exceptions, election campaigns were often fragmented among different and often opposite party factions (and trade unions in the case of Peronism) who independently canvassed and raised funds for competing candidates. Campaign committees decided to invest in television commercials without consultation with other campaigners; thus, different spots for the same candidate (and even identical ads) were often broadcast during the same commercial break but funded by different sources.

Second, overall media planning was neglected. This problem was not specific to (but probably more noticeable in) television; whether in radio, newspapers, or street billboards, advertisements cascaded in the final days of the campaign. Similar to press campaigns, investments in television advertising were often decided on the basis of available funds rather

than upon consideration of strategic goals. As substantial funds were usually amassed in the last phase of the campaign (due to lack of systematic accumulation or to last-minute decisions made by awaiting contributors), campaigners encountered a sudden and substantial injection of monies “to be invested.” As there were no limits either on the length of the spots, on the campaign kickoff, or on campaign expenses, parties advertised according to available funds. Only the in-force deadline for campaigning, twenty-four hours before election day, stopped the avalanche of commercial spots and candidate appearances. Money, rather than legal limits or strategic considerations, drove parties’ decisions for television advertising.

Third, politicians held a simplistic, hypodermic-needle approach to television. Candidates and campaign strategists knew only vaguely which advertising and propaganda techniques effectively “worked,” since research on voter decision-making was almost nonexistent. For politicians, it was fundamental to be on television without further consideration of the kind of appearance (Muraro 1989), and they usually equated extent with depth (Sábato 1990); as television analyst Ulanovsky (1990) puts it, “politicians make the mistake of confusing quantity with quality. They are seduced by the idea that they have to be on television, regardless of the show.” Observers agree that politicians naively believed in a direct relation between space and penetration: doubling television exposure simply implied doubling their chances to get votes. Filling television with advertisements revealed a simplistic understanding of media effects, something like “more-exposure-guarantees-more-chances-for-winning” kind of rationale; as Juan M. Casella (1990), the 1989 Radical candidate for Vice-president, states: “It seemed that the dominant belief was that more spots meant more votes.”¹⁵

Although article 21 of the 1980 Law of Broadcasting prohibited broadcasting commercials on state-owned television stations, a federal judge ruled that each station’s *interventor* (the government appointee) had to decide whether or not to broadcast campaign spots. Ultimately, in view of the evident economic benefit of airing political commercials for stations in financial trouble, and under constant crossfire from candidates and parties who wanted to take full advantage of television for campaigning, station managers agreed to air unlimited amounts of unlimited length political commercials. The continual broadcasting of campaign spots, especially during the last two weeks of the campaign, led many commercial advertisers and their agencies to remove or simply not to start their television campaigns during this period out of fear that their spots were going to be buried in the avalanche of political advertisements.

¹⁵ A research study published by the daily *Página 12* (1989c) reported that out of thirty-six prime-time hours broadcasted by the four Buenos Aires television stations between May 6 and May 8, 1989 (election day was May 14), campaign commercials totaled almost five hours (a fifth of the total airtime). Moreover, in many cases, parties aired the same spot twice in the same commercial group and five times during the three hours.

Along with the professionalization of television campaigning, political spots underwent significant changes. While the first campaigns typically romanticized party politics and strong ideological convictions using a simple format, later they gradually introduced more professional designs and eliminated most party references.¹⁶

Political parties also campaigned on television by using the free slots (in both state- and privately-owned stations) granted by the 1980 Law of Broadcasting. Time slots were equally allocated among all running parties and were determined by a draw; existing television shows as well as ten-minute spaces, specifically ceded to political parties and scattered throughout the regular programming, were available for campaigning. Slight modifications (inspired by the Italian case) were implemented for the 1989 presidential election; it was decided to establish two rounds, one for presidential and the other for vice-presidential candidates, and time slots were allotted according to the amount of votes parties received in the 1987 midterm election. Within the Radical government, some officials were inclined to assign the amount of free time and to order slots in proportion to votes received, while others maintained that free spaces had to be equally distributed because parties and candidates did not evenly participate in the rest of television programming (Zuleta-Puceiro 1990). In the early elections these free spaces mainly featured candidates simply talking into the camera, but later ones were generally more technologically sophisticated and introduced campaign spots.

The succession of electoral campaigns allowed parties, candidates, and campaign strategists to learn about television campaigning. But still the reasons for flooding the television screen with campaign politics remained. Hoping to be on the tube and to reach maximum exposure, candidates campaigned through almost every television show. Amid continual disputes, different programs had to confront the issue of impartiality and fair coverage of elections. Since campaigning surfaced on a large variety of morning, evening, and late-night television shows, pressures existed for almost all programs. How to cover election campaigns became a problem affecting television as a whole, not just some specific shows; every show was progressively subjected to diverse pressures to provide air time for candidates. Let us review the different television genres used by candidates for campaigning.

¹⁶ The 1983 Alfonsín campaign was seen (and still is) as the one that renovated election campaigning by introducing innovative campaign spots and by stressing television. However, members of the Alfonsín headquarters deny common arguments that their television commercials were highly sophisticated. The spots that included over a dozen commercials in which candidate Alfonsín talked about diverse issues (health, housing, education, etc.) and introduced “his people” (local candidates and his running mate Victor Martínez), though often seen as slick, were actually speeches improvised by the candidate himself right before shooting against a simple television backdrop (Monteverde 1990; Sthulman 1990).

Political Interview Shows: Television Central Court

Political talk shows were a central arena for campaigning and, perhaps, politicians' most beloved television genre. Though several "political roundtable" shows existed, they were not equally important nor did they attract politicians' attention evenly. Unquestionably, *Tiempo Nuevo* was the most talked about, highly debated, and highly watched show of its genre during this period (it often ranked among the twenty most watched television shows). For candidates, television campaigning often equaled being on this show; *Tiempo Nuevo* producer Clara Mariño (1990) claims that "politicians see it as the most influential television show in Argentina," while journalist Carlos Fernández (1990), who co-hosted the political talk show *En Profundidad*, says that "it is a first priority for politicians." The show started in the 1960s and until 1990 was hosted by journalist-celebrities Bernardo Neustadt and Mariano Grondona, until they separated and the former remained as host. Its format basically consisted of a series of roundtable conversations with different guests (politicians, trade unionists, military officers, and economists, among others), preceded and followed by a commentary-like conversation between the hosts. While Neustadt often was the fast-paced inquisitor, forcing interviewees to give straight and brief answers, Grondona (also a lawyer and professor at the Law School of the Universidad de Buenos Aires) played the more analytical, professorial-type role (Sirvén 1988).

Tiempo Nuevo was a permanent headache for the Alfonsín administration; the 1985-1989 Buenos Aires Radical mayor defined it as an "omnipresent nightmare" (Suárez Lastra 1990). Seen as too conservative and too ideologically close to former authoritarian regimes by some Radical officials, the government was caught up in a dilemma: how to deal democratically with a show which was viewed by many as having an ambiguous and suspicious tradition toward democracy. Solutions to the "*Tiempo Nuevo* issue" varied within the government; while some suggested canceling the show or removing it from its traditional time slot, other officials proposed maintaining it on the air. The second option prevailed but, under some officials' recommendations, it was decided to simultaneously sponsor other political talk shows in an attempt to secure a more favorable, or at least a more impartial, treatment in television political talk shows. Host Grondona (1990) explains that

the [Radical] government was under intensive pressure from people close to Alfonsín to remove our show and, apparently, Alfonsín's answer was that they had the right to put on as many shows as they could but they could not cancel us.

As a result, several new political talk shows crashed the screens during the first years of the Alfonsín administration, but these shows never turned out to be official megaphones of the Alfonsín administration because their hosts remained independent. This was a consequence of

the fact that the government, though supposedly being interested, exercised almost no control over and gave little actual support to these shows, leaving hosts to their own resources and initiatives. Only in sporadic cases did government officials who consistently declined offers to go to *Tiempo Nuevo* (among others, the 1985-1989 Finance Minister Juan Sourrouille) hint at some official backing by accepting the hosts' invitations to attend the new shows. As journalist Pablo Mendeleovich (1990), who co-hosted the political talk show *En Profundidad* (one of the new breed, presumed pro-Radical political shows), puts it, "Support for these programs often remained individual rather than institutional, and the government seldom gave clear signs of supporting these shows whether by providing production resources or advertising."

Many of this new wave of political talk shows did not last very long while others, though remaining on the air, never could dispute *Tiempo Nuevo*'s unmatched role, primarily, for intra-elite communication. Often the argument for canceling these shows was their low rating (usually between 1 and 2 points), dwarfed by *Tiempo Nuevo*'s much higher numbers (ranking between 10 and 15 points). But again, it was not clear whether commercial or political criteria were driving stations' decisions about their programming. While these political talk shows were originally encouraged, given the Administration's attempt to have some form of support or space for voicing their opinions on television, the shows were canceled on the basis of their low capacity to draw both viewers and advertisers.¹⁷

Besides these reasons, what these post-1984 political talk shows failed at was in disputing what Hertsgaard (1989) labels "one the Ten Commandments of presidential politics in the media age": the setting of an agenda. This was, unquestionably, the main problem that *Tiempo Nuevo* presented to the Radical government; the show talked about issues the hosts, not the government, wanted.¹⁸ The new political shows were rarely successful in becoming what many Radical officials, broadly and vaguely, envisioned as a competitor to *Tiempo Nuevo*. *Tiempo Nuevo* clearly had a definite political agenda, which in its producer's words, was "defending liberal ideas" (Mariño 1990).¹⁹ The show periodically clashed with the Alfonsín administration, mainly over the government policy on foreign affairs, human rights, and the economy, among other issues. To put it succinctly, both hosts constantly championed free-

¹⁷ The reasons why these new political talk shows did not enjoy higher ratings and wider attention are varied, such as the administrators' impatience and desire to have an immediate commercial success or the meager support they enjoyed from politicians who supposedly were interested in keeping them on the air.

¹⁸ Television analyst Pablo Sirvén (1988: 154) comments: "*Tiempo Nuevo* was the only dissident television show in those years, setting up an incredible pro-privatization campaign, which not only influenced many of its viewers, but also some officials who criticized the show. Curiously, Neustadt crusaded against state activities from a state station."

¹⁹ Within the convoluted Argentine political dictionary, "liberal ideas" refers strictly to free-market, anti-statist economic policies without any specific references to cultural or political ideals.

market ideals, promoted a unequivocal alignment with the United States in foreign affairs, and viewed the trials of officers accused of violations of human rights as highly disruptive. The government had enormous difficulties battling for this terrain and was often impotent to counter the show's unquestionable relevance for both advancing definite political ideas and becoming a central space for intra-elite discussion. Moreover, *Tiempo Nuevo* gained legitimacy as an arena for political debate as televised debates (introducing Radical officials) were held in the show's time slot, while host Bernardo Neustadt, by being selected to moderate two debates, advanced his recognized status as a "prominent journalist" and "social communicator." For Grondona (1990), the success of the show rested on the fact that

it monopolized independence, it was the only [television] show which could be seen to get an impartial image of what was going on. For some years, *Tiempo Nuevo* was a synonym of a program that could be watched, where all opinions counted and the government could be criticized.

Bernardo Neustadt claimed that the program "was the only thing that permitted Alfonsín to say there is liberty of the press on state television" (New York Times 1987c). Their portrait dissents from what politicians, regardless of political affiliations, often opined about the show: namely, that it explicitly supported conservative politicians and ideas, and that the hosts were biased opinion-peddlers. However, despite eternally criticizing it, candidates steadily attempted to get on the show; as producer Mariño (1990) states, "politicians criticize *Tiempo Nuevo* but they ask others what to do to be on the show." Ideological leanings were certainly an important criteria for being on the show, but in many known cases, politicians who were prone to sustain heated debates with the hosts or were skillful at dealing with television's fast pace and drive for agitation and conflict were invited because they guaranteed a strong disagreement and higher ratings (Mariño 1990; Grondona 1990).²⁰

For politicians, *Tiempo Nuevo* (and other interview shows) remained to a large extent equivalent to television campaigning. As these shows decisively secured their colleagues' and political insiders' attention, candidates approached political talk shows as avenues for getting visibility and notoriety among the political elites. Another benefit from attending these shows was that, as the press and morning radio programs usually reported and commented on them, candidates potentially received free coverage. However, campaign strategists gradually opted to advise candidates not to attend interview shows frequently as these programs concentrated on a very specific and definite electorate: the often well-informed and active political insiders. Seeking

²⁰ Perhaps the best known example was the appearance of Foreign Affairs Minister Dante Caputo who in heated discussions, catalogued as "the journalistic event of the year" (El Periodista 1987: 35), showed good television sagacity and opposed both hosts' constant criticisms of the Administration's foreign policy.

to address wider numbers of the electorate, campaign aides and candidates expanded their communication strategies to include other television genres.

Television Debates: Coming of Age

Television debates were one of the new arenas for television campaigning. Though presidential debates were not held, other debates, in what was a true novelty for Argentine campaigning, took place.

In both the 1983 and the 1989 presidential election, debates were scheduled but did not occur. In the 1983 election the debate between Italo Luder and Raul Alfonsín was scheduled to be held during *Tiempo Nuevo*'s habitual Tuesday night time slot. But after numerous discussions over the format, the debate was canceled given "profound disagreements over the inclusion of journalists and candidates' advisors" (*Clarín* 1983c). Peronists certainly wanted the debate as it was an opportunity for candidate Luder to address a segment of the electorate traditionally estranged from Peronism: the educated, well-off, middle-class voters. In contrast, Radical campaign officials were not eager for the confrontation and avoided it by setting up many requirements they knew were not going to be accepted by Peronist advisors (Stulman 1990). Alfonsín aides judged the debate unnecessary and inconvenient for different reasons: Alfonsín had a notable lead over his opponent; it was very likely that middle-class voters, who were already firm in their support of Alfonsín, were going to be the main audience—thus, as an Alfonsín advisor held, "Radicals risked a lot and had very little to win" (Dreyfuss 1987); and the debate was potentially troublesome given Alfonsín's proclivity to lose control in face-to-face debates (a significant disadvantage especially given Luder's more serene and professorial attitude).

During the 1989 election, the Angeloz campaign committee consistently challenged Menem to hold a television debate. They saw the debate as a great (and surely the last) opportunity for Angeloz to diminish Menem's large advantage. To achieve this, the debate had to be a knockout—and Angeloz aides were convinced that it was going to be. More than trusting in Angeloz's television abilities, his campaign advisors firmly believed that Menem's constant verbal *faux pas*, which the Radical campaigns repeatedly brought up during the campaign, would surface in the debate. The Angeloz camp blindly believed that the debate would produce a favorable outcome for its candidate and contribute to winning the election.²¹

²¹ Though greatly telefluent, Carlos Menem's television Achilles' heel was participating in a televised debate. His charisma and familiarity with television routines and codes were an enormous advantage for being in entertainment shows, but were not helpful when arguing about political proposals.

Due to an almost unsurmountable lead and conscious of Menem's tendency for misstatements, Peronist campaign managers constantly rejected the offer to hold a debate. Even until the last minute, Radicals still tried by all means to play their last card and, as they said, to "sit Menem in the debate." Whether through candidates who publicly challenged Menem to accept the request or through newspaper advertisements, Radicals bet all their chips for winning the election on a television debate.²² Peronists did not change their decision and also replied through different ways: newspaper ads accused the Radicals of being too concerned with the debate while ignoring other more important problems, and Menem repeatedly rejected the debate in his public appearances.²³ Angeloz attended the debate (arranged with *Tiempo Nuevo's* production to be held during the show's time slot and to be conducted by Bernardo Neustadt) and waited for Carlos Menem, but as the latter did not appear he ended up being interviewed by the show's hosts and foreign journalists.²⁴ While Angeloz was in the television station, Carlos Menem, addressing a multitude in a rally on the outskirts of Buenos Aires, stated: "Doctor Angeloz, the people are preoccupied about other things, not a debate between us. I was not going to miss this dialogue with my people by sitting with you in a television studio" (*Página 12* 1989b).

While presidential debates were not held, other debates did take place. The first debate was during the campaign for the 1984 referendum on the Beagle question. The debate was the last step of a well-organized and professional campaign planned by the Alfonsín administration which, according to many Radical officials, was the best campaign masterminded by the Radical party. For various reasons the campaign was distinctive: it was the first time the Radical government was facing a public test after its conclusive 1983 electoral victory; the referendum on the Beagle was the first in Argentine history; and as voting was optional, not mandatory (as it is for regular elections), possible turnout was unknown. The issue at stake was the century-long

²² A Radical newspaper ad read: "Menem's empty chair: These are neither offenses nor insults. These are the conclusions of all opinion polls. Many Argentines doubt your capacity and aptitude to govern the nation. Moreover, many who are going to vote for you will do it just for party loyalty or as a protest against the government. Convince them and us that the doubts are unjustified. There are two ways to do it. First, accept a televised debate, without advisors, in a private station with our candidate Eduardo César Angeloz. Second, if you don't want the debate, agree to be interviewed on television, also without advisors, by qualified Argentine and foreign journalists. Our candidate will do the same. Don't hide, Governor Menem. Occupy the debate seat and do the country a favor. Convince us that you also have the capacity to sit in Rivadavia's seat [referring to the presidential seat]."

²³ An ad stated: "Angeloz's empty words. The Radicals think that to govern is to speak. That's why they are concerned about an empty chair in a television debate. We, the Peronists, are concerned because there are other empty spaces. There are thousands of empty tables in houses. Empty factories. Empty banks. Empty pharmacies. Empty supermarkets. And even a presidential seat seems empty."

²⁴ *Tiempo Nuevo* clearly favored the Radical presidential candidate during the 1989 election campaign, mainly because of Angeloz's constant promises for modernization and economic privatization, the show's traditional "pet projects."

dispute with Chile over the boundaries of the southern Beagle channel and the sovereignty over islands located in the channel. The government faced passionate opposition from some sectors which labeled the question as one for specialists, not for the general public. The question that was up for a vote was the decision made by the Vatican (who acted as an intermediary between Chile and Argentina) over this issue. Voters could approve or reject the settlement, or abstain. The Alfonsín administration and other political parties (Intransigente, Communist, Socialists, Conservatives) as well as some Peronist leaders (such as then-governor Carlos Menem) endorsed the Vatican resolution while the official leadership of the Peronist party together with other political forces (Nationalists from the right and the left and pro-military groups) championed the *no* vote, blank vote, and/or abstention. The results were conclusive: the turnout was quite high (more than 73% of the electorate voted), and 81% approved the agreement while only 17% rejected it.

Though different political groups endorsed the affirmative vote, the campaign remained a government affair. It started and ended with President Alfonsín's brief televised speeches and included numerous print and broadcast advertisements, television spots in which popular figures (actors, athletes, politicians, among others) endorsed the *sí* vote, and several crowded rallies.²⁵

The television debate was the peak of the campaign and starred Foreign Affairs Minister Dante Caputo, who represented the *sí* vote, and the late Senator Vicente Saadi, then vice-president of the Peronist party, for the *no* vote. It was moderated by *Tiempo Nuevo's* co-host, Bernardo Neustadt.²⁶ The debate was not just the first in its genre, but it had an enormous impact; for many observers, it was the turning point of the times, the 1960 Kennedy-Nixon debate of Argentine politics, the main sign that television was transforming Argentine political communication. Both politicians and observers conclusively agreed that out of the debate the government position, on the referendum, "the yes vote," became stronger; *Clarín's* headline was categorical: "The Debate Caputo-Saadi: Weighted Scale." More than Minister Caputo's measured, skillful, and well-supported arguments, Senator Saadi's performance (absolutely seen as "unbefitting" for television) was viewed as negatively influencing voters (Cardoso 1984). The Senator's presentation, notable for its incongruities and lack of evidence to sustain the argument, later became the "talk of the town." His movements were clumsy, his voice extremely loud, and his gestures bombastic by television standards. Politicians stressed the poor performance of Senator Saadi (*Clarín* 1984), gossip magazines mocked the Senator (one titled its edition "The

²⁵ Total campaign expenditures for the affirmative vote were u\$ 3.390.000, while the referendum expenses totalled u\$ 6.830.000 (*La Nación* 1984).

²⁶ The debate was originally proposed by Senator Saadi. According to Mario Sábato (who directed cameras during the debate and assisted then-Minister Caputo), the debate "was rapidly accepted." The participation of host Bernardo Neustadt was decided upon by both panelists and he did not intervene except for briefly introducing and closing the debate.

Comedians of the Year: Saadi and his fight with Caputo”), and journalists focused on the decisive impact of television on politics.²⁷

The debate exhibited the persistence of a very naive understanding of televisual politics and the lack of awareness about the potential effects of television on segments of the political class. Senator Saadi’s consultants put up many requirements for the debate but forgot some obvious ones, such as having control of the cameras or asking for lecterns big enough to hold their maps, and were not concerned with the stage design, the background color, or the quality of the microphones for each presenter. After the debate, politicians were surprised (and even shocked) by the potential consequences a lousy television appearance could have on a politician’s career.

Unquestionably, the debate was a major learning experience. An example of the Beagle debate’s enormous repercussion was the debate between the Peronist and the Radical candidates for governor of the province of Buenos Aires, Antonio Cafiero and Juan Manuel Casella, during the 1987 election campaign for state posts.²⁸ The 1987 Cafiero-Casella debate was carefully planned and almost no details were left unattended to.²⁹ The debate was conducted by radio interview morning-show host Magdalena Ruiz Guiñazú (commonly seen as a politically independent journalist), and a 40.2 rating made it the most watched television show during August 1987 (elections were held on September 6).³⁰

The debate lacked what “good” television debates are supposed to have in the age of telepolitics: pizzazz, excitement, entertainment. The discussion was notoriously intellectualized:

²⁷ Journalist Jorge Halperín (1984) concluded: “Last Thursday, two generations of politicians confronted each other.... The *catamarqueño* [Dr. Saadi represented the northwestern province of Catamarca] senator grew up at a time in which political activity did not count on electronic media. He raised his voice until he lost it and read with difficulty. He did not know what to do facing a television camera, something a politician in the 1980s cannot ignore. But, since when do Argentine politicians have ample TV appearances? How many years must we wait for public debates? Or does time not count? It is a mistake, not justifiable but certainly a monumental one, that Saadi ignored that TV is a ‘cold medium,’ which scrutinizes its characters with close-ups and is not charmed by old charismatic gestures.”

²⁸ The debate was the first one between political candidates. A *New York Times* article stressed that the debate “underscored the gradually increasing importance of image in Argentine politics” (1987b: A6).

²⁹ The debate was divided into eight segments, preceded by a brief introduction by the moderator. It was aired by Channel 9 (the only privately owned station), according to Radical officials, to avoid suspicions of government intervention. On the reasons why the debate was extremely controlled and planned, then-candidate Casella justified: “everybody remembers the Caputo-Saadi debate in which one of the participants overacted so clearly that we took precautions not to repeat that performance. Thus, the debate turned out very formal” (Somos 1987). The only minor fumble was that, since timing was not very strictly followed (the moderator used a digital clock which did not indicate seconds), candidates complained about unfair time allocation.

³⁰ The one-and-half-hour debate (with only one four-minute break) was also broadcast by three Buenos Aires radio stations.

hard political and economic issues such as inflation, Buenos Aires' GNP, federalism and intervention, and agricultural and industrial policies were at the forefront of the discussion.³¹ Journalist Martín Granovsky (1990) recalls that "the debate did not move anybody. It was incomprehensible if you were not familiar with the economy and the history of the Buenos Aires state." *La Nación* (1987a) concluded:

The debate's monotonous characteristics were due not to the candidates but to the rigorous rules established beforehand, which prevented a direct dialogue and replies between the participants, and the exasperation and exhilaration which usually characterize these confrontations.

Only during the so-called free-topics slots (when candidates could pick any issue), did some sparks fly, as candidates abandoned their earlier stiff postures and arranged arguments. Though the actual impact on voting behavior was not determined, most analysts and polling information agreed that Cafiero, who later won the election by a wide margin, emerged as the winner of the debate (*La Nación*, 1987b).

The 1989 television debate between Dante Caputo and Adelina Dalessio de Viola contrasted notably with the 1987 Casella-Cafiero confrontation. Foreign Affairs Minister Dante Caputo and City Council member Adelina Dalessio de Viola were the heads of the lists of Radical and UCeDe candidates for representatives for the city of Buenos Aires in the 1989 national election. Dalessio de Viola publicly challenged Caputo to hold the debate while accusing him of avoiding it.³² Mario Sábato (1990), Caputo's main television aide, recalls: "We could not back out." The debate had almost no procedure rules, and, as a condition imposed by Dalessio de Viola, Bernardo Neustadt, who openly and strenuously criticized Caputo's foreign policy, was appointed moderator of the debate as part of his *Tiempo Nuevo* interview show.

For Caputo and his campaign advisors, the debate, more than an occasion for getting votes, was seen as an opportunity to take votes away from the UCeDe. Caputo (1990) explains: "We wanted the debate. It was a complex debate as it could not be won but rather the other had to lose. That was our strategy." His media advisor recalls: "We knew that our best possibility was to subtract votes from Adelina, but it was difficult for us to get new votes" (Sábato 1990). Amid a

³¹ Juan M. Casella (1990) explained: "[television] debates are important as a way to see the capacity of a candidate to confront unexpected situations, to answer arguments. Perhaps on this point Cafiero and I failed. That is why the debate was so boring. It was the first time we did it, and we excessively regulated it." However, the then-Radical candidate was somewhat satisfied with the debate as "some serious matters [were discussed]. We did not fall into the trap of bickering and fighting on a circus-like show" (*La Nación* 1987a).

³² For Dalessio de Viola, a debate with Caputo offered the opportunity to achieve two goals: exposure and legitimacy. First, she was more likely to get potential Radical than Peronist voters due to the more similar sociodemographic profile between Radical and UCeDe voters (middle- and upper-middle-class, educated voters). Second, the debate was an important occasion to strengthen her position within her party as Caputo was considered a "bete noire" within UCeDe notables and conservative politicians.

catastrophic economic situation which by extension strongly affected Radical candidates' chances, the Caputo campaign team opted to confront Dalessio de Viola instead of Miguel Angel Toma (the head of the Peronist list) for several reasons: the UCeDe candidate regularly accused Caputo of avoiding the debate; the UCeDe was ranked third, trailing the Radicals by a wide margin (the Peronists were running far ahead); it was more feasible to attract potential UCeDe than Peronist voters; and chancellor Caputo was seen as a strong contender for television debates.

The debate was distinctive as it attracted two definite, different personalities. Dante Caputo, a soft-spoken, Sorbonne-educated, intellectual-turned-politician Foreign Affairs Minister, headed a highly audacious and conflictive foreign policy (which made him a permanent target of criticism from the Argentine conservative establishment), and was notable for being Alfonsín's only minister to remain in office throughout the Radical government. His 1989 bid was the first time he ran for public office. Adelina Dalessio de Viola embodied, perhaps, the exact opposite profile: a housewife-turned-politician who headed her own campaign within the highly centralized UCeDe party, adopted a quasi-populist, girl-next-door type of image (intensively condemned by most UCeDe conservative notables) and, in a heavily male-dominated world, was one of the few female politicians both holding and running for office.

The debate generated a brouhaha as the discussion adopted an unusual tone for Argentine standards: personal aggressions and accusations, rather than the usual politeness and good manners, permeated the debate. The discussion mainly spun around candidates' mutual charges; while Dalessio de Viola accused Caputo of overspending on his diplomatic trips, disbursing state's monies in personal dinners and appointing an extra number of ambassadors, Caputo accused the UCeDe candidate of freely spending on clothes. The debate was overwhelmingly criticized. *La Nación* (1989c) reported:

A debate presupposes a confrontation of ideas, not a recurring series of aggressions in which personal issues prevail over the proposals and initiatives both candidates have for Congress. Lamentably, the opportunity was frustrated due to the [candidates'] persistence on almost family-like, street-type criticisms. Coarse and vulgar [discussions] show a lack of respect for the public.

The *Tiempo Nuevo* producer describes it: “[The debate] was disappointing. Though it starred two of the most interesting figures in Argentine politics, for us as well as for the public, it was a neighborhood discussion [*conventillo*] more than a serious debate” (Mariño 1990). Immediately after the debate, the head of the Peronist list for representatives, who in his opinion “was intentionally excluded from the debate” (Toma 1990), produced a fifty-second television spot in which he stated that although he was “neither a chancellor nor a city council member,” from the debate it was clear why the political class was deprecated, and he advised the electorate to vote for “non-strident men.”

Dante Caputo (1990) opines that “the debate was bad because there were no rules for discussion. The UCeDe candidate rejected rules.” Caputo’s strategy was

that exaggerating her style, [she] would generate rejection. I acted not so much to discuss the arguments but to try to produce an exaggerated, vulgar image [of her] so that it would scare away some of the electorate. That was the only tactic.

His media advisor admits that “the strategy was bad for your own health but it was a very good one” (Sábato 1990). According to Dalessio de Viola’s campaign manager, the problem was that “the people did not want any fights,” and although the UCeDe candidate defeated Caputo, her mistake was “the desire to be a man” (Jiménez Peña 1990). *Tiempo Nuevo* host Grondona (1990) considers that “Adelina lost ... because she attacked him.... She steered the debate towards superficial areas.” Besides the mutual frontal charges (certainly a typical trait of electioneering elsewhere but new for Argentine campaigns), what was shocking was, in the context of a male dominated political television world, the fact that a woman was taking the lead in accusing her adversary in an “aggressive” way. As Hirsch (1991: 56) concludes, “women who participate in aggressive banter risk being stigmatized as “screechy” and “strident.”

Broadcasting News: Evening Canvassing, Daily Polemics

While being the center of frequent disputes, television news provided another opportunity for politicians to campaign. As television news was controlled by government-appointed officials (except for the privately-owned Channel 9), accusations from politicians and opposition parties, and even from Radical officials not belonging to the party faction in control of the station, were common (Sirvén 1988). Non-Radical politicians often labeled television news as manifestly propagandizing the government’s views. Although the complaints about not getting news coverage might have been partially true (in fact, some Radical politicians even agreed that newscasts slightly privileged government officials), it would be mistaken to conclude that television news was part of an elaborate plan by the Alfonsín administration to deliver a favorable picture of government deeds and to intentionally exclude political opponents. Such a conclusion would disregard the fact that the control of television stations during the 1984-1989 years was highly autonomous because the government seldom had full, direct, or centralized control over station management.

Newscasts were, perhaps, the hottest, most sensitive issue of the whole television heritage the Radical administration received from the military government. How to proceed with television news management in a newly established democratic regime was a very sensitive issue for the Alfonsín administration. Television news, given its extremely important role during the authoritarian years but especially during the Malvinas/Falklands war, when it was the official voice

of the regime and forcefully manipulated information, was an urgent issue for the new government. While the most renowned television faces from the military years were removed or simply could not find room under the new government after losing their previous “political” support/contact, other popular anchors stayed on television as they were judged by the new Administration to have remained mostly independent of the generals. As a result of these changes, television news in state-owned stations, though generally under the command of pro-Radical journalists or producers appointed by government officials, was effectively managed by politically independent producers and anchors with different partisan preferences and with previous (and in some cases vast) experience in television.³³

Under the Alfonsín administration, the evolution of television news parallels the rest of television programming. Though attempts at coordinating newscasts in state-owned stations, tailoring their format to different audiences, and developing investigative reporting were initially implemented, these plans were later abandoned as commercial standards, namely competition and ratings, were adopted as guiding principles and the management of television stations was splintered among party factions. Lacking a firm central direction over what issues to cover and how to treat them, decisions remained confined to news producers and anchors. Pressures from politicians to get coverage were constant while other parties and observers accused station managers of favoring political allies with coverage; as a former news manager during the Alfonsín administration states, “what was news was defined through pressure. If a given politician was better at exerting pressure, he won” (Dominiani 1991).

Individual news executives and anchors usually proceeded following personal criteria (in which their position vis-à-vis different party factions amid perpetual internal struggles was certainly important) rather than explicitly defined government instructions. Only during some isolated cases (like the 1987-1989 military rebellions) did the government impart somewhat precise communiques about what to cover and what position to take.³⁴ An advisor to President Alfonsín on media issues claims:

³³ For example, Carlos Campolongo and Santo Biasatti, publicly self-defined as Peronist supporters, as well as Roberto Maidana and Sergio Villaroel, commonly seen as politically independent, anchored different newscasts in state-owned television stations.

³⁴ The fact that newscasts of state-owned television stations decisively sided with the government and the whole political spectrum in defending democracy by calling people to congregate around the major plazas in support of the regime and refusing to cover the rebellious officers was heatedly criticized by private media groups. The latter accused the government of manipulation, propaganda, and biased coverage of the 1987 military crisis. Radical officials justified television’s attitude on the basis of the need to defend democracy while criticizing privately owned radio stations and news organizations for giving space to the seditious officers to voice their demands. Both government officials and news anchors accepted the charges of manipulation but considered it as valid for the defense of democratic institutions (Campolongo 1990; *New York Times* 1987a).

Television news was part of the lack of planning everything had.... They were neither antagonist nor supporter. It was a hybrid. Radicalism did not have an information policy.... There was no defined policy over television news, no systematic work at all (Graziano 1990).

To attribute to the Alfonsín administration a methodic plan, whether for favoring Radical officials or excluding opponents from access to newscasts, ignores both that the government lacked a systematic news media policy and that intra-party struggles overwhelmed the administration. Data shows that eighty percent of the government information was produced in Buenos Aires airports where in-transit officials made statements about assorted issues, while press conferences were unusual. As Graziano (1990) puts it, “a ward-boss mentality dominated [television news],” friendly relations with stations and news managers who were subjected to wide pressures from inside and outside the government (Sario 1990), were often the best formula to guarantee coverage.

Television news remained in a critical state throughout the 1983-1989 years. Due to several reasons, such as low ratings, changing political alliances, or inappropriate coverage of an sensitive topic, television news was cancelled and anchors were removed. Which potentially controversial topics could be covered and how they could be treated were matters of permanent conflict. “Inappropriate” coverage or “delicate” issues were defined not explicitly but depended on everybody’s tacit and often unclear understanding of the elasticity of the boundaries. Thus, both anchors and producers had to rely on their own criteria when deciding on topics and their treatment. After the initial attempts to reformulate television news’ format by removing show-biz and human-interest stories failed, newscasts offered an extremely sensational, yellow-journalism design. As competition and economic achievements became the name of the game, the news format that worked the best for market success was accepted. When the highly ranked *Nuevediarío*, the private Channel 9 evening news, overwhelmingly focused on scandals, human-interest stories, and gory issues, state television news progressively adopted, though with much less rating success, a similar treatment of what was newsworthy.³⁵ Media analyst Carlos Ulanovsky (1990) accurately observes that these changes signaled “the renunciation by television news of its guiding, educational, instructive role.”

It is plausible that, as Knight (1989) argues, television news became less credible as a result of being increasingly focused on lurid issues. Though no actual data exist on the relation between credibility and emphasis on sensational news, both politicians and media analysts

³⁵ *Nuevediarío* usually ranked among the ten-most watched television shows with a rating ranging from fifteen to thirty-two points. Defined as a “great soap opera,” a “morbid show” (Sirvén 1988: 168, 178), it constituted one of the “booms” of Argentine television. While a frequent target of criticism for its focus on bloody and macabre news, trivial approach to “serious” issues, and drive for human tragedies (El Periodista 1987a; Humor 1986), *Nuevediarío*’s occasional coverage of daily problems affecting low-income communities (water shortages, lack of security, traffic accidents) and opening up television cameras to the often ignored voices of ordinary people was praised (*Página 12* 1989a).

commonly observe that tabloid news is rarely credible. Opinion polls have shown that within a highly distrusted mass media, television was the least credible medium, trailing newspapers and radio. However, the low credibility of television news can hardly be attributed mainly or only to its focus on lurid, shocking, unbelievable stories. Broadcast news had low credibility even before its turn to a sensational format. Two previously existing conditions had already undermined the public's confidence in television news.

First, news on one-party-controlled state-owned television anywhere is hardly believable. Eduardo Metzger (1990), one of the *interventores* of Channel 13, states: "News in the hands of the state lacks credibility.... [People say]: 'they cannot talk against the government.'" Second, and partially related to the first point, the role that television news (and especially evening news) played during the 1982 Malvinas war also accounts for its low credibility. Being tightly controlled by the military government, television news offered continuous coverage of the war that was strongly pro-government and soundly triumphant. Television was notoriously *the* media during the war. The government earnestly defended and propagandized its goals through the tube (*New York Times* 1982a, 1982b; *The Economist* 1982); television's version of the war contrasted sharply with the dramatic outcome. The clash between the broadcast version and the actual development of the South Atlantic conflict adversely affected television's credibility afterwards (Landi 1987; Somos 1982).³⁶

Besides low credibility, newscasts have had almost no capacity to cover late-breaking news. Journalists describe television news as usually being mere "visual illustration of newspapers" (Ciancaglini 1990) and "the last vehicle of information" (Blanck 1990); columnist Morales Solá (1990b) claims: "In twenty-two years of journalism, I cannot recall anytime television broke the news. No one ever talks to me about something that was said on TV, except for *Tiempo Nuevo*." Within the continual information bouncing from one medium to another, television news often got little consideration from radio news productions and newspaper journalists looking for newsworthy stories;³⁷ television news was definitely not a top priority for either reporters or officials in the lemming dynamics of Argentine journalism.

During campaigns, the meager ability of television news to break news stories persisted. Most television stations did not have journalists following candidates on the road; campaign

³⁶ In many cases, television's lack of credibility restrained many politicians and campaigners from heavily campaigning through the tube. The public's widespread sense of manipulation and distrust of "political uses" of television was considered detrimental to politicians' constant exposure. Luis Stulman (1990), an advisor for several Radical candidates, recounts: "After Malvinas, television was not credible. In the focus groups it was said: 'Whatever is on TV is a lie.'"

³⁷ How information routinely reverberates and passes from one medium to another can be summarized as follows: radio morning shows "lift" news from dailies, news agencies report the comments and news aired by radio shows, and both evening and morning newspapers repeat stories from wire services and radio. An example of this information bouncing is that newspapers generally assign employees (usually newsroom assistants) to listen to radio shows.

coverage often consisted of broadcasting a two-minute excerpt of major rallies. Airing rally sound-bites was unquestionably more important to campaign staffs than to television news productions. Campaign headquarters were often the ones who had to set up the television production of rallies (cameras, lighting systems) because stations had scarce resources for coverage. But often only fragments of rallies (generally the closing ones) were nationally broadcast; unless campaign headquarters invited stations to cover photo opportunities or sent their own films of rallies to Buenos Aires-television stations, television news virtually ignored candidates throughout their campaigns. During the campaigns, television largely remained a vehicle for local rather than national campaigning.

Technological, economic, and political reasons explain why television news' coverage of electoral campaigns was intermittent rather than continuous, local rather than national. First, television stations were not connected in a widespread network and cable capacity was often limited to carrying regular programming. Thus, rallies could not always be broadcast simultaneously throughout the country, and sometimes could not even reach many cities. Only when prime-time programming ended (around 10:00 p.m.) could rallies be aired. Therefore, party campaigners planned the main candidate's appearance for times when the transmission systems were available.

Second, covering constant campaign trails in an extensive country like Argentina was an enormously expensive and difficult endeavor for television stations with poor technological resources and high debts (Biasatti 1991; Dominiani 1991; Metzger 1990). When not compelled to cover specific events in order to compete against other stations for higher ratings, and when not pressured by candidates' lobbying efforts to broadcast certain campaign stories, stations usually opted to cover more accessible campaign events such as local rallies and nearby precinct walks, especially those likely to satisfy television's appetite for tumultuous, chaotic, and highly visual events.³⁸

Third, candidates had little or no chance of getting television news coverage when stations were, directly or indirectly, managed by political adversaries. Examples and accusations were numerous. The 1983 Alfonsín campaign headquarters complained that television news (then in the hands of the military) failed to give them ample coverage because the Radical candidate was not the generals' electoral choice. Candidates from parties in the opposition consistently charged the Radical government with discrimination and favoritism in television news.³⁹ Radical politicians charged that local stations in Peronist-governed states refused to

³⁸ Rodolfo Pousá (1990), Channel 13 news vice-manager, states: "We are not interested in covering a tranquil rally.... That is propaganda.... Images with speed and information are indispensable, otherwise you run the risk of people switching channels. You need more images."

³⁹ In some cases, Radical officials could not resist the temptation of using their control over television to show potentially negative images of opponents and to overexpose their candidates.

broadcast their rallies and reported that cable signals, leased to air their campaigns, were mysteriously cut off. Many Radical officials claimed that they were censored by television stations controlled by opposing factions of their party.

Entertainment Shows: Desperately Seeking the Mass Audience

Entertainment programming totals eighty percent of Argentine television (Morgan and Shanahan 1991). These shows, encompassing a diversity of programs such as afternoon talk shows (some of them formatted following their U.S. and European counterparts), comedy variety shows, and game shows, also provided an opportunity for candidates to go public. These shows became more important as politicians attempted to address an audience scarcely interested in hard political issues; as an UCeDe campaign aide puts it (Domán 1990), “the people who are tired of politics.” Some politicians strongly criticized their colleagues for attending these shows (or for relentlessly expecting to be invited) as, in their view, such appearances were unfit for true “politicians” and degraded politics by turning it into a “circus,” a “vulgar, coarse activity.” Others, in a “that-is-the-way-things-are” attitude, justified appearing on these shows as the way to be in contact with the majority of voters, detached from hard party politics. Searching for massive recognition, at first politicians slowly accepted these shows, but later they wanted to be invited to them (especially those with high ratings). These shows, introduced candidates talking informally about their childhood, hobbies, and horoscope; presenting their families; spontaneously cracking jokes with comedians and impersonators; and offering handy analyses on current issues by providing down-to-earth examples.⁴⁰

The show *El Candidato* was important in presenting a more informal image of politicians. Produced and broadcast only during the campaign months of the 1985-1989 elections, *El Candidato* differed from several seasonal political talk shows which blossomed in the heyday of

During the 1989 campaign, when the chances for Radicals to retain the presidency were scarce, candidate Carlos Menem got slanted television coverage: television news heavily stressed Menem’s gaffes (his appearances were often unedited), and, coinciding with Angeloz’s strategists’ emphasis upon the menace Menem represented as a return to the violent times of the Peronist past, news gave extraordinary attention to the crash of Menem’s campaign plane when arms were found aboard.

⁴⁰ Candidate Carlos Menem was seen as a true master of these shows. Journalists state that “Menem smashed other politicians in that terrain” (Domán 1990) and that “Menem could perfectly host one of those shows.” For the Menem campaign staff, getting invitations from entertainment shows was seen as fundamental because Menem faced meager and unfavorable coverage from the government-controlled television news and permanent criticism from political talk shows (Oyuela 1990). Hugo Heguy, one of Menem’s campaign spokespersons, asserts: “People accept Menem but not other politicians taking part in a car race. Menem dances a *zamba* [folk dance] on television and people praise him. He is different. Being authentic is his most notable characteristic. People are tired of stiff, meticulous, deceptive politicians. You see Menem in the soccer stadium, at lunch, or in a rally and he is always the same person” (Dailia and Haimovici 1989: 37-38).

the campaigns by not focusing on hard politics but on the “other side of politicians.” One co-host says that the show attempted to “renovate the journalistic genre on television, ... to defrost the image of candidates, and to offer more elements to judge them by” (Masetti 1990); the other co-host recalls: “The idea came up when we were thinking that in times of elections, people are bombarded with advertising, ... but most of the time people have almost no idea about who the character [candidate] is” (Cahen D’Anvers 1990). During the hour-long show the candidate talked with the moderators about his/her life story; informally chatted with “the person in the street” in different settings such as homes, schools, and bars; and was taken to “unusual zones”: leftist candidates discussed economic issues with bankers in select restaurants, and conservative candidates conversed with slum inhabitants on issues like the price of daily products. Differing from other lowbrow entertainment shows, politicians generally welcomed *El Candidato* because both hosts were, as a former candidate puts it, “well-respected journalists.”

WHAT HAS CHANGED: DRAMATURGICAL AND COMMUNICATIVE ACTION

Campaign consultants agree that during the 1983 election, except for what Alfonsín’s camp hinted at, the lack of familiarity with television and its potential for political communication was widespread. Campaign staffs and candidates were to a large extent loyal to traditional campaign routines and paid scant attention to television.⁴¹ During the ensuing campaigns, attitudes toward television progressively changed. From a timid and prejudiced view when “it was usually difficult to make a politician understand the importance of a good television appearance and cancel a rally attended by 200 people” (Sábato 1990), and “television and other campaign techniques were seen as corruption” (Muraro 1989), Argentine politicians developed an unrelenting appetite for television. Foreign experts were regularly invited to teach courses on television basics and campaign strategies; many politicians no longer seemed television “illiterates,” uneasy about television rules and routines (some even became authentic masters of the medium); and candidates attentively selected their appearances according to image and political strategies. Comparing the light of a television camera to the light of an open refrigerator, journalists crack jokes that nowadays politicians, even when they see an open refrigerator, straighten up, clear their throats, and start blabbering.

The changing role and escalating importance of television for campaigning can be traced in the evolution of the investments made in paid political advertisements on television in

⁴¹ Columnist Oscar Cardoso (1990) recalls: “Since in the previous political era, there was a culture of rallies, the majority of journalists followed that idea. We did not have in mind the influence of television.” Former *Clarín* editorialist Joaquín Morales Solá (1990b) states: “At that time, it was thought that rallies were a symptom of the society.”

comparison to newspapers. Data in Table 1 on the allocation of advertising monies between television and newspapers throughout the 1983-1989 period shows two processes. First, while newspapers received a declining share of total campaign expenditures, television increasingly became a major recipient of campaign funds.

TABLE 1

Distribution of Campaign Funds (in Percentage)

	1983	1985	1987	1988	1989
T.V., Buenos Aires	38	27	35	66	76
T.V., Rest of the country	36	43	30	19	9
Newspapers, Buenos Aires	14	19	16	12	11
Newspapers, Rest of the country	10	11	18	3	2
Magazines	2	0	1	0	2
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Author's figures based on data from Fuentes y Cía, 1983-1989.

As elections progressed, newspapers, especially provincial dailies, got a meager part of campaign funds. Comparing the two national elections, 1983 and 1989, the evolution is clear: while in 1983 the press captured twenty-four percent, in 1989 it received only thirteen percent of the allocated monies. In contrast, television showed an opposite pattern by receiving funds previously assigned to the press: while seventy-four percent of the advertising money was invested in television during the 1983 campaign, eighty-five percent was devoted to it in the 1989 campaign. The primary elections held in mid-1988 seemed to be a turning point. Compared to the 1987 national election for state posts, the distribution of campaign funds in television and print media is notably different: television became the overwhelming recipient of campaign monies while investments in newspapers dwindled dramatically. The 1989 national elections seemed to follow the pattern started in the primaries; despite the fall in the amount of advertising spent on provincial television stations, the total allocation of campaign monies remained basically the same.

Second, the role of television and newspapers in different stages of the campaign also changed. While in the 1983-1987 elections, campaign expenditures on television advertising were increased during the weeks immediately before election day and were dwarfed throughout the previous months by funds for newspaper advertising, the 1988-1989 period shows a different

pattern. Newspapers, which except for the election months always got a bigger share of campaign advertising investments in the 1983, 1985, and 1987 campaigns, never obtained a bigger portion than television of total campaign monies spent from June 1988 to May 1989. Whereas the press fulfilled a central role in the earlier periods of the 1983-1987 campaigns, whether for launching or installing a candidate, and television was mainly used during the last weeks of the campaign, in recent elections this dynamic has changed; television fulfills a central role throughout the whole campaign, not only during the final stages. While the amount of television advertising monies skyrocketed during election months in the 1983-1987 campaigns, the evolution was significantly smoother in the last elections. From January until May 1989 (when elections were held) the percentage of the distribution of campaign monies between television and newspapers was fairly similar; the amount of money invested grew but the pattern of allocation between those media remained basically identical.⁴²

In addition to pouring into television a bigger proportion of campaign funds over a more prolonged period, candidates and parties gradually adapted their campaign strategies to television requirements. Some politicians became television cognoscenti by mastering timing and routines. Campaign staffs professionalized their approach to television campaigning by using it in a more “scientific,” “modernized” way. Advertising efforts as well as candidates’ appearances were adjusted to campaign goals, targeting specific segments of the electorate. Let us examine some examples.

Though still reluctant, candidates became increasingly conscious of the value of political talk shows for addressing both upper-bracket constituencies and news junkies, and for influencing campaign agendas. In contrast, to reach non-politicized voters, an electorate foreign to hard politics, candidates ventured into new, less-familiar territory. Getting a spot on the top-watched, sensational television news, *Nuevediarío*, became an obsession for many; moreover, several politicians from across the political spectrum participated in *Nuevediarío* as columnists offering their perspective on a wide range of issues. Being interviewed by a television variety show host was seen as more advantageous than discussing inside politics on political talk shows. Campaign strategists improved their control of the conditions under which candidates appeared before television cameras, carefully staging rallies as ordered crowd events and packaging (not always successfully) candidates’ contacts with television. Though still distant from the

⁴² An increasing devotion to television advertising certainly caused the total amount of campaign expenditures to skyrocket. Though it is hard to figure out the exact quantity of money invested in different campaigns, mainly due to the absence of any type of control over contributions or expenses and the general disorganization of campaigning, a number of analyses show that finances for recent campaigns increased greatly (Fraga 1989). According to many analysts, greater expenditures on television are responsible for escalating campaign costs.

choreographic atmosphere of television campaigning elsewhere, Argentine campaigning clearly showed signs of a more “modern” approach.

These changes developed as a way to better accommodate election goals to television’s requirements and current state. Yet, borrowing Habermas’ (1977) terminology, changes were confined to dramaturgical action, an actor’s self-presentation to an audience in certain way, while considerations about television as an institution for enhancing communicative action remained forgotten. Transformations resulted from attempts to design and/or to improve candidates’ electoral communication; they were strictly *instrumental* and *individual*: changes aimed at solving specific, momentary needs of a candidate for addressing the electorate rather than solving deeper problems affecting parties as communication institutions. More substantial changes regarding the role of television in democratic politics, whether during or outside the election period, were seldom on the agenda. For Argentine parties and politicians, television communication was simply reduced to brushing up on presentation skills, wearing appropriate ties and suits, and appearing on shows whose audiences matched the profiles of targeted voters.

The steadily accelerating, intensive, and disordered use of television for campaigning unmasked the profound weakness of parties and politicians in communicating with the citizenry. The failure of Argentine parties to construct stable and institutionalized channels for expression, information, and participation became evident at the very time when the need to reach out to voters was most immediate. Parties showed themselves to be progressively ineffective in developing means of communication. Accordingly, television was seen as a way to remedy this vulnerability and to strengthen means for debate. Not that parties were much stronger in this sense before. As Mario Sábato (1990), executive manager of programming and production of Channel 7 during 1985, puts it: “Political parties were already weak in this [area] even when they were highly legitimate.” Facing mounting political apathy and party disloyalty, politicians viewed television as supplying invaluable assistance when voters were more detached from candidates and campaign politics. The full and varied television repertoire increased exposure but did not create newer and stronger forms of communication. Outbursts of commercials and candidate appearances on almost every program revealed the limited imagination of political parties to use television for communicating politics.

Parties basically maintained an adaptive position towards the existing state of television. Because firm and comprehensive initiatives to reshape and to develop an alternative model for television were scarce and weak, and while the whimsical and peculiar status of television was predominantly accepted, candidates basically conformed their campaign needs and strategies to the prevailing television structure. Tailoring campaigns to the confusing and disorganized state of television, instead of trying to simultaneously redesign television’s structure (whether towards a more commercially-driven, public-service or a mixed model), was the dominant attitude. Adapting

television to circumstantial needs for short-term communication rather than including it within more lasting and inclusive political goals was the dominant stance.

In a country where parties have historically shown a weakness in developing means of communication, television could hardly be considered a circumstantial issue, affecting individual candidates only during campaign seasons. Rather it needs to be seen as a medium challenging the whole dynamics of political communication in contemporary Latin American democracies. As communication scholar Oscar Landi (1989) observes, "Television came inside the recent processes of democratization in the region and remains a central element."

Despite the popularity and centrality of television in patterns of communication in democratic Argentina, parties made little effort to reconsider the function of television in a changing communication environment, namely, how television transforms and challenges the interaction between parties and citizens. Most frequently, television was treated simply as a technological gadget modifying the context of candidates' presentations or providing a vast audience in times when parties confronted credibility problems. Parties approached television as a medium to scramble for time on, an apparatus offering time slots for individuals to go public, not as a means to cultivate links with the public and to mediate public debates. Television can be a catalyst for the development of citizenship or it can consecrate an existing state of political apathy and a depoliticized public. However, considerations about television as a media giving "an opportunity for being republican" (Habermas 1977), for broadening forms of public argument and discussion (Williams 1975), or for nurturing democracy, were often forgotten.

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