INVESTIGACIÓN/RESEARCH

MEDIA INDICATORS: TOOLS FOR CITIZEN PARTICIPATION AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s, several international organizations have increased their interest in creating instruments to measure reality. In the field of communication, various non-profit organizations such as Freedom House, Reporters Without Borders and IREX, generated indicators. In 2008 the Intergovernmental Council of the International Program for the Development of Communication (IPDC) approved *Media Development Indicators (MDI); Framework for assessing the development of social media* at its 26th meeting (26th – 28th March, 2008). Citizen participation and access to information were consolidated as essential instruments for democratic discourse.
The main objective of this article is to critically analyze MDI, paying particular attention to these two aspects: citizen participation and access to information. In order to achieve this, a multi-method design (Cresswell, 2014) has been applied, which is divided into several successive phases so that the methodology chosen may be compatible with the complex nature of the object of study. The first phase has been an extensive literature review; the second phase was in the form of a questionnaire put to a panel of experts who participated in the definition, implementation and critical analysis of the indicators. Finally, a series of in-depth interviews were arranged to further explore the findings. At the end of this process, we have found a contrast between the statements of values that appear in the UNESCO document, and the obscure practices and political pressure from state members to hinder the correct development of citizen participation and access to information.

KEY WORDS
Communication – Media Indicators – Citizen Participation – Access to information

INDICADORES MEDIÁTICOS: HERRAMIENTAS PARA LA PARTICIPACIÓN CIUDADANA Y EL ACCESO A LA

INFORMACIÓN

RESUMEN

Desde los años setenta del siglo pasado diversas organizaciones internacionales han aumentado su interés por crear instrumentos de medición de la realidad. En el ámbito de la comunicación, entidades sin ánimo de lucro como los de Freedom House, Reporteros Sin Fronteras o IREX generaron indicadores. En 2008, el Consejo Intergubernamental del Programa Internacional para el Desarrollo de la Comunicación (PIDC) en su sesión XXVI (26-28 marzo 2008) aprobó los *Indicadores de desarrollo mediático* (IDM). *Marco para evaluar el desarrollo de los medios de comunicación social*. En ellos, la participación ciudadana y el acceso a la información se consolidaban con instrumentos imprescindibles del discurso democrático. El presente artículo tiene como objetivo principal realizar un análisis crítico de los IDM, prestando especial atención a estos dos aspectos: la participación ciudadana y el acceso a la información. Para alcanzar dicha finalidad se ha planteado un diseño multimétodo (Cresswell, 2014) que se divide en varias fases sucesivas con el propósito de que la metodología elegida se adecúe a la compleja naturaleza del objeto de estudio. En primer lugar, se ha realizado una profusa revisión documental, a continuación se ha aplicado un cuestionario a un panel de expertos formado por informantes que han participado en la definición, aplicación y análisis crítico de distintos indicadores para, en una última etapa, ahondar en los hallazgos obtenidos mediante entrevistas en profundidad. Entre los principales resultados de la investigación destaca la divergencia que existe entre las declaraciones de valores que aparecen en el documento de UNESCO, con las prácticas oscurantistas y presiones políticas de los estados miembros para dificultar, precisamente, el correcto desarrollo de la participación ciudadana y el acceso a la información.

PALABRAS CLAVE
Comunicación – Indicadores mediáticos – Participación ciudadana – Acceso a la información

1. INTRODUCTION

In the last two centuries, states and citizens have increasingly demanded measures to assess the state of their societies and establish public policies in different areas (Cobb and Rixford, 1998). Specifically, the movement of social indicators (Social Indicator Movement), as part of the social sciences began in the sixties of last century in The United States of America[2], when a group of scholars became aware of the importance of social monitoring and enlightening the public about the costs of technology

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[2] The antecedents of the movement for social indicators date from 1929, when the *Research Committee on Social Transfer* was created in the United States, under the rule of President Herbert Hoover. For further information, see the report, pages *Recent Social Trends in the United States.* New York: Mcgraw Hill, 1933

development, economic growth and modernization (Land and Spilerman, 1975). Presumably it was Raymond Bauer, director of a specific project on the impact of the space program on the American society, who invented the term "*social indicator*": "*Statistics, statistical series, and all other forms of evidence that enable us to assess where we stand and are going with respect to our values and goals* "(Bauer, 1966, p. 1).

This functionalist view was answered harshly by critic studies in general and by those in the area of communication in particular. One example is the prolific literature of Cultural Studies and Political Economy of European, American and Latin American Communication. Such polarity in the theoretical approaches on indicators has also been reproduced by numerous international agencies throughout history. The rise of social indicators in the sixties and seventies of the last century was directly related to a political climate of prosperity in the North.

The United Nations relates for the first time economic and human development with its Human Development Index. In addition, other international agencies developed their own annual reports focusing on social issues, such as the World Bank or the World Health Organization (WHO) (Waddell, 1995, pp. 213-215).

With regard to purely communicational level, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) elaborated on this analysis, especially since the establishment of the New World Order of Information and Communication (NOMIC) in the seventies of the last century (Reyes Matta, 2013). Precisely at that time the international organization laid the foundation for Media Development Indicators (MDI), which were approved by the General Council in 2008 and are being used in measurements by organizations like the World Bank, the United Nations Program for Development (UNDP) and the European Commission.

This paper presents an approach based on critical analysis of MDIs, which have to do with the role of indicators as tools for citizen participation and access to information, in line with the desideratum of transparency, technological development and current social practices. Precisely this point is related to the main hypothesis of this piece of research, under which the indicators are called to evolve in the direction of measuring the values that distinguish today's media development, such as transparency, sex equality, democracy and culture of peace, determinants of a new social paradigm.

2. OBJECTIVES

The main objective of this article is to critically analyze UNESCO MDI, with particular attention to citizen participation and the right of access. The importance of these two aspects for the consolidation of democratic processes within Social State of Law articulates a concern to the international organization since its founding, but it lacks studies critically assessing the instruments being generated to measure reality.

Therefore, the secondary objectives of this study are to see whether there is an ongoing phenomenon characterized by transparency in the implementation of the Media Development Indicators or if member states are generating processes to ensure their particular interests (Giannone, 2014th ;Giannone, 2014b).

This purpose is in the interest of observing whether the introduction of contents such as access rights and citizen participation in MDIs corresponds to political practices to

facilitate these two elements or, conversely, whether it generates reluctance among member states of UNESCO.

If these tensions occur, one of the secondary objectives of this piece of research will be to observe the consequences of such conflicts between principles contained in the report of UNESCO and the behavior of governments in this regard.

3. METHODOLOGY

The literature on media indicators is very limited and partial, since most studies are concerned with existing instruments that, in turn, analyze one aspect of the media environment, such as freedom of expression, transparency or gender. Furthermore, the explanatory research on these media-system-measuring tools is still emerging and has not reached any definitive conclusions.

In the absence of prior literature on the subject of study, there is need for applying a methodological design able to assess the complexity of the nature of indicators in a structured way, so we have chosen to apply quantitative and qualitative tools by combining methods, philosophies and orientations of various methodological designs (Creswell 2014; Creswell and Plano Clark 2011).

The application of a new theoretical and technical-methodological guidance through the multi-method design will contribute various elements to this work, increasing the quality of results and helping to study in depth a scarcely approached item: media indicators (Creswell, 2012; Sandelowski, Voils and Knafl, 2009; Verd and Lopez, 2008; Callejo and Viedma, 2006 and Bericat, 1998).

Here, before describing the methodology selected for this research, it is necessary to define the multi-method study and the elements that have been taken into account to develop the study. One of the first definitions of this combined or mixed method was performed by Greene, Caracelli and Graham:

> In this study, we defined mixed-method designs as those that include at least one quantitative method (designed to collect numbers) and one qualitative method (designed to collect words), where neither type of method is inherently linked to any particular inquiry paradigm (Greene, Caracelli y Graham, 1989, p. 256).

Following these definitions, the study on media indicators demands applying a multi-method methodological design or mixed method and new theoretical orientations, to help understand the nature of these media-measuring instruments (Fielding, 2010) as well as their importance for the realization of diachronic analysis and comparative studies.

Some authors such as Miles and Huberman Saldana (2013, pp. 41-42), Flick (2011,. 2009, pp 260-261) or Borrás, Lopez and Lozanes (1999) conceive that such studies should be structured in three or more stages to optimize the entire methodological process. Following this argument, then we list the different phases in which the multi-method design of this research has been divided.

The preliminary stage of the study, start of the exploratory sequential analysis, is based on document analysis. To do this, we have developed a collection of statistical data and reports related to the definition and implementation of media indicators in

the world through a historical and descriptive-explanatory perspective, from May 2011 to November 2013 approximately.

This document analysis has resulted in two types of data from primary or secondary sources: quantitative, which have been incorporated into other statistical data needed to understand the context in which MDIs are articulated, and qualitative, which have been added to the interviews previous to the field study, said interviews being conducted with some of the members of the expert panel[3]. The purpose of this data collection was to define the most important issues regarding media indicators that made direct reference to the assumptions and objectives of this study, in order to add them to the questionnaire. These items were structured in a preliminary questionnaire administered as a pretest, which concluded the preliminary phase of the proposed methodological design.

The integration of the results of the preliminary phase completed after finalizing the pretest marked the beginning of the first phase of the empirical study, where we have obtained quantitative and qualitative data through a questionnaire. Qualitative exploitation of these questionnaires together with the statistical analysis of quantitative questions served to get the questions for the next stage with respondents, which was characteristic of this phase of research: in-depth interviews.

Therefore, it can be stated that the interpretation of the results of this research has been performed, as previously anticipated, through the combination of quantitative and qualitative techniques:

1. Quantitative: the use of statistical data from the document analysis of the report of MDIs (UNESCO, 2008) and the statistical exploitation of the quantitative questions in the questionnaires.

2. Qualitative: resulting from the responses in the questionnaires and in-depth interviews to experts.

This model proper to the exploratory sequential design (Creswell, 2014, 2011) tries to get as much information as possible through different techniques used one after another and being applied to the results of the previous phases. Following the notions of Creswell, the multi-method design applied in inductive logic of research has been defined as a cumulative methodology as it performs various stages of study in which quantitative and qualitative methods are interleaved in order to fit as closely as possible in the structure of the complex features of media indicators.

4. DISCUSSION

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[3] To provide an example, the member of the Intervozes group, João Brant, was previously interviewed on February 19th, 2013, in said interview there were different appraisals on the nature of UNESCO Media Development Indicators and their implementation in Brazil. The expert recognized that, according to his experience, "UNESCO says in the description of the indicators that the idea was not exactly to make a comparison. I think one of the more complicated issues in the discussion with countries was precisely the idea of comparability. I think that member states did not want the time of making a ranking or something like that to come." Precisely this reflection resulted in several issues stated in depth in the later questionnaires and interviews (Preliminary interview, João Brant, member of Intervozes executive coordination)

The objectives, hypotheses and research methodology having been presented, this heading will analyze the importance of these instruments as tools for citizen participation and universal access to information. Citizen participation in the definition of public policies contributes to the deepening of democracy in terms of deepening the deliberation and socialization in decision-making[4] (Diaz Nosty, 2013).

To do this, we have tried to map the media field and the importance of media indicators. Martín Barbero and King argue that the media are characterized by being scenarios for representation and circulation on the social (Martín Barbero and Herlinghaus, 2014; Martín Barbero, 2000), providing opportunities for social deliberation, participating in the creation of public agendas and allowing mediations and social relations that "*can expand the public sphere not only of societies with strong institutional frameworks but also in deinstitutionalized societies*" and the development of which "*is closely linked to procedures modeling what is public*" (King, 2003, pp. 2-3) .

By extension, media indicators are also meeting and recognition spaces and may constitute links between civil society and public power if used rigorously or, conversely, thy may be consolidated as restrictive devices. Also, it can be said that, in contemporary societies, media assessment indexes are central institutions in symbolic struggles, as they are consolidated as a source of representing media health in a given environment.

Practices aimed at democratizing communication could also be defined in terms of political philosophy, based on a contribution to the expansion of subjects, topics and expressive-cultural and economic conditions in the public media space (Fraser, 2006). Understanding this process on public policy, it can be stated that these experiences tend to expand the possibilities of access to consumption and production of information, generate new forms of social participation in production and management, and design other right-and-freedom-related policies of the communication system.

From this perspective, the MacBride Report substantiated a milestone in the history of NOMIC for the "*democratization of communication*" (Reyes Mata, 2013; Roncagliolo, 1983) and it is the "*main document on communication policies approved unanimously by the community of nations and it is also the one that goes deeper into a serious proposal of democratization of social communication systems* "(Mastrini and Aguerre, 2007, p. 44).

In it, there are concepts that are directly related to the hypothesis of this paper -the indicators are driven to evolve in the direction of measuring the values that currently distinguish media development such as transparency, sex equality, democracy and culture of peace, determinants of a new social paradigm -concepts of access and participation.

4.1. Access to information

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[4] In this line, the professor at the National University of Córdoba and the National Council for Scientific and Technical Research of Argentina, Maria Soledad Segura, presented a paper at the 12th Latin American Congress of Communication Researchers in August 2014 in Lima (Peru).

The principle of universal access refers to the need to ensure adequate connectivity and universal, ubiquitous, equitable, truly affordable and quality access to the internet infrastructure and ICT services throughout the territory of the State, as defined in the latest report of the Commission on this subject (IACHR, 2013).

[...] Obviously includes providing more numerous and varied means to a greater number of people [...]. It implies greater public access to existing means of communication; but access is only one of the aspects of democratization. (MacBride and others, 1980, pp. 173-174).

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The purpose of IPDC, as noted in Resolution 75 of the General Conference in October 2003 is "*to contribute to sustainable development, democracy and governance, promoting universal access and distribution of information and knowledge*".

4.1.1. Access to information in MDIs

In the report of UNESCO on MDIs, access to the media is defined as "*crucial*" to the exercise of freedom of expression by providing a public platform through the media, which promote democratic debate. For international organization, the media are considered to be channels of information and education that are inseparable from the right of access (UNESCO, 2008, p. 3).

In this sense, independent journalism (Díaz Nosty, 2013, 2012) can only be achieved in societies where these channels are free and independent and "*where there is widespread access to these means of social communication*" (UNESCO, 2008, p. 4). Therefore, access should be analyzed in any attempt to measure media development:

> No only absence of restrictions on the media is important but also the degree of access granted to all sectors of society, especially the most marginalized, to get information and be heard by the media. Limited access or lack of empathy with the media is according to poverty and lack of education. It can also be caused or exacerbated by matters of language, sex, age, ethnicity or the gap between the urban and rural sectors. It is also necessary to promote "literacy" in the information provided by the media (UNESCO, 2008, p. 4).

Thus, the right of access will be developed in different categories of MDIs. Next we will break down those parts of the report which referred to general access and access to information in particular.

Within the Category 1: "*A regulatory system conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity of the media:*" sub-indicator 1.3. "*Editorial independence is guaranteed in law and respected in practice*" refers to whether "*the media are not required to allocate airtime, or carry specific broadcasts by the government (aside from obligatory direct access to political broadcasts during elections)* "(ibid, p. 12). Similarly, in sub-indicator 1.11. "*Means not subject to prior censorship or as required by law or in practice,*" UNESCO states that "*there will be no explicit or hidden restrictions to access to newsprint, distribution networks or publishing houses*" (ibid, p . 18).

Sub-indicator 2.3. "*The State actively promotes a diverse mix of public, private and community media*" introduces the clause stating that these three media types are not discriminated in access to information (ibid, p. 26) Category 2: "*Plurality and diversity of media, a level economic playing field and transparency in ownership* "; while sub-indicator 2.4. "*Independent and transparent regulatory system*" recognizes that the "*regulatory system ensures equitable access to spectrum for a pluralistic range of media, including community*" (ibid); 2.10. "*The state does not discriminate by its advertising policy*" refers to the "*allocation of government advertising to undergo strict monitoring to ensure that it is fair access for all media* "(ibid, p. 30). Regarding Category 3: "*The media as a platform for democratic discourse,*" sub-indicator 3.13 "*the journalists, the associated media personnel and respective organizations can practice their profession safely*", access is seen as social assistance, including temporary and independent employees (ibid, p. 44). In Category 4: "*Professional training and support institutions to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity*" refers to whether the media staff has "*access to training and professional development*" (ibid, p. 7). In particular, in sub-indicator 4.4. "*academic courses accessible to a wide range of students*" reference to access to ICTs (ibid, p. 50) is made.

Later in Category 5: "*Infrastructural capacity is sufficient to support independent and pluralistic media,*" UNESCO states that the "*media sector is characterized by high or rising levels of public access, including marginalized groups, and efficient use of technology to gather and distribute news and information, as appropriate for the local context* "(ibid). Thus, the key indicator of availability and use of technical resources by the media, there is mention of "*access to modern technical facilities to collect, produce and disseminate news*" (ibid, p. 56); while sub-indicator 5.2. draws attention to whether marginalized groups "*have access to forms of communication that they are able to use*" (ibid, p. 58).

Therefore, we can see that the right of access is widely recognized in all categories of MDIs, although each refers to a different sphere: the right to information, equal access to frequencies, social assistance, professional skills and even the infrastructural capacity of public, private and community media.

4.1.2. The opinion of experts on access to information

Faced with the multiple facets of the right of access detected along UNESCO report (2008), it is noteworthy that the experts who participated in the second and third phase of research relate this element primarily to audience interaction .

Moreover, they detect that MDIs should be more open to other indicators, such as social share. In addition, specialists draw attention to the need to observe the relationship between the results of implementing media development indicators and public communication policies in different countries.

Therefore, to study the status of international experts on the right of access, several issues related to the interaction that, in their view, should be between the audience and the media have been studied. First, experts have been asked about their valuation of the effectiveness of MDIs about the interaction between the media and their audience.
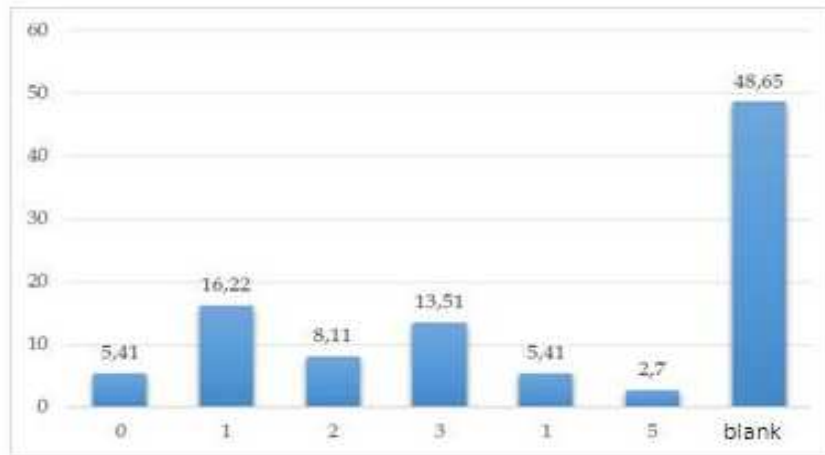
Figure 1: Evaluate, in your judgment, the efficiency of the following media indicators
Rate 0-5, where 0 is very inefficient and 5 very efficient.
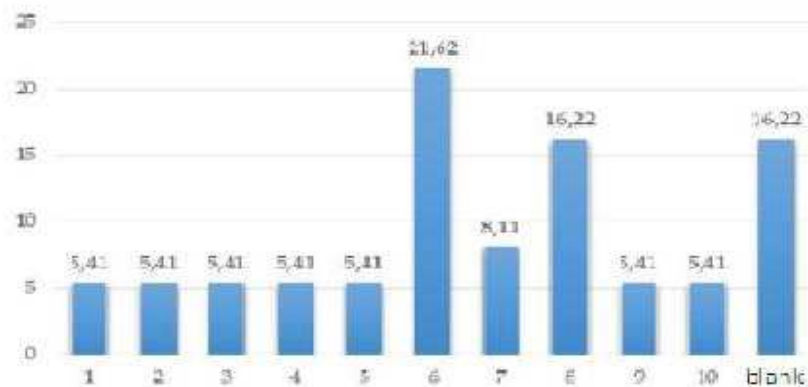Source: Prepared on one's own

Figure 1 it shows how most experts, nearly half of them, do not answer this question, which should make us reflect on the reason for the absence of answers to this question. Most of these indicators come from the business world so they respond primarily to economic criteria.

Paraphrasing Bauman (2014, 2013), the liquid media ecosystem has altered the usual roles of paradigm of communication of transmitter and receiver (Rublescki, 2011). The audience goes from being static to interacting actively, characterized by a permanent and dynamic connection to the network. In this sense, we can take the example of the hearing or social share, a new indicator that analyzes the participation in social networks related to the contents of traditional media[5].

This social audience results from segmentation according to interactivity through social networks and it has increased in the last decade (Quintas and Gonzalez, 2014; Arrojo, 2013; Tiscal, 2005). However, the effectiveness or, at least, the use of that instrument as a complementary source against MDIs should be considered, as access to social networks is articulated in a certain sector of society, preventing it from being a universal and participatory tool since it is not representative of all citizens[6].

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[5] For example, Tuitele analyzes the social television audience in Spain, real time monitoring the social activity and conversations that are generated around all television programs broadcast in Spain (Tuitele, 2013). In our country 32% of all comments in prime-time television deal with television programs (Tuitele, 2013). In fact, this is the European country with the highest development of social audience (The Wit, 2013), mainly due to the diffusion of mobile devices and tablets (above 43% according to the Mobile Marketing Association).

[6] Continuing with the Spanish example, the Spanish user profile is mostly adult (44% ranging from 40 to 55 years) and young (34% from 18 to 30 years) (AIB, 2013).

Figure 2: Influence of the indicators of audience interaction in public policies on Communication
On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being very important and 1 being a little, scarcely, non important.
Source: Prepared on one's own

Because experts do not believe that these indicators are very efficient, it seems obvious to think that their influence on public policies on communication will be residual.

However, when asked about the degree of influence of the media-cultural indicators for audience interaction in public policy communications, 56.77% of respondents affirm that the degree of influence is high or very high (Figure 2).

Therefore, there is controversy because, although experts refer to its low efficiency, they state that these rates serve to condition public policies. Therefore, we can say that there is an estrangement between the perception of the specialists on the right of access, which is directly related to the interaction and active audiences, and the concept included in the UNESCO report (2008).

4.2.   Citizen   Participation

The second concept related to the research hypothesis is participation, which "*seeks to form a citizenry that is the subject of policies and not a mere object of them*" (Mastrini and Aguerre, 2007, p. 44). In 1989, UNESCO adopted a New Communication Strategy setting as the objectives of the area of communication and information: "*To encourage free flow of information, at international and national levels, promote wider and better balanced dissemination of information without any obstacle for freedom of expression, and strengthen communication capacities in developing countries to increase their participation in the communication process*", as stated in Resolution 25C / 104 of the General Conference of UNESCO. However, there are previous documents that already collected this concern:

[...] Democratization [...] is the process through which: 1) the individual goes from being an active element, and not a mere object of communication, 2) the variety of exchanged messages constantly increases, 3) the extent and quality of social representation in communication or participation also increases. (MacBride and others, 1980, pp. 166).

4.2.1. Citizen participation in the MDIs

Regarding the process of defining MDIs, we can assert that it was participatory from the beginning, since there were many experts from diverse: intergovernmental organizations, non-profit organizations, scholars, professional associations, etc. In fact, the Chairman of the Intergovernmental Council of the International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) in 2008, Walter Fust, made reference to the message preceding the body of indicators to which "*special attention was directed to ensure broad geographical representation among participants, as IPDC Council considered it important to take into account perspectives from different areas of the world to develop indicators* "(UNESCO, 2008, p. vii).

This diversity of voices was also represented at the contents of MDIs. Category 1: "*A regulatory system conducive to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity of media*" elements are introduced to ensure best practices for civil society to actively participate. In particular, within the key indicator A. "*Legal and political framework*" sub-indicator 1.5 refers to whether the public and civil society organizations (CSOs) participate in the "*formulation of public policies governing the social media* "(ibid, p. 12). In this sense, MDIs care about whether the "*State creates genuine opportunities for consultation with non-state stakeholders on legislation and public policies on social media*" (ibid); by means of verification means as evidence of a government's commitment to build ties with CSOs to develop the legislative framework and public policies on communication.

Moreover, in Category 2: "*Plurality and diversity of social media, a level economic playing field and transparency of ownership*" explicit reference to "*public participation.*" (Ibid, p 23) is made to addressing legislative thresholds having to do with media concentration. In fact, there are several sub-indicators that speak of participation: 2.2. The State takes measures to promote pluralist media, it is judged whether "groups of CSOs and the general public are actively involved in promoting and implementing measures to promote pluralism" (ibid, p. 24) and 2.4. on the "*independent and transparent regulatory system,*" examines whether they are open and participatory "the processes of making decisions about allocating frequencies between public, private and community media" (ibid, p. 26)

In Category 3: "*The media as a platform for democratic discourse 3*", the "public participation in the appointment of the governing body" of "*public service media.*" (Ibid, p 38) in sub-indicator 3.4 is introduced; in 3.11 "*the public shows high levels of trust with the social media*"[7] is used as a sub-indicator "*high level of citizen participation in*

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[7] It is noteworthy that, one of the means of verification of this key indicator is evidence of community involvement in assessing the media of the third sector.

social media, reflected in the level of public participation in the programs allowing responses from the public, the space dedicated to comments from readers / newspapers, etc. "(ibid, p. 42) and 3.12. about whether "*media organizations are sensitive to the perceptions of the public about their work*" where MDIs refer to whether they "*provide channels for public participation: Telephone calls by the public, debates, citizen reporting*" (idem, p 43). Finally, in category.4: "*Professional training and support institutions to freedom of expression, pluralism and diversity*," MDIs are concerned with the presence of CSOs in the media and, one of their means of verification is "*CSOs participating in international networks of civil society specialized in freedom of information and expression*" (ibid, p. 53).

4.2.2. Expert opinion on citizen participation

When experts were asked about participation, most of them made an extensive reflection on it in the in-depth interviews. Such is the case of Maria Soledad Segura:

> Public policies on communication are always the starting point for us since civil society in general either wants to advance policies or have them altered or repealed, and then we need to know them. What I wanted to show is an audience that is critically and negatively watching the Latin American democratization processes. Maybe what I think is that there are some things in common in all these new laws and precisely these commonalities are those that do meet international standards of communication rights.
> (In-depth interview 7, María Soledad Segura, a member of the research team Civil Society and democratization of communication and culture at the University of Córdoba, Argentina)

In fact, the entry of new stakeholders in the media landscape[8] is one of the research lines that, according to this research team, forms one of the parameters that can be found in the democratization processes in Latin America and responds to elements proper to international standards and proposals made by UNESCO MDIs in 2008

> The second parameter is the entry of new stakeholders [the first common parameter in these laws were the limits to concentration]. Encouraging diversity by promoting the entry of new stakeholders is very important in a scenario like Latin America where there are no strong public media. There is not a tradition of public media as in Europe, which prevented entry in the state sector and the social-community sector. All laws also have these two things, they also respond to requests from reporters of freedom of expression, they also appear in UNESCO indicators and the differences in the various countries will be in the way to implement them.

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[8] In amending the Argentinean legislation of 2009, participatory state institutions were created within the authority implementing the standard. The Federal Authority of Audiovisual Communication Services (AFSCA) and, articulated with AFSCA, the Federal Council of Audiovisual Communication (COFECA) in which representatives of the executive power, of majority and minority political parties at the Congress of the Nation, of provinces, of universities and of all business organizations of the sector and social entities meet

(In-depth interview 7, María Soledad Segura, a member of the research team civil society and democratization of communication and culture at the University of Córdoba, Argentina)

In addition to participation and the right of access, the principle of equity of the flows of information is noteworthy, which was already considered by UNESCO in the eighties of the last century.

It also means a greater chance -to nations, political forces, cultural communities, economic entities and social groups- to exchange information at a more equal level, without domination of the weaker elements and without discrimination against anyone. (MacBride and others, 1980, pp. 173-174).

Equity is directly related to the symbolic struggles and power relations in the public sphere determined by concepts such as media development but also by the role of certain social sectors. In this regard, it is interesting to analyze the sex perspective in the indicators as well as the transparency occurring in these flows of communications.

What matters is to know what happens to most citizens, not just to those who are free to comment on certain forums. Hence the ethnic issue is also an aspect to be considered in defining indicators. [...] I think it would be necessary to enter the issue of poverty and unequal distribution of income within the indicators because not always freedom for a person means freedom for everyone. The sex issue is interesting too. Therefore, I agree to have this kind of transversal indicators.

(In-depth interview, César Ricardo Siqueira Bolaño, President of the Latin American Association of Communication Researchers)

When experts were asked about whether the analyzed rates should measure the democratic development of communication, 29.73% give the maximum score, 18.92% the second and 24.32% the third highest score (Figure 3).

If the four highest scores are summed, 81.08% of the respondents say that indicators should be used to analyze the democratic development of the studied scenario directly related to the main hypothesis of the research. For this media scenario, transparency is a key factor. When specialists were asked directly about the importance of examining the degree of transparency, 78.38% of respondents stated that this should be one of the fundamental objectives of the indicators (Figure 4).

We were therefore interested in knowing the degree of influence of indicators of transparency in public communication policies, since they had been given such a high score in the previous question. In this sense, the influence is bigger than the indicators of audience interaction and, among the respondents who answered that there is indeed such influence, are 78,38% of experts (Figure 5).
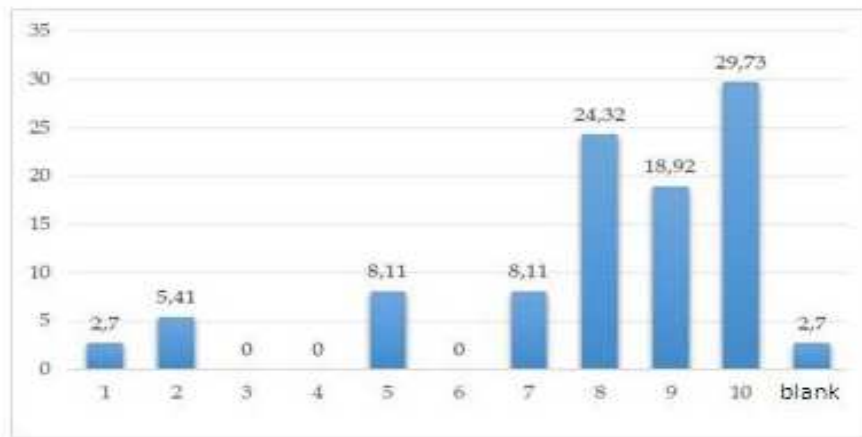
Figure 3: Degree of importance of an indicator to measure the democratic development of communication
On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being very important and 1 being a little, scarcely, non important.
Source: Prepared on one's own
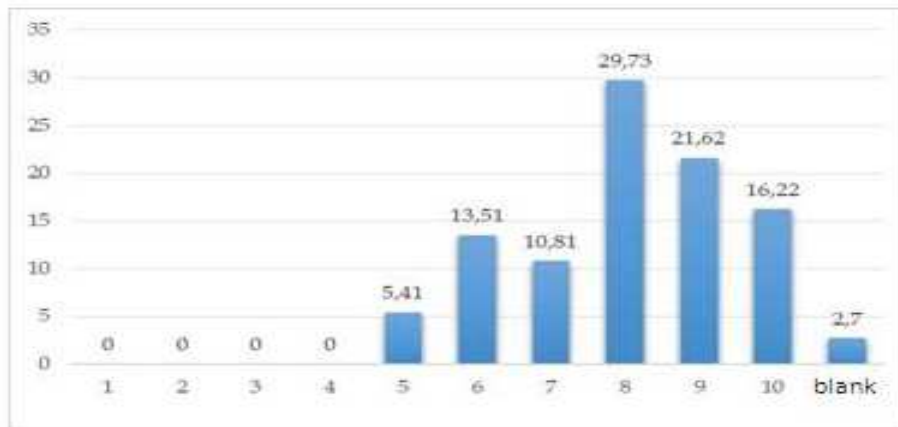
Figure 4: Degree of influence of transparency indicators in public policies on communication
On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being very important and 1 being a little, scarcely, non important.
Source: Prepared on one's own
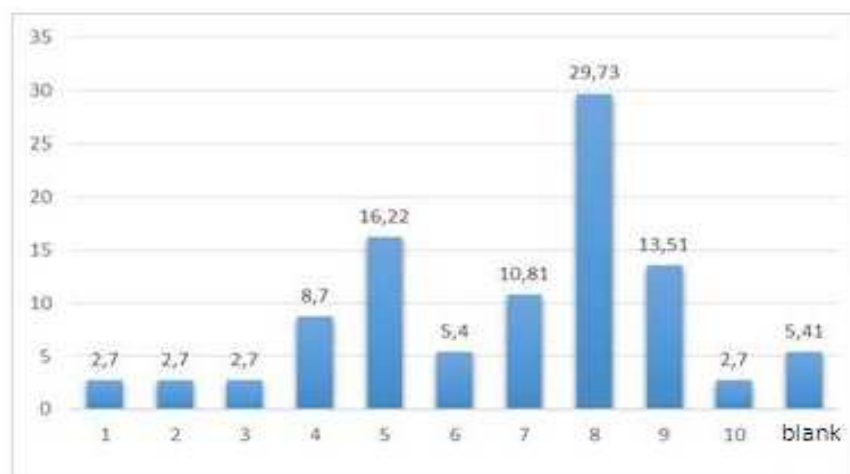
Figure 5: Degree of importance an indicator should have to examine the transparency of media environments

On a scale of 1-10 with 10 being very important and 1 being a little, scarcely, non important.
Source: Prepared on one's own

Therefore, it has been proven that the right of access and citizen participation are two elements recognized in the content of UNESCO Media Development Indicators (2008), but they should be reviewed, in the opinion of the experts that have defined, implemented and critically analyzed these measuring instruments. In this regard, experts would include a number of other key issues for the media reality, such as equity and transparency.

These elements are directly related to the initial hypothesis of this research, ie indicators are driven to evolve in the direction of measuring the values currently distinguishing media development, such as transparency, sex equality, democracy and culture of peace, the determinants of a new social paradigm.

4.3. Obscurantist practices and political pressures

The analysis of the right of access and citizen participation would not be complete without analyzing those aspects that hinder their being properly gathered in the different media environments. In particular, these elements contained in UNESCO report may be altered by the behavior of the member states, mainly resulting from obscurantist practices and political pressures, according to respondents of this piece of research.

In this regard, 80% of experts say there are interests of various kinds in the implementation of indicators (political, social, economic, religious, etc.). Noting that the interests of the institutions promoting them on MDIs can curtail their effectiveness, according to experts, it is interesting to see whether the experts who participated in the study of the media environment have undergone some form of direct pressure. When asked about such episode, almost half of the experts, 45.95%, refer they have undergone some form of coercion.

Since each relationship between the specialist and the indicator used is diverse, we have deepened in those cases that, due to their relevance, may be more interesting to this piece of research. At this time of the study, it is particularly interesting to note the particular responses in this regard.

First, pressures received by the Medianálisis group in Venezuela (UNESCO, 2012a; Medianálisis, 2012) are striking. Implementation of MDIs by this nonprofit organization resulted in pressures from the government and the opposition. Though this report was raised in 2011 and publicized on the UNESCO website to date, expert Elsa Piña says they had to give up their endeavor to analyze the Venezuelan media environment due to such pressures:

> [...] In our case there were pressures of all kinds: direct towards the organization and its executives, and from the Venezuelan State towards UNESCO, mainly because we are a nonprofit organization that does not share the country vision of the country's government.
> (Questionnaire 4 Elsa Cecilia Pineapple, MDI application in Venezuela)

Another case related to pressures, in this case international ones, has to do with the implementation of MDIs in Palestine and occupied territories submitted on June 18, 2014 (UNESCO, 2014b, 2012b; Birzeit University, 2012). The institution Mada Centre held a series of meetings with international experts to provide their researchers with the necessary tools to conduct the study in this area of conflict. In addition to issues arising from the constant attacks on Palestinian media and institutions by Israeli forces (Mada Centre, 2014), the withdrawal of US economic contribution to UNESCO resulting from the entry of the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) into said institution as a full member of the organization has hampered the realization of this media study.

In conclusion, most experts confirm that there are interests, essentially political and economic, behind the media indicators that hinder their results. Furthermore, almost half of the specialists who participated in this research acknowledge that they have undergone pressures during their work related to media indicators.

5.   **CONCLUSIONS**

After analyzing the right to access and citizen participation as crucial elements of media development indicators adopted by UNESCO in 2008 and implemented in dozens of countries to assess the different media environments, we can affirm that there is a clear tension between the definitions of two concepts in the report *Media Development Indicators: Framework for assessing the development of social media* and its practical implementation, according to the results of this piece of research.

Multiform recognition of the right of access to the various categories of MDIs – we must remember that it appears in the five sections into which the document of the international organization is divided – has to do both with the right to access information and with the technical capacity to exercise it. However, the opinions of experts in this regard are more related to the interaction and active audiences, raising the need for MDIs to introduce another set of sub-indicators, such as multimedia share.

The second aspect analyzed is citizen participation, which is also recognized in UNESCO report and is indispensably related by respondents to fairness and transparency. Precisely this recognition confirms the hypothesis of this piece of research, in which indicators are driven to evolve in the direction of measuring the values currently distinguishing media development, such as transparency, sex equality, democracy and culture of peace, the determinants of a new social paradigm. Finally, we have demonstrated the existence of interests, especially political and economic ones, that member states have when MDIs are implemented in their respective countries. In fact, these purposes directly hinder the implementation of the indicators, the researchers who are implementing them having even undergone pressures.

It is therefore confirmed that there is a tension between the democratic values that appear recognized in UNESCO report, particularly the right of access and citizen participation, and the interests and obscurantist practices of member states, which may even put pressure on researchers for the implementation of MDIs to benefit them.

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