

The image in dispute. Cronistas Barriales. Produce from the neighborhoods

*La imagen en disputa. Cronistas barriales.
Producir desde los barrios*

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Abstract

Cronistas Barriales is a Project produced by Quilmes National University (UNQUI) in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Its main goal is to prepare teenagers, from different neighborhoods in the areas of audiovisual languages, broadcasting and production to be able to develop a news programme based on their socio-economic realities and vulnerabilities. It is necessary to clarify that the project is developed in deprived areas in Buenos Aires.

Keywords

Audiovisual information, popular communication, education, public policy.

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Resumen

El proyecto de extensión “Cronistas Barriales” de la Universidad Nacional de Quilmes tiene como objetivo capacitar a jóvenes de distintos barrios de la región en lenguaje, producción y posproducción informativa audiovisual, con el fin de desarrollar un noticiero interbarrial realizado por jóvenes de la periferia del área metropolitana de Buenos Aires.

Las temáticas del noticiero se proponen de acuerdo a las necesidades informativas de la cotidianidad territorial en la cual se inserta el proyecto, posicionando a los y las jóvenes participantes en un rol activo y crítico frente a la realidad comunicacional.

El objetivo de este trabajo es describir el proyecto en sus etapas y alcances, analizando a su vez la experiencia desde la dimensión pedagógica, política y comunicacional.

Palabras clave

Información audiovisual, comunicación popular, educación, política pública.

Introduction

The processes of transformation experienced in Latin America in recent years through the presence of popular governments included in the public agenda the debate on social communication, making it visible as an inalienable human right, generating new legislation that sought to place limits on concentration of the media and promoting conditions for a more equitable and democratic distribution system of the word. That was the case of countries like Bolivia, Ecuador, Uruguay and Argentina, among others.

The policies in audiovisual communication in Argentina put in visibility reflections on the role of the image in our society. In particular, television information, which is increasingly branded as a consumer product and serving the economic interests of the companies producing the information.

In this sense, it should be noted that, on the one hand, the democratization of information requires, among other things, to transfer its production to those places where information is considered a human right and serves social needs. On the other hand, the emergence of audiovisual literacy processes within the framework of the official education system had to wait until the approval of the National Education Law in force towards the end of 2006,

which began to address some of the traditional tensions between school and popular cultures, including television.

The “Cronistas Barriales” (Neighborhood Chroniclers) project, in the framework of the extension program of the National University of Quilmes” Communication, Participation and Citizenship” , is in charge of the production of an audiovisual news program produced by young people from different neighborhoods of the metropolitan area of Buenos Aires, which seeks to transfer the process of audiovisual information production to these sectors of society with themes proposed according to the territorial everyday needs.

This newscast is broadcast through UNQ TV (<http://tv.unq.edu.ar/>), the web channel of the aforementioned house of high studies.

The project, which has been running for more than five years, aims to train young people from different neighborhoods in the region in language, production and post-production of audiovisual information and produce an audiovisual news bulletin.

It is important to mention that since its inception the project had the territorial articulation of the Social Participation Team and the Territorial Team for Children and Adolescents, dependent on the Secretariat of Social Development of the Municipality of Quilmes.

In addition, teachers, tutors and educational counselors of young people, who are part of their educational communities, participated.

This means that the work is done from an intense articulation between actors of the local municipality, social organizations, University and representatives of the educational communities of the region: School of Education No. 6, School of Technical Secondary Education No. 8, School of Middle Education No. 13 “Libertadores de América”, Primary Education School No. 15, Elementary School No. 20, Elementary School No. 36, Primary Education School No. 48 and School of Special Education No. 502 Father Carlos Cajade, of Berisso. And the participating social organizations, members of the “Participatory Tables of Neighborhood Management” of the Secretariat of Social Development of Quilmes, and the District Headquarters of Quilmes, among which stand out Zapatillas gastadas (Ezpeleta), El Hogar de mi sueños (IAPI), Day Center Our great hope (Eucalyptus of Solano), Parish of the Assumption of the Lord (Villa Luján), House of the Child of Quilmes, Villa Valdocco (El monte and El matadero), Centro San Pedro and San Pablo, San Sebastián 1) The casita de la cava (Villa Itatí), the House

of the Child Medal Miraculous (San Francisco Solano), Collective on foot, among others.

In short, Cronistas Barriales is a project conceived as an instrument of social intervention from the tools of social communication, education and public policy.

At the same time, it is important to emphasize that university extension faces new challenges today, since cultural, social, economic, environmental, productive and technological processes tense the traditional paradigms of academic formation and scientific research that the university system develops. The University of Quilmes prioritizes in its substantive actions the extension, understood as the link through which the University puts at the disposal of society its achievements in teaching and research and at the same time, enriches and feeds its academic practice, when making contact with the problematic and perspective of the social environment in which it is inserted. In this sense, the National University of Quilmes has an Extension Program of the Communication Area and the Project described here allows deepening the ties of the University with the environment through the contact with social organizations that value the multidimensional role of the communication in local development processes.

In this way, the initiative contributes to the construction of dialogue between knowledge, the generation and appropriation of content, the circulation of stories, cultural and productive practices, the construction of meaning, and the creation of new networks. The set of humanistic, scientific and technological knowledge must not form a crystallized or deposited reserve at the academic frontiers, but must be constituted in a critical mass available to serve the social transformation.

Information and the neighborhoods

Most of the young people who participate in this project live and spend their schooling in popular districts. These areas are often stigmatized by the mass media, and are identified as sectors in which violence and insecurity reign (Saintout, 2013). When young people see, hear and read news about areas that share the characteristics of their neighborhoods, they receive in the vast majority of cases what we call bad news or information with axes of conflict. And in particular, these informative characteristics are accentuated

when the treatment is about the youths. In other words, these social and age groups are stigmatized, attributing them an identity, based on a context of risk, attributing them the label of “Dangerous Young People”.⁴

Consequently, the project not only considers addressing the problems of the neighborhoods through the eyes of its protagonists, but also attending a transforming event as represented by audiovisual production.

In order to carry out the work objectives, the project first deals with training on audiovisual language, production, recording and postproduction, and on newsworthy criteria and the elaboration of audiovisual news, and after the realization. The training provides language and audiovisual style tools, audiovisual information narratives and preproduction and production strategies for the realization of community audiovisual materials about neighborhood histories and problems, but from the visions of those who live them on a daily basis. Let us look at the expression of one of the “chroniclers” eloquently rapping:

... we are the merchants of our own culture, here we are not going to show what they show all day in the newspaper, at all hours, they say that TV teaches more, nothing more to see, teach less, I have my damn vision, It looks disgusting like on TV ...

It is pertinent to mention that during the initial training meetings the young people consider that the news focused on social violence were those really important, having naturalized the stigmatization of which they and all the boys living in popular neighborhoods are victims. However, as the meetings continued and production processes intensified, the young people gradually modified this idea. As an example of this, one of the young conductors of the program understands that to offer audiences another look at their own reality has a positive impact on their daily life, in one of the programs, “if we show the importance of the organization between us, the parents will keep us in mind.”

4 Report on the representation of youth in news and information programs. August 2009. Observatory of Discrimination in Radio and Television. Federal Authority of Audiovisual Communication Services. Presidency of the Nation.

Report: The project to vote at 16 on open TV news. Youth, Communication and Media Observatory. Faculty of Journalism and Social Communication. National University of La Plata.

This guideline is deepened through the testimonies of those who interview the chroniclers, who are their own neighbors, in the first programs recurrently appears the idea that “To young people must be helped ... not judged.” In this line, in the first program, the young people who coordinate a Bernal West Community Center commented “I like to help the neighborhood, I want it to be better for me and for all my family ...; this neighborhood is falling, and we all have to lift it, “says Federico Acuña, another young participant.

“Cronistas Barriales” is positioned as the space conducive to listen to what young people have to say, betting on the true plurality of voices and the democratization of the media.

A public policy

The implementation of the “Cronistas Barriales” project imposes the challenge of assuming the complexity of the new social problems, in a conjuncture crossed by social inequality. In this way, the position of Carballada (2013) is taken up again by assuming that pain and suffering are expressed both in bodies and in forms of social relations. Therefore, when those are crossed by the different social problems, they alter the ways of thinking about everyday life and the relationship with others. In this sense, the interventions from the different areas of the State should aim at the construction of transversal views on these problems and their ways of approaching them. This implies the need to articulate and coordinate actions among the different spheres and areas responsible for designing, implementing and evaluating public policies together with civil society organizations.

It should be emphasized that the project promoted social participation in the decision-making process referred to it. Thus, on the one hand, there was a process of coordination of actions within the state agencies of the educational field: primary schools, secondary schools and universities, in what could be understood as intersectoral articulation, that is, between different state bodies. In this particular case, even from different jurisdictions, since primary and secondary schools are provincial and university is of level national level.

Likewise, work with social organizations can be identified with another instance of social participation in which non-state actors are incorporated into the design and management of social policies, an intervention model called associative management.

In this way, decision-making processes result not from the exclusive power of public decision-makers but from the interaction and mutual dependencies between political institutions and society.

The work of Carballeda (2013), quoted in a timely manner, allows understanding Social Intervention as an instrument of transformation not only of the circumstances in which it acts, but also as a device for integration and facilitation of dialogue between different logics that arise in different forms, comprehensive, explanatory, not only of social problems, but of the institutions themselves.

Another point to be taken into account about the “Cronistas Barriales” project is that it comes under the Law 26522 on Audiovisual Communication Services, sanctioned in 2009. The SCA Law implied a paradigm shift in communication, when conceived as a right human and not as a commodity, and the State conceives it as guarantor of access to this right, through the creation of quality and accessibility means to guarantee the arrival of the contents, as well as through the distribution of the use of radio-electric spectrum in equal parts for commercial, public, and non-profit media.

In addition, the SCA Act aimed, among other things, to provide access to the production of audiovisual content to universities, schools, NGOs, non-profit associations, social, community or neighborhood organizations, among other actors to which it sought to enable channels for could express their voices.

This means that the “Cronistas Barriales” project involves the challenge of managing the production of local news through the participation of members of the social organizations and schools that are part of the proposal.

In each of the social organizations were given particular processes, depending on the characteristics, timing and logic of each of them. However, it was always based on concerns and problems that the groups themselves identified as priorities. In this way, reports were produced with topics related to the history of the neighborhoods, issues of environmental injustice, community activities, gender perspective, among other topics. Thus, the project produced new audiovisual contents that transcended the mere fact of information, enabling educational objectives from neighborhood narratives and promotion of rights. Thus, from forms of collective production and an active role of participants. that from their own view of the community in which they are inserted and from the appropriation of technical tools, were able to produce audiovisual reports.

This experience, therefore, falls in the path of those perspectives of approaching the intervention, which in dialogue with diverse fields of knowledge opens the way to models of participatory management and territorial decentralization and in this dialogue with civil society, seeks to be able to articulate what is produced by the crisis and the fragmentation of social ties. It is here that the role of the State is discussed as a mere executor of general strategies arising from manuals of procedures elaborated for supposed populations with subjects and homogenous contexts that have little utility in the social scenarios fragmented by the rupture or absence of ties, with its consequent impact on the subjects.

It is also appropriate to mention that “Cronistas Barriales” conducted training incorporating the use of technological tools that come included in another public policy such as the free distribution of Netbooks of the National Plan “Connect Equality” that inserted 3 million computers with the goal of narrowing the digital gap, exploring new television formats, including the video clip, articulating literature and audiovisuals, and using social networks with the software and hardware tools that are included with the computer.

Pedagogy and communication in “Cronistas Barriales”

The extension project Cronistas Barriales understands education and communication as a dialogical relationship. This implies understanding these disciplines as relational fields, in constant fusion and feedback.

We can think that in this dialogue operate a set of discourses, norms, rules, codes and languages protected by traditions of the field.

Just as traditional education has established a unidirectional model of knowledge, where official knowledge is always born from the same voice and is deposited in empty subjects to be indoctrinated; hegemonic communication models also tend to monopolize information with a single voice: generally strident, noisy, that pretends to silence any possibility of other dissimilar voices.

From this framework, Cronistas Barriales aims to become a situation of dialogue: plot, narrate, meet, ask and ask one’s self. Educating and communicating, seems to be that which is plotted as long as we are aware of who we are, where our place is and what we mean by it.

The extensive and valuable Freirean literature, which emphasizes communication and education as a starting point, refers only to the primary task of recognizing ourselves: We cannot educate and communicate if we do not know ourselves and even more, we cannot do so if we do not we resignify what they say about us. For this task, being in a dialogue situation is a substantive part of the project.

Cristina Corea (2004) in this sense, states the following:

Dialogue under state conditions occurs from established places - the knower and the unknower, the adult and the child, the teacher and the student -; in order to speak to the other, one has only to occupy its place in the device (...). The communication work is therefore a permanent construction of conditions: it is necessary to institute each other's place, the proper place and institute the code, the rules according to which significations are to be organized. And this work forces us to think, since the one who creates the conditions is being constituted in the rules of the situation. This is to constitute a situation of dialogue (p.54).

Cronistas Barriales operates in this way, creating conditions to rebuild a code of its own, a set of identitarian meanings and a language that speaks of the young people and the children of the neighborhoods.

Taking as a reference the typology that develops Florence Saintout (2013) in his studies on youth, where he distributes in three large groups the conventional forms in which the hegemonic means usually represent the young: the successful, the disinterested and the dangerous; the project is based on the need to generate an own discourse, counter-hegemonic, and on the importance of forming a collective space, a meeting place where the priority is to circulate and raise the voice.

It is intended to represent what worries and concerns the neighborhood, what excites, hurts, gives joy and pride. In short, we talk about a job that involves knowing first, describing the place where you live from the very look of who lives there, free yourself from the typologies (neither disinterested nor delinquent), and make themselves known as they want to present themselves to the world.

It is interesting to note in this regard that when two of the participants in the project are asked, what do the Chronistas Barriales contribute to them? They respond in unison and with confidence: "Emotion and knowledge": two twin words, which from the traditional pedagogical perspective tried

to maintain a divorce. What goes through the body and the emotions, from this conservative model, was always kept in places that are helpless when it comes to learning and knowing (Rosso, 2015).

Emotion and knowledge, perhaps the best way to explain that pedagogical and communicational practice if it does not speak about who we are and identifies us, neither generates nor produces any meaning.

The project, then, takes on an enormous, complex and necessary responsibility; but this is not singular, unique and much less individual. It is the same that assumes any educator and communicator committed to the circulation and democratization of knowledge and voices; represents the multiple collective spaces of education and popular communication that we defend and we add to this project: a self-managed model that cannot exist if not based on the constant dialogue with the political and social context in which it is inscribed.

The work proposal: Workshop dynamics

The work dynamics of Cronistas Barriales is based on three main axes of work that respond to the three phases of audiovisual production: Preproduction, production and postproduction.

The meeting spaces are developed through the workshop dynamics by providing a reciprocal communication space that implies recognizing the group's faculties of self-organization and interaction between peers. The work perspective that we assume as a team, is not only linked to a liberating pedagogical approach to generate autonomy processes, but also responds to a position on communication understood in the same sense. It is at this point that the category of edu-communication worked by Mario Kaplún represents much of the process of our work, where we propose a self-managing model, in constant dialogue with the social political context.

From this pedagogical perspective, the workshops promote, at the pre-production stage, the deconstruction of the news in order to reframe stereotyped discourses installed by the mass media. We work in turn, on the importance of being recognized in that stigmatizing place in which the media usually locate the peripheral neighborhoods. This recognition, as part of the awareness process, allows us to move on to the stage of production, almost as a response and consequence of the above, where we intend to position the members of the workshop as transformers, producers of meaning and builders of their own stories.

The proposal of intervention of the workshop, thus constitutes the most appropriate tool where knowledge is built from the activity itself and the experience of the participants.

Topics and neighborhood approach

Among the productions made there are highly identified topics with the neighborhoods. The first program showed the activities of the San Pedro San Pablo Community Center and workshops taught at the Secondary School of Technical Education No. 8. The first topic discussed, the educational and cultural plans were presented by the Center located in the San Sebastián I, which also functions as a dining room that houses 180 kids with their families; with testimonies of the teenage coordinators, who had previously attended to eat and now help others.

Of the second topic, the technical and computer courses in the school that is in the IAPI neighborhood; and programs of interaction with other institutions: what is produced in the establishment is intended for the families of students and, in addition, donations are organized.

The lack of education and the necessary elements for the correct dictation of classes are many, and affect the daily learning of students. However, the young people recognized that this view on the situation is already present in the traditional media, so the originality of their performance in the institution was prioritized.

In Program N° 2: Youth Orchestra and history of the Arsenal Battalion 601 “Domingo Viejo Bueno”. First, on the set of popular music composed by adolescents, which functions as a containment area in front of the few artistic activities promoted by the municipality of Quilmes in that community. It was communicated in the first instance the existence of the youth orchestra and its value in the containment of young people and the artistic promotion. This position also responds to show the will that there are in the neighborhoods to face the adversities.

The second report includes statements by neighbors who witnessed the failed battalion attempt by members of the People’s Revolutionary Army (ERP), on December 23, 1975. Archival footage was included and part of the event rebuilt, an investigation into the consequences of repression through the Armed Forces: violations of human rights suffered by neighborhood neighbors, known to the families of the Cronistas Barriales.

The interest of young people in history and national political events was captured. Again, we find that the traditional media issues a lot of material related to state terrorism, so it was decided to jointly circumscribe the problem to the neighborhood scenario. In this way, the coverage was given an original look, with testimonials and audiovisual documentary material.

In addition, one of the initial interview questions “what happened?” Was immediately followed by the question “how did the media show it?”. The boys demonstrated to be aware of the current debate on media bias and with questions like this, they adopted an attitude about it.

Program No. 3: Flooding of the stream “Las Piedras” and Library “On the other side of the tree”. The first issue is a recurrent problem for many of the quilmenian neighborhoods, where many *Chronistas Barriales* live; this harsh reality is shown from within, with emphasis on proposals to reverse the situation. The irresponsibility of the companies that pollute it adds to the need for structural works to prevent systematic flooding. We analyzed the actions promoted so far and the mechanisms that can optimize them, especially the COLCIC organization, of neighborhood environmental care.

The second, about a library and playroom intended mainly for children with health problems, emphasizing the story of overcoming a marriage that lost its daughter because of an illness, and that remember it through this place of containment to vulnerable children.

The fourth issue, the Organization “Decir Basta”, Project “Roperito” and neighborhood board “Mejor Vivir”. The initial theme of the submission was coverage of the NGO, based on assistance and accompaniment to women victims of gender violence.

Then, an initiative of the Ministry of Social Development of the municipality, based on recycling, was journalistically covered. With the materials suitable for reuse, furniture and clothes are produced and delivered to different social organizations. Regarding the neighborhood meeting, the boys interviewed their referents, who struggle to optimize the quality of life of the neighborhood “La Nueva Esperanza”.

Cronistas Barriales, in its two years of training, has transformed and given young people the opportunity to value their practices, their knowledge, their feelings not only to their own peers in schools, but also in social networks and in diverse academic and cultural events.

In the following programs until issue number thirteen, the treatment of organizations to fight against gender violence is renewed, the debate

about the lowering of the age of imputability promoted by the neoliberal government in force in Argentina to criminalize social protest, the work of Don Bosco who works in the recovery of young addicts to coca paste, or the experiences of communitarian or popular communication.

Without a doubt, one of the elements of greater visibility of the project is through the circulation by social networks, that are in turn the main means of communication of the digital natives. Although there were several notes about the “Cronistas Barriales” in the local media and in the news of the University, the potentiality of the social network conducive to contact with various provincial institutions and academic meetings or public programs.

Conclusions

The processes of construction and dispute for a paradigm of social communication as inalienable human right is a permanent target of tensions with the media and communicational power that in Latin America is immensely concentrated and under the criterion of communication as a commodity that is broadly influential on the democratic systems, appropriating the capital destined by the State to the public communication and monopolizing the richness of the market without allowing the entrance of new actors to the field, small and medium businessmen and non-profit sectors.

The Principles on the regulation of official publicity and freedom of expression prepared by the Office of the Special Rapporteur for Freedom of Expression of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights issued in 2012 a document that brings together a set of definitions and recommendations among which it is argued that there are different ways of illegitimately affecting freedom of expression, from the extreme of their radical suppression through acts of prior censorship to mechanisms less obvious, more subtle and sophisticated that tend to impede communication and circulation of ideas and opinions. Undoubtedly, these mechanisms that attack communication also weaken democracy.

Consequently, strategies of articulation between universities, local governments and social organizations are fundamental to build instruments that improve the quality of life by organizing efforts to make social communication and education also public policies.

Cronistas Barriales are a faithful example of this. <http://tv.unq.edu.ar/cronistas-barriales/>

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